

Education and Civic Engagement in Kenya: Evidence from a Study of Undergraduate University Students

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Introduction

Since World War II at least, it has been widely believed amongst political scientists that education is a predictor of civic engagement (Ehrlich, 2010). This has been an area of interest not only for political scientists but for sociologists and educationists as well, all of whom are interested in the impact of education beyond the classroom.

Apart from the primary agents of socialization such as the family and the education system, voluntary associations have acquired increasing prominence in the evaluation of how civic engagement is nurtured in society. As civil society gains in importance as an important pillar of democratic theory and practice, voluntary associations have now come to occupy a very central position in understanding and theorising about civic engagement.

In a study published by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University (2002) three measures are outlined for civic engagement: civic, electoral; and political voice. Each of these areas is associated with particular types of activities that define them as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Measures of civic engagement

Civic	Electoral	Political Voice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community problem solving ▪ Regular volunteering for a non-electoral organization ▪ Active membership in a group or association ▪ Participation in fund raising ▪ Other charity activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular voting ▪ Persuading others to vote ▪ Displaying buttons, signs, etc ▪ Campaign contributions ▪ Volunteering for candidate or political organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contacting officials ▪ Contacting the print media ▪ Contacting the broadcast media ▪ Protesting ▪ Email petitions ▪ Written petitions ▪ Boycotting ▪ Buycotting ▪ Canvassing

(Source: CIRCLE publication 2002)

From this array, it is clear that civic engagement takes many forms. This paper is based on the analysis of data collected on university undergraduate students in Kenya in 1999 and its aim is to find out the extent to which students in Kenya's universities are civically engaged and the characteristics or quality of that engagement, more particularly, whether this engagement could be typified as democratic or anti-democratic.

Membership of voluntary associations as an expression of civic engagement

According to Owen (2000, p. 2), researchers in America have found that participation in extra-curricula activities and service learning programmes is associated with greater tendency towards political engagement. In this study, this extra-curricula activity element was represented by the participation of the university undergraduate students in voluntary associations.

It is now widely accepted that voluntary associations have the potential to become an instrument of continuous and active participation in government because all of them have their own politics and their members subsequently have to make and administer policy decisions. It is at the point when these associations begin to participate in governmental activity that they are transformed into “civil society”. However, as Woods (1992, p. 94) and Barber (1996, p 291) have noted, while a viable democracy is unlikely to survive in the absence of civil society, the mere emergence of civil society does not guarantee the development of democracy.

In the case of Kenya, although there exist many voluntary grass-root associations it is still moot whether a civil society has indeed evolved. As Ake (1993, p. 75) aptly observed, the slew of voluntary grassroots self-help groups that have existed for a very long time have not made Kenya democratic. This is simply because they have so far failed to bring about any decentralization of power and the state’s discretion remains virtually undiminished. However, the promulgation of the new Constitution in May 2010 that is strong on a decentralized structure of government offers new opportunities in this regard.

Statement of the problem

Democracy is now globally accepted as a desirable good and the preferred way of governance. This is especially true for Kenya that like many other African countries is trying to make an often difficult transition to democracy. The success of such a transition demands that social institutions that socialize people politically be well attuned to give this democratic support. Such support is not automatic but it would be presumed that most institutions would try to be in step with widely expressed social aspirations. Kenya is well known for having many voluntary associations, especially those based on the self-help concept. The problem for this study consisted in determining whether students’ involvement in these voluntary associations helped to socialize democratic attitudes and orientations. Their failure to do so would indicate an undesirable situation that undermines Kenya’s democratization agenda and that would therefore call for appropriate remedial measures.

