Unions Membership and Political Participation in the United States*

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Abstract

How does union membership shape individual civic and political participation in the United States? This article addresses the organizational and institutional context that leads unions to mobilize their members and enumerates key mechanisms – addressing *why*, *where*, and *how* unions influence the political participation of members. We argue that union membership will most strongly affect electoral and collective action outcomes and will be larger for low-SES individuals. Regression analyses of three nationally representative datasets find that union membership is associated with many forms of political activity, including voting, participating in protests, joining voluntary associations, and donating money to political campaigns. No effects are found on outcomes far removed from union political agendas, such as general volunteering and charitable activities, suggesting that unions primarily generate “political capital” rather than generalized social capital. The impact of unions on political participation is often stronger for low-SES individuals, suggesting that unions offer a route to civic life for people otherwise unlikely to have political access. We consider implications of these findings in light of the secular decline of organized labor in the United States.
Introduction

Political and civic participation facilitate the production of collective goods and serve as the foundation for democratic representation and effective governance (e.g., Putnam 2000 and many others). A pressing question, for sociologists and political scientists alike, has been to understand why people participate in political life – and why many do not. American labor unions provide a useful case to examine organizational and institutional dynamics that shape political involvement, and to explore the process of political mobilization.

Political participation is a central issue to scholars across the social sciences. Yet, the role of unions in participation has received surprisingly little attention, particularly beyond the issue of voting behavior. The issue is also substantively important. Despite years of decline, labor unions still boast an enormous membership: 16 million Americans or 12% of the workforce. Moreover, unions represent low-SES individuals, who frequently lack the education, skills, and resources that are known to facilitate civic participation. To the extent that unions generate participation among their members, unions play a unique role in expanding the representativeness of American democracy.

We draw on insights from historic institutional and neo-institutional perspectives within sociology to inform the conventional literature, mainly rooted in political science. Greater attention to institutional context is needed to understand why union members may be more likely to be politically and civically active and where participation is likely to be channeled. We further argue that greater examination of the process of mobilization is needed to understand how union members become politically and civically active. American labor unions inhabit an institutional context that pushes them to focus heavily
on the political mobilization of members. As a result, unions strive to develop the
organizational and political skills of their members, cultivate their members’ political
identities, link members to organizations in civil society, and directly mobilize members
to participate in political life. We use data from several large nationally representative
surveys in the late 20th century to examine the consequences for individual-level political
participation.

Who Participates?

Why are citizens politically active? Norris (2002:19) identifies three main
theoretical approaches within the massive literature which is dominated by voices from
political science: 1) Theories emphasizing individual characteristics – e.g., skills,
resources, and motivation – as the source of participation, sometimes referred to as
Verba’s “civic voluntarism model”; 2) Organizational theories, referring to research
following Rosenstone and Hansen’s (1993) seminal work on the role of leaders, parties,
and other groups that mobilize individual participants; and 3) Institutional approaches
that attend to historical or comparative variability in the state, party systems, and the like,
which influence political involvement. We suggest a partial synthesis of the former two
perspectives: in the case of American labor unions the process of mobilization is, in fact,
intertwined with the individual skills and capacities of organization members. We also
suggest points of synthesis between the latter perspectives: mobilizing strategies (and the
propensity to mobilize versus pursuing other political strategies) are very much shaped by
the institutional context. To develop this argument we also draw upon ideas from social
movements (e.g., the importance of framing and political identity for mobilization) and political sociology generally.

*Individual-level characteristics*

The classic literature emphasizes individual characteristics as the origin of political participation: education, income, class, race, and gender (Almond and Verba 1963; Verba and Nie 1972; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Olsen 1982; Hayghe 1991). Education, in particular, proves to be the dominant predictor of many political participation outcomes. Educated citizens, it is argued, are better able to understand political issues as well as their own individual and collective interests, and have greater skills and capacities to engage in political action. Similarly, affluence is associated with political participation (Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba and Nie 1972).

More recent scholarship in this tradition has focused on organizational processes that mediate individuals’ civic participation (though it arguably remains distinct from “organizational” theories discussed below). For example, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) argue that churches, workplaces, and other non-political organizations serve as major sites for skill development. Basic organizational activities, like attending meetings, writing letters, or organizing office events, build individuals’ organizational capacities and communication skills and ultimately enable individuals to better participate in politics (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Houghland and Christenson 1983; Peterson 1992).

*Organizational Perspectives*
One response to the classical literature is to focus more directly on the organizations that mobilize members to participate in politics (Norris 2002; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Meyer 2007). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) contend that people participate in politics because organizations mobilize or inspire them to act. They find that when political parties contact citizens, those citizens are much more likely to participate in electoral politics. Political action, then, stems from interaction between individuals and organizations, parties, or interest groups, not from individual attributes alone.

**Institutional Dynamics**

Scholars of voting behavior have long recognized that basic societal features – the level of democracy, type of electoral system (proportional vs. majoritarian), the structure of the party system, character of voting laws, and so on – powerfully affect individual voting behavior (Powell 1986; Jackman 1987). We argue that scholarship on political participation would benefit from greater attention to institutional dynamics – in part because institutional structures may powerfully shape the organizational effects observed in prior studies (Kitschelt 1994).

Drawing on both historical-institutional and neo-institutional ideas, the literature on civic association has highlighted the extent to which individual participation is deeply shaped by the state, political institutions, and organizational structures in society (Skocpol 2003; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999; Schofer and Fourcade Gourinchas 2001; Paxton 2002; Crowley and Skocpol 2001; Clemens 1993). Likewise, the social movement literature has shifted in a more macro direction – emphasizing the institutional
constraints and opportunity structures that shape movement mobilization and strategies (Clemens 1993; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1997; Meyer 2004).

We use the case of American unions to explore and develop these ideas for the study of political participation more generally. Following Rosenstone and Hansen, we argue that political participation involves mobilization. However, the mobilizing strategies of groups – whether they be parties, interest groups, movements, or unions – should not be taken for granted, but rather are shaped by the institutional context in which those groups are embedded, as well as the characteristics of individuals they seek to mobilize.

The Institutional and Organizational Context of Union Mobilization in the U.S.

Why might union membership affect an individual’s political involvement? At a minimum, Verba et al. (1995) suggest that any sort of organizational membership causes individuals to develop organizational skills that enable civic and political participation. This is only the tip of the iceberg. Drawing on an organizational and institutional analysis of the environment unions inhabit, we examine why, where, and how unions influence and mobilize their members.¹ In short, contemporary American labor unions inhabit a structural position vis-à-vis employers, political parties, and the state that generates incentives for unions to invest heavily in developing the civic skills, political identities, and collective action capacities of their members, and to galvanize members to participate in certain forms of politics.

¹ While much of the following section stresses macro-dynamics that favor mobilizations, we note that labor unions have a long history of ideological commitment to the mobilization of members.
At the most basic level, unions are shaped by their relationship with employers. Much of unions’ leverage over employers stems from their perceived ability to act collectively and to disrupt production. Indeed, dozens of case studies of American unions over the 20th century document unions’ extensive efforts to mobilize workers (e.g., Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 2003; Brecher 1997; DeVault 2004). The imperative to maintain collective action capacity places incentives on unions to train and mobilize workers, imparting skills and experiences that may enhance prospects for political participation.

Yet, the union-employer relationship is only a part of the story. Union strategies and efforts to politically mobilize their members are powerfully shaped by the state – particularly the legal/regulatory context. Nations have markedly different systems of industrial relations, which matter immensely for the tactics of unions. Unions operating in societies and/or historical eras with greater institutional support are less dependent on member mobilization (Baccaro, Hamann, and Turner 2003; Greer 2008) and coalition building (Frege, Heery, Turner 2004). In corporatist systems like those found in Scandinavia, for instance, wages are set by industry at the national level, with substantial involvement from the state. Corporatist governance structures often provide unions with a ‘place at the table’ in state planning and decision-making. In societies with less institutional support, however, unions that wish to influence state policy or decision-making must organize, mobilize members, and build coalitions. Greer (2008), for instance, finds that in Germany's health care sector, labor's traditional avenues of influence were through the state. When these channels of influence dried up in the late 20th century, unions compensated by increasing member mobilization. (Obviously, other
factors – such as class-based parties and strong working class culture also affect working class mobilization in Europe.)

