THE CIVIC BONDING OF SCHOOL AND FAMILY: HOW KIDS VOTING STUDENTS ENLIVEN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The influence of Kids Voting USA, an interactive civics curriculum taught during election campaigns, is assessed in the context of three field experiments that took place during the fall of 2002. The research sites are Maricopa County, Arizona; El Paso County, Colorado; and Broward/Palm Beach counties, Florida. We present findings from the first wave of a panel study on the long-term effects of the curriculum on high school juniors and seniors and their parents. Data were collected from N=559 student-parent dyads. Results from standardized questionnaires are supplemented with focus-group interviews of students.

We identify the initial curriculum effects on students, on parents, and on the family system as a setting for developmental growth. After looking at impacts of the entire curriculum, we examine whether specific components help to account for particular results. Finally, we point to implications for innovations in civics education.

A central goal of the study was to develop a conceptual map of the civic bonding of school and family, in which students influence parents to pay more attention to politics, and parents encourage students to participate more actively in civics activities at school. As evident in the findings, the process begins with Kids Voting instruction, which emphasizes peer-group conversation. Students acquire an interest in partisan debates and begin to appreciate the importance of strengthening their knowledge so as to back up opinions. Students then initiate conversations with parents, and in doing so gain confidence as young citizens who have the ability to influence others. Parents respond by paying more attention to news and by acquiring opinions they can use in subsequent conversations with children.

Students and parents become embraced in a discursive system at home, which we call the domestic sphere. In this social system, a family norm of political competence develops. Students and parents are equipped and motivated to influence each other in a self-perpetuating dynamic. The family takes on every appearance of a domestic sphere in which opinions are freely expressed, knowledge is shared, media use is encouraged, and political competence is highly valued. This can occur despite prior parenting practices that had discouraged open debate about political

topics. The school-family bonding comes full circle when parents, apparently intrigued by the political conversations at home, take a greater interest in their children's civics education. Parents encourage children to express political opinions in school, thereby completing a loop of influence in which the family and the school enliven the political discussion of each other.

Other findings include:

A narrowing of gaps in civic involvement between white and non-white students. This occurred in El Paso County, where Hispanic students apparently became concerned about a proposed Colorado amendment to restrict bilingual education. Kids Voting interacted with ethnicity to narrow or completely close gaps in attention to news, attention to an election issue, knowledge, cognitive processing, willingness to listen to opposing views, willingness to disagree, and support for conventional politics.

The identification of Kids Voting components that are particularly effective. Classroom discussion and students encouraging others to vote emerged as the most consequential curriculum activities with respect to numerous indicators of civic growth.

Indirect effects on parents, replicating prior studies. Apparently through the mechanism of student-initiated conversation, Kids Voting stimulated parents' discussion with friends, strength of opinions, strength of partisanship, and support for conventional and unconventional politics.

"My dad likes to yell at the television all the time when he watches the news. We have that caught on tape. Usually I like to challenge my dad on his views ... I just want to make him explain to me the way he feels about everything. He actually got me to watch the Washington news and I would like to know why he's always yelling at it."

Florida high school student, May 2003

BACKGROUND

Scholars have searched for the genesis of civic identity in places where adolescents test out partisan allegiances, share knowledge, and monitor how opinions play out in conversation. A growing body of theoretical perspectives is coalescing under the rubric of civic empowerment as a discursive phenomenon (e.g., Fishkin, 1996; Wyatt, Kim, & Katz, 2000; McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002). The classroom, the home, and peer groups each provide opportunities for adolescent growth in political communication activities. However, it is obvious from a plethora of research that American teenagers are not uniformly preoccupied with civic activism. No where is the gap between democratic philosophy and empirical reality wider than with adolescent political involvement: scores of studies demonstrate that motivated citizenship is not an inevitable outcome of teenage life in America (National Youth Survey, 2002; Weiss, Lutkus, Grigg, & Niemi, 2001). This is the case even in a society characterized by high literacy rates and state-mandated social studies instruction. Many adolescents never adopt the dispositions required for participatory democracy, including a daily newspaper reading habit, the conviction to express minority views, or the cognitive effort that would allow them to vote as adults in their best interests.

The question arises, then, as to whether it is possible to locate a distinct sphere of social interaction in which political empowerment occurs. One way to look at generational declines in political competence is to dismiss schools, families, and peer groups as inconsequential agents of political socialization. Working independently from each other, these entities probably cannot do the job of civic nurturing by themselves. A growing number of scholars, in fact, have come to recognize that the potential for civic renewal lies in the interactive influence of multiple agents (McLeod, Eveland, & Horowitz, 1998; McDevitt & Chaffee, 1998). But how these agents might interact in ways that promote civic empowerment has yet to be explored in adequate detail. We will focus in this report on an under-examined but powerful linkage of two institutions – the school and the family. By motivating student-initiated discussion and media use at home, the school can energize the family as a domestic sphere in which political communication becomes self-sustaining. One outcome of this scenario is influence moving back in the opposite direction – from family to school. That is, parents encourage students to participate more actively in civics activities at school.