Purpose of the study

This is a retrospective study of the data that were examining the political attitudes and orientations of university undergraduate students across six universities in Kenya. According to Rokeach (1968, pp 450, 454), attitudes can be described as a type of subsystem of beliefs that are acquired through the “principles of learning”. They are learned as part of the process of growing up and tend to remain fairly stable during a person’s life (Sears and Funk, 1999, p 1). The purpose of this study therefore, was to find out the extent to which students’ membership in voluntary associations helped to socialize democratic attitudes and orientations as it has been suggested that such associations are the foundations of civil society that are deemed to be essential for any vibrant democracy.

Significance of the study

The study may therefore prove to be significant in the following ways:

1. It may be useful in finding out the extent to which students’ involvement in voluntary associations affect their political socialization.
2. The study may afford the opportunity to assess the extent to which the nature of participation in such associations results in different attitudinal outcomes and how such participation may contribute to the national aim of democratization.
3. It may facilitate better policy making of how best to engage such voluntary associations in bringing about desirable social change.

Hypothesis

The study set out to explore the following hypothesis: There is a positive relationship between membership in voluntary associations and democratic political attitudes among university undergraduate students. In exploring this hypothesis the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no relationship between membership in voluntary associations and democratic political attitudes.

In order to test this hypothesis the political attitudes and orientations of students across six universities were analysed and compared.

Research methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and was quantitative in approach. Data were collected from the campuses of six universities three of which were public, namely Kenyatta University (KU); Maseno University and Egerton University and three private universities comprising University of Eastern Africa, Baraton; Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA); and Daystar University.

Population

The universities in Kenya comprised the population for the study. The universities were chosen for the original study for several reasons some that remain relevant to the present purpose. The first is that being tertiary institutions, they logically represent the ultimate confluence of the socialization effects of the formal education system with the other primary agents of the same process, especially voluntary associations. The second is what may be described as the country's demographic profile. There is every reason to believe that the main age groups represented in the universities are, or very soon will be, the significant group in active politics in Kenya, especially as voters. In any case, their political attitudes and orientations cannot be taken lightly. Almost certainly and to a great extent, it is this group perhaps more than any other, whose attitudes and orientations will determine the character of democracy as far as its future development in Kenya is concerned.

Sampling

The samples were drawn from the six universities. The target was to have 150 informants from each university to give a total of 900 informants for the whole study. In the 1998/99 academic year when the sampling for the study was done, the three public universities selected for the study accounted for some 49.2 per cent of the total enrolment of undergraduates in all the public universities. The three private universities accounted for more than 70 per cent of the total undergraduate enrolment in private universities (Kenya, 1999, p. 182). The total number of undergraduate student population in the six universities numbered 23,845 students in all. Given this population, this sample size was calculated to be more than adequate for testing the hypothesis.

It was assumed that given the similarities among the general population of university undergraduates and the fairly large sample size for the study, a convenience sample of classes across the universities depending on their size and availability would be as good as random samples chosen any other way. It was further assumed that such a sample would adequately capture the categories of the independent variables of the study.

The rationale for using this procedure to procure samples that are then treated as random samples is well grounded in research (Dunn, 1964, p. 12; Remington & Schork, 1970, p. 93; Armitage, 1971, p. 99; Colton, 1974, pp. 4-7; Daniel, 1978, p. 3). The rationale in this case is that university undergraduate students are a fairly homogenous group in terms of the critical path they follow through the education system to get to the university (in other words, their socialization through the education system). As such, any sample, provided that it is not too small, could be considered to be representative of any random sample of the population of undergraduate students in Kenya.

The study also took into account the continuous nature of the socialization process by stratifying the various samples to reflect the four years of undergraduate education. This aspect gave the study its developmental or cross-comparative perspective.

