

Civic Engagement and Education: An Empirical Test of the Sorting Model

David E. Campbell
University of Notre Dame

dave_campbell@nd.edu
www.nd.edu/~dcampbe4

Engagement a Zero-Sum Game?

We argue that certain aspects of democratic citizenship are in fact bounded, or limited, by their essentially competitive nature. The instrumental behaviors and cognitions of political engagement can be seen as more of a zero-sum game, bounded by finite resources and conflict, where one's gain will necessarily be another's loss. (101)

Is Group Membership Zero-Sum?

[M]embership in voluntary associations is, we expect, the result of relative, rather than absolute, educational attainment. Members of associations obtain substantial psychic and social rewards for their organizational involvements. Moreover, voluntary membership requires time, energy, and often money, and those who are relatively near the center of the social network can better afford to pay the costs and are more likely to reap the benefits. (162)

Critiques of Nie et al.

- Age (Tenn 2005)
- Place (Helliwell and Putnam 2007)

Age

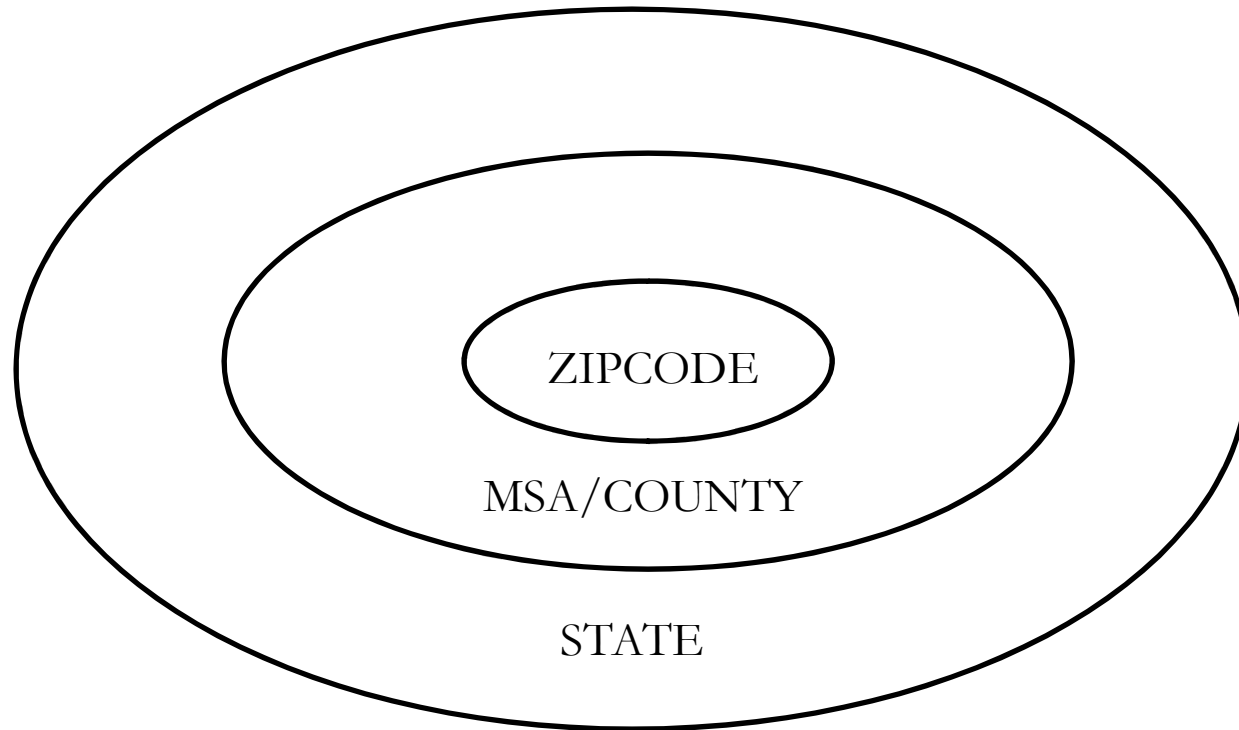
25-34

35-44

45-64

65 plus

Place



Forms of Engagement

<p>Electoral Index Persuading Others Displaying button, signs, stickers Campaign contributions Volunteering for candidate or political organizations</p>	<p>Expressive Index Contacting officials Contacting the print media Contacting the broadcast media Protesting E-mail petitions Written petitions Boycotting Buycotting Canvassing</p>
<p>Civic Index Community problem solving Regular volunteering for a nonelectoral organization Active membership in a group or association Participation in fund-raising run/walk/ride Other fund raising for charity</p>	<p>Voting Regular voting in local and national elections</p>

