

AN EXPLORATION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

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WHAT IS 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. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes” (Thomas Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi).



WHY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

- A representative democracy requires a civically engaged citizenry.
- A commitment to civic engagement must be one of the core tenets for democracy to function (Sullivan & Transue, 1999).
- Adolescents don't feel the need to participate or pay attention to politics, (Verba et al., 1995; Youniss, McClellan & Yates, 1997; Putnam, 2000).



WHY COMMUNITY COLLEGES?

- Open access policy (Franco, 2002; Lucey, 2002)
- Population comprised of “ethnic and racial minorities, first-generation students, and low-income students” (Rendon, 2000, p.1).
- Lower engagement by this group (Lopez & Brown, 2006).
- Underrepresentation of these groups in our democratic system (Kahne & Sporte, 2008).
- Overall lack of research on civic engagement at community colleges.



WHY COLLEGE STUDENTS?

- Long-term benefits (Putnam, 1995).
- Next generation to support the democratic process and contribute to tier communities (Balsano, 2005).
- Adolescent years (15-25) most important stage in the development of civic skills and civic participation (Delli Carpini, 1989; Jennings, 1981).



POLITICAL VS. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Political engagement is “activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies” (Verba et al., p. 38).
- Civic engagement can be defined as organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others. It includes a variety of work done alone or with others to affect change (Zukin et al., 2005).



WHO IS ENGAGED?

- Adults vs. adolescents
- Ethnic differences
- Gender differences



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Does the type of college a student is enrolled in, either 2 or 4-year, affect their level of engagement and the types of engagement activities they participate in?
- Is there a relationship between the type of college an individual graduates from, either 2 or 4-year, and their level of engagement and the types of engagement activities they participate in?
- Do an individual's initial background characteristics have a greater impact on their civic engagement than the type of college they attend or graduate from?



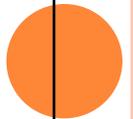
HYPOTHESES

- H1: It is hypothesized in this study that the college environment matters where students at two-year colleges will exhibit lower levels of civic engagement than students at four-year colleges.
- H2: It is also hypothesized that adults who graduated from a two-year college will exhibit lower rates of civic engagement than students who graduated from a four-year college.



HOW IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MEASURED?

Table 1: Civic Engagement Indicators (Zukin et al., 2006)	
Civic Indicators	<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 fundraising run/walk/ride for charity
Political Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular voting Persuading others Displaying buttons, signs or stickers, Campaign contributions Volunteering for a candidate or political organization
Political Voice Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacting officials Contacting the print or broadcast media Protesting Petitioning Boycotting or buycotting Canvassing
Cognitive Engagement Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the government and public affairs Talking with family and friends about politics Political knowledge Paying attention to the news media

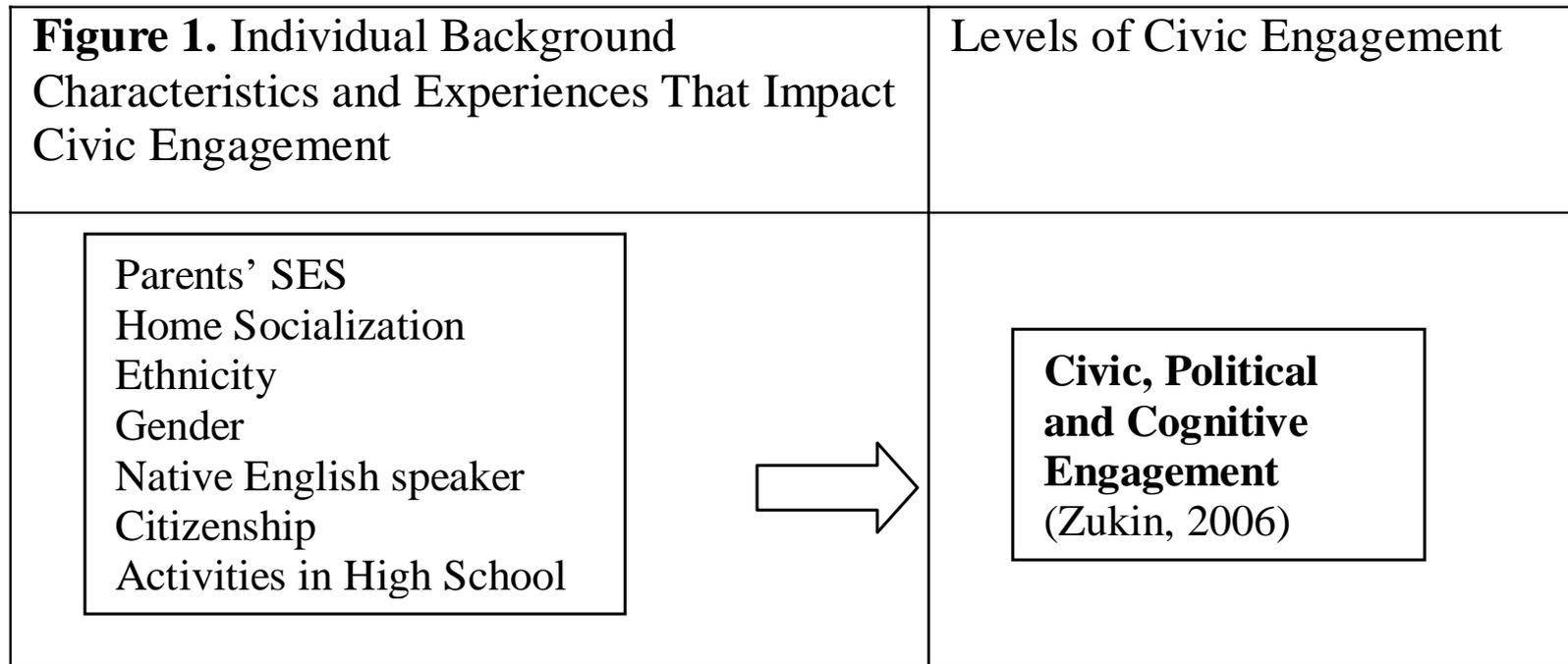


FACTORS LEADING TO INCREASED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

