Adults’ Civic Engagement in the U. S. and Germany: Evidence from the PIAAC Survey

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Background

• Immigration and, in the EU, internal migration are often viewed as...
  – *Social problems*, e.g., lack of integration; using taxpayer dollars; and,
  – *Political problems*, e.g., increasing xenophobia
• We were interested in exploring these issues through analysis of PIAAC data
Definition: Civic engagement

“working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference” (Ehrlich, 2000, vi)
Civic engagement includes...

- **Voluntary work:**
  - “doing work without pay for charities, political parties, trade unions or other nonprofit organizations” (OECD, 2011, p. 46)

- **Political efficacy:**
  - “the extent to which people feel they understand and can affect politics” (p. 46)

- **Social trust:**
  - “confidence in the reliability of a person or system” (p. 46)
U.S. and Germany

- Both advanced industrial countries
- Different education systems and paths to citizenship
- Different treatment of immigrants
  - Recently, and historically
- Comparison can lead to insights about the integration of immigrants into the civic life of the country
Research questions

1.) Among adults in the US and Germany, are age, education, gender, immigration status, skill proficiency, work status, and number of years worked associated with civic engagement (i.e., voluntary work for non-profit organizations, political efficacy, and social trust)?

2.) Do the associations of age, education, gender, immigration status, skill proficiency, work status, and number of years worked with civic engagement (i.e., voluntary work for non-profit organizations, political efficacy, and social trust) differ between individuals in the US and Germany?
Method

• **RQ1**: Four ordinal regression models predicting each of four ordinal indicators of civic engagement from immigration status, demographic characteristics, and skill proficiencies

• **RQ2**: Multi-group ordinal regression (Germany vs. U.S.) using the same ordinal regression outcomes and predictors from RQ1
RQ1

Ordinal civic engagement outcomes:
- Volunteer work
- Political efficacy
- Ability to trust more than few people, and
- Belief that others won’t take advantage

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RQ2

Germany
- Gender
- Work status
- Years of work experience
- Education
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- PS-TRE
- Native-born status
- Age

Civic Engagement

U.S.
- Gender
- Work status
- Years of work experience
- Education
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- PS-TRE
- Native-born status
- Age
Data analyses

• Sampling weights and replicate weights utilized
• Analyses repeated using 10 sets of plausible values for the skill proficiencies, and parameters averaged
• Between-country differences in effects from multi-group regression assessed by comparing unconstrained and constrained regression models
RQ1

- Female
- Age
- Native-born
- Working
- Years of work experience
- Education
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- PS-TRE

Volunteerism

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Working and Volunteerism are positively related to Years of work experience, Education, Literacy, Numeracy, and PS-TRE. Age is positively related to Native-born, Working, Years of work experience, Education, and Volunteerism. Native-born is positively related to Volunteerism.
Years of work experience
Education
Literacy
Numeracy
Working
Female
Age
Native-born
Political Efficacy
PS-TRE

RQ1
Years of work experience
Education
Literacy
Numeracy
Female
Working
Age
Native-born
PS-TRE
Trust more than a few
RQ1
Years of work experience

Education

Literacy

Numeracy

Won’t take advantage

PS-TRE

Native-born

Age

Working

Female

RQ1
RQ2

Germany

Female
Working
Years of work experience
Education
Literacy
Numeracy
PS-TRE

Native-born
Age

Volunteerism

U.S.

Female
Working
Years of work experience
Education
Literacy
Numeracy
PS-TRE

Native-born
Age

ns
RQ2

Germany

Female

Working

Years of work experience

Education

Literacy

Numeracy

PS-TRE

Native-born

Age

Political Efficacy

U.S.

Native-born

Age

Female

Working

Years of work experience

Education

Literacy

Numeracy

PS-TRE

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+}

ns
RQ2

Trust more than a few

Trust more than a few

Germany

U.S.

Female

Age

Native-born

Native-born

Age

Female

Working

Years of work experience

Education

Literacy

Numeracy

PS-TRE

PS-TRE

ns

+ ns

+, ns
RQ2

Germany

Female

Years of work experience

Working

Native-born

Literacy

Numeracy

PS-TRE

Others won’t take advantage

U.S.

Native-born

Age

Female

Years of work experience

Working

Education

Literacy

PS-TRE

Others won’t take advantage

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Discussion

• Several background variables predict dimensions of civic engagement—age, education, work experience, gender, and skills (i.e., literacy, numeracy, PS-TRE)—though not consistently or uniformly

• Only one observed difference between immigrants and native-born on civic engagement (voluntary work in Germany)

• Predictive capacity of gender, skills, and work experience on political efficacy and social trust appears to differ between Germany and the U.S.
Implications

• The U.S. and Germany should embrace immigration and assist immigrants in becoming acclimated to their communities, and encourage civic participation among immigrants (in Germany, volunteering)

• Address misinformation about immigrants

• Educational opportunity and skills are keys to civic engagement

• Increasing skills is not sufficient; need for programs that engage people, in terms of volunteering and political efficacy