Source: Zukin et al. *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen* (2006)

Hypotheses

- **Interaction Hypothesis:** *As average education rises, each year of an individual's own education has a smaller impact*
- **Geography Hypothesis:** *The interaction between education and educational environment should be stronger as the geographic scope of the environment narrows*
- **Electoral Hypothesis:** *The sorting model should apply only to electoral activity*

Controls

gender, race/ethnicity, marital status, retired, homeowner, religious attendance, metropolitan area, strong partisan, independent, residential mobility, age

Table 2. Educational Environment and Electoral Index

Results from ordered logit

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Unit of aggregation for educational environment	State	MSA/County	Zipcode
Education X Educational Environment	-0.031 (0.029)	-0.037* (0.021)	-0.032** (0.015)
Years of Education	0.507 (0.372)	0.586** (0.273)	0.520*** (0.191)
Educational Environment	0.263 (0.423)	0.411 (0.310)	0.397* (0.224)
Observations	2220	2219	2211
Pseudo R-squared	0.065	0.065	.065

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustering by educational environment (age cohort and geographic unit, as explained in the text)

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Figure 1. Educational Sorting and Electoral Activity (25-34 year olds)

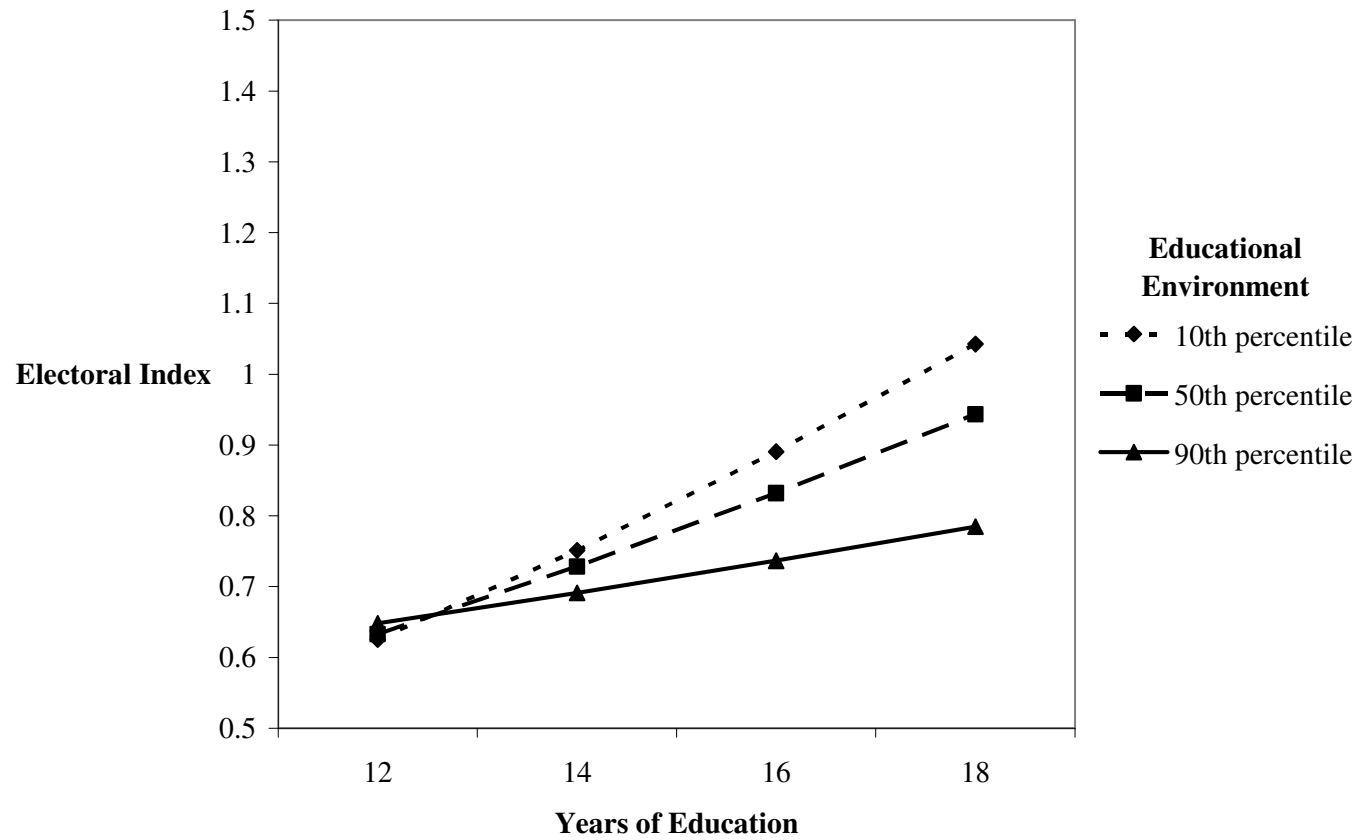


Figure 2. Educational Sorting and Electoral Activity (65+ year olds)