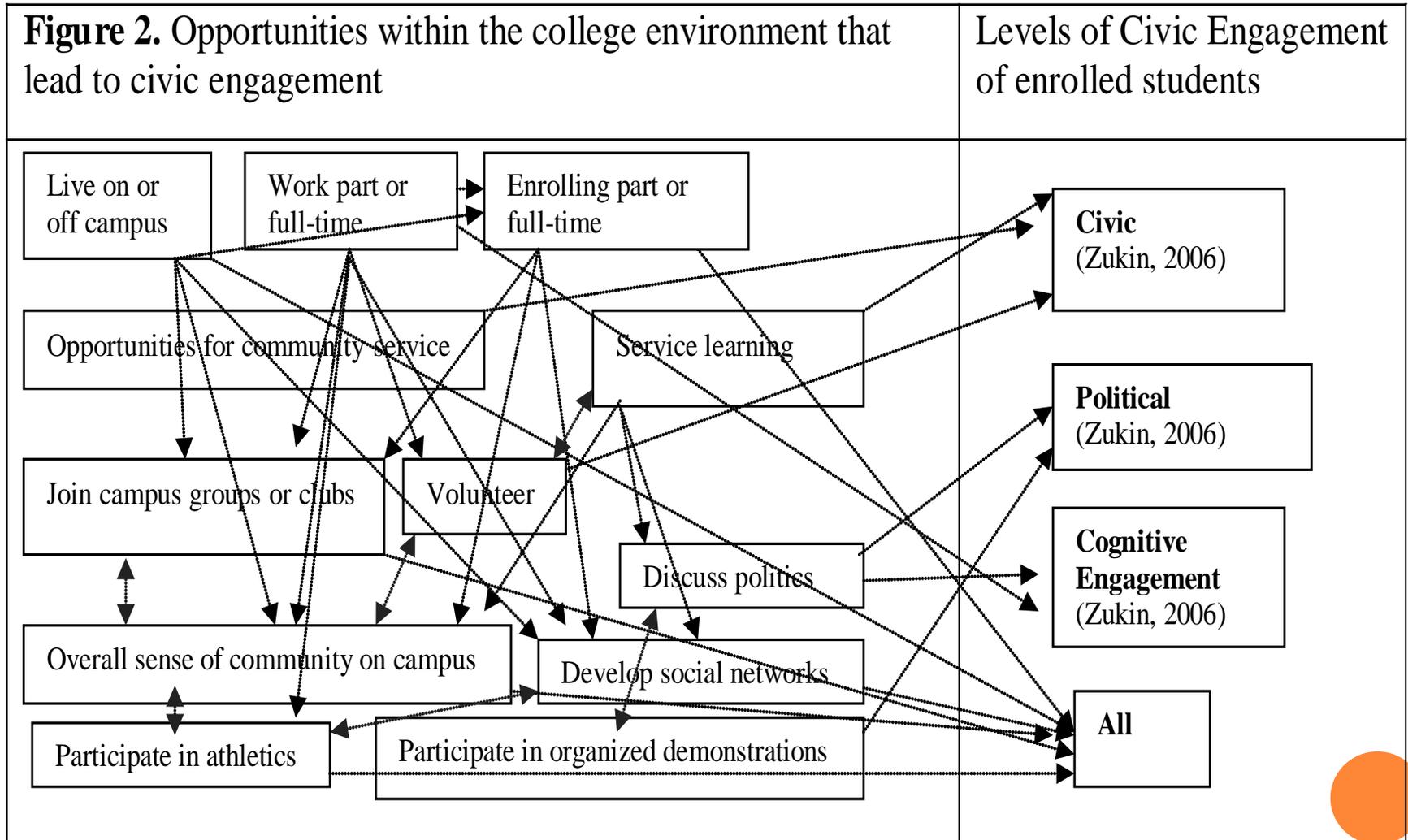
Table 2. Factors Leading to Increased Civic Engagement

Factors	Variables Linked to Increased Engagement
Background Characteristics	Family education and income; ethnicity; citizenship status, gender.
Socialization	Volunteer opportunities; political discussions at home; service learning programs.
Civic Skills	Writing letters; membership in groups; planning or chairing a meeting; making speeches or presentations; taking part in decision making.
High School Activities	Volunteering; membership in community organizations; newspaper; yearbook; political clubs; student government.
College Environment	Diverse student bodies; students with high socioeconomic status; campuses that create intentional learning environments that foster civic engagement; development of peer networks; a student body that shares a commitment to social activism; campuses which provide civic training in the classroom and reward service opportunities; campuses that encourage open discussions about politics; an overall sense of community on campus.

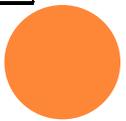
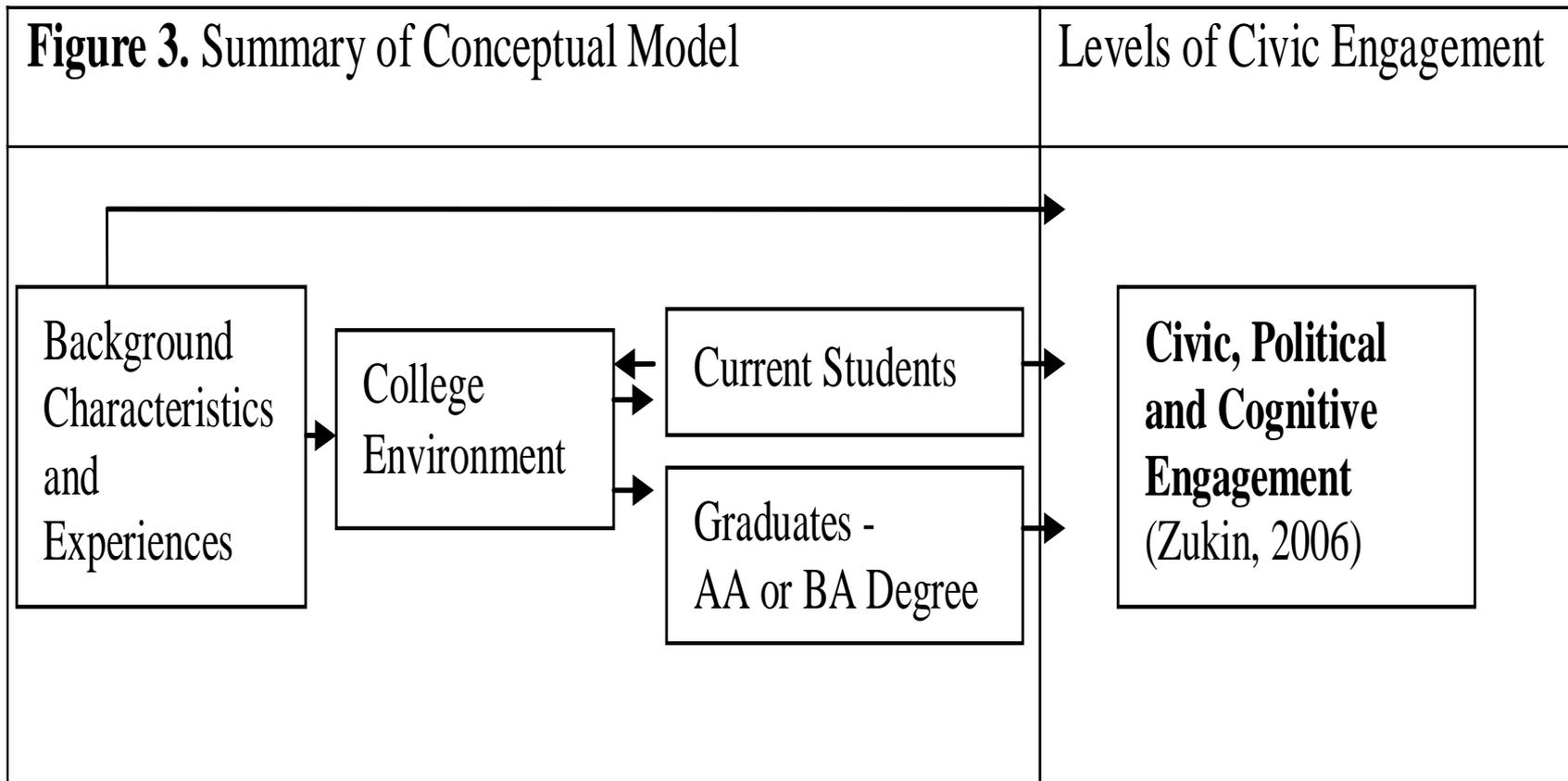
CONCEPTUAL MODEL



CONCEPTUAL MODEL CONTINUED



SUMMARY OF CONCEPTUAL MODEL



YFCY SURVEY DATA

- “Your First College Year” (YFCY) survey
 - Two-year and four-year college students.
 - Nationally representative sample of students in 2002, 2003 and 2004.
 - 9,723 four-year college students
 - 3,620 two-year students
 - Matched sample on race/ethnicity (proportion of white/non-white students), year entered current college, college GPA, and enrollment status (full-time/part-time student).