U.S. unions lack the “social partnership” that is found across much of Europe (at least historically; see Martin and Ross 1999; Greer 2008 for a discussion of recent European trends). Without direct political access, American unions have opted to pursue alternate strategies to influence politics, such as the mobilization of members to influence electoral outcomes (Baccaro, Hamann, and Turner 2003).

In addition to this cross-national variability, there is also important temporal variation in the institutional/legal context that unions face in the United States. In brief, prior to the late 1930’s, few laws existed to regulate the relationship between unions and employers. In 1935 Congress enacted the Wagner Act, which institutionalized labor relations by granting workers the right to organize unions, to bargain collectively and to strike. This state “support”, however, was short lived. In 1947, Taft Hartley stripped unions of many rights, including requiring union leaders to sign non-Communist affidavits and allowing states to pass more restrictive laws (like “right to work” laws). Moreover, Taft-Hartley limited the types of mobilization that unions could legally use, particularly around unions’ strongest weapon, the strike: it outlawed the popular “sit-down” strikes of the 1930’s and 1940’s, sympathy strikes, and secondary boycotts.

While Taft Hartley restricted how unions organize new workers and the parameters of striking, unions maintained the right to mobilize members in the electoral arena. Starting in the 1930’s and increasingly so after Taft-Hartley, unions adopted political agendas aimed at influencing legislation (Dark 1999; Bok and Dunlop 1970; Greenstone 1977). Unions have used their advantage in size and capacity to mobilize
members to affect change in local and national politics. While they cannot outspend business in lobbying efforts of campaign contributions, unions can mobilize their millions of members to vote and volunteer for campaign work. Indeed, in electoral politics, unions’ manpower has been more effective than their endorsements or campaign contributions (Bok and Dunlop 1970).

In sum: an analysis of the institutional/legal context in which contemporary American labor unions are embedded helps explain why unions might seek to mobilize their members to engage in collective action and participate in politics, and why those efforts center on electoral involvement. In the following sections, we discuss how this occurs and articulate specific hypotheses.

**How do unions mobilize members?**

Union efforts to galvanize members are highly systematic, reflecting both the wider political exigencies (discussed above) and also the features of their membership. Union members tend to have low levels of education and skills. Moreover, members typically join for reasons of employment and often lack political commitment to union causes. This makes unions distinctive from social movement organizations, where individuals select into membership primarily based on commitment to a given cause. In this context, union strategies have developed highly elaborated strategies to cultivate both political skills and pro-union identities.

Drawing upon prior quantitative and qualitative research, we identify four key processes: 1) Unions intentionally cultivate organizational and civic skills among their members as a means to achieve both organizational and political goals. 2) Unions shape
the political identity of members through the use of framing and related tactics. 3) Unions actively mobilize their members, directly urging them to engage in politics and collective action. 4) Unions form organizational ties to civic associations and social movement organizations, serving as a “bridge” that links members to other parts of the political sphere. These processes overlap and individual unions engage in them to varying degrees. Taken together, however, these four dynamics paint a rich picture of how unions shape the political behavior of their members.

**Organizational and Political Skill Development**

Unions routinely seek to cultivate their members’ skills, often in very direct and systematic ways. In her study of union organizing, Sharpe (2004: 72) emphasizes the role of training: “Organizers assumed workers wouldn’t magically emerge as full-fledged union activists and therefore would have to be trained in organizing and leadership skills.” Likewise, Spencer (1995) argues that rank and file education is a core component of unions’ agenda in North America. This involves both formal training programs, as well as informal activity at the local level (Sharpe 2004; Markowitz 1998, 2000; Clawson 2003).

Union efforts to develop the organizational and political skills of members span a broad range of activities, from negotiating with employers to participating in organizing drives to volunteering in political campaigns (e.g., Clawson 2003; Sharpe 2004). For

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2 Of course, unions vary in the degree to which they aim to train members and the types of trainings they conduct. For instance, researchers note that female union members often have fewer opportunities within unions than their male counterparts (Fonow 2003; Eaton in Adler and Suarez 1993).
example, since unions work extensively in electoral politics, they often train rank and file members to phone bank, canvass neighborhoods, and talk with their co-workers and families about voting.

It seems likely that the skills cultivated by unions facilitate union members’ subsequent political involvement. Indeed, Rogers and Terriquez’s (2009) study highlights the ways that union skills can be transferred to political activism. Skills developed in a union enabled low-SES members to subsequently engage in other political activism (Rogers and Terriquez 2009: 234).

Framing and Political Identity

Political identities affect commitment and sustained participation over time. Social movement scholars argue that strong identity with a group makes participation in collective action more likely (Futrell and Simi 2004; Hirsch 1990; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Like social movement actors, union leaders seek to shape members’ political identities. One way that they accomplish this is by systematically exposing members to pro-labor views, invoking movement frames, and discussing political and union issues with members. For instance, in his study of a union organizing drive, Lopez (2004) documents how pro-union workers visited their co-workers at their homes to educate them about why they should become active in the union. These conversations continue once a workplace is unionized. Indeed, drawing on Verba's (1995) data, we find that nearly three-quarters of union members report that union meetings explicitly address political issues (See Table 1). To put that in perspective, less than one-third of participants in religious organizations report the same.
Moreover, actual participation in movement activities affects members’ political identities: behavior breeds commitment (Swarts 2008). Participation, then, not only helps unions to reach tangible goals (i.e., letters written to legislators), but also cements members’ identity around the union. Collective action, in particular, powerfully shapes union members’ collective identities (e.g., McAdam 1988; Fantasia 1988). Unions encourage members to engage in collective action, ranging from modest acts demonstrating solidarity (e.g., wearing a pro-union button to work) to more substantial acts such as striking.

Direct Mobilization

People are most likely to participate in activities when they are directly asked to partake (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Meyer 2007; Asher, Heberlig, Ripley, and Snyder 2001). Asking members to participate – and then asking again – is critical for participation. Labor unions routinely urge members to participate in activities on a range of issues (Asher et al. 2001). Many of these activities revolve solely around the labor-management relationship, like participating in contract negotiations. Others involve activities that spill into general civic life, like attending anti-World Trade Organization rallies (Smith 2001) or speaking at a NAACP meeting.

Note that unions ask for participation for various reasons, the obvious being that the more members participate, the better unions can collectively act. Unions also use participation as a tool to assess and build union support. By completing tasks like collecting co-workers addresses, workers signal that they are dedicated to organizing a union (Sharpe 2004). Tasks such as these also solidify workers’ commitment to the union, as Swarts (2008) shows occurs with social movements.
The most striking example of how union activities flow into broader political life is union members’ participation in electoral politics. Unions invest massively in efforts to elect Democratic politicians, routinely organizing get-out-the-vote campaigns, voter registration drives, and the like. In the 2008 elections, for example, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) dramatically mobilized members. The SEIU reported that members and staff knocked on 3.5 million doors, made 16.5 million phone calls, and had over 100,000 members volunteer overall (SEIU website). This election drive spurred a tremendous amount of volunteering and political involvement among union members, and increased electoral participation both among SEIU members and beyond. In-depth historical accounts tell a similar story of direct efforts of unions to mobilize their members for the purposes of electoral involvement (e.g., Shaw 2008: 142).

*Institutional Bridges*

Finally, unions foster civic participation by serving as institutional bridges, linking members to other community organizations, political groups, and/or movements. While the length and depth of coalitions vary, an extensive body of research documents the frequent existence of labor-community coalitions, such as religious groups, environmental groups, and immigrant groups (Nissen 2004; Obach 2004). Coalitions involve both formal and often extensive informal ties between groups, and can lead to union member involvement in a wide range of civic organizations and social movements.