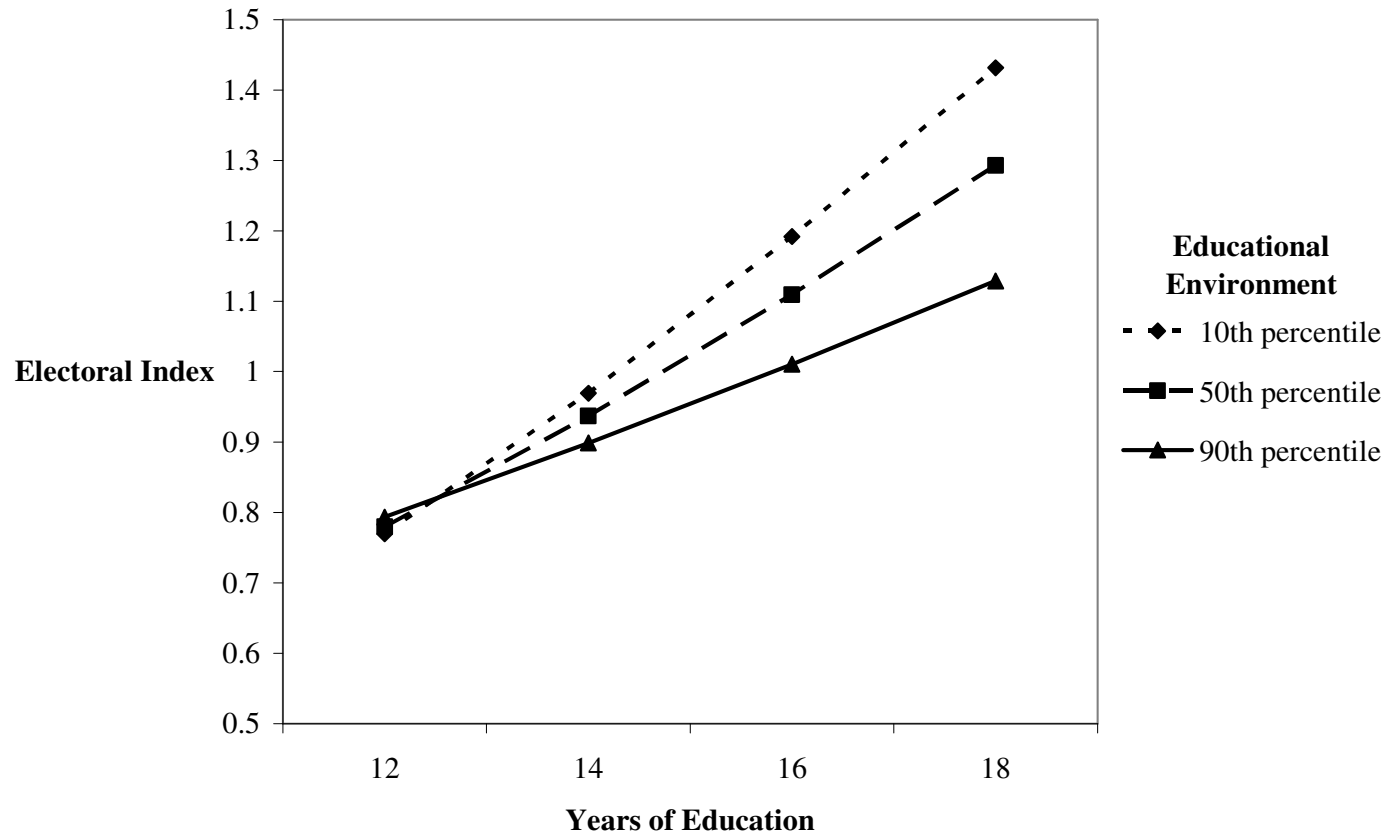


Table 3. Educational Environment and Voting, Expressive Index, and Civic Index

Results from ordered logit

Zipcode as unit of aggregation for educational environment

	(1) Voting	(2) Expressive Index	(3) Civic Index
Education X Educational Environment	-0.011 (0.017)	-0.006 (0.013)	-0.018 (0.019)
Years of Education	0.322 (0.217)	0.237 (0.171)	0.485* (0.251)
Educational Environment, Zipcode	0.147 (0.239)	0.135 (0.198)	0.243 (0.281)
Observations	2151	2211	2211
Pseudo R-squared	0.123	0.035	.083

Further exploration

- Group membership?
- Mobilization?

Table 5. Educational Environment and Political Knowledge, Tolerance

Results from ordered logit

Zipcode as unit of aggregation for educational environment

	(1) Knowledge Index	(2) Approve of free speech
Education X Educational Environment	0.034** (0.017)	0.027* (0.014)
Years of Education	-0.121 (0.221)	-0.181 (0.171)
Educational Environment, Zipcode	-0.401 (0.254)	-0.303 (0.205)
Observations	2211	2204
Pseudo R-squared	0.128	0.049

Figure 3. Amplification Effect and Political Knowledge (25-34 year olds)

