

What Happens When Newspapers Fail? Studying the Demise of Seattle's *Post-Intelligencer* and Denver's *Rocky Mountain News*

How important are newspapers to their communities and our society? For generations, scholars have argued that newspapers provide critical information to citizens and serve as vital watchdogs of public officials – but it has been difficult to empirically depict the value of newspapers. Using data from the 2008 and 2009 Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the United States Census, this article assesses the year-over-year change in the civic engagement of citizens in 10 major American cities, including Denver and Seattle which both lost a major newspaper during the intervening year. The data from this natural experiment show that many indicators of civic engagement in Seattle and Denver dropped significantly from 2008 to 2009 - declines that are not replicated in other, similar cities that did not lose a newspaper.

Keywords: Quantitative – Survey, Quantitative – Experiment, Civic Engagement, News/Journalism, Newspapers

How important are newspapers to their communities and society at large? For generations, scholars (Janowitz, 1968; Kaniss, 1997; Tarde, 1903; Tocqueville, 2001) have argued that newspapers provide critical information to citizens and serve as vital watchdogs of public officials. And, in recent years, communication researchers have shown that newspaper readership and various civic and political acts are related (Hoffman & Eveland, 2010; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Moy, McCluskey, McCoy, & Spratt, 2004; Stamm & Weis, 1986). Consequently, as newspaper circulation dwindles and the very future of the print product is questioned, there is reason for scholarly and civic concern. In Paul Starr's (2011) words, "More than any other medium, newspapers have been our eyes on the state, our check on private abuses, our civic alarm systems. It is true that they have often failed to perform those functions as well as they should have done. But whether they can continue to perform them at all is now in doubt."

Using data from the 2008 and 2009 November supplements of the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the United States Census, this article examines the civic engagement of citizens in 10 major American cities. The purpose of this analysis is to assess and compare the year-over-year change in the civic engagement of citizens in cities that lost a newspaper in the intervening year - namely, Denver and Seattle - with cities that did not lose a newspaper over the same time period. The contrast over time and across cities provides unique leverage to address the question that headlines this article, and the CPS data shows that many indicators of civic engagement in both Seattle and Denver dropped significantly from 2008 to 2009. This decline is not replicated in the other, similar cities that are examined, which supports that what many have suspected: newspapers are vital institutions in our democracy.

Literature Review

Newspapers contribute to communities in many different ways. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville suggests that newspapers were catalysts for associations that were vital to the America's early participatory democracy. Similarly, Bryce (1995) and Tarde (1903) argue that newspapers set a common agenda for their readers which, in a way, defines the readers' communities. Janowitz (1968) describes the reciprocal relationship between community newspaper readership and community integration (or attachment), suggesting that, one way or another, newspaper readership is an important part of being a community member. And, as urban populations suburbanized in the latter half of the 20th century, Kaniss (1997) asserted that newspapers transcended the quilt work of municipalities in order to knit metropolitan areas together by actively cultivating one overarching civic identity.

Against this theoretical backdrop, empirical researchers have worked to isolate the discrete contributions that newspapers make to their towns and cities. In the process, they have depicted correlations between newspaper readership and civic engagement (Kang & Kwak, 2003; McLeod et al., 1999; Moy et al., 2004; Scheufele, Shanahan, & Kim, 2002), community attachment (Jeffres, Atkin, & Neuendorf, 2002; McLeod et al., 1996; Stamm, 1988; Stamm & Weis, 1986; Stamm, Emig, & Hesse, 1997), and other relevant outcomes (Becker & Dunwoody, 1982; McLeod et al., 1999). But, most prior research in this vein is limited by a reliance upon cross-sectional, single-city datasets that preclude causal tests and limit generalizability (Hoffman & Eveland, 2010; Y. C. Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006). Inconsistent, unreliable, and often self-reported media exposure variables, which plague media research in general (Prior, 2009), are additional obstacles facing researchers working to show a causal relationship between newspaper readership and community-related outcomes (Friedland & McLeod, 1999).