Our perspective on this cyclical dynamic is derived from an evaluation of Kids Voting USA, an interactive civics curriculum taught during election campaigns in 39 states. In this report, we will describe the curriculum's influence during the fall of 2002 in three communities: Maricopa County, Arizona; El Paso County, Colorado; and Broward/Palm Beach counties, Florida. We present findings from the first wave of a panel study on the long-term influence of the curriculum on high school students and their parents. Results from standardized questionnaires are supplemented with focus-group interviews of students. We

will identify the initial curriculum effects on students, on parents, and on the family system as a setting for developmental growth. After looking at impacts of the entire curriculum, we will examine whether specific components help to account for particular results. Finally, we will point to implications for innovations in civics education.

SCHOOLS AS A TRAINING GROUND FOR CITIZENSHIP

Up until the mid 1990s, research on curriculum effects generally concluded that the impact of social studies courses on political development is minimal beyond the direct transmission of textbook knowledge. In 1974, Jennings and Niemi suggested that students might actually develop resistance to civics education by the time they reach adolescence. Shermis and Barth (1982) argued that traditional civics instruction teaches passive citizenship; these courses are reducible to the notion that learning is what happens to children. Such curriculum consists of students memorizing the formal decision-making structures of government. But recent studies show that interactive, participatory programs can have a positive impact on adolescents. For example, Niemi and Junn (1998) drew upon a sample of 4,275 twelfth graders in an analysis of curriculum components that contribute to political knowledge; they identified classroom discussion as a particularly consequential factor.

Kids Voting USA seeks to involve students in activities that foster a sense of empowerment and connections to the civic life of a community. The immediate goal of Kids Voting is to provide students with knowledge and critical-thinking skills during an election campaign to instill feelings of civic competence. A secondary goal is to engage parents in activities such as student-parent conversations about candidates, with the hope that parents would be more likely to vote.

Studies conducted by the principal investigator of this report have demonstrated that the intervention is remarkably effective at promoting interest in an election campaign (McDevitt & Chaffee, 1998, 2000, 2002). The contexts for the prior evaluations were Kids Voting as taught in San Jose, California, in 1994 and 1998, and in Lubbock, Texas, in 2000. The curriculum stimulated news media use, discussion with parents, the acquisition of knowledge, and the formation of partisan opinions. The program of research also illustrated how student-initiated discussion benefits parents by increasing their political interest. This "trickle-up influence" was particularly strong in families of low socioeconomic status in San Jose, demonstrating that the intervention promotes equality in civic development by narrowing gaps that otherwise arise due to demographic background.

RESEARCH GOALS

The purpose of the current study is to not only replicate the prior findings, but to advance theoretical and pragmatic, pedagogical understanding in the following areas.

Curriculum Components. Kids Voting represents a multifaceted approach to teaching civics. Since its inception, administrators have experimented with different types of interactive approaches. Our prior evaluations focused primarily on the influence of the entire curriculum, although we had limited success in exploring the effects of individual components in Lubbock (McDevitt, 2002). In this study, after looking at Kids Voting lesson plans, we selected 10 activities that represent important elements for high school instruction. These activities are:

1. Frequent discussion in class about election issues.
2. Teacher encouragement to express

opinions.
3. Taking sides in classroom debates.
4. Analyzing political cartoons.
5. Analyzing political ads.
6. Service learning.
7. Working at a polling site.
8. Encouraging people to vote.
9. Family homework assignments.
10. Mock voting (with parents).

In addition to exploring the individual contributions of these components, we have included for the first time a measure of prior Kids Voting exposure. This will allow us to assess whether the program can contribute to civic growth of high school juniors and seniors beyond the development that occurred in previous years. This line of inquiry has a great deal of practical value because prior research has shown, and many teachers have observed, that Kids Voting is less effective with the older high school students (Chaffee, Moon, McDevitt, Pan, McLeod, Eveland, & Horowitz, 1995).

Closing Gaps in Citizenship. Political involvement in the United States is highly stratified by socioeconomic status, with high-SES adults and their children participating at greater levels in comparison to members of low-SES families (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). This is the case for voting, news media use, discussion about politics, and many other indicators of active citizenship. The same pattern occurs along ethnic lines, with white parents and children more involved in comparison to individuals in minority groups. However, our previous studies on Kids Voting effects demonstrated that the curriculum promotes equality in civic development – the strongest effects occur among low-SES students and parents. In 1994, the intervention in San Jose schools closed gaps in political knowledge, media use, discussion, and opinion formation (McDevitt & Chaffee, 1998, 2000).