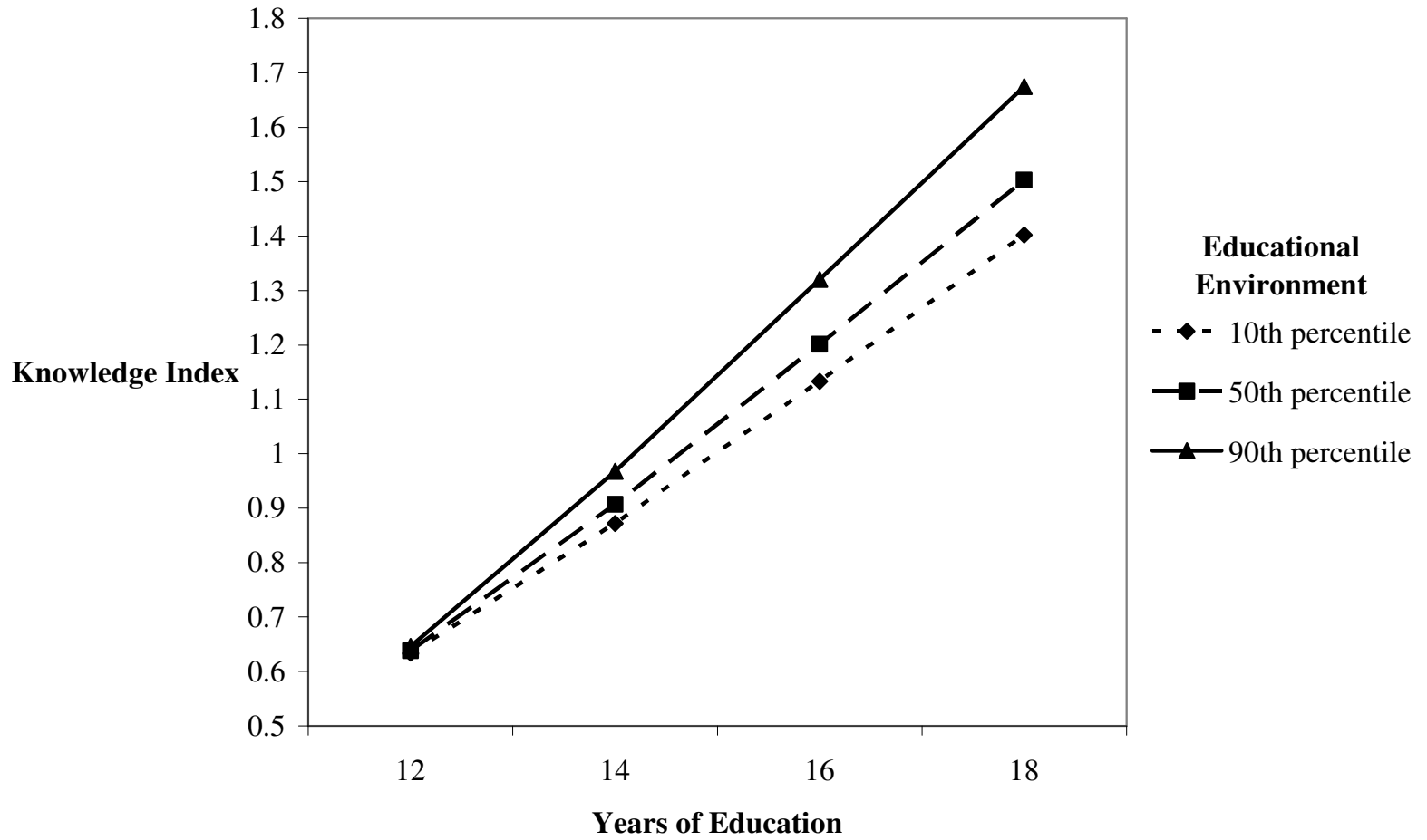