YFCY DATA

- **Civic engagement activities:** 8 questions focused on performing volunteer work, hours spent volunteering, performing community service, participation in student clubs, participating in athletics, or enrolled in a formal learning community.
- **Political engagement:** 1 question focused on political protests.
- **Cognitive engagement:** 1 question focused on discussing politics.
- **Additional variables:** two-year and four-year college enrollment, full-time or part-time enrollment, full-time or part-time employment, live on or off campus, gender, ethnicity and native English speaker.



CPS DATA

- Current Population Survey – 2008 Volunteer Supplement and the 2008 Civic Engagement Supplement.
- Nationally representative samples.
- Highest level of school includes: high school diploma, some college, associate degree and bachelor degree.
- Data are weighted so that the individuals sampled match the individuals in the total U.S. population.



CPS DATA

- **Civic activities:** 8 questions focus on volunteering, hours spent volunteering, participating in community groups, participating in sports or recreational club, or serving as an officer in a group or organization.
- **Political activities:** 5 questions focused on contacting a public official, attending a political meeting, boycotting or buycotting a product, attending a rally or protest and supporting a political candidate.
- **Cognitive engagement:** 2 questions focused on political knowledge.
- **Additional variables:** Ethnicity, citizenship, employment status.

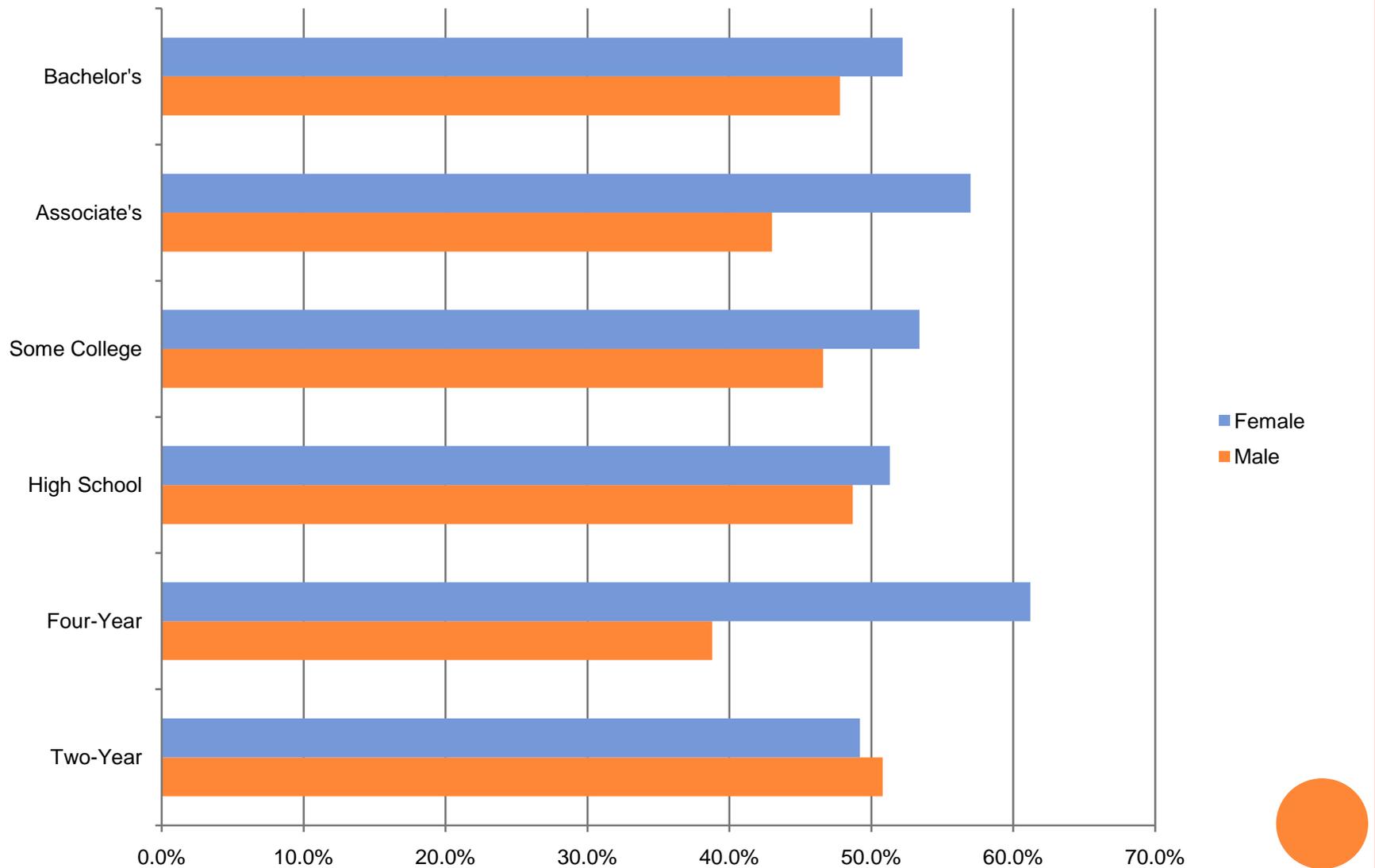


METHODOLOGY

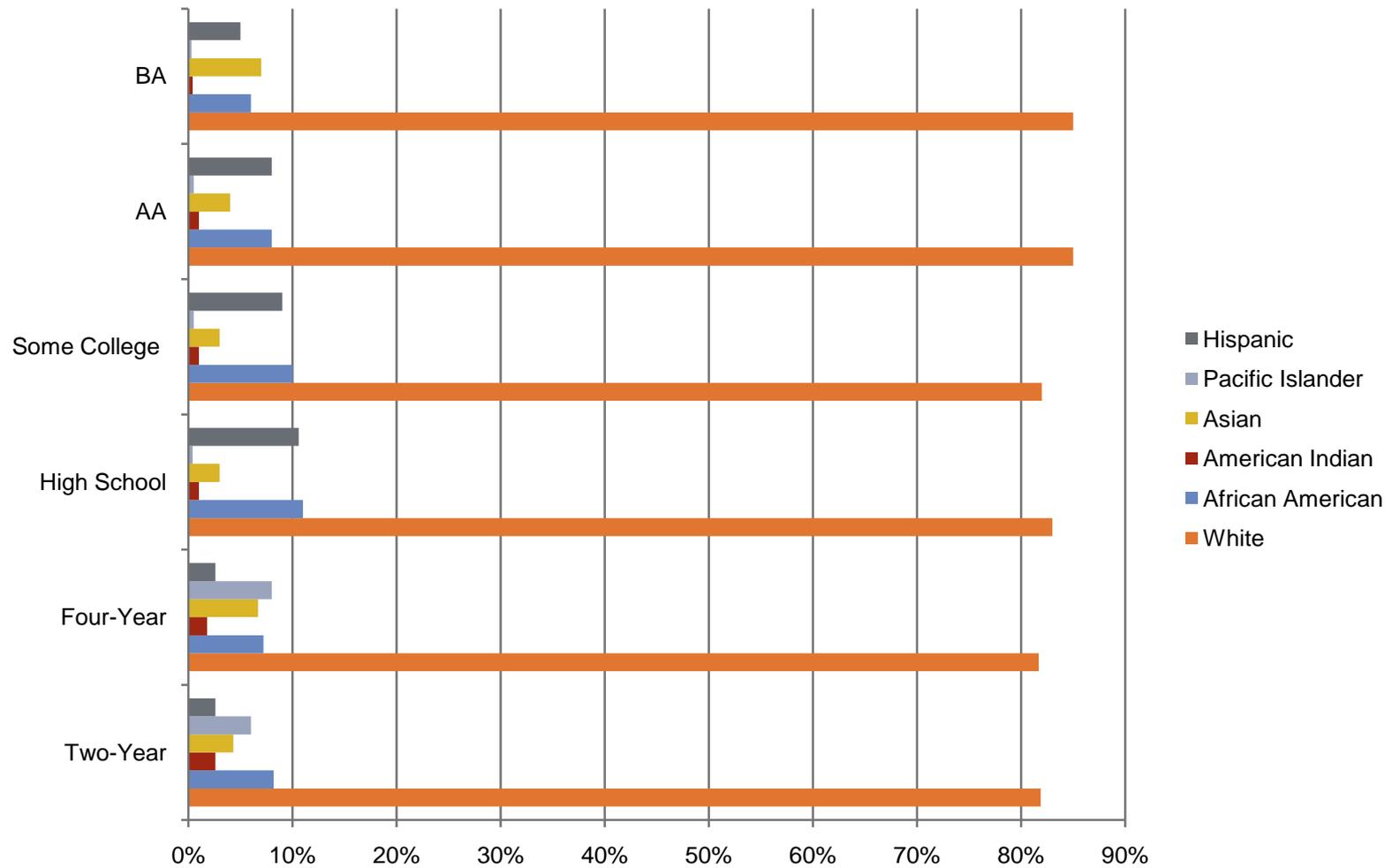
- Descriptive analyses of the variables to determine variation and central tendency.
- Crosstabulation of the college enrollment (two-year and four-year) and the categorical civic engagement variables and categorical background characteristics.
- Categorical dependent variable regression model will be used to answer the research questions.



