



Year 7

# The High School Years: Transitioning to Adulthood

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Welcome to the UCLA High School Project, a continuation of the three-year UCLA Middle School Diversity Project in which you and your child participated. As a parent or guardian of a student who completed their fourth year in one of our high schools in California, you have given us continued permission to include your son or daughter in the extension of this important project. Our newsletter, *The High School Years: Transitioning to Adulthood*, will keep you informed about the study.

As Principal Investigators, allow us to first reintroduce ourselves. Sandra Graham is a Professor in the Department of Education at UCLA. Jaana Juvonen is a Professor in the Department of Psychology at UCLA. Our collaborator in northern California is Frank C. Worrell, a Professor in the Graduate School of Education at UC Berkeley. We are devoting our careers to the study of adolescent development in school. We have a particular interest in adolescents' social development – their relationships with peers, their friendship networks, whether they feel accepted or rejected, their desires to be engaged in their communities, their mind-sets regarding the future, and how these feelings affect their adjustment and academic performance in high school. Based on what we have learned about adolescent development, we believe that healthy social relationships and academic success go hand-in-hand. Our long-term goal is to use the information obtained from our research to develop school programs that are sensitive to the needs of all adolescents. In the high school phase of this project, we are especially interested in how both the past middle school experiences and the students' current feelings about their new school, their classmates, and themselves influence their academic performance and healthy development in schools that range in ethnic diversity. With the most ethnically diverse population of any state in the nation, California remains the perfect setting for this study.

As a participant in this study, your son or daughter will be followed over their four years of high school and the first year following graduation. In each of these five years, your teen will complete a written and confidential survey that asks about the social and academic experiences, challenges, and successes of high school. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade Spring assessment will have already been completed by the time you receive this Newsletter. We are pleased to inform you that the great majority of students found the survey to be interesting and the use of iPads to be particularly enjoyable. They were also happy to receive a cash honorarium for completing the survey.

Published once per year, our Newsletter will provide updates about the progress in the study. Each issue will also include informative essays on topics important to adolescent development and performance in high school and descriptions of recent research on timely topics of concern to you as parents of teenagers. These articles will be written by us and our talented team of undergraduate and graduate students. This fourth issue reports our findings on civic engagement during the first two years of high school. We also include two informational articles: one on adolescents' use of social media and one on financing a college education. Our goal is to share with you our knowledge about development during the teen years based on our own research and the work of other leading scholars. Finally, we introduce a new type of article in this Newsletter. "Through the Eyes of Our Students" is a column written by one of our talented undergraduates reflecting on how what we are studying is related to his or her own personal experiences as a teenager.

If you have any questions about the study or other information contained in this Newsletter, please feel free to call (661) 310-8076. Caprice Primo, our Project Manager, will be happy to speak with you. If you prefer, she will arrange for you to speak to one of the Principal Investigators.

We are grateful to you, as parents, and to the staff and teachers at your teen's high school.

*Enjoy the Newsletter!*

Visit our website:  
[www.uclaschooldiversityproject.com](http://www.uclaschooldiversityproject.com)

# Adolescents in Action: Examining the Civic Engagement of High School Students

By Hannah Schacter and Leah Lessard

The civic engagement of youth is essential for promoting a democratic society and politically engaged citizens. Civic engagement can take many forms, such as joining community groups to address local problems, participating in a walk for a cause, or taking part in a political rally. Such activities importantly contribute to academic achievement, civic competence, responsibility towards community, and the development of positive social attitudes and behaviors during adolescence. However, today's youth are less likely than those in earlier generations to exhibit many important characteristics of citizenship (e.g., voting, working on a community project, attending club meetings).