Hoffman and Eveland (2010) address some of these shortfalls by using a national panel study to assess the importance of local news media use. Their findings replicate the well-established correlational relationship between newspaper readership and attachment, but they do not locate evidence of a significant relationship over time. This prevents any conclusions regarding the causal ordering of the relationship between local news media use and community attachment. In explaining their null findings, Hoffman and Eveland assert that levels of both local news media use and community attachment are entrenched and unlikely to vary much over the course of a year (the time period between the waves of their survey) - unless a dramatic event disrupts the status quo. As they write, "Only panel studies that track individuals over time, beginning when they enter communities or when communities are significantly disrupted by outside events, are likely to be capable of sorting out the causal ambiguities inherent in this area of great theoretical interest" (Hoffman & Eveland, 2010, p. 193).

It is a pair of such disruptions – the cessation of the print edition of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and the complete closure of Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* – that prompts the current research. And, there is a small tradition of similar papers that informs this work. Berelson (1948) conducted an interview-based examination of the effects of a newspaper delivery strike in New York City that took place in 1945 and lasted for 17 days. In this pre-television era, most of the respondents said they missed the hard news that their newspaper provided - but in Berelson's estimation, only about a third were able to engage in enough discussion of the news to indicate that they ever actually read it. More recently, a pair of studies replicated Berelson's work in small towns where the local newspaper had not been delivered (Bentley, 2001) or was closed (Smethers, Bressers, Willard, Harvey, & Freeland, 2007). Like Berelson, both projects found that many of the interviewees primarily missed their newspaper for reasons related to habit or

entertainment – but not because of a lack of access to hard news. But there was a new wrinkle: many respondents specifically noted the loss of *local* news, even though they had access to various electronic media (Bentley, 2001). These three investigations suggest that citizens and communities will be affected by the loss of a newspaper – and that the impact will be seen most in the context of *local* matters.

Aside from small-N research, how might the importance of a newspaper to a community be measured? If individual-level media exposure variables derived from surveys are unreliable, perhaps a better approach is to use environmental differences to, in effect, establish a natural experiment at the community level. A pair of relevant studies have done this, exploiting quirks in regional media distribution to study the relationship between access to information and political knowledge. Zukin and Snyder (1984) examine New Jersey, which is served by the media from New York City and Philadelphia, and find evidence of “passive learning”: though citizens in the state have little instrumental need for knowledge of New York or Pennsylvania’s politics, they do – depending on which part of the state they are in – possess such knowledge. And, in a similar study set in Virginia, residents of two distinct media markets were knowledgeable about different political matters in a pattern that corresponded to the types of news available in their home market (Delli Carpini, Keeter, & Kenamer, 1994). So, even without individual-level media exposure variables, it is possible to measure the effects of access to different media within and across communities.

Most relevant to this project is a recent study of Cincinnati and its suburbs (Schulhofer-Wohl & Garrido, 2011) that evaluated the effects of the 2007 closure of *The Cincinnati Post*. The authors suggest that a number of deleterious political outcomes could be observed from 2007-2010 in the Northern Kentucky communities that the *Post* traditionally served – but that these

same outcomes were not visible in the communities served by the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, which did not close. In the Kentucky communities, “Fewer people voted in elections for city council, city commission, and school board; fewer candidates sought those seats; the remaining candidates spent less money on their campaigns; and, for councils and commissions, incumbents' chances of retaining office improved” (Schulhofer-Wohl & Garrido, 2011, p. 2). Even though the *Enquirer* increased coverage of Northern Kentucky to compensate for the *Post's* closure, the communities suffered significant, negative political effects.

Hypotheses

Following the empirical work reviewed above, the first hypothesis that this article tests is:

H1: A positive association between newspaper readership and acts of civic engagement exists, at the national level and within individual communities.

If this is true, then we have reason to investigate the change in year-over-year civic engagement in various metropolitan areas, with a particular focus on Denver and Seattle. Though cross-sectional data cannot alone establish the causal direction of the relationship between newspaper readership and civic engagement, a long tradition of theory suggests that the loss of a newspaper will result in a decline in civic engagement:

H2: Civic engagement in Seattle and Denver will decline from 2008 to 2009

Meanwhile, in cities that did not experience a significant disruption in their local media environments, at first blush there is no reason to expect a significant year-over-year change in civic engagement:

H3: Civic engagement in cities other than Seattle and Denver will be unchanged from 2008 to 2009.