While we were not able to find a consistent pattern of gap closing for ethnicity in the prior studies, we hope to have better luck in this study. The three study sites – in Arizona, in Colorado, and in Florida – collectively include a large percentages of Hispanic families. We will see whether Kids Voting can alleviate some of the disparities of civic involvement associated with ethnic background. To supplement the analysis of standardized questionnaires, we conducted a series of focus groups to explore what motivates civic involvement within a highly diverse group of students in Florida.

Additional Measures of Citizenship. Political scientists traditionally conceptualize communication behaviors as relatively passive dimensions of participatory citizenship. By contrast, we envision news media use and discussion as the fuel by which adolescents (and their parents) make strides toward higher levels of civic competence, as reflected in cognitive sophistication and motivation for participatory activities. Media use and interpersonal communication enliven the family as a domestic sphere, as we will explain shortly. Media use provides cognitive resources for opinion crystallization, which in turn increases confidence during political discussion. Frequent and voluntary conversations about politics, meanwhile, should engender democratic dispositions such as tolerance, reciprocity, and curiosity.

In keeping with this perspective, we will seek to redress a tendency in prior studies to ignore some critical conceptions of how civic growth proceeds. "In many cases, important indicators are overlooked altogether, among them a tolerance for diversity (of people and ideas), the ability and willingness to engage in civil discourse, and the ability to analyze news and information critically" (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, 2003). In this study, we incorporate some traditional measures for the purpose of replication and comparison with prior evaluations of Kids Voting effects. However, many of the indicators

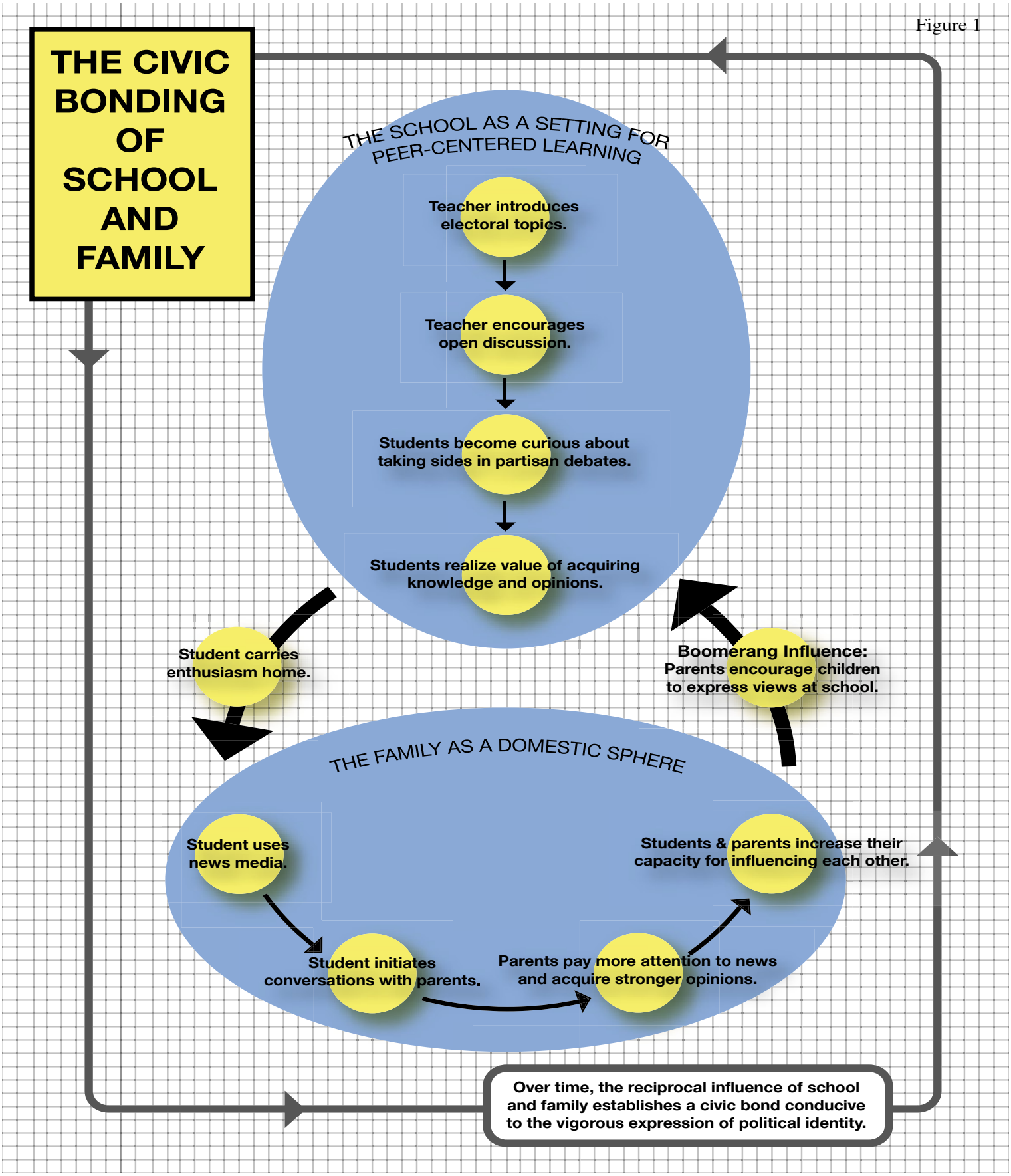
are used for the first time as measures of curriculum influence. In the area of media use and cognition, our indicators of political development for students and parents include attention to news, knowledge, awareness (or salience) of the key electoral issue in each state, and the ability to integrate new information from news and discussion. For interpersonal communication, student and parent measures include frequency of discussion, willingness to express opinions, listening to opposing views, and willingness to disagree openly. We have also included indicators for the holding of opinions, the development of strongly held views, and degree of partisanship (in either direction). For activities and behavioral intention, we created student measures of support for conventional politics, support for unconventional activism (such as participating in boycotts or protests), propensity to attend college, and participation in student government. For parents, we included support for conventional and unconventional politics, a self-report of voting in 2002, and interest in students' civics education.