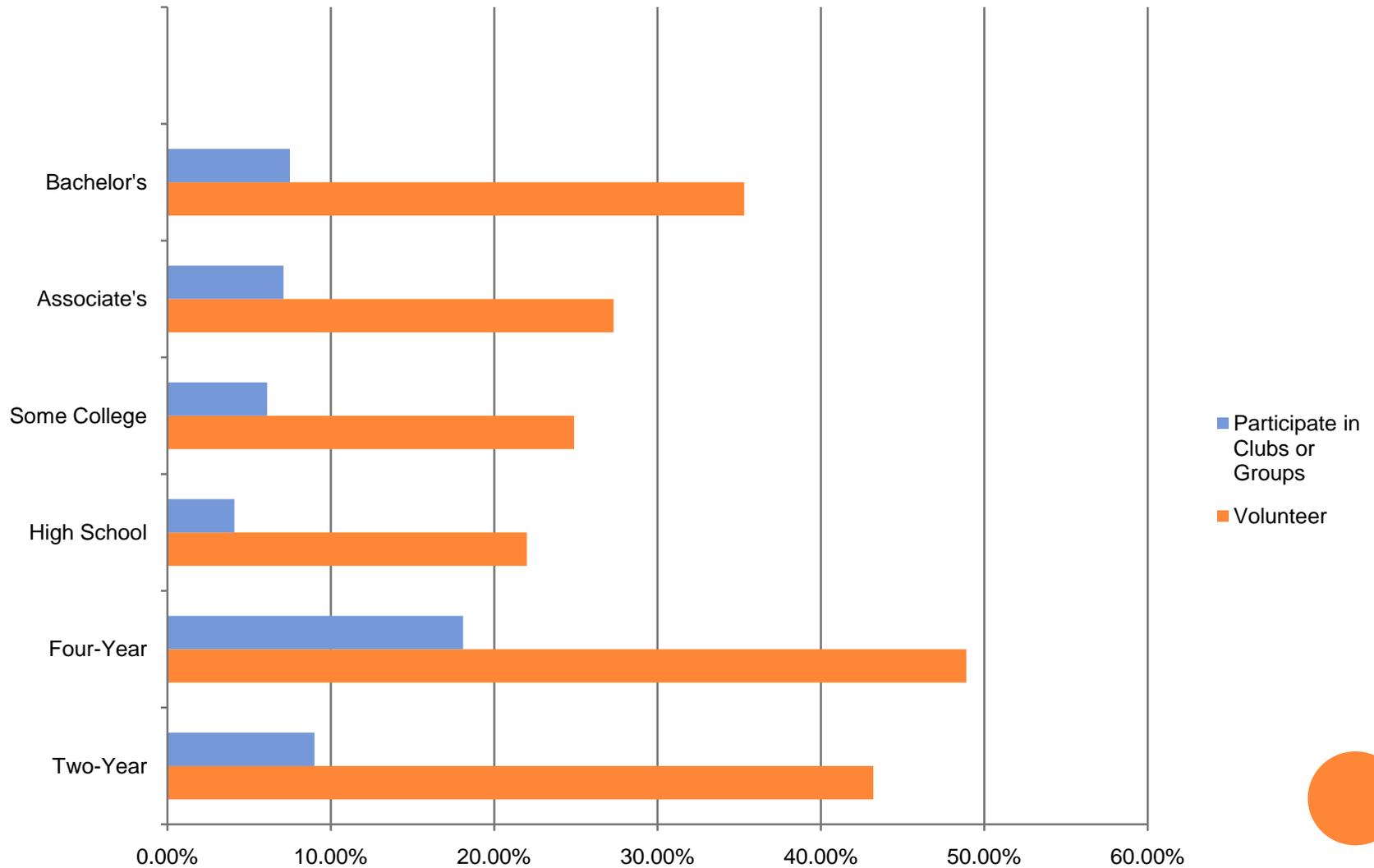
DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE - GENDER



DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE - ETHNICITY

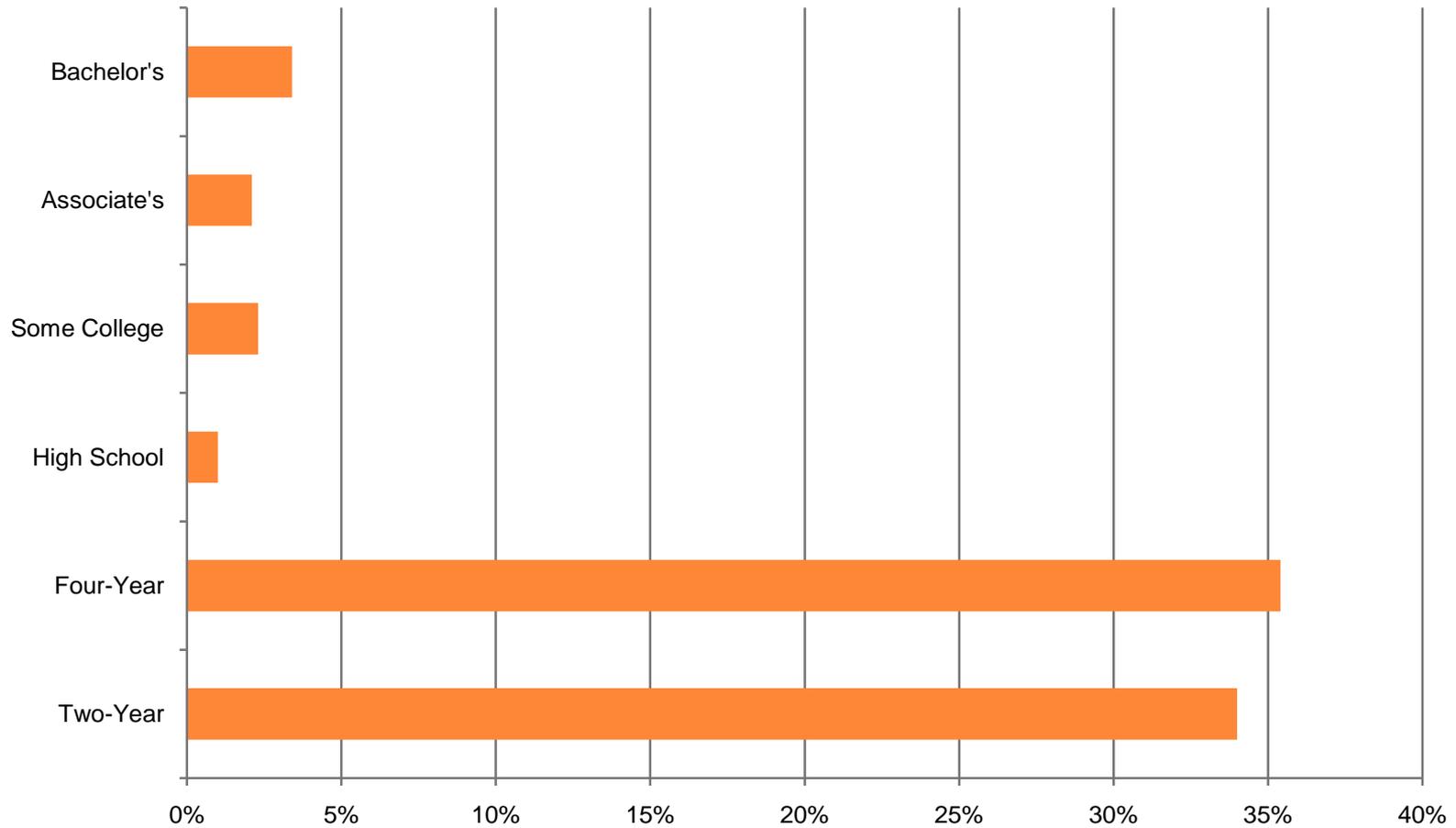


CIVIC ENGAGEMENT - COMPARISON



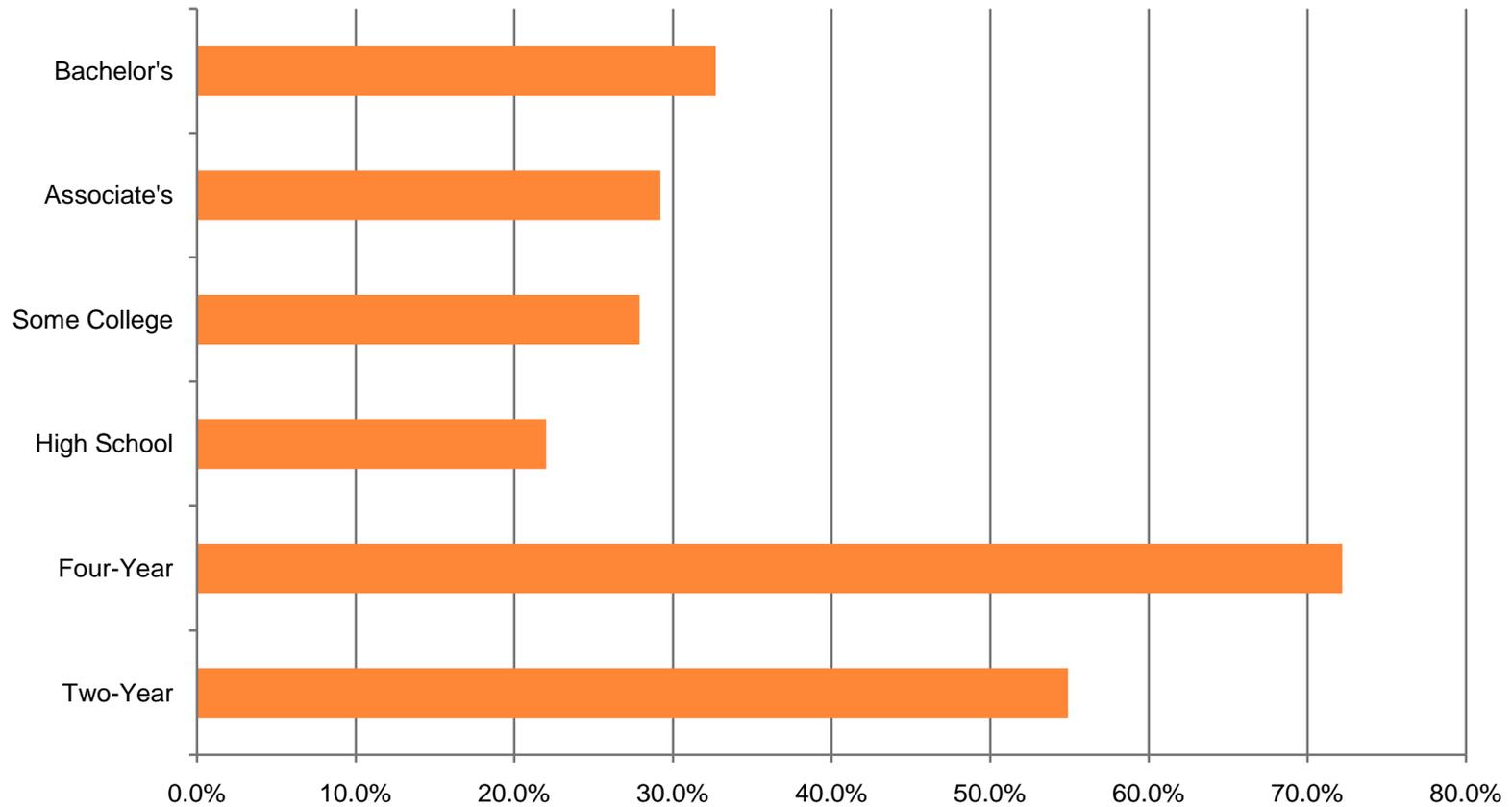
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT - COMPARISON