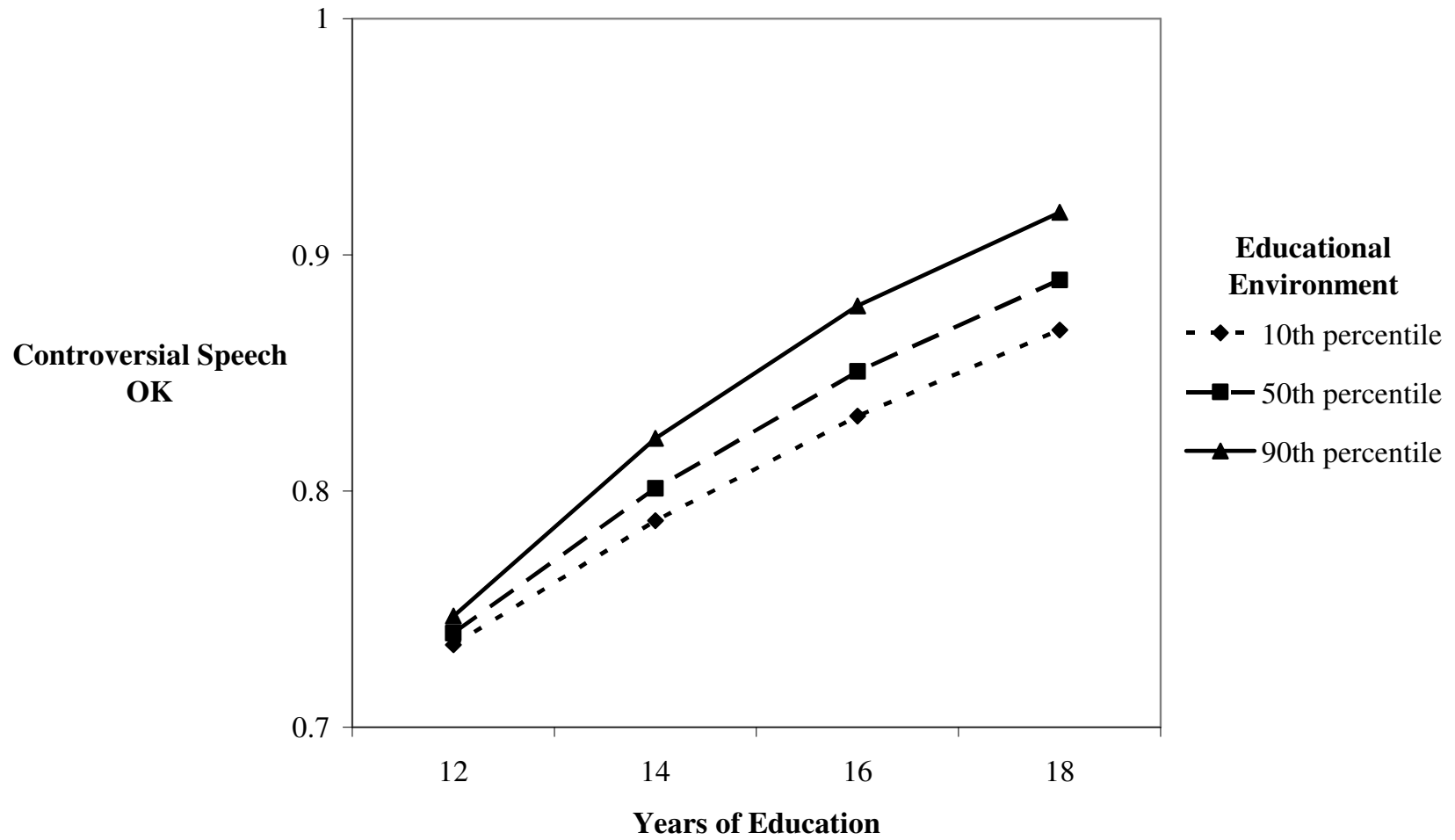