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4 We cannot independently verify these figures. Obviously, the SEIU has an interest in dramatizing their influence. But, even if these numbers are exaggerated, there is no doubt that the SEIU engaged in substantial mobilization in the 2008 election.
Occasionally coalitions develop formal training programs between organizations, for instance between labor and environmental groups (Obach 2004). Other times, the exposure is informal. For example, a sign at the 1999 anti-WTO protests in Seattle reflect the spirit of labor-environment alliances: “Teamsters and Turtles...together at last” (Berg 2002:1). Broad-based protests, like anti-WTO, immigrants’ rights, and peace, provide space for union members to interact with members from other organizations. We expect that such cross pollination between unions, civic organizations, and movements increases the likelihood that union members will become involved in movements and civic organizations.

**Prior Empirical Studies: Unions and Political Participation**

Prior studies of unions and political participation have centered on electoral outcomes. Union density is associated with aggregate voter turnout in the US and across the affluent democracies (Radcliff 2001; Radcliff and Davis 2000). Individual-level studies, likewise, show that union members are much more likely to vote for Democratic candidates than non-union members (Asher et al. 2001; Juravich and Shergold 1988; Sousa 1993; Dark 1999). Moreover, union members are more likely to vote in general than non-members (Asher et al. 2001; Masters and Delaney 1987; Freeman and Medoff 1984; but see Juravich and Shergold 1988). The effect is even larger for black union members (Sousa 1993). It should be noted that the impact of union membership on voting weakens – and often fails to be statistically significant – in studies that incorporate a wide range of control variables (Sousa 1993; Asher et al. 2001). Even this most basic issue warrants further study.
The impact of unions on voting varies across societies, suggesting that institutional differences matter. Gray and Caul (2000), for instance, find that in the U.S., union turnout is 8.8% higher than the general population turn, whereas the effect of union membership is considerably less in the Netherlands (1.6%), Germany (1.5%), and the United Kingdom (2.8%). As discussed above, lack of state support in the United States may strengthen the effect of unions on electoral outcomes.

Although few studies address the issue, there is limited evidence that the impact of unions goes beyond voting behavior. Prior research finds that union membership is associated with activities such as putting up yard signs, phone banking, and donating to campaigns (Bok and Dunlop 1970; Asher et al. 2001). However, these studies did not control for even some basic variables (e.g., education, gender) so the results should be interpreted with caution.

Norris’s (2002) work on Europe argues that union membership is important for general political activity, including memberships in civic organizations. Using data on European countries from the World Values Survey, Norris observes that union members are more likely to be active members in civic groups and express greater willingness to participate in protests (though actual behavior is not examined), compared to non-union members. Although European unions differ substantially from those in the U.S. and the analyses focus on attitudes more so than behaviors, Norris’s findings are nevertheless suggestive of a link between unions and political participation, broadly defined.

In contrast, a recent study of unions and civic association actually suggests that union members may be less organizationally involved than non-members. Cornwell and Harrison (2004) show that from 1972-1994, union members are less likely to have
membership in other organizations, compared to members of churches, professional
groups, and the like. However, when they disaggregate union members they find that
unions affect members differently: unions have a higher prominence in the organizational
lives of men, blacks, and the working class.

Finally, a number of case studies of U.S. unions document the ways that unions
have affected their members’ participation in general political action. A common thread
is that unions train or encourage workers to be involved in other organizations or social
movements. For example, Korstad and Lichtenstein (1988) examine two organizing
drives in the 1940’s, in Winston and Detroit. In both cases, they find that the campaigns
dramatically increased the membership of the NAACP. Similarly, Honey (1993) argues
that industrial unionism provided union members with the training and experiences to be
active in the civil rights movements.

**Implications and hypotheses: A working class route to political involvement?**

The prior discussion suggests that unions have both *general* and *specific* effects
on the political involvement of members. At a general level, unions teach civic and
political skills to their members and inculcate a politicized identity. General civic
knowledge and skills – such as knowing how to contact political officeholders or
familiarity with procedures in organizational meetings – is a foundation for all forms of
civic participation, from voting to organizational membership to protesting. Moreover,
unions seek to develop an empowered and politicized identity among workers. This, too,
is likely to have broad effects on a variety of civic and political participation outcomes.
Thus we expect:
Hypothesis 1: Union members are more likely to participate in civic life, broadly defined, compared to non-members.

In addition to building general capacities, we expect unions to have specific effects on the political behavior for members, stemming from the goals and strategies of labor unions in the American context. As discussed above, preparation for collective action is central to union agendas. Unions teach specific skills and engage in practices that prime members for participation and strikes and other collective acts. Moreover, the political context in the United States has produced strong incentives for unions to build political allies – most notably the Democratic party – and consequently labor unions have focused a great deal of energy toward electoral politics. Thus, we expect:

Hypothesis 2: The effects of union membership on political participation will be particularly strong for electoral and collective action outcomes.

Finally, we consider who is most affected by unions. Large proportions of union members come from the working class, and possess low levels of education and income. It is no surprise, then, that union efforts to mobilize workers often center on teaching basic civic skills (as discussed above). High-SES individuals may derive political knowledge and civic skills from many sources, such as from highly educated parents or via advanced schooling, and may be less affected by union efforts. In contrast, low-SES union members are less likely to gain such skills outside of the union context. Thus, we expect unions to have a stronger effect on low-SES members:

Hypothesis 3: Union membership will have a larger impact on the political participation of low-SES members compared to high-SES members.
This latter point has important implications for American democracy. The training and mobilization provided by unions may serve to greatly expand political access for working class Americans. Because they make explicit efforts to prepare members for political life – in a manner that could be characterized as a ‘compensatory’ – unions may provide a distinctive route to political involvement for low-SES Americans. It is hard to think of other large organizations or institutions in the United States that play a comparable role. Churches bear some similarity to unions: they inculcate civic skills (Verba 1995) and in some cases support political mobilization (McAdam 1999). Yet, churches are far more variable in their agendas and membership. Most churches do not focus so intently on political mobilization of members, and many do not principally serve working class individuals. In short, unions may play a unique role facilitating the political participation of the working class in America.

**Data and Methods**

We examine three nationally representative datasets that address political behavior of American citizens from 1973 to 1994. These years fit solidly into the era that scholars characterize unions as using a business union model. In this time period, unions were less focused on mobilizing members than in other eras, like the 1940’s. In other words, this is a “strong test” of our arguments, as this period one would expect relatively weaker effects of unions on member mobilization. Unfortunately, our data sources either
do not extend past the 1990s or have very small samples in later years, so we cannot extend our analysis.\(^5\)

*The Roper Social and Political Trends Dataset.* The Roper dataset compiles individual responses from 207 public opinion surveys administered on a roughly monthly basis between 1973 and 1994. The survey included twelve questions on political participation, along with a diverse range of demographic and social measures. Each survey consisted of approximately 2000 in-home interviews conducted by the Roper Organization, resulting in over 41,000 cases. The dataset includes weights to compensate for under- and over-sampling across education, gender, income, and race (compared to the most recent census data) for a large proportion of the surveys.

*The American Citizen Participation Study, 1990.* Collected by Sidney Verba and colleagues, the dataset contains an extremely broad range of measures of individual political participation (see Verba et al. 1995). This survey of the American adult population involved a two-stage design. First, a brief telephone screening survey was used to collect basic demographic and political participation data on 15,053 individuals. This sample was stratified by race, ethnicity, level of political participation, and type of political participation. From this group, 2,517 individuals were selected to participate in in-person surveys. Highly politically active individuals and minorities were

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\(^5\) We do conduct analyses on the differences within our time frame, examining outcomes in the 1970’s compared to the 1980’s and beyond (the 1980’s marked the anti-union Reagan era, including his 1981 decision to permanently replace striking air traffic controllers). We find that these time periods do not affect the impact of union membership on political participation.
oversampled, providing more precise estimates for those groups, but the use of sampling weights allows generalization to the US adult population.