A profile of the students

The study sample consisted of 879 informants. Of these, 47.2 per cent were males while 52.3 per cent were females. Four informants did not indicate their sex. In terms of the distribution across the six universities, CUEA accounted for 17.6 per cent of the sample, Daystar for 18 per cent, Egerton for 18.3 per cent, KU for 17 per cent, Maseno for 14 per cent and Baraton for 15.1 per cent. This information is contained in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Distribution of the sample across the universities

University	Number of Informants	Percentage (%)
CUEA	155	17.6
Daystar	158	18.0
Egerton	161	18.3
Kenyatta	149	17.0
Maseno	123	14.0
Baraton	133	15.1
Total	879	100

With regard to the year of study, 360 students or 41 per cent were in their third year, 239 students or 27.2 per cent in their first year, and 174 students or 19.8 per cent in their second year. Fourth year students comprised 101 students or 11.5 per cent of the informants while three students did not indicate their year of study. Fourth year students were remarkably fewer in the sample because of the increasing specialization as students progress through the university and hence the relatively smaller classes of fourth year students.

Out of the 879 informants in the study only 209 students or 23.8 per cent reported that they were not a member of any voluntary association. Of the rest, slightly more than one-half (53.6 per cent) were members of one or two associations. One hundred and fifty (17.1 per cent) were members of between three and four associations while 31 students (3.5 per cent) were members of five or more associations. These are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Distribution of student membership in voluntary associations.

Number of associations of which one was member	Number of students (Frequency)	Percentage
None	209	23.8
1-2 voluntary associations	451	51.3
3-4 voluntary associations	150	17.1
5 or more associations	31	3.5
Non-respondents	38	4.3
TOTAL	879	100.0

Thirty-eight students (4.3 per cent) did not respond to the question. This means that a large majority of 632 students or (nearly 72 per cent) were members of at least one voluntary association; a high proportion by any standards.

Selection of data collection instruments

A self-administered questionnaire comprised the sole tool of data collection for this study. Three attitude scales of the Likert type were used for the study.

The choice of scales

These attitude scales were adapted or borrowed from Shaw and Wright (1967) and Robinson and Shaver (1975). These scales required informants to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with a set of statements about the attitude object. Generally, these statements attributed to the object characteristics that were positively or negatively evaluated and were rarely neutral. They measured acceptance of evaluation statements about the attitude object. The respondent's attitude towards the object was then inferred from the statements endorsed or rejected by him or her. The instruments were duly piloted and their reliability established. The questionnaire yielded a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.85. This was subsequently followed by a factor analysis to isolate the various attitude dimensions of the various scales.

The scales

A total of three scales were used namely, the *Family Ideology Scale*, the *University's Social-Political Environment Scale*, and the *Authoritarianism Scale*. Following is a brief description and discussion of each one.

The Family Ideology Scale

This scale was developed by Levinson and Huffman (Shaw & Wright, 1967, pp 66-69) and is entitled *The Traditional Family Ideology (TFI) Scale* and was used in its abbreviated form for this study. According to Shaw and Wright, the 12-item abbreviated form of the original 58-item scale has proved to be just as reliable and valid as the longer version. For this study it was further abbreviated to 11 items.

It is a multi-dimensional scale and the domain strata identified in the original form as it was developed by Levinson and Huffman were: *Parent-child relationships; husband-wife roles and relationships; general male-female relationships; concepts of masculinity and femininity; and general values and aims*. However, the factor analysis carried out for this study identified four strata of attitude domains that were labeled as follows:

- Pre-eminence of male authority
- Behavioural norms for offspring
- Family personality attributes; and
- Parental morality socialization.

The University's Socio-Political Environment Scale

This scale was developed by the Academic Freedom Committee, Illinois Division of the American Civil Rights Union, and published by Psychometric Affiliates in 1954 (Shaw & Wright, 1967, pp 145-147). Its proper title is the *Academic Freedom Survey*. The original scale had 23 items and covered various aspects of school life and various groups in the school including teachers and other general issues. This was further reduced to 12 items without loss of reliability. For this study, three further items were eliminated either because they seemed redundant or inapplicable in the Kenyan context.

In its original form it was conceived to have three strata of attitude domains namely the *political system environment of the institution; the academic life; and the university administration-students relationships*. From the factor analysis carried out for this study, three attitude domains emerged and were labeled as follows:

- Students' political freedom
- Students' access to university resources and facilities; and
- Students' academic freedom.