Participated in Demonstrations/Protests

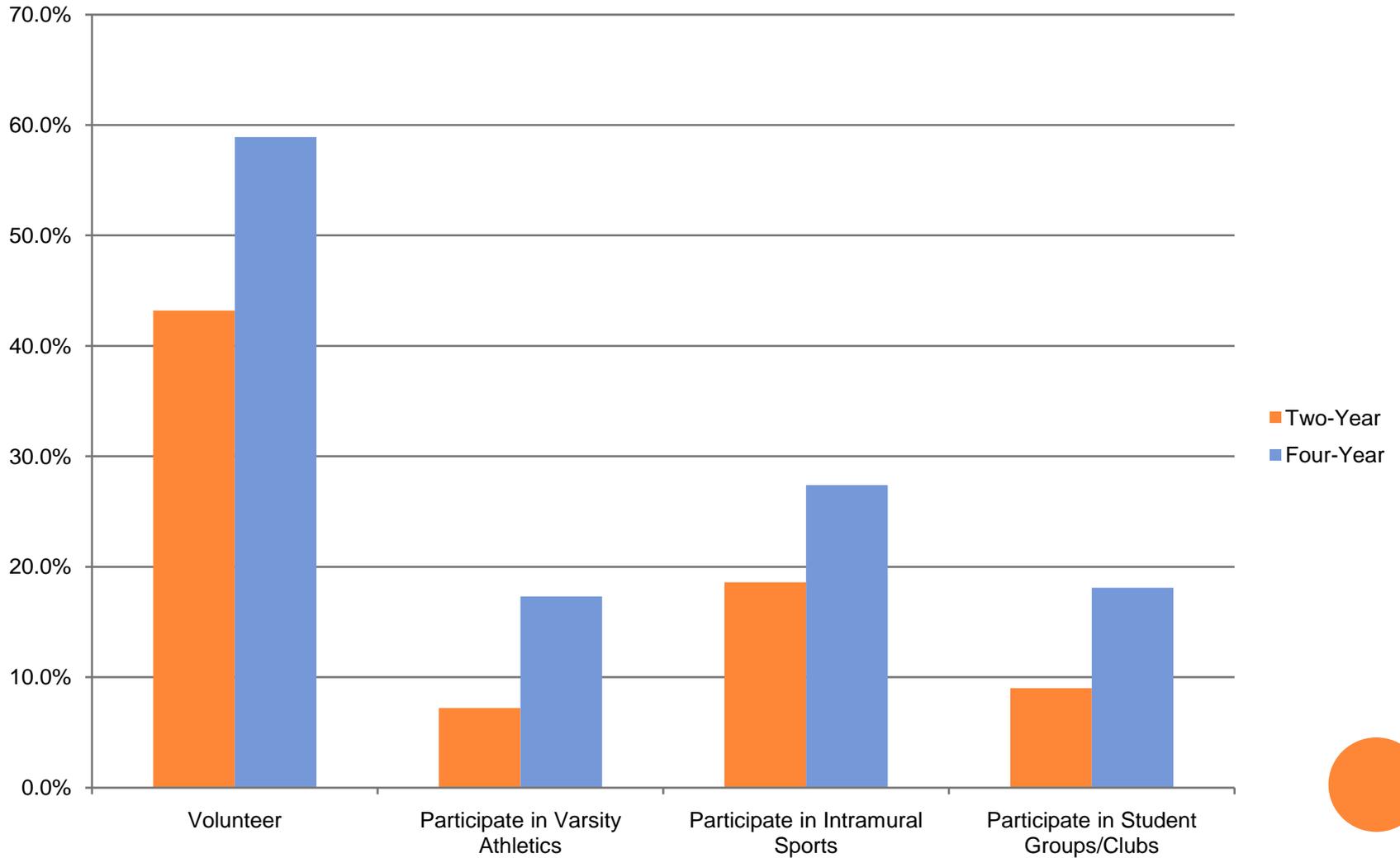


COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT - COMPARISON

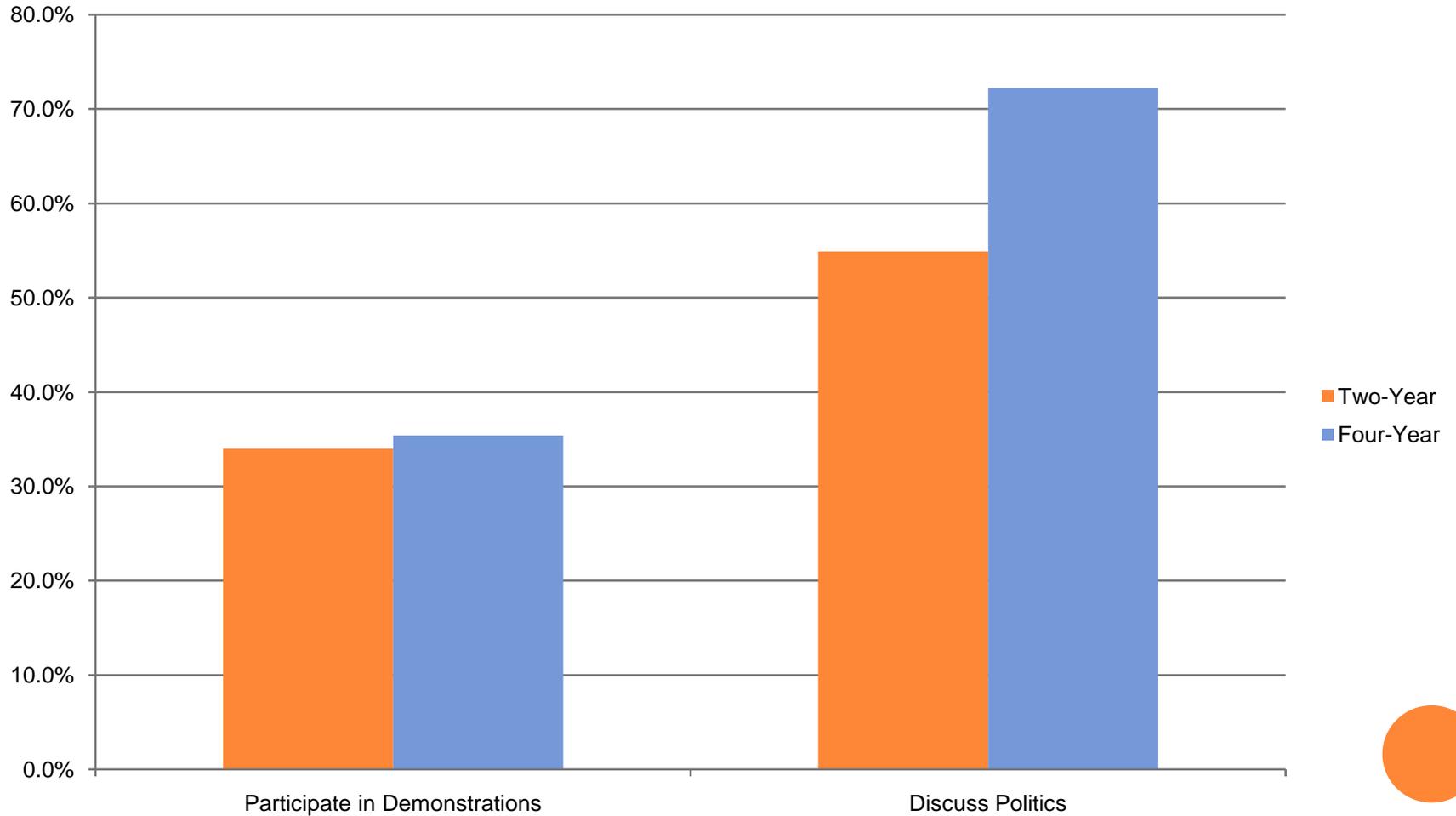
Political Knowledge