*The General Social Survey.* The GSS, perhaps most well-known of our datasets, includes basic measures of political participation (voting, membership in associations) for most years between 1978 and 1990. In addition, specific survey years include “modules” that ask a broader range of questions regarding political activity.

Our dependent variables include both dichotomous and count outcomes. We use logistic and negative binomial regression models, respectively. Robust (Huber/White) standard errors are presented throughout.

*Dependent Variables*

Political participation can take multiple forms. We consider five outcome variables that capture a broad spectrum of individual participation in the wider polity.

*Electoral participation.* Voting is measured dichotomously, based on participation in the most recent presidential election. We also examine a dichotomous measure indicating volunteering for a political campaign.

*Collective action.* We examine several dichotomous measures of collective action, including attending a protest, attending a political rally, participating in a boycott, and signing a petition.

*Association Membership.* The GSS includes more than a dozen dichotomous variables indicating whether respondents are members of various types of voluntary associations,
including veterans groups, school organizations, sports organizations, and so on. We constructed a general ‘membership’ measure as the sum of all types.

*Political Communication.* Our data sources include dichotomous measures of political communication, including whether a respondent has ever contacted a public official or written a letter to a senator.

*Volunteering.* We have two dichotomous measures of volunteering, one reflecting participation in a campaign, and another indicating general volunteering in the community.

*Donations.* We also have two measures of charitable donations, one for donations to political causes and a second measure of general donation.

*Independent Variables:*

Our key independent variable of interest is individual membership in labor unions.

*Union Membership.* A dichotomous variable indicates individuals who are currently members of a labor union.

We control for a standard array of demographic and background variables that may also affect political participation.

*Education.* Ordinal measures of educational attainment are available in all datasets. The GSS and Verba datasets provide ordinal measures reflecting number of years of schooling completed. Alternative codings (e.g., dummies for completion of various
levels) yielded similar results. The Roper dataset includes a 4-category ordinal measure
distinguishing “no schooling”, grade school, high school, or college attendance.\footnote{Later surveys years added categories for completion of high school and college. Results are similar using that measure, but we combine those categories to create a measure consistent across all years.}

*Income.* The Verba dataset includes a 16 category measure of household income, with
categories up to “$200,000 and above”. The Roper dataset includes an inflation-adjusted
measure of actual household income, which we rescaled, dividing by 10,000. The natural
log of income yielded similar results. The GSS includes a 12-category ordinal measure
limited to “$25,000” and up, with additional categories added in subsequent survey years
(which, unlike Roper, do not adjust for inflation). Results were similar across measures
used in different survey years (i.e., when examined for sub-sets of surveys with identical
categories of measurement), and when survey years were combined together. Results,
below, pool these disparate income measures in order to combine all survey years, which
greatly simplifies presentation (results are not substantively affected).

*Age.* Age is operationalized by a series of dummy variables indicating individuals 30 to
59 years of age and 60+ years of age (18 to 29 is the reference category). Knoke and
Thompson (1977) document a curvilinear relationship between age and civic life: middle
age people are most likely to participate. We examined several other operationalizations
including linear age and age-squared as well as more fine-grained age-group dummy
variables. Results were consistent.

*Gender.* Measured dichotomously, with women coded as 1.

*Race/Ethnicity.* All three datasets include crude measures of race/ethnicity (black, white,
“other”) as well as more complex coding for sub-samples. To maximize sample size, the
simple race dummies are used, with ‘white’ as the omitted reference category. Corollary analyses that included additional race/ethnicity categories yielded similar results (not presented here; available from the authors upon request).

*Marital Status.* Measured dichotomously, with married respondents coded as 1.

*Employment Status.* We include dichotomous variables indicating full-time and part-time employment.

Additional variables: The GSS survey and the Roper dataset include a large variety of demographic and social indicators, allowing us to include a wider array of control variables in our models. Coefficients are omitted from tables (below) for the sake of parsimony, and because the findings are not central to the arguments discussed above (but are available from the authors upon request).

*Geographic region of residence.* The GSS and Roper includes a 9-category variable identifying the geographic region of the respondent within the United States.

*Urban/Suburban/Rural residence.* We use a series of dichotomous variables to identify urban, sub-urban, and rural residency for both GSS and Roper data. Rural is the omitted reference group.

*Occupation type.* We used occupation codes to create dummy variables indicating 15 occupational categories (e.g., farm, clerical, managerial, professional, etc) for both GSS and Roper data. We also examined more fine-grained occupational categories; results were unaffected.

*Occupational prestige.* The GSS includes a 90-point scale reflecting the prestige of a respondent’s job.
Perceived social class. In the GSS, respondents were asked to identify themselves in a 4-category scale: lower class, working class, middle class, and upper class.

Empirical issue: endogeneity?

The possibility of endogeneity is increasingly raised in studies of political participation (e.g., Verba et al. 1995). We discuss the issue and conclude – based on the prior literature – that union membership is not likely to be endogenous to key political outcomes. Nevertheless, we conduct corollary analyses to further reassure readers.

Endogeneity can pose a challenge for studies of the impact of organizational membership and political participation because the latter may affect the former. For instance, cross-sectional estimates of the impact of party membership on protest behavior may be upwardly biased because protest experiences may make individuals more likely to join a party (or both may be influenced by some unobserved characteristic, like concern with a particular issue). One strategy, pursued by Verba et al. (1995) is to focus on so-called ‘non-political’ organizations like churches or workplaces. One’s workplace, for instance, is principally determined by educational and occupational decisions as well as employment opportunities, rather than as a consequence of one’s political behaviors. Unions are analogous to the workplace, in that membership is determined by similar educational and occupational choices – as well as structural factors, such as whether a given industry is organized in a particular area (see Asher et al. 2001).

Union membership isn’t entirely random – members are, after all, similar in class background, occupation, educational attainment, and geographic region (factors we are able to control) – but evidence suggests that it is generally not driven by prior political
experiences or views. Union membership is predominately driven by structural dynamics – most importantly, whether a given workplace happens to be organized (Asher et al. 2001). Workers become union members if their industry or workplace is previously unionized – and otherwise do not. The process is largely automatic, rather than reflecting the particular political experiences or discretion of individual members.

Nevertheless, we err in the direction of caution and conduct corollary analyses to address potential sources of endogeneity. Our strategy is to restrict our analysis to subgroups for whom the decision to join a union is less likely to result from individual discretion. We identify two circumstances that may provide individuals with a greater degree of choice over union membership. First, we take advantage of cross-state legal differences by comparing “right to work” states to others. Although union membership is largely automatic for employees of a unionized workplace, “right to work” laws make it easier for individuals to opt out of union membership at their own discretion. The more union membership is a “choice”, the more we might expect it to be influenced by (potentially unobserved) individual attributes. If an endogenous relationship exists, we should observe a larger effect size in ‘right to work” states compared to others. In fact, corollary analyses find little difference in effect sizes across these two types of states workers who live in states with “right to work” laws are not mandated to join a union or pay dues (not presented here; available from the authors). Second, workers in certain industries, such as craft workers, have relatively greater discretion regarding whether to join a union. Craft workers tend to move between worksites and they can opt to not join a union; but, non-joiners cannot work at a union worksite. Thus, it may be that craft workers with strong political commitments are likely to join unions. To account for this,
we systematically omitted craft occupations from the analyses. Again, results were similar, suggesting that potential endogeneity does not substantially influence our results (not presented here; available from the authors).