At the national level the demises of the *Post-Intelligencer* and *Rocky Mountain News* are relatively insignificant – though they were indicative of a larger wave of closures. But, because of the timing of the CPS survey – the 2008 iteration immediately followed the surge of political

activity tied to the 2008 presidential campaign and the 2009 iteration was not preceded by a similar catalyst – it is conceivable that civic engagement would be broadly depressed in any year-over-year comparison. Accordingly:

H4A: Nationwide, civic engagement will decline from 2008 to 2009.

H4B: Declines in civic engagement in Seattle and Denver will be larger than declines observed at the national level.

Method

This article uses data from the 2008 and 2009 November supplements of the United States Census Current Population Survey. Starting in 2008, the Census added a battery on Civic Engagement that initially included 25 items and was asked of nearly 68,000 respondents nationwide (US Census, 2008). The next year, the battery was repeated – but 12 items were dropped (including the set of news media usage questions) and the number of respondents was reduced to about 21,000 (US Census, 2009). In addition to the civic engagement battery, the CPS datasets both provide access to basic demographic information describing the respondents. The specific respondents from year to year vary, but because the sample is derived from a probability sample designed to be representative of all households, comparisons of aggregate year-over-year data should be valid.¹

Of the 13 civic engagement items that are repeated in the 2009 supplement, many target social capital – doing favors for neighbors, participating in recreational sports leagues – which have at most an indirect connection to newspaper readership.² Five core civic engagement items are available year-over-year, however, and these – individually recoded into yes (1) and no (0)

¹ Conducting demographic comparisons of the 2008 and 2009 samples does reveal some significant differences in the metropolitan area populations year-over-year. The samples in Denver, Cincinnati, Dallas, Portland, and San Francisco had no significant demographic differences across the two measurement times. In Seattle and Cleveland, income declined among respondents from 2008 to 2009. In Minneapolis, there were fewer ‘other’ respondents and more ‘white’ respondents in 2009. In Philadelphia, the 2009 sample was older, had more black respondents, and had fewer ‘other’ respondents. In Phoenix, the 2009 sample was older and better educated.

² See Appendix 1 for a full version of the Civic Engagement Supplement questionnaire.

dummy variables and also averaged into a cumulative index of civic engagement (0-1, $M = .13$, $SD = .20$) – are the key dependent variables in the analyses below. They are:

Please tell whether or not you have done any of the following in the last 12 months, that is between November 200X and now:

- (1) Contacted or visited a public official – at any level of government – to express your opinion? (Yes/No/DK/Refused)
- (2) Bought or boycotted a certain product or service because of the social or political values of the company that provides it? (Yes/No/DK/Refused)

Have you participated in any of these groups during the last 12 months, that is between November 200X and now:

- (3) A school group, neighborhood, or community association such as PTA or neighborhood watch groups? (Yes/No/DK/Refused)
- (4) A service or civic organization such as American Legion or Lions Club? (Yes/No/DK/Refused)

(5) In the last 12 months, between November 200X and now, have you been an officer or served on a committee of any group or organization? (Yes/No/DK/Refused)

The initial regression analyses below establish the basic relationship between newspaper readership and civic engagement at the individual level. For these, the 2008 CPS dataset is used alone because the news media use questions were eliminated from the 2009 survey.³ The newspaper readership question on the 2008 survey is:

Please tell me how often you did each of the following during a TYPICAL MONTH in the past year:

Read a newspaper in print or on the Internet – basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?⁴

Next, the 2008 and 2009 datasets are merged to allow for community-level analyses that seek to isolate the effect of the newspaper closures in Denver and Seattle.⁵ Since the 2009 data

³ Basic demographic control variables are also included in the 2008-only regression analyses. These items allow for the discrete importance of newspaper readership to be better assessed. Wording and recodes of these variables can be found in Appendix 1.

⁴ The newspaper readership variable is included in the regression models below as a 0-4 scale that runs from not at all (0) to basically every day (4).

⁵ The *Rocky Mountain News* closed on February 27, 2009; the *Post-Intelligencer* ended its print run on March 17, 2009. Consequently, the timing of the CPS works very well to capture a before and after snapshot of civic engagement in Denver and Seattle. When the papers halted publication, the *Post-Intelligencer* was being delivered

does not offer news media use variables, the independent variable in the year-over-year analyses is implied: the change (or lack of thereof) in the media environment within each community. Simple t-tests are used to assess the significance of the observed changes.

