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## Change in Social Movement Engagement and Leadership Should Equal a Change in Civic Education

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# Change in Social Movement Engagement and Leadership Should Equal a Change in Civic Education

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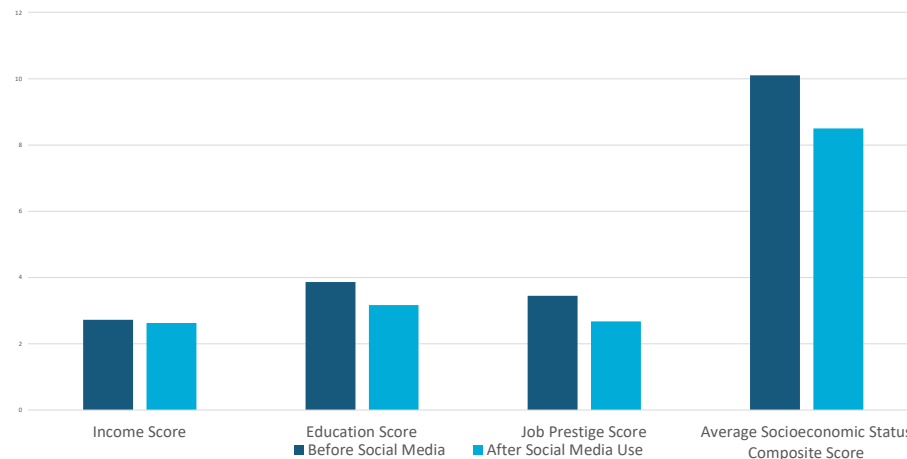
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## Introduction

Civic engagement used to look like people reading the newspaper, going to town hall meetings, writing their local representatives letters, and running for office (which involved traveling and giving speeches). The way we taught civic looked very much the same. Students were asked to read about current events, engage in polite, public debates, practice writing professional letters to their representatives, and give speeches about political topics.

Today civic engagement is more about people scrolling through social media to find out about an action, plan, or controversy which they then react to on social media, where all of their friends, family, and distant acquaintances can see. Instead of handing out flyers about an event or an issue they want to draw attention to, people will create posts, pages, Facebook events, or hashtags to spread the word. The problem is: civic education hasn't changed to reflect this new form of civic engagement. It is still about having polite, mediated debates, writing papers, giving speeches, and finding current events from traditional news outlets.

## Change in Socioeconomic Status of Social Movement Leaders With The Onset of Widespread Social Media Use:



## Results

A one-tailed t-test with a 95% confidence level revealed a critical t of 4.84, which is greater than the corresponding t\* value of 1.699. This means that we can be 95% confident that the socioeconomic status of the leaders of social movements actually is lower since the onset of social media or that in repeated samples of the same size from the same parent population, fewer than 5% of samples would yield a difference this big by chance alone if there were no true difference in socioeconomic status.

Another one-tailed t-test revealed that there is a wider range in the *age* of social movement leaders before and after social media as well.

## Methods

Using a list of social movements found on Wikipedia, I randomly selected 10 movements from before the onset of social media and 10 movements after. I then did an internet search to determine the leaders of those movement.

For each of the names on that list that I was able to find information for, I determined the leader's income, their education, and their job prestige.

I put that information on an interval scale, breaking down possible outcomes for each category to a scale from 1-5.

After each leader had been given a 1-5 score for each category, I added the scores together to get one composite socioeconomic score for each leader, whose mean could then be found and compared across time.

## Conclusion

The way people engage with politics is changing. People are learning about and engaging with movements in different ways. As that interaction changes, different types of people are finding their way to the tops of these movements.

Yet civic education has not changed to reflect this shift. Civic education needs to reflect the world around it and prepare students for the ways they will actually be expected to engage with politics. It is time we reevaluated.

Before



Tadeusz Bor-Komorowski

After



Greta Thunberg