Empirical Issue: Group differences & interaction effects in non-linear models

We examine whether education and income have different effects on participation for union members versus non-members. The challenges of comparing coefficients across groups and interpreting interaction effects in nonlinear models have garnered significant attention in recent years. Allison (1999) points out that group differences in coefficients of logit models may be purely the result of unequal residual variation – i.e., unobserved heterogeneity. Allison recommends testing for and, if necessary, correcting for unequal residual variation. Williams (2009) shows that Allison’s approach is a special case of a heterogeneous choice model (estimable via “oglm” in Stata). Results of heterogenous choice models indicate no significant difference in residual variance across the critical variable of interest (union membership) for key outcomes of interest (not presented here; available from the authors). In this case, the use of traditional logit models is appropriate (Allison 1999) and avoids the sensitivity to mis-specification observed in heterogeneous choice models (Keep and Park 2006).

On a somewhat related matter, Ai and Norton (2003) sharply criticize current practices of interpreting non-linear interaction term coefficients and conventional marginal effects calculations, and question the utility and interpretability of odds ratios when dealing with interactions. Instead, they argue that interaction terms ought to be interpreted as a marginal effect calculated as the cross derivative of the terms in the
interaction. With this approach, one can calculate effect sizes and standard errors for each combination of covariates in the data (e.g., using “inteff” in Stata).

Hilbe (2009) and others dismiss Ai and Norton’s (2003) strategy, arguing that the conventional understanding of interaction effects is sufficient, so long as researchers take care not to oversimplify the results. Greene (2010), likewise, offers a lukewarm evaluation of Ai and Norton’s (2003) approach, instead calling for greater emphasis on developing an appropriate model (rather than testing significance of interaction terms or marginal effects) and providing visual representation of interaction effects. In particular, scholars point to the importance of plotting predicted probabilities and/or marginal effects across values of key variables (Long and Freese 2006; Hilbe 2009; Greene 2010). Following this advice, we used a variety of visual representations to characterize interaction effects (selected graphs are presented below). However, as an additional check on our findings, we also pursued Ai and Norton’s approach. Estimates of marginal effects using Ai and Norton’s method painted a very similar picture (not presented here; available from the authors).

Results

Before turning to our central research hypotheses, we present descriptive statistics and models characterizing the organizational experiences of union members. Our general argument holds that labor unions shape the skills and identity of members and directly mobilize them to participate in political life. The Verba et al. (1990) dataset asks questions to union members that provide some leverage on this issue.
Table 1 summarizes the organizational experiences of union members drawn from the Verba et al. (1990) dataset. Members of neighborhood and religious organizations are chosen as representative points of contrast. We see that a very high percentage of union members experience organizational meetings as explicitly political affairs. In Table 1 we see that 72% of union members report that union meetings included political issues on the agenda. In contrast, 56% of neighborhood organization members and only 31% of religious organization members report the same. Similarly, 72% of union members report that their union takes “stands” on political issues, compared to only 53% of neighborhood organizations and 32% of religious organizations. Informal political discussion at meetings is also higher at unions than other types of organizations, though the differences are not quite as large.

Table 2 examines whether union members are asked to participate in protests. We argue, above, that unions directly mobilize their members – in part by directly asking them to participate in union activities. Results of a logistic regression analysis indicate that unions members have 53% greater odds of being asked to participate in a protest than non-members (exp(.425) = 1.53). This finding is only suggestive both because it is only marginally significant and does not demonstrate that the union (versus some other person or organization) encouraged the respondent to participate in a protest.
Table 3 presents logistic regression models examining electoral and collective action outcomes – types of activity where we expect strong union effects. We see in the first model that union membership has a positive and significant effect on voting in presidential elections. Union members have 19 percent greater odds of voting than non-members (exp(.172)=1.187). The effect is not as large as some, below, but it is of great interest – in large part because the prior literature has been surprisingly equivocal on this issue (and often employed poorly-specified models). Union members also have 43 percent greater odds of volunteering as part of election campaigns (exp(.356)=1.43). These findings are consistent with our argument (and numerous historical examples) that American labor unions are very focused on electoral outcomes and mobilize their members to vote and to get involved in electoral campaigns.

--- Table 3 Here ---

Table 3 also examines several measures of collective action outcomes: attending political rally, attending a protest, and signing a petition. We observe uniform positive and significant effects on all collective action outcomes. The effect of union membership on protest is particularly large. Analyses of the Roper dataset indicate that union members have 73% greater odds of participating in protests (exp(.549)=1.73), while results from the Verba dataset suggest that the odds are nearly double (exp(.667)=1.95). These big effects make sense in light of the organizational and political contexts that American labor unions face, which provide strong incentives to mobilize their members
for collective action. It is also consistent with results in Table 2, which shows that union members are often asked to participate in protests.

Models in Table 4 examine the relationship between membership in unions and membership in other voluntary associations. Generally speaking, union membership tends not to overlap heavily with other types of civic membership (Cornwell and Harrison 2004). Nevertheless, we expect that the skills and ties developed in unions may spill over into other areas of civic life. In fact, we observe positive effects of union membership on participation in voluntary associations throughout Table 3, though coefficients vary importantly in size and significance. We begin with two general measures of association membership, from the Verba and GSS datasets. We see that union membership has a positive and significant effect on overall association membership. Exponentiated coefficients show that membership counts are 11% (GSS) and 20% (Verba) higher among union members.

--- Table 4 Here ---

Table 4 also includes analyses examining memberships in specific types of associations. We consider three types of associations: political organizations, “traditional” community organizations (church, school, veteran, and fraternal associations), and “other” organizations (sport, hobby, youth, greek, farm, literature, professional, and ‘other’ associations). We argue that unions may particularly encourage membership in political organizations, because unions mobilize their members politically, and because unions often have ties to political organizations, serving as
“institutional bridges.” Indeed, we find that union members are more likely to be members of political associations. The estimates are similar in size (.331 and .278, corresponding to 39% and 32% higher counts, respectively), though the effect is much more highly significant in the Roper dataset, which has a massive sample size. We also find a large effect of union membership on traditional community associations. The effect of union membership on all other types of association is very small (.03, or about 3%) and not statistically significant. In sum: Unions are associated with higher membership – but that effect is mainly due to memberships in political associations and traditional community organizations (church, school, veteran, and fraternal associations). Unions have little impact on other types of civic membership. Further disaggregation of association categories reaffirms this story (not presented here; available from the authors).

Table 5 examines interactions between union membership and education and income. We argue, above, that the effect of unions may be largest for individuals from low-SES backgrounds, who lack other routes to political involvement. We begin with education, the ‘master predictor’ of political involvement. The interaction of education and union membership is negative for the three outcomes we analyze, voting, protest, and membership in voluntary association – suggesting that that positive effect of unions is largest among those with low levels of education.\footnote{The interaction of education and union membership is negative and significant for other measures of participation available in the Roper dataset, including contacting officials, attending a rally, and signing a petition. The results are not presented in tables for brevity.}

--- Figure 1 Here ---
To illustrate this relationship, Figure 1 shows the average predicted probability of participating in a protest by levels of education for union members and non-members, with other variables held at the mean. Unions have a tremendous impact on protest participation for less-educated individuals, but little or no effect on those with high levels of schooling. The predicted probability of having participated in a protest is around .04 for a union member with no formal education, which is 5 times higher than the estimated .008 probability for a non-member (other variables at the mean). Among those with a high school degree, the probabilities are about .10 for union members versus .05 for non members, still a sizable gap. Differences are statistically significant at all levels of education below “college degree”, with the exception of individuals with zero education (the small sample results in slightly wider confidence intervals for that group; also the non-union group hits the “floor” of the logit curve). At the other extreme, the difference in predicted probabilities between union members and non-members disappears among the most educated – those with college degrees and post-college education. Average predicted probabilities and casewise marginal effects paint a similar picture (see discussion of Ai and Norton 2003, above).

