



*Journal of Advances and  
Scholarly Researches in  
Allied Education*

*Vol. VIII, Issue No. XVI,  
Oct-2014, ISSN 2230-7540*

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY ATTITUDE AND YOUTH  
ACTIVISM**

AN  
INTERNATIONALLY  
INDEXED PEER  
REVIEWED &  
REFEREED JOURNAL

# The Relationship between a Social Responsibility Attitude and Youth Activism

Kanak

Research Scholar, Bundelkhand University, Jhansi, U. P.

**Abstract – Despite existing literature that demonstrates the relation between an attitude of social responsibility and activism; few studies have examined the underlying factor structure of social responsibility. The current study had two goals. The first goal was to examine the structure of a measure of social responsibility attitude for urban adolescents. The second goal was to examine the associations of social responsibility with civic and political activism. Confirmatory factor analysis of social responsibility items revealed that a model with a single latent factor explained the data better than a two-factor model with one latent factor representing neighborhood social responsibility and the other representing global social responsibility. There were significant positive relations between social responsibility and civic activism and political activism when controlling for parental activism and peer activism. This study suggests that a social responsibility attitude may exist as a single factor amongst urban adolescents and it has added empirical support to show that higher levels of social responsibility are associated with greater depth of involvement in civic and political activism. Implications for both theory and practice are discussed.**

**Keywords: Relation, Responsibility, Attitude, Youth Activism, Social Responsibility, Civic Activism, Etc.**

-----X-----

## INTRODUCTION

The primary goals of this study were to identify the underlying structure of an attitude of social responsibility for urban adolescents and to determine the association between social responsibility and depth of involvement in both political and civic activism [1]. Few studies have explored the structure of a social responsibility attitude. Moreover, this dissertation is the first study to use CFA strategies to delineate between latent neighborhood and global factors of social responsibility. By elucidating the structure of social responsibility the nature of the construct's relationship with engagement in activist behaviors can be better understood. There is no widely accepted single definition of activism, as evidenced by the broad range of terms used by scholars across disciplines to capture esoteric or issue-specific definitions – civic engagement, citizenship, political engagement, community service, volunteerism, etc. This ambiguity in the definition of activism may be due to discipline-specific uses of the term or describe in their book on engaging young people in civic life, the ambiguity in the definition of activism across time may be due to the need subsequent generations have “to forge a definition that fits its history because younger and older generations view the society differently” [2]. The psychological perspective broadens the conceptualization of activism from that of political science to include citizenship and the range of civic

activities in which youth participate. Research based on this definition reveals how civic engagement experiences in adolescence play a key role in helping adults define their political stances in adulthood and in community service. Taking these civic activities into account represents a shift towards a greater emphasis on the behaviors of adolescents and beyond political science's narrower focus on political attitudes.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In some ways, social activism is on the rise. As was evident in the last Presidential election and in the recent rise of the Tea Party, America appears to be experiencing a resurgence of activism. Although prominent during the presidential and congressional campaigns, increases in activist behaviors have been occurring for nearly two decades. A number of recent studies have demonstrated that various forms of activism are being practiced by a growing number of Americans, especially among younger people [3]. Voting rates for young people were slightly lower in 2008 than in 2006; however these voting rates remain at their highest levels since young people were first given the right to vote in 1972. Beyond voting, over one-third of young people reported engaging in volunteer activities between 2002 and 2006, and their rate of volunteering at 36% remains higher than adults at 34% (The Center for Information

and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2006). A separate study conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service (2006) supports the findings of CIRCLE by demonstrating that volunteering rates among young people have steadily increased from 1990 through 2006 to their highest levels since the 1970s. Looking beyond these conventional forms of civic activism captured by indicators such as voting and volunteering rates, increases in participation have also been measured for more political forms of activism. While not as drastic as the increases in volunteering and voting, young people reported increases in their rate of participation in political campaigns from 1% in 2002 to 2% in 2006 [4]. CIRCLE's national study on the political health of the nation in 2006 confirms the findings of Lopez et al. and further describes that in addition to formal participation in political campaigns, the rate young people participated in informal campaign activities such as displaying propaganda (20% in 2002 to 23% in 2006) and donating money to a campaign (4% in 2002 to 7% in 2006) has increased. These slight increases are also evident in more grass-roots forms of political activism [5].