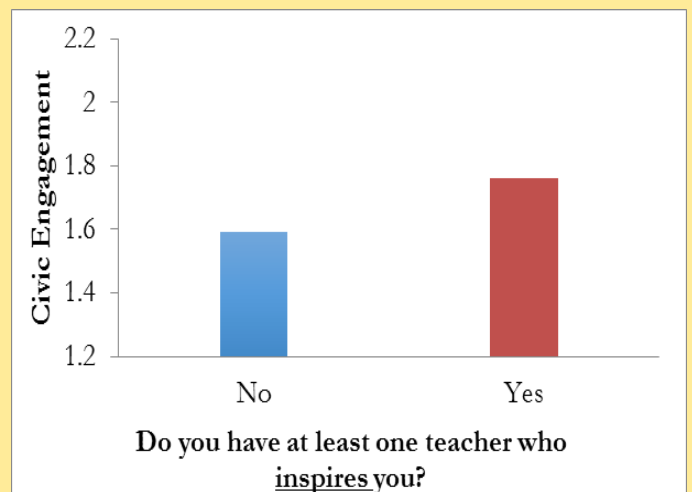
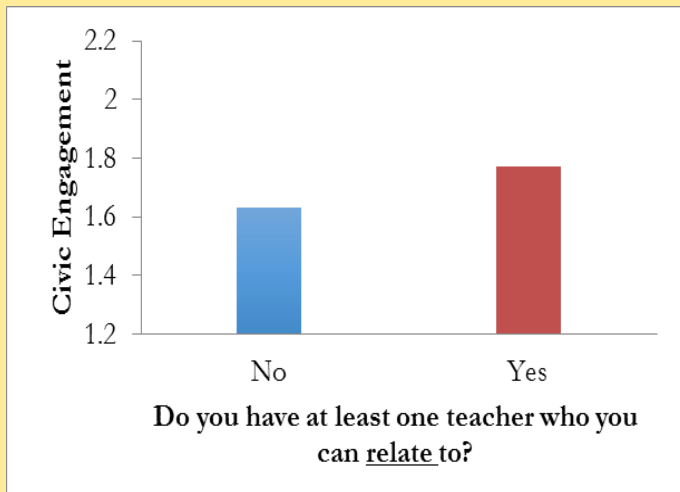
We asked 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in our survey how often they take part in civic engagement opportunities. As seen in Figure 1, most 9<sup>th</sup> grade students have volunteered to help people in their community sometimes (e.g., a few times) or frequently (e.g., more than once a month). However, over half of students have not engaged in other types of civic engagement. What factors might promote civic engagement? Our analyses revealed that civic engagement increased from 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade and that 9<sup>th</sup> graders who took on school leadership positions (e.g., student government, team captain, tutor, club founder) were more civically engaged in their communities one year later. Through such leadership positions in school, adolescents may develop a sense of agency and responsibility which translates to greater civic involvement across domains.

We also asked students about adult role models at school (e.g., teachers). 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who reported having an inspiring teacher or a teacher with whom they could relate showed more civic engagement one year later (Figure 2), and students who reported having an adult at school that they want to be like or that they can turn to showed higher levels of civic engagement one year later. Finally, we found that the more students feel like they belong at school, the more civically engaged they are. Whether by encouraging students to start their own clubs or take on a position in student government, acting as a role model for students, or promoting a culture of belonging, our results indicate that schools and teachers are uniquely positioned to promote civic engagement of high schoolers.

How often have you...	Never	Sometimes	Frequently
Volunteered your time to help people in your community?	28%	56%	16%
Helped collect money or signatures for a social cause?	59%	35%	6%
Participated in a walk or run for a cause?	59%	37%	4%
Volunteered for an environmental group?	62%	31%	7%
Volunteered for a group to help feed the homeless/care for the elderly/handicapped?	58%	36%	6%
Participated in a community or a political rally? (in person or on social media)	67%	29%	5%
Volunteered for a group that worked to reduce prejudice?	78%	19%	3%
Volunteered for a group that provided tutoring for children in the community?	69%	24%	7%

**Figure 1.** Frequencies of Civic Engagement Among 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students.

## Adult Role Models at School Promote Students' Civic Engagement



**Figure 2.** Having adult role models in 9<sup>th</sup> grade promoted civic engagement one year later (10<sup>th</sup> grade).