--- Figures 2 & 3 Here ---

Figures 2 and 3 show predicted probabilities of voting and predicted counts of association membership across levels of education for union members and non-members. Again, a similar pattern is observed. Predicted probabilities diverge as level of education decreases – though in the case of voting, wide standard errors render differences
insignificant at the very lowest levels of education (reflecting the relatively smaller sample size at those levels of education).

The interaction between union membership and income is similarly negative – suggesting a smaller effect among wealthy respondents – but is not statistically significant for the three outcomes: protest, voting, and organization membership. Whereas union membership seems to compensate for lack of education (and presumably skills), it does less to make up for resource disadvantages.

--- Table 5 Here ---

Table 6 and 7 address political interest, political communication, volunteering, and charitable donations. Compared to electoral involvement and protest, unions tend to place less effort on preparing and urging members to participate in these ways. Thus, we may expect smaller effects. However, it is quite plausible that the general impact of unions – on identity, civic skills, etc – may spill over into these domains. Moreover, we again predict stronger effects on explicitly ‘political’ forms – e.g., general volunteering versus volunteering for political groups.

--- Table 6 Here ---

In Table 6 we observe uniformly positive effects of union membership on political interest, political discussion, attendance of public meetings, and several measures of contacting public officials. All effects are statistically significant in the large
Roper dataset, but non-significant in the much smaller Verba dataset. We believe that differences in statistical significance across outcomes are due to sample size rather than substantive differences in the dependent variables.

Table 7 turns to volunteering and donations. Here, we see an interesting contrast between measures of volunteering and donating on behalf of political causes, versus general measures of charitable activity (which include activities on behalf of both political and non-political causes). Union members have 42% greater odds of volunteering for a political campaign, but union membership has no significant effect on general volunteering. Donations also favor political causes, though not to such an extent. Union members have twice the odds of donating to political causes than do non-members (exp(.770)=2.16). In contrast, union members are not more likely to donate to general charities. When examining a non-political act, like blood donation, we find the effect to be non-significant. Thus, the impact of unions appears to be selective, mobilizing voluntarism in the political arena more so than other areas.

--- Table 7 Here ---

Discussion and Conclusion

We observe consistent evidence that union members are more politically engaged than non-members. The effect of union membership is broad, spanning most types of political and civic involvement, including voting, protesting, signing petitions, association membership, and so on, and holds up with a large range of control variables.
The prior literature looks mainly at voting outcomes – and often finds weak results when many variables are controlled – so even these basic findings represent a step forward.

The magnitude of the union membership effect varies across outcomes, but is generally substantial. For instance, union members have 20% greater odds of voting than comparable non-members. The odds of participating in a protest were 73% to 100% higher among union members, according to the Roper and Verba datasets, respectively.

Many of the large and highly significant effects are in areas of social protest and electoral participation. In the case of volunteering and charitable donations, for instance, we see substantially larger effects in political forms of those activities – whereas general measures of volunteering and donations show smaller effects. We observe weaker or non-significant effects of union membership on activities that are far removed from union agendas, such as general civic membership, volunteering, or blood donation. It appears that unions build ‘political capital’ more than generalized ‘social capital’. These patterns are broadly consistent with our structural arguments, discussed above, that contemporary American labor unions face strong pressures to mobilize members to prepare for collective action with employers and to maintain political capital with the Democratic party.

We also see that the effects of union membership on voting, protest, and civic membership are strongest for individuals with low levels of education. Similar patterns are observed for other measures of civic and political participation (not presented for the sake of brevity). Highly educated people are likely to be politically active no matter what – but unions make a large difference for those possessing low levels of schooling. This presumably reflects union mobilizing strategies, which are tailored to boost participation.

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8 We thank David Meyer for suggesting this formulation.
among those with limited skills. Interestingly, we do not see a similar ‘compensatory’ effect of unions on political participation among low income individuals. While unions can in some ways substitute for schooling, they do not mitigate the disadvantages associated with economic resources. In any case, our results suggest that unions provide a route to political involvement from individuals from low-SES backgrounds.

The secular decline of union membership in the United States – from a peak of roughly 34 percent of the workforce in 1955 to 12.4 percent of the workforce in 2008 – has serious implications for American political life. Most obviously, fewer individuals are exposed to the mobilizing effects of union membership which, in aggregate, would result in non-trivially lower levels of voting, protesting, and civic membership (compared to a hypothetical world in which union membership remained at earlier levels). Perhaps more important, the decline of unions has implications for the composition of public life, as unions are particularly effective at mobilizing less-educated individuals. To the extent that unions amplify participation among low-SES individuals, they represent a distinctively democratizing influence on American political life. Union decline implies a relative decrease in political participation overall – and also a diminishing role of low-SES individuals in American political life.

We discuss the institutional landscape that unions inhabit and union mobilization efforts to provide necessary context of contemporary American labor relations. In the process, we point out some opportunities for theoretical synthesis. Organizational theories of political mobilization have not always appreciated the extent to which mobilization strategies are shaped by the institutional environment. Likewise, our

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9 Nor did we see similar patterns among women or African Americans (not presented here; analyses available from the authors).
discussion of union mobilization highlights the fact that organizational mobilization strategies are intertwined with the individual-level resources and capacities of their members. Movements groups dominated by low-SES members may need to do more than “ask” to mobilize members – a point that is not generally acknowledged in the Rosenstone and Hansen tradition. Unions engage in extensive efforts to cultivate the skills and capabilities of their members, blurring the lines between mobilization theories and the classical work of Verba and others. Is participation about attitudes/skills or mobilization? For the study of unions – and presumably many social movement organizations – these issues are conjoined.

Our discussion of institutional context also reminds us that the key relationship of interest – between unions and political participation – is historically contingent. We argue that the mobilizing strategies of unions in late 20th century America reflect external exigencies, such as weak institutional support from the state and a post-Taft Hartley legal environment. Institutional factors vary a great deal across societies and over time. Indeed, evidence on voting behavior suggests that union mobilization effects may be much larger in the United States than in Europe (Gray and Caul 2000). This is not to say that European unions are necessarily passive – but rather that they may channel the civic and political participation of members in very different ways. Comparative studies that attend to institutional differences across countries and time are needed to further advance the literature.
References


Table 1. Percent of members reporting political discussion at meetings for labor unions and other types of organizations. \(^a\) (Source: Verba 1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Labor Union</th>
<th>Neighborhood Organization</th>
<th>Religious Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political issues on agenda at meetings?</td>
<td>72 %</td>
<td>56 %</td>
<td>31 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization takes “political stands” on local or national political issues?</td>
<td>72 %</td>
<td>53 %</td>
<td>32 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal chat about politics at meetings?</td>
<td>85 %</td>
<td>74 %</td>
<td>63 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Sample size varies across each question and for each organization type, but ranges from 179 to 340.
Table 2. Logistic Regression: the effects of union membership on being asked to participate in a protest. (Source: Verba 1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union member</td>
<td>0.425+</td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.192***</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.0291</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.0692</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30-59</td>
<td>0.00970</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60+</td>
<td>-0.770*</td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: black</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: ‘other’</td>
<td>-0.231</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-0.348</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-4.831***</td>
<td>(0.65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 2012