In the combined dataset, the populations of various metropolitan areas are identified according to the Census CBSA FIPS code. The Census's definitions of metropolitan areas are often relatively broad, encompassing multiple contiguous cities and sometimes even spanning across state lines in the process (US Census, 2008). As scholars have argued (Kaniss, 1997), newspapers also transcend municipal borders, so defining the community of study according to these metropolitan areas is intuitive. In addition, this broad definition of communities yields sample sizes that allow for localized year-over-year comparisons to be made with reasonable statistical power. Accordingly, the 8 comparison cities were chosen with both a purposive and practical reason in mind. First, in terms of culture and demographics some cities are more comparable in nature (Seattle and Portland, for example) than others (Seattle and Houston). Second, the CPS data, abundant as it is, limits local-level comparisons to only the largest metropolitan areas because of the reduced sample in 2009.

to 117,600 (Richman & James, 2009) weekday readers and the *Rocky Mountain News* had a paid circulation of 210,000 (AP, 2009).

Table 1: OLS Regressions Predicting Civic Engagement in 2008 CPS Data

	National (N = 57,334)	Seattle (N = 534)	Denver (N = 547)
	Coefficient	Coefficient	Coefficient
Race			
White	-	-	-
Black	-0.027*** (0.003)	-0.062 (0.055)	-0.008 (0.046)
Other	-0.042*** (0.002)	-0.082*** (0.023)	-0.034 (0.023)
Gender			
Female	-	-	-
Male	-0.013*** (0.002)	-0.008 (0.018)	-0.018 (0.017)
Age	0.008*** (0.001)	0.017* (0.008)	0.017* (0.007)
Household Income			
1: < \$30,000	-	-	-
2: \$30-60,000	0.015*** (0.002)	0.006 (0.029)	0.054* (0.026)
3: \$60,001-\$100,000	0.035*** (0.002)	0.009 (0.028)	0.090*** (0.025)
4: >\$100,000	0.049*** (0.003)	0.059* (0.029)	0.080** (0.028)
Education			
1: < High School	-		
2: High School	0.008*** (0.003)	0.008 (0.042)	0.018 (0.034)
3: Some Post-Secondary	0.060*** (0.003)	0.084* (0.041)	0.046 (0.033)
4: College	0.107*** (0.003)	0.105* (0.042)	0.091** (0.034)
5: > College	0.161*** (0.004)	0.210*** (0.046)	0.156*** (0.040)
Newspaper Readership (0-4)	0.014*** (0.001)	0.015* (0.007)	0.015* (0.006)
Intercept	0.001 (0.004)	-0.015 (0.050)	-0.044 (0.042)
R ²	0.135	0.173	0.374

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Results

Table 1 contains the results of three OLS regressions that predict cumulative civic engagement in three populations: the United States, Seattle, and Denver. At the national level, the sample is over 50,000 and every IV has a significant relationship with civic engagement, including newspaper readership ($\beta = .014$, $p < .001$). In Seattle, the positive relationship between newspaper readership and civic engagement holds even with a sample of just over 500 ($\beta = .015$, $p < .05$). The positive association is present in the Denver data as well ($\beta = .015$, $p < .05$). So, the data confirm H1: there is a positive relationship between newspaper reading and civic engagement.

Table 2 contains the results of year-over-year comparisons of the 5 civic engagement indicators earlier described. Data for 10 cities, including Denver and Seattle, as well as the nation as a whole are reported. Each cell contains the difference from 2008 to 2009, in terms of percent, in the proportion of the survey sample within each city that responded in the affirmative to the particular engagement question at hand. Negative numbers indicate that the specific indicator declined year-over-year; positive figures indicate the opposite. The significance of each difference was assessed with simple, two-tailed T-tests.

The results show that, in Denver, four of the five indicators declined significantly from 2008 to 2009. In Seattle, two of the five indicators significantly decreased between the two measurements. The other indicators in both cities were not significantly different year-over-year. Together, these results offer relatively strong support for H2: many measures of civic engagement in Seattle and Denver declined from 2008 to 2009.