The Authoritarianism Scale

This scale is adapted from a Likert-type scale designed by Edwards (1941, pp 579-582) to measure pro-fascist attitudes. The items were collected from a variety of sources including studies of Stagner and Gundlach and writings of Childs, Mann and Kolnai (Robinson & Shaver, 1975, p. 367). For this study only seven items were selected from the original 22 items due to their relevance to the Kenyan situation. As originally developed it was conceived to have three strata of attitude domains namely *considerations of strength and weakness; dominance and subservience; and supremacy and inferiority*. From the factor analysis done for this study three attitude domains were once again identified and labeled as follows:

- Restrictions on women's rights
- Limitations on civil rights; and
- Low achievement motivation.

Analysis

The testing of the hypotheses was done using a non-parametric statistical method of measuring association, *Gamma*, in the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)*. The hypothesis was tested at a minimum confidence level of 95 per cent with the level of significance set at five per cent.

Gamma: a measure of association.

Gamma is used when the data consists of ordinal data. However, it may also be used when looking for association between ordinal and nominal data. This is acceptable so long as the cross-tabulations involve nominal variables that do not consist of three or more categories (Richards, 2003; Marsden, 2004, pp 1-3).

The Findings

The null hypothesis that was tested for this study stated that:

There is no relationship between membership in voluntary associations and democratic political attitudes among university undergraduate students.

Following is the background to the hypothesis, the results obtained from testing of the hypothesis and the interpretation of the results.

Description and explanation

This hypothesis was suggested by the role attributed to voluntary associations in the literature on political socialization and democracy. Voluntary associations are regarded as a necessary institution in participatory democracy through which individuals can seek to influence government. Because of this role it may be argued that the style and content of participation within these voluntary associations are to an extent a reflection of the politics of the polity. Essentially, the character of political discourse in these associations will be those of the polity in microcosm; an undemocratic polity is unlikely to tolerate democratically oriented voluntary associations (Diamond, 2000, p 17).

It was therefore argued that if the Kenyan polity (and by extension its voluntary associations) were predominantly characterised by democratic orientations, there would be likelihood that those informants who were members of more associations would have a more democratic orientation towards civic engagement than those informants who were members of fewer voluntary associations. Conversely, if the polity was predominantly characterised by authoritarian tendencies, it is this characteristic that would colour the orientations towards civic engagement of those who were members of more voluntary associations.

Instruments of the test

When the hypothesis that there would be a positive association between membership in voluntary associations and democratic political orientations was tested using the three instruments, the only significant association occurred in one domain of ***The Family Ideology Scale***. No significant relationships were found with respect to the attitude components in the other two scales, ***The University's Socio-Political Environment Scale*** and ***The Authoritarianism Scale***. The component that registered a significant relationship is discussed below.

The Family Ideology Scale

It was only with reference to one attitude dimension in ***The Family Ideology Scale*** where membership in voluntary associations was found to be associated with political orientations. This was the dimension labelled *Pre-eminence of male authority* where there was a positive relationship between membership in voluntary associations and political orientations as shown in Table 4.

There was a positive but weak association ($\text{gamma} = 0.16$) between the number of voluntary associations in which an informant was a member and attitudes towards pre-eminence of male authority in the family. This gave some support to the hypothesis that those who were members of more voluntary associations would have more democratic orientations than those who were members of fewer or no voluntary associations with regard to their orientations towards the dimension *Pre-eminence of male authority*.