### 1. Political Activism:

While the concept of civic engagement is helpful to further discourse and provides a broad framework to understand a sub-set of behaviors that constitute activism, the conclusions emerging from the definitions of civic engagement provided in the literature suggests a limitation of civic engagement to truly capture activism – the omission of more overt political engagement behaviors. Question challenges the notion of civic engagement and demands the inclusion of more politically-oriented activities as a part of activism's definition. Morally and politically, there is a strong distinction between civic engagement and political activism [6].

### 2. The Benefits of Activism:

Although the literature remains inconsistent in how various activist behaviors may be categorized, behaviors in both typologies represent individual or collective efforts at creating change in various socio-environmental levels (e.g., reducing individual stress by volunteering at a soup kitchen or establishing just social policies as a result of political protest or voter mobilization). Regardless of how scholars characterize activist behaviors, the potential benefits of activism are agreed upon across disciplines. [7] Youth activism is beneficial to the institutions and communities in which they participate. Settings such as schools, non-profit organizations, neighborhoods, and governments function better when the assets of active youth are utilized [11].

### 3. A Social Responsibility Attitude:

As noted earlier, a significant body of social psychology literature points to attitudes as a

determinant of behaviors. Considering the relationship of attitudes and behavior along with the positive benefits that result from activist behaviors, it remains highly imperative to examine what attitude(s) may predict engagement in activism by youth. As suggested by the literature, an attitude of social responsibility is a valuable construct to consider in determining how to predict engagement in activist behaviors [8]. Although definitions of social responsibility vary across time and disciplines, it is generally understood to be a concern with broader ethical issues beyond the self and characterized by an obligation to a common good. The lack of consensus on a conceptual understanding of social responsibility necessitates operationalizing the construct so that its predictive value can be measured [10].

### 4. Expanding Social Responsibility:

Inherent in these earlier conceptions of social responsibility is membership in some group, typically a nation or one's community. What becomes apparent in the evolving conceptions of social responsibility is a distinction between the varying socio-environmental levels to which social responsibility can be measured and applied. The scope of measuring an individual's social responsibility appears to be limited by the context to which a specific social responsibility scale has been developed to measure. It can thus be posited that one could develop a responsibility for the socio-environmental level at which they experience the greatest sense of belonging or connectedness [9].

### CONCLUSION:

This study represents an important first step towards fully understanding the structure of social responsibility in adolescents. While not validating the two hypothesized neighborhood and global factors of social responsibility, establishing a stable structure for the construct allowed for an examination of how social responsibility is related to activist behaviors. This study confirmed how social responsibility can predict depth of involvement in civic and political activism, supporting the assumption that promoting an attitude of social responsibility will lead to adolescents becoming more engaged in social activism. Considering past studies that demonstrate how participation in activist behaviors can have positive developmental effects on youth and in light of more recent studies that demonstrate how an active citizenship leads to positive social outcomes such as the strengthening of responsive and accountable governments and the development of inclusive and cohesive societies the significance of youth activism cannot be emphasized enough. The benefit of youth activism to both the individual and society is clear and this study lends to the knowledgebase of how best to promote activism in young people.

## REFERENCES:

1. American University (2008) Much-hyped Turnout Record Fails to Materialize Convenience Voting Fails to Boost Balloting. Retrieved January, 2010, from <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2008/images/11/06/pdf.gansre08turnout.au.pdf>
2. Anderson, J., & Gerbing, D. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103, 411-423.
3. Armstrong, M.N. & House, D. (2007, June). Youth as Agents of Change: 2006 Evaluation of the Summer Youth Fellows Program. Paper presented at the 11th Biennial Conference on Community Research and Action, Pasadena, CA.
4. Azjen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
5. Barber, B.L., Eccles, J.S., & Stone, M.R. (2001). Whatever happened to the jock, the brain, and the princess?: Young adult pathways linked to adolescent activity involvement and social identity. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 16(5), 429-455.
6. Berkowitz, L., & Lutterman, K.G. (1968). The traditional socially responsible personality. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 32, 169-185.
7. Berman, S. (1997). Children's social consciousness and the development of social responsibility. Albany: State University of New York Press.
8. Bohnert, A., Fredericks, J., & Randall, E. (2010). Capturing unique dimensions of youth organized activity involvement: Theoretical and methodological considerations. *Review of Educational Research*, 80(4), 576-610.
9. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). (2006). The 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation. New York: Carnegie Corporation.
10. Collins, L. M., Graham, J. W., & Flaherty, B. P. (1998). An alternative framework for defining mediation. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 33, 295-312.
11. Corning, A. & Myers, D. (2002). Individual orientation toward engagement in social action. *Political Psychology*, 23(4), 703-729.