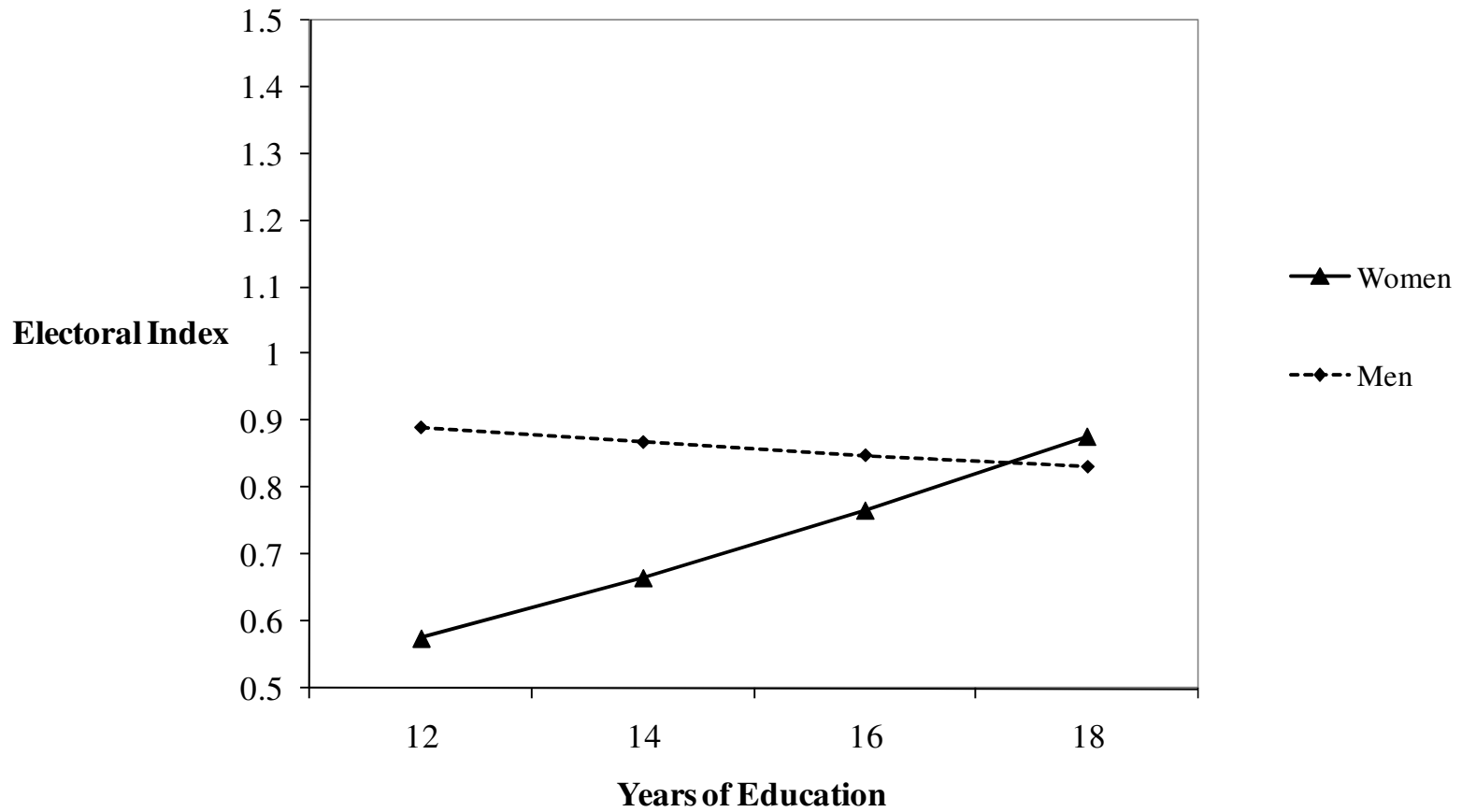
Figure 4. Amplification Effect and Political Tolerance (25-34 year olds)