Significance levels: p<.1+  p< .05*  p< .01**  p< .001***

Robust standard errors in parentheses.
Table 3: Logistic Regressions: The effects of union membership on electoral participation and collective action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Party Volunteer</th>
<th>Attend Pol. Rally</th>
<th>Protest</th>
<th>Protest Petition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dataset</td>
<td>GSS&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Roper&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Roper&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Roper&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Verba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union member</td>
<td>0.172* (0.070)</td>
<td>0.356*** (0.0244)</td>
<td>0.311*** (0.0180)</td>
<td>0.549*** (0.141)</td>
<td>0.667* (0.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.144*** (0.011)</td>
<td>0.384*** (0.00840)</td>
<td>0.429*** (0.00619)</td>
<td>0.527*** (0.0567)</td>
<td>0.203*** (0.051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.0319*** (0.0062)</td>
<td>0.148*** (0.0180)</td>
<td>0.132*** (0.0131)</td>
<td>0.0211 (0.0357)</td>
<td>0.0610+ (0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.159** (0.058)</td>
<td>-0.0770*** (0.0180)</td>
<td>-0.231*** (0.0131)</td>
<td>-0.233* (0.112)</td>
<td>0.105 (0.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30-59</td>
<td>1.012*** (0.056)</td>
<td>0.329*** (0.0217)</td>
<td>0.100*** (0.0148)</td>
<td>-0.133 (0.115)</td>
<td>-0.179 (0.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60+</td>
<td>2.067*** (0.086)</td>
<td>0.484*** (0.0276)</td>
<td>0.0299 (0.0204)</td>
<td>-1.421*** (0.247)</td>
<td>-1.330** (0.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: black</td>
<td>0.101 (0.074)</td>
<td>0.198*** (0.0302)</td>
<td>0.144*** (0.0220)</td>
<td>0.286+ (0.171)</td>
<td>0.712** (0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: ‘other’</td>
<td>-1.096*** (0.16)</td>
<td>-0.571*** (0.0758)</td>
<td>-0.463*** (0.0486)</td>
<td>0.320 (0.296)</td>
<td>-0.0994 (0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.156** (0.053)</td>
<td>-0.0903*** (0.0190)</td>
<td>-0.184*** (0.0136)</td>
<td>-0.164 (0.112)</td>
<td>-0.385+ (0.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time</td>
<td>-0.0309 (0.062)</td>
<td>0.235*** (0.0359)</td>
<td>0.350*** (0.0267)</td>
<td>0.663*** (0.226)</td>
<td>-0.431+ (0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time</td>
<td>-0.0915 (0.084)</td>
<td>0.521*** (0.0419)</td>
<td>0.668*** (0.0310)</td>
<td>0.938*** (0.264)</td>
<td>-0.121 (0.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.433*** (0.28)</td>
<td>-5.243*** (0.0566)</td>
<td>-4.297*** (0.0412)</td>
<td>-4.419*** (0.383)</td>
<td>-2.934*** (0.40)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 355728 35728 5024 355728 2307 355728

Significance levels: p<.1 + p<.05 * p<.01 ** p<.001 ***. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

<sup>a</sup> Models include additional controls (not presented for the sake of parsimony): geographic region dummies (6 categories), urban/sub-urban/rural dummies, religious attendance, perceived social class, job prestige, and occupational dummies (15 categories).

<sup>b</sup> Models include additional controls (not presented for the sake of parsimony): geographic region dummies (6 categories), urban/sub-urban/rural dummies, and occupational dummies (15 categories).
Table 4: Negative Binomial and Logistic Regression Models: Effects of union membership on civic membership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Membership: Political Orgs</th>
<th>Membership: Political Orgs</th>
<th>Membership: Community</th>
<th>Membership: Other Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dataset</td>
<td>GSS (^a)</td>
<td>Verba (^b)</td>
<td>GSS (^a)</td>
<td>GSS (^a)</td>
<td>GSS (^a)</td>
<td>GSS (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union member</td>
<td>0.108**</td>
<td>0.183*</td>
<td>0.331***</td>
<td>0.278+</td>
<td>0.142***</td>
<td>0.0308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.034)</td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
<td>(0.0276)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.125***</td>
<td>0.161***</td>
<td>0.468***</td>
<td>0.215***</td>
<td>0.0501***</td>
<td>0.135***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.0060)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.00963)</td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
<td>(0.0050)</td>
<td>(0.0063)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.0173***</td>
<td>0.0679***</td>
<td>0.138***</td>
<td>0.0152</td>
<td>0.00393</td>
<td>0.0191***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.0034)</td>
<td>(0.0088)</td>
<td>(0.00628)</td>
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<td>(0.0029)</td>
<td>(0.0036)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.145***</td>
<td>-0.0480</td>
<td>0.234***</td>
<td>-0.0303</td>
<td>-0.109***</td>
<td>-0.0805**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.029)</td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.0199)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30-59</td>
<td>0.0381</td>
<td>0.235***</td>
<td>0.354***</td>
<td>0.339*</td>
<td>0.335***</td>
<td>-0.131***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.065)</td>
<td>(0.0241)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60+</td>
<td>-0.0400</td>
<td>0.749***</td>
<td>0.614***</td>
<td>0.673***</td>
<td>0.411***</td>
<td>-0.326***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.091)</td>
<td>(0.0303)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: black</td>
<td>-0.141***</td>
<td>-0.122+</td>
<td>0.173***</td>
<td>0.211</td>
<td>0.121***</td>
<td>-0.172***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>(0.067)</td>
<td>(0.0340)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: ‘other’</td>
<td>-0.417***</td>
<td>-0.406**</td>
<td>-0.400***</td>
<td>-0.414</td>
<td>-0.248***</td>
<td>-0.424***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.0736)</td>
<td>(0.42)</td>
<td>(0.089)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-0.0827***</td>
<td>-0.0127</td>
<td>-0.125***</td>
<td>-0.223+</td>
<td>0.101***</td>
<td>-0.142***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.027)</td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
<td>(0.0208)</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
<td>(0.029)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time</td>
<td>-0.0546</td>
<td>-0.108</td>
<td>0.359***</td>
<td>-0.129</td>
<td>-0.116***</td>
<td>-0.0101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.078)</td>
<td>(0.0389)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time</td>
<td>0.0790+</td>
<td>0.0773</td>
<td>0.625***</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>0.0418</td>
<td>0.0942*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.044)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.0452)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
<td>(0.048)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.355***</td>
<td>-0.242*</td>
<td>-6.216***</td>
<td>-7.631***</td>
<td>-2.641***</td>
<td>-2.804***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.0659)</td>
<td>(0.62)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>9419</td>
<td>2102</td>
<td>355728</td>
<td>9977</td>
<td>9914</td>
<td>9455</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels: p<.1+ p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***, Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\(^a\) and \(^b\) See table 3.
Table 5: Logistic and Negative Binomial Regression: Interaction of union membership with education and income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Protest</th>
<th>Protest</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dataset</td>
<td>GSS*</td>
<td>GSS*</td>
<td>Roper*</td>
<td>Roper*</td>
<td>GSS*</td>
<td>GSS*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union member</td>
<td>0.768**</td>
<td>0.159*</td>
<td>2.411***</td>
<td>0.687*</td>
<td>0.539***</td>
<td>0.117***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
<td>(0.642)</td>
<td>(0.304)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.151***</td>
<td>0.144***</td>
<td>0.599***</td>
<td>0.528***</td>
<td>0.128***</td>
<td>0.124***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.0632)</td>
<td>(0.0568)</td>
<td>(0.0063)</td>
<td>(0.0060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.0324***</td>
<td>0.0341***</td>
<td>-0.0223</td>
<td>-0.0149</td>
<td>0.0166***</td>
<td>0.0178***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0062)</td>
<td>(0.0064)</td>
<td>(0.0357)</td>
<td>(0.0377)</td>
<td>(0.0034)</td>
<td>(0.0036)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.147*</td>
<td>-0.152**</td>
<td>-0.221*</td>
<td>-0.231*</td>
<td>-0.130***</td>
<td>-0.133***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td>(0.029)</td>
<td>(0.029)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30-59</td>
<td>1.013***</td>
<td>1.013***</td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>-0.133</td>
<td>0.0375</td>
<td>0.0382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60+</td>
<td>2.077***</td>
<td>2.074***</td>
<td>-1.410***</td>
<td>-1.422***</td>
<td>-0.0394</td>
<td>-0.0395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.086)</td>
<td>(0.086)</td>
<td>(0.247)</td>
<td>(0.247)</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: black</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.282+</td>
<td>0.283+</td>
<td>-0.140**</td>
<td>-0.140**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: ‘other’</td>
<td>-1.085***</td>
<td>-1.082***</td>
<td>0.325</td>
<td>0.318</td>
<td>-0.430***</td>
<td>-0.427***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.296)</td>
<td>(0.296)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.155**</td>
<td>0.158**</td>
<td>-0.178</td>
<td>-0.163</td>
<td>-0.0819**</td>
<td>-0.0808**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time</td>
<td>-0.0334</td>
<td>-0.0345</td>
<td>0.649**</td>
<td>0.659**</td>
<td>-0.0552+</td>
<td>-0.0568+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.226)</td>
<td>(0.226)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time</td>
<td>-0.0921</td>
<td>-0.0910</td>
<td>0.937***</td>
<td>0.934***</td>
<td>0.0765+</td>
<td>0.0778+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
<td>0.159*</td>
<td>(0.264)</td>
<td>(0.264)</td>
<td>(0.044)</td>
<td>(0.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union * Education</td>
<td>-0.0496*</td>
<td>-0.361**</td>
<td>-0.0318**</td>
<td>-0.0318**</td>
<td>-0.00882</td>
<td>-0.00882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.024)</td>
<td>(0.123)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.0077)</td>
<td>(0.0077)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.293***</td>
<td>-3.231***</td>
<td>-4.773***</td>
<td>-4.439***</td>
<td>-2.250***</td>
<td>-2.204***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td>(0.410)</td>
<td>(0.385)</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>10569</td>
<td>10569</td>
<td>5052</td>
<td>5052</td>
<td>9412</td>
<td>9412</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels: p<.1+  p< .05*  p< .01**  p< .001*** Robust standard errors in parentheses. 