Table 4: Membership of voluntary associations by students' attitudes towards pre-eminence of male authority

Number of voluntary association memberships	<i>Pre-eminence of male authority</i>			N
	Male authority should predominate	Male authority should sometimes predominate	There should be equality	
	%	%	%	
None	29.2	58.4	12.4	209
1 - 2	15.0	67.2	17.9	448
3 - 4	19.5	61.7	18.8	149
5 or more	9.7	79.4	11.8	34
N	160	542	138	840

Gamma = 0.16, $p < 0.01$

Studies in America (Kane, 1995) suggest that the more educated tend to show less gender bias. However, while educated people may be more ready to recognise gender inequalities they will not necessarily act to redress the same. In this case it may therefore be suggested that membership in more voluntary associations helped to reinforce this effect of education. It may be argued that those who were members of more associations were more likely to meet and interact with members of the opposite sex within the context of these associations than those who were members of fewer or no associations. This could, conceivably, have made them to be more gender-sensitive and permissive of the equal participation of women in the family context in preference to the traditional male-authority-dominated family. It was therefore concluded that the two variables were related in the population, as the sample gamma was unlikely to have occurred by chance ($p < 0.01$).

Control Variables

The introduction of other independent variables in the study helped to reveal the circumstances under which the hypothesised relationships between membership in voluntary associations and political orientations did or did not occur. This happened with two of the control variables, namely, age and sex.

Age

The introduction of age as a control variable in the analysis proved to be important in revealing the circumstances under which membership in voluntary associations modified political orientations. This proved to be the case in the *Pre-eminence of male authority* component in *The Family Ideology Scale* and *Limitations on civil rights* and *Low achievement motivation* components in *The Authoritarianism Scale*. These results are summarised in Table 5. None of the dimensions in *The University's Socio-Political Environment Scale* had any significant relationships with membership in voluntary associations with regard to age as the control variable.

Age and Pre-eminence of male authority

The relationship was not significant for the various age groups except for those aged between 21-22 years. Within this age group there was a weak positive association (gamma = 0.18, $p < 0.05$) between membership in voluntary associations and attitudes towards the dimension *pre-eminence of male authority*. However, the reason(s) for the significant relationships was not clear.

Age and Limitations on civil rights

In *The Authoritarianism Scale* a significant association was found to exist between membership in voluntary associations and attitudes towards the attitudinal dimension labelled *Limitations on civil rights*.

There was a moderate negative association ($\gamma = -0.29$) between membership in voluntary associations and attitudes towards this domain among those informants aged 25 years and above. Those informants in this age group who were members of fewer or no voluntary associations were more likely to support civil rights than those who were members of more voluntary associations. It was also noted that although gamma values were not significant, the other two age groups replicated this trend. The trends highlighted above went contrary to the expectations of the research hypothesis.

Table 5: Membership of voluntary associations by attitudes towards pre-eminence of male authority; limitations on civil rights and low achievement motivation controlling for age

Age group in years	N	Pre-eminence of Male Authority		N	Limitations on Civil Rights		N	Low Achievement Motivation	
		Gamma	Significance		Gamma	Significance		Gamma	Significance
20 and below	226	0.12	NS	226	-0.10	NS	221	-0.01	NS
21-22	319	0.18	0.05	319	-0.00	NS	315	0.19	0.05
23-24	183	0.14	NS	184	0.23	NS	180	-0.09	NS
25 and above	107	0.16	NS	103	-0.29	0.05	95	0.27	0.05

NS = Not significant

It seems that the socialization of the students for civic engagement by virtue of their membership in voluntary associations was not supportive of civil rights. This trend was noticeable amongst the two groups aged below 22 years who were members of many associations than those who were members of fewer or no associations. Thus, these associations tended to reinforce autocratic attitudes towards engagement with civil rights. However, for reasons that remain obscure, at the age of 23-24 years, a reversal occurred and those who were members of more associations became more supportive of such rights. But just as abruptly again, from the age of 25 years, the basic autocratic trend was restored where those who were not members of any associations were actually more supportive of democratic civic engagement than those who were members of such associations.

There are many convincing arguments that have been advanced concerning the crucial role that such associations play in the political system. According to various authors (Almond & Verba, 1963, p 167; Cohen & Arrato, 1992, p 230; Gundelach & Torpe, 1996 p 5), voluntary associations are the vehicles that help to transform the individual into a citizen. The belief that cooperation with others is mandatory for effective political action is a highly significant one because vis-à-vis government the individual is virtually powerless.