Your thoughts?

Figure 1C. Sorting Applies More To Men Than Women

25-34 Year Olds
Educational Environment = 90th percentile



Conclusions

- Relative education *does* matter
- But . . . only for one form of engagement
- And . . . only when you account for both age and place
- And . . . model sorting as interactive
- But . . . only for men
- Thus . . . education just might not be only a sorting mechanism after all

End

Electoral Index

		Factor loading (principal components)
Persuading others	When there is an election taking place do you generally talk to any people and try to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates, or not?	0.6896
Displaying button, signs, stickers	Do you wear a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or place a sign in front of your house, or aren't these things you do?	0.6980
Campaign contributions	In the past 12 months, did you contribute money to a candidate, a political party, or any organization that supported candidates?	0.6495
Volunteering for candidate or political organizations	[From volunteering sequence, respondent indicated having volunteered for] "A political organization or candidates running for office"	0.6485
Eigenvalue		1.81

Expressive Index

		Factor loading (principal components)
Contacting officials	[Now I'm going to read you a quick list of things that some people have done to express their views. For each one I read, please just tell me whether you have ever done it or not. (For each yes, probe: And have you done this in the last 12 months or not?)] Contacted or visited a public official—at any level of government—to ask for assistance or to express your opinion?	0.6527
Contacting the print media	Contacted a newspaper or magazine to express your opinion on an issue?	0.5831
Contacting the broadcast media	Called in to a radio or television talk show to express your opinion on a political issue, even if you did not get on the air?	0.5319
Protesting	Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration	0.4956
Written petitions	And have you ever signed a written petition about a political or social issue?	0.6090
Boycotting	Not bought something because of conditions under which the product is made, or because you dislike the conduct of the company that produces it?	0.4638
Canvassing	Have you worked as a canvasser—having gone door-to-door for a political or social group or candidate?	0.4262
Eigenvalue		2.06

Civic Index

		Factor loading (principal components)
Community problem solving	Have you ever worked together informally with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live? If Yes, Was this in the last 12 months or not?	0.6969
Regular volunteering for a nonelectoral organization	Have you ever spent time participating in any community service or volunteer activity, or haven't you had time to do this? [Prompt is followed by a detailed list of specific types of organizations]	0.7610
Active membership in a group or association	Do you belong to or donate money to any groups or associations, either locally or nationally? Are you an active member of this group/any of these groups, a member but not active, or have you given money only?	0.7021
Raise money for charity	[Now I'm going to read you a quick list of things that some people have done to express their views. For each one I read, please just tell me whether you have ever done it or not. (For each yes, probe: And have you done this in the last 12 months, or not?) Personally walked, ran, or bicycled for a charitable cause—this is separate from sponsoring or giving money to this type of event? And have you ever done anything else to help raise money for a charitable cause?	0.5858
Eigenvalue		1.90