# Online Communication

By Hannah Schacter

Are your teens glued to their phones and computers? If the answer is yes, you are not alone. According to recent reports, teenagers spend an average of nine hours using media each day. That's even more time than high school students typically sleep on a given weeknight! But, what exactly are they doing? One of the most popular activities involves checking and browsing different types of social media. Recent reports suggest that approximately 70% of teens have their own smartphones, 90% have used a form of social media at some point in time, and 50% visit a social networking site at least once a day.

What types of social media do teens like to use? Although Facebook continues to be one of the most popular social media websites among adults, teenagers turned to applications like Snapchat and Instagram as favorites (see Table 1 for descriptions). Importantly, certain behaviors on social media can be problematic for teen mental health. For example, recent evidence shows that teens often engage in social comparison and feedback-seeking activities on apps like Facebook and Instagram. Moreover, teens who frequently use these types of media to compare their lives to other people and gain approval from peers tend to feel more distressed—especially girls and students who are less popular at school. Because teens tend to engage in strategic self-presentation online (e.g., portraying positively distorted images and videos), it is easy for youth to start believing that “everyone is happier than me.”

Similarly, some research shows that “passive browsing” activities online are especially maladaptive. Users who spend extensive time exclusively looking at other people's photos and social media profile content may experience envy, exclusion and loneliness. Because adolescents in particular are very concerned with fitting in and being accepted by peers, social media activity that highlights one's isolation from the peer group (e.g., classmate posting photos of a party you weren't invited to) can take a negative toll on teen well-being. This concern about being left out has been colloquially referred to as “FOMO”, or “fear of missing out”; initial research suggests that people with higher levels of “FOMO” tend to spend more time on websites like Facebook and experience more negative mood.

What can parents do to encourage healthy social media usage in teens? We can't forget that there are also positive effects of adolescent social media use. For example, for kids who have social difficulties or experience anxiety relating to in-person interpersonal interactions, social communication with peers online can help alleviate feelings of loneliness and distress. Social media can also promote political engagement and identity strengthening by helping teens unite around common causes or interests. As such, it is important for teens to recognize what types of social media usage make them feel anxious and sad — like passive browsing and making social comparisons — versus those that increase their sense of social connectedness and happiness. Parents can help adolescents develop these healthy habits online by learning more about the types of social media their teens use, understanding motives for usage, and having open discussions about how to balance time using these technologies.





Link to Hannah's blog post on the psychological impact of social media activity:

<http://www.psychologyinaction.org/2015/09/07/me-myselfie-and-i-the-psychological-impact-of-social-media-activity/>

## Through the Eyes of Our Students

By Becky Paz

About a year ago, me and my mother were looking through my high school yearbook. While flipping over pages that documented some of the most awkward moments in my life (my twenties are proving that to be otherwise), I found it- a picture of the varsity cheer team. I found myself fairly quickly as I was the fattest girl on the team. I pointed myself out and proudly stated that although I was fat I managed to be cheer captain. She looked at me and said, “I always admired that about you”. I stared back, debating if she meant my weight or my enthusiasm for school sports. She told me that I never allowed my weight stop me from doing what I took interest in. She recounted her experience as an overweight teenager, describing it as a period of debilitating self-awareness that prevented her from enjoying school activities.

App/Site	Description
 Facebook	Online and mobile social network used to share photo, video, text, and instant message with other users
 Instagram	Primarily mobile application used to share pictures and video
 Snapchat	Exclusively mobile application for sharing pictures and video that “disappear” after 24 hours
 Twitter	Online and mobile social network for sharing brief text, video, or picture updates

I never thought of myself as being confident. I did what I wanted regardless of the voice in the back of my head reminding me of my chubby frame. I knew I was good enough, likely because my parents acknowledged I was overweight and made diligent efforts to create a healthy environment, which cultivated body positivity in my household. I felt pretty. Even when I didn't get asked to dance at formals or when my friends were dating and I wasn't, I *still* felt pretty.

As a junior at UCLA I am at a healthy weight, fearless when facing challenges, and unafraid of throwing myself into new situations. I thank my upbringing for my confidence. I value the importance of reminding children and teens about their beauty and their ability to achieve any goal- regardless of their bodies. By doing so, passions and interests are given the opportunity to develop and grow.