Meanwhile, in the other eight cities, 35 of the 40 year-over-year comparisons are non-significant. Only one indicator – boycotts of products or services among Cincinnatians – across

Table 2: % Change in 5 Civic Engagement Indicators from 2008 to 2009, by City

	N	1: Contact Public Official	2: Boycott Product or Service	3: Neighborhood Group Membership	4: Civic Group Membership	5: Act as a Group Officer
Denver	2008 = 589 2009 = 236	-5.11%*	-8.53%**	0.01%	-4.85%*	-4.67%*
Seattle	2008 = 563 2009 = 209	5.90%	-6.71%*	1.95%	-1.01%	-6.83%*
Cincinnati	2008 = 294 2009 = 130	-2.42%	-7.37%*	-5.28%	2.18%	-3.81%
Cleveland	2008 = 304 2009 = 103	7.59%*	-3.80%	-1.66%	-2.76%	-6.70%
Dallas	2008 = 824 2009 = 246	3.83%	4.70%*	-1.95%	-0.46%	0.64%
Minneapolis	2008 = 970 2009 = 260	5.75%*	4.43%	2.08%	1.13%	-1.09%
Philadelphia	2008 = 1349 2009 = 419	-1.12%	-0.01%	0.00%	-0.80%	-0.01%
Phoenix	2008 = 456 2009 = 177	2.87%	-0.92%	-1.50%	3.59%*	-0.10%
Portland	2008 = 524 2009 = 176	1.76%	-0.08%	-0.38%	-2.73%	-1.20%
San Francisco	2008 = 510 2009 = 227	0.42%	-0.25%	-0.99%	3.03%	1.80%
Nationwide	2008 = 68042 2009 = 20840	1.06%***	-1.43%***	-1.78%***	-0.96%***	-1.32%***

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Significance derived from year-over-year, two-tailed T-Tests.

all of the cities significantly declined year-over-year. Four indicators – contacting a public official in Cleveland and Minneapolis, boycotting a product or service in Dallas, and participating in a civic group in Phoenix – *increased* from 2008 to 2009. So, H3 is not fully supported: there are some differences in the data across the nation. But, the vast majority of the city-level indicators were not significantly different across the two years, which is consonant with H3.

The national data provides a wider view; here, each indicator is significantly different (due in part to the large sample size) in the year-over-year comparisons: four decreased and one increased. The general trend reflects a decline in civic engagement, nationwide, which supports H4A. The magnitude of these differences, however, ranges between just 1-2% across the board. The observed declines in Seattle and Denver, meanwhile, are roughly 5-8% – which supports H4B.

Discussion

The results reported here suggest that the collapses of the *Rocky Mountain News* and *Post-Intelligencer* adversely affected the civic engagement of citizens in Denver and Seattle, respectively. Levels of civic engagement fell significantly, particularly in Denver. There are a myriad of possible explanations for these results: measurement error, chance, and an array of unmeasured factors that may have intervened in the year between measurements. In isolation, it would be difficult to rule out these competing hypotheses and attribute the change to the collapse of a pair of newspapers.

Yet, the data presented here are not in isolation – there are multiple points of comparison that can be used to address alternate explanations. National data suggests that there was a slight decline in many civic-engagement indicators from 2008 to 2009 – not surprising considering the

change in the macro-political environment. But the magnitude of the decline in Seattle and Denver outstripped the national trend. And, in other, similar cities, measurement of the same indicators, collected in the same surveys, at the same times, showed little evidence of decline. Contrasts of the Denver and Seattle results with those from other cities thus offers a pair of important benefits. First, concern regarding a measurement issue that systematically skewed the data towards a year-over-year decline is assuaged. Second, national-level third variables (economic turmoil, different political conditions, etc.) that could plausibly explain variation in any one city should also cause the same variation in other cities as well. The absence of uniformity across the cities suggests that differences within a city from year-to-year can be attributed to factors at the metropolitan level.