One condition that seems to be taken for granted by the thesis of the democratic role of voluntary associations is that there exist internal democratic structures and practices in these associations. However, as Paxton (2002, p 21) specifies, this is not automatic. Using Putnam's (1995) dichotomy, Paxton differentiates between "bridging" and "bonding" voluntary associations. While the former attempt to bridge social cleavages and help to promote democracy, the latter tend to be exclusive and avoid integration with other associations. The glue that holds the former type of associations together is trust and Paxton goes on to suggest that when people do not trust one another, they also tend to join associations that are insular and isolated that avoid participation in society and do not contribute to democracy. Indeed, Uslaner (2002, p 21) observed that joining an ethnic-based voluntary association made people less trusting of others.

The foregoing indicates the possibility that membership in voluntary associations in general tended to reinforce autocratic orientations towards civic engagement. This outcome may be explained with reference to the predominant characteristics of the voluntary associations in which the students were members, namely, whether such associations were of the "bridging" or of the "bonding" type (Paxton, 2002). Given the ubiquity of ethnicity-based associations in the university campuses across the country, it is more than likely that any student who was a member of any association was at least a member of one of these.

Given that voluntary associations are not immune from the problems that affect society in general it could therefore be expected that illiberalism, tribalism, nepotism, corruption, and so on were also a feature of these groups (Diamond, 2000, p. 17) and particularly so for those of the “bonding” type. This outcome would then be explained as follows.

It is likely that in terms of shaping attitudes towards civil rights, those students who were members of any associations were more greatly influenced by their experiences in the “bonding” rather than in the “bridging” type of association. Civil rights are one of the corner stones of democracy and they are basically “outward-looking” as they have to do with an individual’s rights and relationship to the state and other citizens. This goes contrary to the major preoccupations of the “bonding” type of association such as the ethnicity-based associations that are really “inward-looking” and are therefore driven more by parochial concerns of the “we” group. The preponderance or ascendancy of the influence of this type of association therefore renders their members to be less likely to support civil rights. On the other hand, those students who were not members of any association did not therefore suffer the burdens of the authoritarian tendencies encouraged by the “bonding” associations.

Among those informants who were aged 25 years and over, the tendency to become less supportive of civil rights with increasing membership in voluntary associations may be said to have emanated from their relative maturity in age. This age group, more than those below them, represented the “mature” face of the university undergraduate students and their engagement with the political system may have been more grounded on experience. Their attitudes thus marked the concluding phases of political socialization into a neopatrimonial political system where the importance of the need for “we” (in whatever way defined) solidarity against “them” had become most manifest. Thus, for this age group the influences of the “bonding” type of associations easily overwhelmed those of any of the “bridging” type of associations of which they may have been members.

Age and Low achievement motivation

Age also proved to be a factor in mediating the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and orientations towards the *low achievement motivation* component in *The Authoritarianism Scale*. In this instance, as was the case for age and *pre-eminence of male authority*, the relationship was significant among those informants aged 21-22 years. There was a weak positive relationship ($\gamma = 0.19$, $p < 0.05$) between membership in voluntary associations and attitudes towards *Low achievement motivation* for this age group. In addition, the relationship between voluntary association membership and views about this component was significant among those aged 25 years and above (see Table 5). For this latter age group the relationship was a moderate positive one ($\gamma = 0.27$, $p < 0.05$). By and large, informants in these two age brackets attributed success to additional factors beyond individual will power hence they tended to be more democratic in orientation.