# Loans, Financial Aid, and Funding

By Kara Kogachi

## Merit-Based Aid and Grants

Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH)

Grant: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/teach>

This grant helps pay for college if you plan to become a teacher in a high-need field in a low-income area.

Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grants: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/iraq-afghanistan-service>

## Need-Based Grants

Federal Pell Grants: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/pell>

Federal Supplement Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG): <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/fseog>

## Need-Based Work-Study and Campus Employment

Work Study: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/work-study>

⇒ Resident Advisor, Teaching Assistant, Campus Jobs

## Need-Based Loans

Unlike scholarships and grants, loans are money you borrow and must be paid back with interest

Overview of types of loans: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/loans>

### Types of Loans

- ⇒ Federal Perkins Loan; exceptional financial need, school is the lender so this will depend on available funds
- ⇒ Direct Unsubsidized Loans; DOE is leader, you do not need to show need to be eligible, it is based on the cost of attendance and financial aid you receive from the school. And interest starts accruing immediately
- ⇒ Private Loans; pay attention to the interest rates and avoid if possible, you do not usually have the repayment or consolidation flexibility that federal government loans do

## Financial Support for College

### 1. Federal

You must complete the Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to receive financial aid through the U.S. Department of Education and to be considered for most government, public, and university financial aid programs. Submit a free application here: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

### 2. State

Contact your state to see if you are eligible for financial aid: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/contacts/state/index.html>

### 3. College or Career School

Visit your school's website, or talk to someone in the financial aid office. You can ask about scholarships for students in your intended fields, and remember, each school may have their own internal application that have different deadlines. Check the dates!

### 4. Nonprofit or Private Organizations

Try these websites to find scholarships that are relevant to you:

- ⇒ [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)
- ⇒ [www.fastweb.org](http://www.fastweb.org)

## Scholarships

Some scholarships are merit-based and others are based on financial needs. Here are just a few of the different scholarships that you be eligible for:

- The financial aid office at a college or career school
- High school or TRIO counselor
- U.S. Department of Labor's FREE scholarship search tool
- Federal agencies
- State grant agency
- Local library
- Ethnicity-based organizations
- Scholarships for military families

## Loan Forgiveness

The Public Service *Loan Forgiveness* (PSLF) Program forgives balance on Direct Loans after making 120 qualifying monthly payments under a qualifying repayment plan while working full-time for a qualifying employer, including:

1. Government organizations at any level (federal, state, local, or tribal)
2. Not-for-profit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code
3. Other types of not-for-profit organizations that provide certain types of *qualifying public services*

## UCLA High School Project Team

### Principal Investigators

Sandra Graham, Ph.D.  
Jaana Juvonen, Ph.D.  
Frank C. Worrell, Ph.D.  
Brett Solomon, Ph.D.

### Project Managers

Caprice Primo  
Ciara Bogdanovic  
Manpreet Dhillon

### Graduate Students

Amirah Saafir  
Antonya Jackson  
Ariana Bell  
Cheri Hodson  
Daisy Camacho  
Danielle Smith  
Feliz Quinones  
Hannah Levy  
Hannah Schacter  
Jenny Chow  
Jessica Morales-Chicas  
Kara Kogachi  
Leah Lesserd  
Young Yun

### Undergraduate Students

Allison Nguyen  
Amanda Del Giacomo  
Amy Aldana  
Andy Hierl  
Angela Lan-Anh Nguyen  
Bianette Perez  
Chiamaka Nwosu  
Cyndy Garcia  
Desiree Martinez  
Edlyn Palafox  
Evelyn (Ziyi) Wang  
Frida Ramirez-Aldapa  
Jasmin Aquino  
Jasper Kushner

### Jenna Kim

Jessie Hernandez-Reyes  
Jocelyn Cuevas  
Jorge Huerta  
Julia Yi  
Kaitlyn Hart  
Lisa Lau  
Luis Mendez  
Melissa Smith  
Precious Elam  
Rene Rosas  
Sean Lynn  
Shriya Venkatesh  
Shushanik Baghdasaryan  
Soleil Herring

### Stephanie Soto-Lara

Quintara Dunbar  
Veronica Huh