Is it possible that the declines in civic engagement in Seattle and Denver could be attributed to factors other than the newspaper closures? Yes. In the 12-month period between surveys, many important events surely transpired in each city. Yet, particularly because available evidence suggests that newspaper readership is significantly related to civic engagement, it seems very likely that the newspaper closures did bear negatively upon civic engagement in Denver and Seattle. For civic engagement to decline, in both of these cities but not uniformly in others, when newspapers closed – but not as a result of the closures – would be quite a coincidence. The evidence reported here is not strictly causal, but it is highly suggestive that Seattle and Denver suffered measurable, significant negative effects when they lost one of their daily newspapers.

Why is the degree of the decline in civic engagement different in Denver and Seattle? Though both cities experienced a *similar* shock to their local media environments, the disruption was not identical. First, the relative importance of the two newspapers to their communities was

different in at least one key respect: in Seattle, about 8% of households received the *Post-Intelligencer* while, in Denver, about 20% of households received the *Rocky Mountain News*. Accordingly, we should expect to see larger effects in Denver. Second, the *Post-Intelligencer* halted its print edition but continues to produce and distribute news on the web; meanwhile, the *Rocky Mountain News* went completely out of business. If we think of local news as a public good – something that is broadly beneficial even if it is not specifically consumed – then this is an important distinction. In Seattle, much of the news produced for a print edition of the *Post-Intelligencer* is now created for the web – and even if the audience is smaller, the positive externalities of its mere existence may still exist. In Denver, the amount of local news was simply reduced. Put together, these two factors help explain the disparity in the civic engagement declines across Denver and Seattle.

Limitations

This study has several limitations, both in terms of its macro-level conceptualization and micro-level operationalization. Taking a wide view, perhaps the most significant limitation is the fact that no two cities are entirely alike. To a certain extent, this limits the utility of cross-city comparisons. Additionally, the data utilized in these analyses is parsed at the metropolitan level – perhaps an overly inclusive approach for measuring the influence of an urban newspaper. Metropolitan areas are richly varied and working with city-units that correspond more closely to the newspapers' distribution areas would likely capture their influence more precisely. Further, though the study has two time points, any year-over-year change could be aberrant and not indicative of a trend or effect.

In addition, the actual analyses in this study are undermined by a pair of specific drawbacks in the available data. First, the 2009 survey does not contain a newspaper readership

item, which means that readership cannot be used as a control in the comparisons. Second, there are some minor variations in the demographic profiles of the city-level samples from year to year. These variations could be the source of any observed differences in the year-over-year comparisons.

Though the data and design of the current project have limitations, the study presented here has many advantages when compared to similar studies of localized civic engagement. Rather than a single city, cross-sectional design, the CPS data allows for year-over-year within and across city comparisons. Because of this, the study provides a unique illumination of civic engagement as well as the importance of newspapers to their communities.

Conclusion

For generations, newspapers have been many things to many people: tool, companion, protector, amusement, and so on. That newspapers are important to their readers and communities should be self-evident – though scholars have struggled to prove this empirically. So how important are newspapers? Are they still important today, when information washes over all of us in electronic waves?

This study suggests that importance of newspapers *can* still be measured, even in their reduced economic and social state – though perhaps only after the fact. The results should provide solace to some – journalism professionals may find some validation here – and discourage others – those who have argued for more public support for newspapers, thus far to no avail. Either way, the findings in this article illustrate that the composition of local media environments is an important factor in the civic and democratic functioning of communities. Newspapers like the *Post-Intelligencer* and *Rocky Mountain News* may be gone, but a commitment to local news media cannot be abandoned.

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Appendix 1: United States Census: CPS November Questionnaire Items

Demographic Items (2008 and 2009)

EDUCATION: What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

VALID ENTRIES

- 31 LESS THAN 1ST GRADE
- 32 1ST, 2ND, 3RD OR 4TH GRADE
- 33 5TH OR 6TH GRADE
- 34 7TH OR 8TH GRADE
- 35 9TH GRADE
- 36 10TH GRADE
- 37 11TH GRADE
- 38 12TH GRADE NO DIPLOMA
- 39 HIGH SCHOOL GRAD-DIPLOMA OR EQUIV (GED)
- 40 SOME COLLEGE BUT NO DEGREE
- 41 ASSOCIATE DEGREE-OCCUPATIONAL/VOCATIONAL
- 42 ASSOCIATE DEGREE-ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- 43 BACHELOR'S DEGREE (EX: BA, AB, BS)
- 44 MASTER'S DEGREE (EX: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW)
- 45 PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL DEG (EX: MD, DDS, DVM)
- 46 DOCTORATE DEGREE (EX: PhD, EdD)

Recoded into five dummy variables:

- 31-38=Less than High School (1)
 - 39=High School (2)
 - 40-42=Some College (3)
 - 43=College (4)
 - 44-46=Graduate Degree (5)
-

RACE: What is your race?