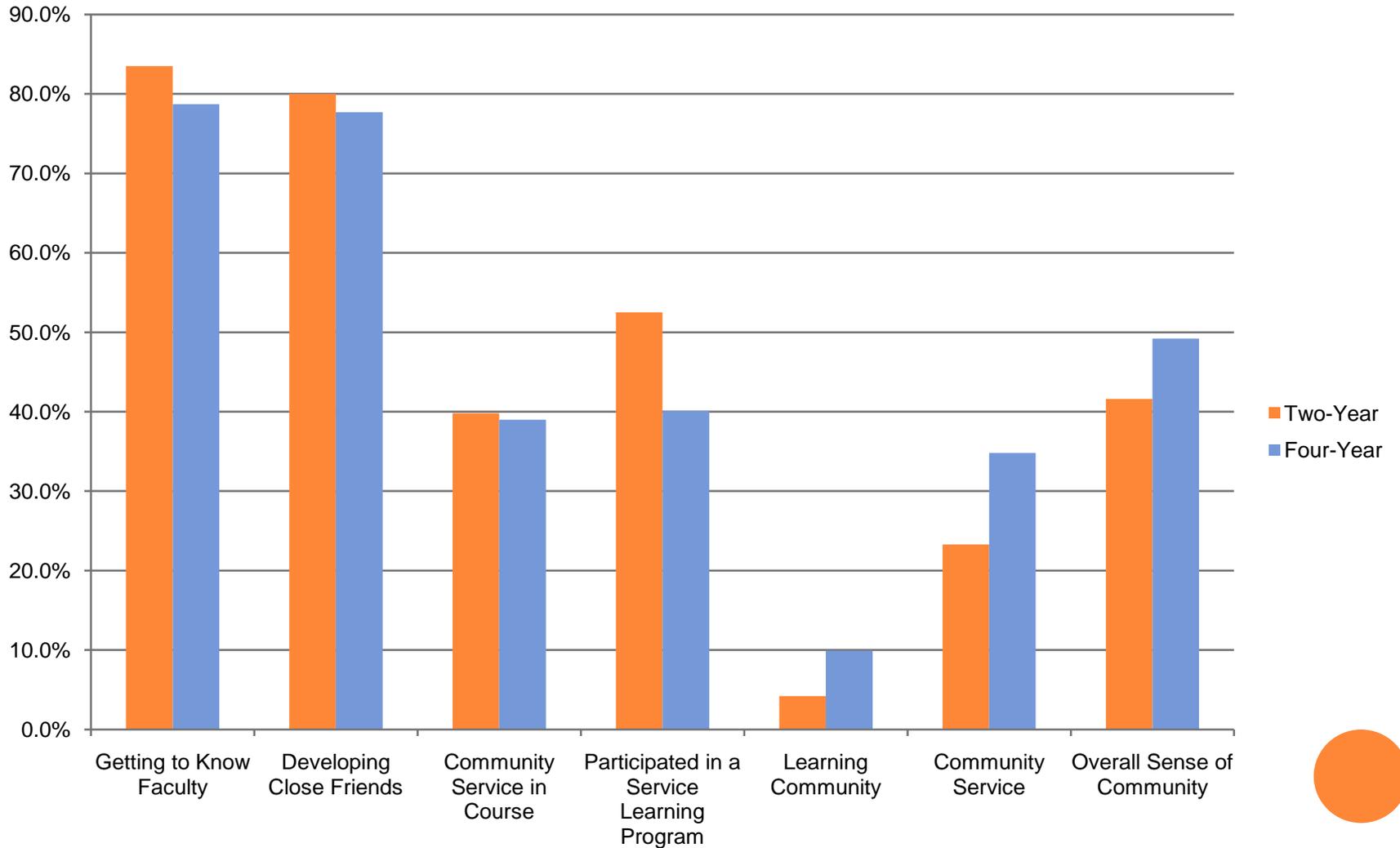
CURRENT STUDENTS – CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



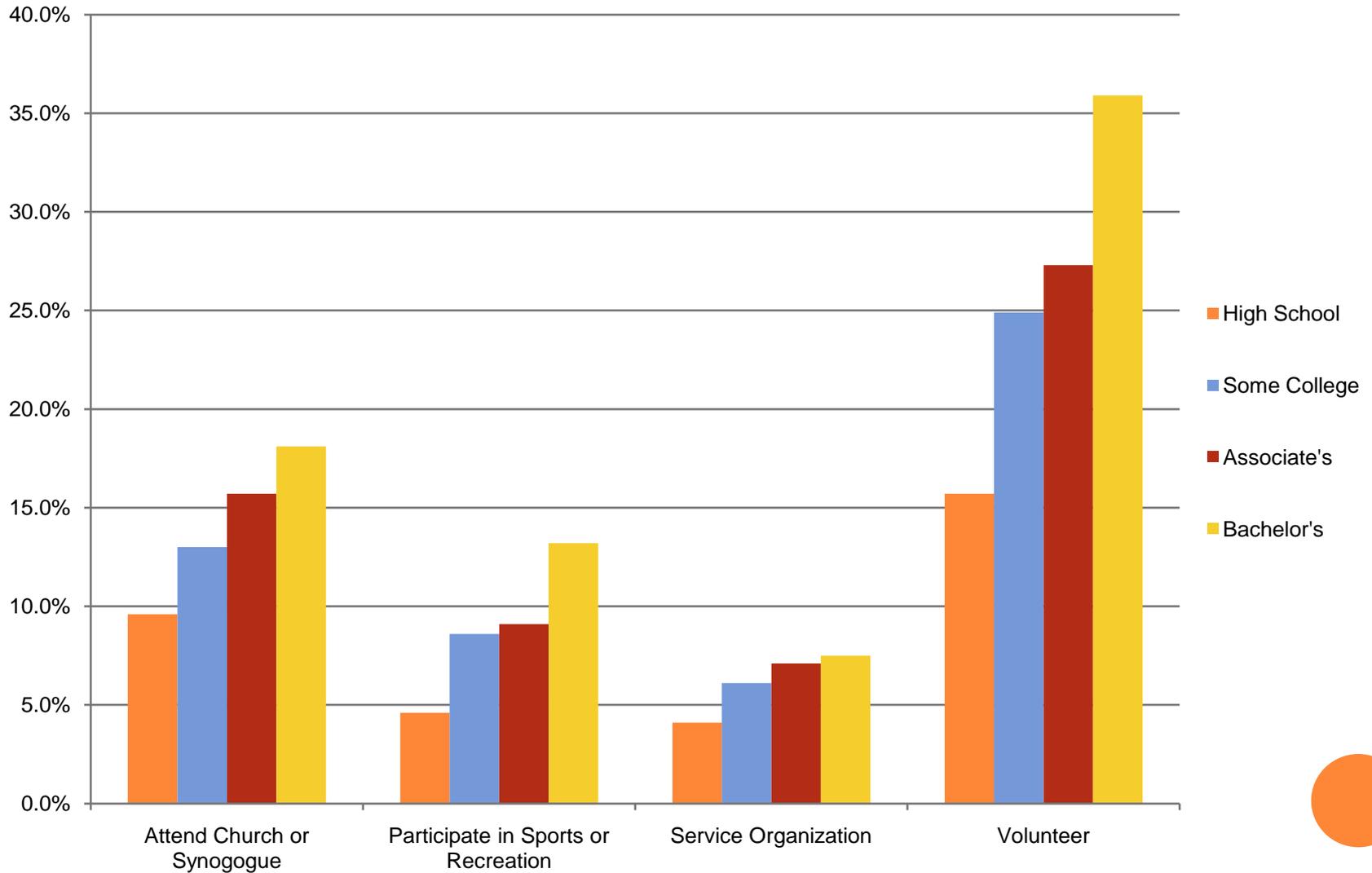
CURRENT STUDENTS – POLITICAL AND COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT



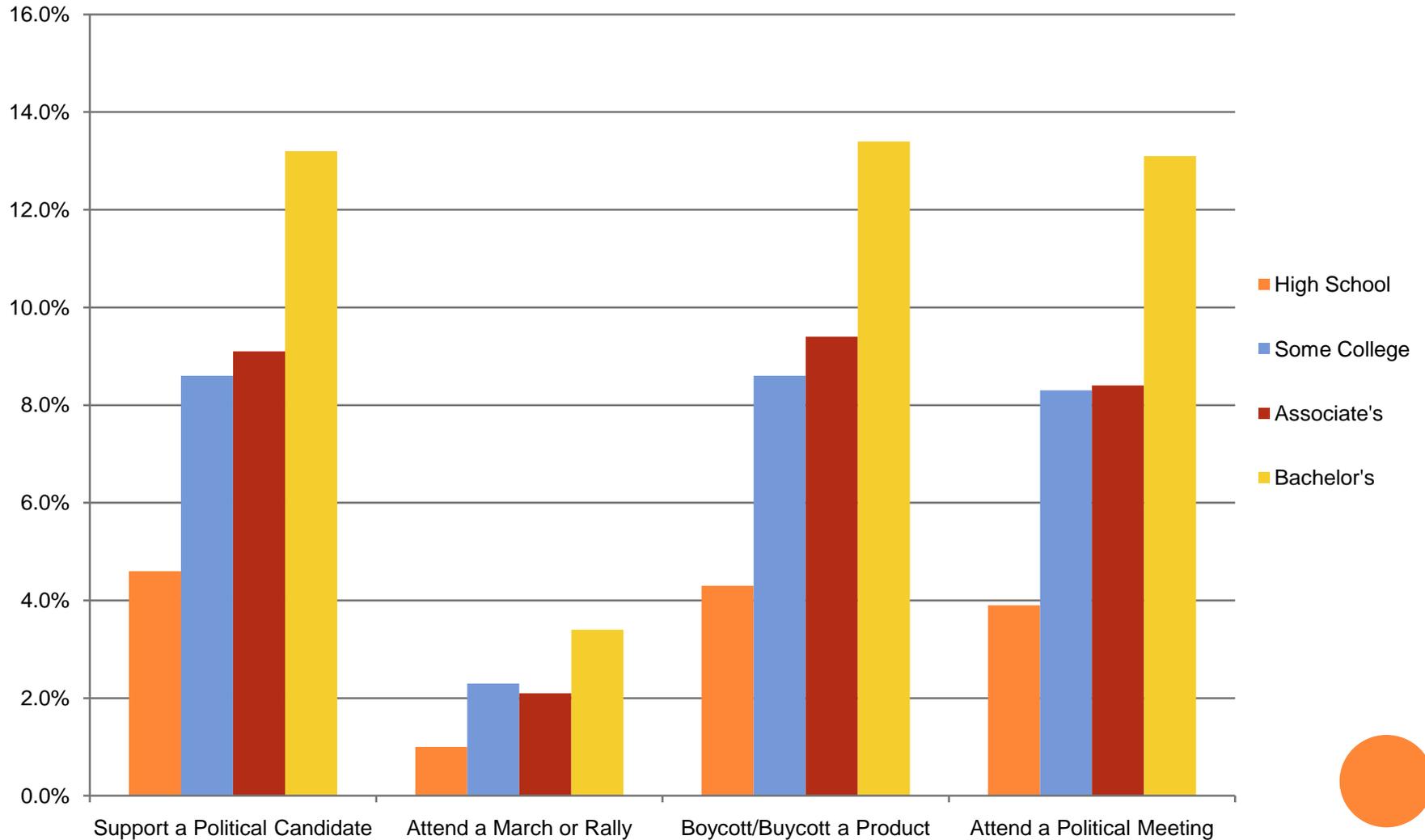
CURRENT STUDENTS – COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT



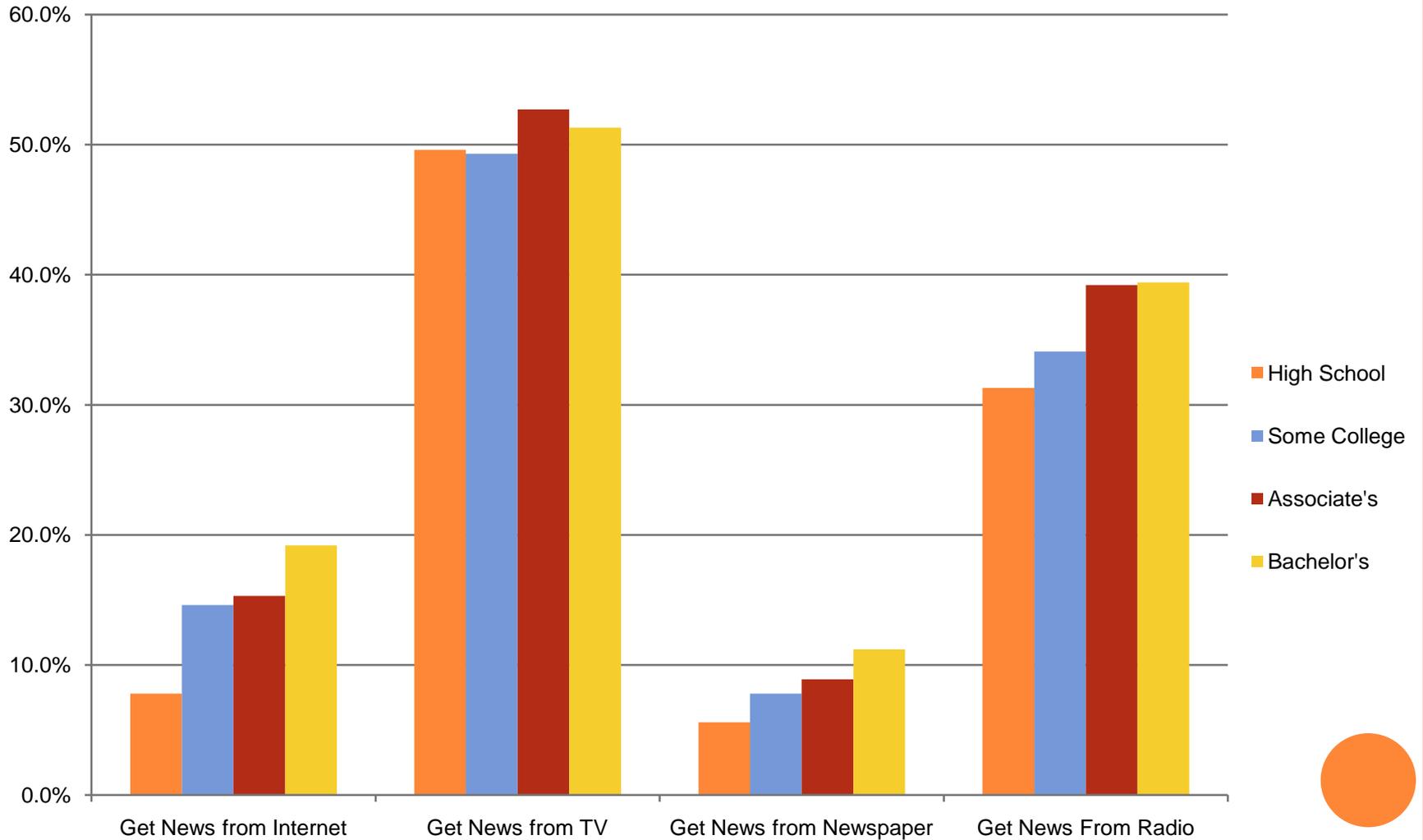
GRADUATES – CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



GRADUATES – POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT



GRADUATES – COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT



NEXT STEPS

- Categorical Dependent Variable Regression Model Analysis
- Explore whether background characteristics play a larger role in civic engagement than type of college attended/graduated from.
- Explore whether the college environment matters to the level of civic engagement of current students and graduates.



IMPLICATIONS

- Expand the research on civic engagement of community college students.
- Exhibit the importance of civic engagement at community colleges.
- Focus attention on giving a greater voice to underrepresented groups enrolled in community colleges.
- Call for a larger focus on incorporating civic engagement into the community college curriculum.



QUESTIONS?

- Comments or questions:
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