It was also noted that for the other two age groups – 20 years and below and 23-24 year olds – for whom the relationship was not significant, the results indicated that there was a mild tendency in such a relationship. Thus, amongst these two groups, those who were members of fewer associations were more likely to credit success primarily to individual effort. In other words, they tended to be autocratic in orientation. With respect to the two age groups for which the relationship was significant the following could be suggested. It may be that those who were members of fewer or no voluntary associations were more likely to believe in their own capacity as individuals to be successful in undertaking different tasks (hence their limited or lack of engagement in voluntary associations). By contrast, those who were members of more voluntary associations were constantly interacting with others about their experiences in life and were therefore better placed to give social-structural factors their due place in affairs of human endeavour including the achievement of “success”. It was therefore concluded that among the population of those aged 21-22 years and those aged 25 years and above there was a significant positive relationship between membership in associations and orientations towards *low achievement motivation*.

Sex

The introduction of sex of the informants as a control variable also helped to reveal circumstances under which membership in voluntary associations and political orientations were related. This was the case with one attitude dimension in *The Family Ideology Scale*, namely, *pre-eminence of male authority* and one component in *The University’s Socio-Political Environment Scale*, namely, *perceptions of academic freedom*. The results are presented in Table 6.

Sex and pre-eminence of male authority

As may have been anticipated, sex was important in revealing the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and attitudes towards *Pre-eminence of male authority*. There was a weak positive but significant association ($\gamma = 0.17, p < 0.05$) between membership in voluntary associations and attitudes towards this dimension. Those students who were members of three or more associations were more likely to reject the notion of pre-eminence of male authority within the family than their counterparts who were members of fewer or no associations. They were less likely, for example, to regard placing women in authority over men as “unnatural”, or believing that obedience of a wife to her husband was the most important characteristic of a wife. This gave some limited support to the hypothesis that there would be a positive relationship between membership in voluntary associations and democratic political orientations.

Table 6: Membership of voluntary associations by attitudes towards: pre-eminence of male authority, and perceptions of academic freedom controlling for sex

Sex	N	Pre-eminence of male authority		N =	Perceptions of Academic Freedom	
		Gamma	Significance		Gamma	Significance
Male	395	0.14	NS	394	-0.18	0.05
Female	441	0.17	0.05	440	0.01	NS

NS = Not significant

This may be partly explained by the possibility that membership in numerous associations allowed women to exchange views with men on a wide range of issues. This would serve not only to make such females more gender sensitive but also give them greater subjective competence in gender relations than their colleagues who had fewer opportunities of interacting with men in similar forums.

Sex and Students' academic freedom

The second instance where sex mediated in shaping some orientations towards civic engagement with regard to membership of voluntary associations was with reference to the *Students' academic freedom* component of ***The University's Socio-Political Environment Scale***. There was a weak negative but significant association between membership in voluntary associations and perceptions of academic freedom among the male informants. ($\gamma = -0.18, p < 0.05$) Instructively for male students the result was contrary to the expectations of the research hypothesis because those who were members of fewer associations actually perceived greater academic freedom than those who were members of more associations.

Generally, it has been argued that those individuals who are members of more associations develop greater subjective political competence as they interact more frequently with a broader range of people (Almond & Verba, 1963). Assuming that this observation holds true, it could be argued that those students who were not members of any association failed to develop adequate subjective competence to question the level of academic freedom prevailing in their institutions. By the same token it could be argued that those who were members of various associations, had developed such subjective competence to a greater extent and were therefore better equipped to question the degree of academic freedom in their institutions.

Summary

To sum up, in only one attitude dimension *pre-eminence of male authority* in ***The Family Ideology Scale*** was there a positive relationship between membership in voluntary associations and democratic political orientations among the university undergraduate students and it was the 21-22 year-olds that exhibited this relationship to a significant degree. Those informants who were members of more associations were less likely to accept pre-eminence of male authority in the family than those who were members of fewer or no such associations. The number of associations in which one was a member did not influence orientations towards the attitude dimensions in ***The University's Socio-Political Environment Scale*** and ***The Authoritarianism Scale***.