VALID ENTRIES

- 01 White Only
- 02 Black Only
- 03 American Indian, Alaskan Native Only
- 04 Asian Only
- 05 Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Only
- 06 White-Black
- 07 White-AI
- 08 White-Asian
- 09 White-Hawaiian
- 10 Black-AI

- 11 Black-Asian
- 12 Black-HP
- 13 AI-Asian
- 14 Asian-HP
- 15 W-B-AI
- 16 W-B-A
- 17 W-AI-A
- 18 W-A-HP
- 19 W-B-AI-A
- 20 2 or 3 Races
- 21 4 or 5 Races

HISPANIC: Are you Hispanic?

VALID ENTRIES

- 1 HISPANIC
- 2 NON-HISPANIC

Recoded into three exclusive dummy variables:

- White, not Hispanic
 - Black, not Hispanic
 - Other, including all Hispanic groups
-

SEX: Ask Only If Necessary: What is your sex?

VALID ENTRIES

- 1 MALE
 - 2 FEMALE
-

AGE: Person's age as of the end of the survey week.

VALID ENTRIES

- 00-79 Age in Years
- 80 80-84 Years Old
- 85 85+ Years Old

Recoded into six dummy variables:

- 18-24=1
 - 25-34=2
 - 35-49=3
 - 50-64=4
 - 65-79=5
 - 80&up=6
-

FAMILY INCOME: Which category represents the total combined income of all members of this Family during the past 12 months. This includes money from jobs, net income from business, farm or rent, pensions, dividends, interest, social security payments and any other money income received by members of this Family who are 15 years of age or older?

VALID ENTRIES

- 1 LESS THAN \$5,000
- 2 5,000 TO 7,499
- 3 7,500 TO 9,999
- 4 10,000 TO 12,499
- 5 12,500 TO 14,999
- 6 15,000 TO 19,999
- 7 20,000 TO 24,999
- 8 25,000 TO 29,999
- 9 30,000 TO 34,999
- 10 35,000 TO 39,999
- 11 40,000 TO 49,999
- 12 50,000 TO 59,999
- 13 60,000 TO 74,999
- 14 75,000 TO 99,999
- 15 100,000 TO 149,999
- 16 150,000 OR MORE

Recoded into four dummy variables:

- 1-8= Less than \$20,000 (1)
 - 9-12= \$20-59,999 (2)
 - 13-14=\$60-99,999 (3)
 - 15-16=\$100,000&up (4)
-

Civic Engagement Supplement

2008 ONLY

PRESUP2 The next set of questions are about people's involvement and communication within their communities.

2008 AND 2009

Q2 During a TYPICAL MONTH in the past year, when communicating with family and friends, how often were politics discussed -- basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?

- (1) Basically every day
- (2) A few times a week
- (3) A few times a month

- (4) Once a month
 - (5) Not at all
-

2008 ONLY

Q3 I am going to read some ways that people get news and information. Please tell me how often you did each of the following during a TYPICAL MONTH in the past year:

(a) Read a newspaper in print or on the Internet - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?

- (0) No Internet
- (1) Basically every day
- (2) A few times a week
- (3) A few times a month
- (4) Once a month
- (5) Not at all

(b) Read news magazines such as Newsweek or Time, in print or on the Internet - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?

- (1) Basically every day
- (2) A few times a week
- (3) A few times a month
- (4) Once a month
- (5) Not at all

8-2

(c) Watch the news on television or get news from television internet sites - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?

- (1) Basically every day
- (2) A few times a week
- (3) A few times a month
- (4) Once a month
- (5) Not at all

(d) Listen to the news on radio or get news from radio internet sites - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?

- (1) Basically every day
- (2) A few times a week
- (3) A few times a month
- (4) Once a month
- (5) Not at all

(e) Obtain news from any other Internet sources that we have not previously asked about such as blogs, chat rooms, or independent news services - basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?