\[ a \text{ and } b \text{ See table 3 } \]
Table 6: Logistic regression models: Effects of union membership on political interest and communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Political Interest</th>
<th>Discuss Politics</th>
<th>Contact Official</th>
<th>Contact Official</th>
<th>Att. Public Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dataset</td>
<td>Verba</td>
<td>Roper\textsuperscript{a}</td>
<td>Roper\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>Verba</td>
<td>Roper\textsuperscript{b}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union member</td>
<td>0.144 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.297*** (0.0707)</td>
<td>0.401*** (0.0148)</td>
<td>0.417 (0.63)</td>
<td>0.222*** (0.0140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.157*** (0.017)</td>
<td>0.357*** (0.0210)</td>
<td>0.364*** (0.00480)</td>
<td>-0.236** (0.075)</td>
<td>0.300*** (0.00448)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.0654*** (0.014)</td>
<td>0.134*** (0.0177)</td>
<td>0.107*** (0.00363)</td>
<td>-0.101+ (0.060)</td>
<td>0.122*** (0.00339)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.159+ (0.083)</td>
<td>-0.359*** (0.0467)</td>
<td>-0.00174 (0.0108)</td>
<td>0.180 (0.46)</td>
<td>0.172*** (0.0101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30-59</td>
<td>0.407*** (0.093)</td>
<td>0.191*** (0.0539)</td>
<td>0.468*** (0.0131)</td>
<td>-0.0625 (0.42)</td>
<td>0.349*** (0.0112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60+</td>
<td>0.802*** (0.14)</td>
<td>0.330*** (0.0705)</td>
<td>0.781*** (0.0164)</td>
<td>0.922 (0.67)</td>
<td>-0.328*** (0.0165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: black</td>
<td>0.174+ (0.10)</td>
<td>-0.553*** (0.0816)</td>
<td>-0.840*** (0.0243)</td>
<td>-0.710 (0.57)</td>
<td>0.0280 (0.0170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: ‘other’</td>
<td>-0.253+ (0.13)</td>
<td>-0.728*** (0.137)</td>
<td>-0.811*** (0.0434)</td>
<td>0.838 (0.68)</td>
<td>-0.463*** (0.0354)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.128 (0.089)</td>
<td>0.00943 (0.0483)</td>
<td>0.164*** (0.0116)</td>
<td>-0.543 (0.37)</td>
<td>0.375*** (0.0109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time</td>
<td>-0.140 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.318** (0.116)</td>
<td>0.304*** (0.0233)</td>
<td>0.0665 (0.57)</td>
<td>0.283*** (0.0222)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time</td>
<td>-0.00168 (0.15)</td>
<td>0.417** (0.129)</td>
<td>0.469*** (0.0269)</td>
<td>-0.420 (0.60)</td>
<td>0.541*** (0.0253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>5.049*** (0.15)</td>
<td>-2.087*** (0.149)</td>
<td>-4.279*** (0.0341)</td>
<td>5.106*** (0.74)</td>
<td>-3.265*** (0.0303)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 2300 9942 355728 2307 355728

Significance levels: \( p<.1+ \) \( p<.05 \) \( p<.01 \) \( p<.001 \), Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\textsuperscript{a} and \textsuperscript{b} See table 3
Table 7: Logistic regression models: Effects of union membership on volunteering and donation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Political Volunteer</th>
<th>General Volunteer</th>
<th>Political Donation</th>
<th>Charity Donation</th>
<th>Blood Donation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dataset</td>
<td>Roper\textsuperscript{a}</td>
<td>Roper\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>Verba</td>
<td>Roper\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>Roper\textsuperscript{b}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union member</td>
<td>0.356***</td>
<td>-0.0914</td>
<td>0.770***</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0244)</td>
<td>(0.105)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.142)</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.384***</td>
<td>0.378***</td>
<td>0.153***</td>
<td>0.274***</td>
<td>0.215***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00840)</td>
<td>(0.0304)</td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.0386)</td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.148***</td>
<td>0.0989***</td>
<td>0.206***</td>
<td>0.219***</td>
<td>0.0657*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00575)</td>
<td>(0.0215)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.0309)</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.0770***</td>
<td>0.364***</td>
<td>-0.0542</td>
<td>0.185*</td>
<td>-0.267**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0180)</td>
<td>(0.0641)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.0846)</td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30-59</td>
<td>0.329***</td>
<td>0.319***</td>
<td>0.434***</td>
<td>0.259**</td>
<td>-0.410***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0217)</td>
<td>(0.0772)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.0988)</td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60+</td>
<td>0.484***</td>
<td>0.308**</td>
<td>0.897***</td>
<td>0.915***</td>
<td>-1.167***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0276)</td>
<td>(0.0993)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.129)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: black</td>
<td>0.198***</td>
<td>-0.0847</td>
<td>-0.275*</td>
<td>-0.501***</td>
<td>-0.511***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0302)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.133)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: ‘other’</td>
<td>-0.571***</td>
<td>-0.0522</td>
<td>-0.127</td>
<td>-0.764***</td>
<td>-0.0719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(0.0758)</td>
<td>(0.166)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.190)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-0.0903***</td>
<td>0.217**</td>
<td>-0.157</td>
<td>0.344***</td>
<td>-0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(0.0190)</td>
<td>(0.0680)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.0850)</td>
<td>(0.087)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time</td>
<td>0.235***</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>0.206</td>
<td>0.0577</td>
<td>0.734***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0359)</td>
<td>(0.136)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td>(0.233)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time</td>
<td>0.521***</td>
<td>0.439**</td>
<td>-0.248</td>
<td>0.0500</td>
<td>0.741***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0419)</td>
<td>(0.157)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.256)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-5.243***</td>
<td>-3.897***</td>
<td>1.891***</td>
<td>-2.076***</td>
<td>-3.327***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0566)</td>
<td>(0.212)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.277)</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 355728, 9979, 1787, 3079, 8285

Significance levels: \textsuperscript{a}p<.1+ \textsuperscript{b}p<.05* \textsuperscript{c}p<.01** \textsuperscript{d}p<.001***, Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\textsuperscript{a,b} See table 3
Figure 1. Predicted probability of participating in a protest by level of educational attainment with 95% confidence intervals.
Figure 2. Predicted probability of voting by years of education with 95% confidence intervals.
Figure 3. Predicted count of organization membership with 95% confidence intervals.