A relationship that did not support the hypothesis was revealed among those informants aged 25 years and above with regard to their membership in voluntary associations and their attitudes towards the dimension labelled *limitations on civil rights* in *The Authoritarianism Scale*. The findings in this case were that democratic orientations actually diminished with increasing voluntary association membership apart from demonstrating that the students actually became less supportive of civil rights as they grew older.

Age also proved to be a factor in attitudes towards *low achievement motivation* among the 21-22 year olds and those aged 25 years and above. In both cases, high associational membership meant a more democratic attitude towards this domain. Thus among these two age groups those who were members of more voluntary associations were more keenly aware that there were more factors beyond individual motivation that determined individual "success". With regard to sex, female students who were members of more voluntary associations were less likely to subscribe to *pre-eminence of male authority* in the family than those who were members of fewer or no voluntary associations. With regard to *perceptions of academic freedom*, those males who were members of more voluntary associations perceived less academic freedom than did those who were members of fewer or no voluntary associations.

The findings with regard to *perceptions of academic freedom* and *limitations on civil rights* posed a contradictory situation in which membership in more voluntary associations conferred a democratic orientation in the former, and autocratic orientations in the latter. Although orientations need not always be consistent this observation implied that there was no logical transfer of orientations across various attitudinal dimensions. Thus, academic freedom was not seen or treated as part of civil rights that it is. This suggested a "compartmentalisation" of attitudes and orientations. This instance pointed to the likelihood of the different roles voluntary associations play in shaping orientations towards different attitude domains.

Possibly this inconsistency could be explained with reference to the relative effects of "bonding" as opposed to "bridging" associations on political socialization of the university undergraduate students. In effect, the informants drew from their experiences in one type of association rather than the other to inform their orientations in different domains. This would mean, for example, that the orientations acquired from membership in a "bridging" association such as the sociology students association or the theatre arts association would come to the fore in discussing issues of academic freedom. As a result, the attitudes regarding matters of academic freedom may be democratic because they are largely shaped in a democratically enabling "bridging" association. Since civil rights are more overtly political in nature, membership in "bonding" associations such as a district or an ethnicity-based students union, have the tendency to ethnic polarisation and values of group exclusivity may therefore come to characterise orientations towards this domain. Thus, autocratic orientations may come to the fore with respect to civil rights. This would result in contradictory outcomes from membership of voluntary associations.

Conclusions

That membership in voluntary associations led to the acquisition of democratic orientations was not conclusively proven as the results tended to be equivocal. It would seem that the prevailing relationships in the majority of these associations were autocratic rather than democratic. The study arrived at two main conclusions. To begin with, membership in many voluntary associations seemed to contribute towards a more democratic family environment. This was the case among those females who were members of more associations. They were less predisposed to subscribe to pre-eminence of male authority in the family setting. The first conclusion therefore was that among the female students, membership in more voluntary associations was likely to lead to a democratic family ideology that did not emphasise pre-eminence of male authority than was the case for males and females who were members of fewer or no such associations.

It would also appear from the results of this study that the vast number of voluntary associations to which the students subscribed did not confer democratic orientations. There was a contradiction that membership in more associations did not have a consistent effect on attitudes and orientations. Thus, while support for civil rights was more frequent among those students who were members of fewer or no associations, with regard to academic freedom it was those male students who were members of more associations that had more democratic attitudes and orientations. This inconsistency could be explained with reference to Paxton's (2002, p 2) dichotomy of "bridging" versus "bonding" associations.

This leads to the second and final conclusion that the orientations of the students towards civic engagement were more greatly influenced by their memberships in the “bonding” type of associations than their memberships in the “bridging” type of associations that promote democracy. This relative dominance of the influence of either type of association depends on the context of the attitude object(s). Thus, while the “bridging” type of association was important in shaping attitudes and orientations towards academic freedom, the influence of the “bonding” type of association became dominant in shaping attitudes and orientations towards civil rights where partisan considerations were more likely to play a role in shaping perceptions.

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