- (1) Basically every day

- (2) A few times a week
- (3) A few times a month
- (4) Once a month
- (5) Not at all

Q4 I am going to read a list of things some people have done to express their views. Please tell me whether or not you have done any of the following in the last 12 months, that is between November 2007 and now:

2008 AND 2009

(a) Contacted or visited a public official - at any level of government - to express your opinion?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

(b) Attended a meeting where political issues are discussed?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

8-3

2008 ONLY

(c) Bought or boycotted a certain product or service because of the social or political values of the company that provides it?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

(d) Taken part in a march, rally, protest or demonstration?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

(e) Showed support for a particular political candidate or party by distributing campaign materials, fundraising, making a donation or in some other way?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

Q5 The next questions are about the groups or organizations in which people sometimes participate. I will read a list of types of groups and organizations. Please tell me whether or not you participated in any of these groups during the last 12 months, that is between November 2007 and now:

2008 AND 2009

(a) A school group, neighborhood, or community association such as PTA or neighborhood watch groups?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

(b) A service or civic organization such as American Legion or Lions Club?

(1) Yes

(2) No

(d) A sports or recreation organization such as a soccer club or tennis club?

(1) Yes

(2) No

(g) A church, synagogue, mosque or other religious institutions or organizations, NOT COUNTING your attendance at religious services?

(1) Yes

(2) No

8-4

(h) Any other type of organization that I have not mentioned?

(1) Yes Go to S5s

(2) No

Q5s What type of organization is that?

2008 AND 2009

Q6 In the last 12 months, between November 2007 and now, have you been an officer or served on a committee of any group or organization?

(1) Yes

(2) No

2008 ONLY

Q7 In the last 12 months, between November 2007 and now, have you attended a meeting of any group or organization?

(1) Yes

(2) No

DO NOT ASK OF 1 PERSON HOUSEHOLDS

2008 AND 2009

Q8 During a TYPICAL MONTH in the past year, how often did you eat dinner with any of the other members of your household –basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?

(1) Basically every day

(2) A few times a week

(3) A few times a month

(4) Once a month

(5) Not at all

2008 AND 2009

Q9 During a TYPICAL MONTH in the past year, how often, if at all, did you communicate with friends and family by Email or on the Internet –basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?

- (1) Basically every day
- (2) A few times a week
- (3) A few times a month
- (4) Once a month
- (5) Not at all

8-5

2008 AND 2009

Q10 During a TYPICAL MONTH in the past year, how often did you talk with any of your neighbors –basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?

- (1) Basically every day
 - (2) A few times a week
 - (3) A few times a month
 - (4) Once a month
 - (5) Not at all
-

2008 AND 2009

Q11 During a TYPICAL MONTH in the past year, how often did you and your neighbors do favors for each other? By favors we mean such things as watching each other's children, helping with shopping, house sitting, lending garden or house tools, and other small acts of kindness –basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, once a month, or not at all?

- (1) Basically every day
 - (2) A few times a week
 - (3) A few times a month
 - (4) Once a month
 - (5) Not at all
-

2008 ONLY

Q12 NOT COUNTING family members, about how many CLOSE FRIENDS do you currently have, if any? These are people you feel at ease with, can talk to about private matters, or call on for help.

Number —>__ __

2008 ONLY

Q19 People nowadays have a lot to keep up with and no one can keep up with everything. I have two questions about federal laws. If you don't happen to know the answer, just tell me and we'll move on.

(self-response only)

(a) What individual or group of individuals has the responsibility to make the final decision on whether a law is constitutional or not – is it the President of the United States, the Supreme Court, or the Congress?

- (1) President of the United State
 - (2) Supreme Court
 - (3) Congress
 - (4) DK
 - (5) Refused
- 8-6
-

2008 ONLY

(b) Do you know how much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a presidential veto? Is it 80 percent, 67 percent, 60 percent, or 51 percent?

- (1) 80 percent
 - (2) 67 percent
 - (3) 60 percent
 - (4) 51 percent
-

SCK5 * DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT *****

Who reported for this person?

- (1) Self
 - (2) Other
-