The Family as a Domestic Sphere.

The most central goal of this study is to develop a conceptual map of the civic bonding of school and family, in which students influence parents to pay more attention to politics, and parents encourage students to participate more actively in civics activities at school. The entire sequence is summarized in Figure 1. There must be a strong catalyst for such a multi-layered process to occur. And that is where Kids Voting comes into play. The top cell in Figure 1 illustrates the importance of the teacher.

The cell is vertical to

Figure 1


THE CIVIC BONDING OF SCHOOL AND FAMILY
THE SCHOOL AS A SETTING FOR PEER-CENTERED LEARNING
Teacher introduces electoral topics.
Teacher encourages open discussion.
Students become curious about taking sides in partisan debates.
Students realize value of acquiring knowledge and opinions.
Student carries enthusiasm home.
Boomerang Influence: Parents encourage children to express views at school.
THE FAMILY AS A DOMESTIC SPHERE
Student uses news media.
Student initiates conversations with parents.
Parents pay more attention to news and acquire stronger opinions.
Students & parents increase their capacity for influencing each other.
Over time, the reciprocal influence of school and family establishes a civic bond conducive to the vigorous expression of political identity.

acknowledge that most adolescents are not particularly interested in politics, and thus some top-down influence, from teacher to parent, is necessary. By participating in peer-group conversations, students acquire an interest in partisan debates and begin to appreciate the importance of strengthening their knowledge so as to back up opinions.

News media use, of course, is useful for acquiring political information and this activity largely occurs in the home. Students then initiate conversation with parents and in doing so gain confidence as young citizens who have the ability to influence others. Parents respond by paying more attention to news for acquiring opinions they can use in subsequent conversations with children. Students and parents are now embraced in a discursive system at home, which we call the domestic sphere. In this social system, a family norm of political competence develops. Students and parents are thus equipped and motivated to influence each other in a self-perpetuating dynamic.

The cell for family interaction is horizontal to signify the equality of children and parents in the social influence process. In developing this model of school-family interaction, we are casting aside a series of unfortunate assumptions about young people being resistant to civic growth. High school students, in fact, do most of the work in the bonding of school and family. The students (not their parents and not their teachers) establish the first link between school and family, as shown in Figure 1. The household as a holistic system benefits once the student-to-parent effects are translated into reciprocal influence. One unintended but positive outcome is that the family takes on every appearance of a domestic sphere in which opinions are freely expressed, knowledge is shared, media use is encouraged, and political competence is highly valued. This can occur despite prior parenting practices that had discouraged open debate about political topics. The school-family bonding comes full circle when parents, apparently intrigued by the political conversations at home, take a greater interest in their children's civics education ("boomerang influence" in Figure 1). At this point in the process, parents encourage children to express political opinions in school, thereby completing a loop of influence in which the family and the school enliven the political discussion of each other.

The family as a domestic sphere should be conducive to civic involvement outside the home as well. For example, family discussion should provide reciprocal influence in which family members encourage each other to vote in future years. We plan to examine this process in the second and third year of this study

We created family-level indicators to document these activities, and also considered whether the domestic sphere might benefit the family beyond civic growth. Theorists of family development conclude that healthy families are characterized by social roles and relational patterns that reflect two primary goals: cohesion and adaptability (Bodman & Peterson, 1995; Day, Gilbert, Settles, & Burr, 1995). Olson (1995) defines cohesion as "feeling of emotional closeness with another person" (p. 135) and adaptability as "the ability to change power structures, roles, and rules" in relationships (p. 137). Our general expectation is that political communication, while potentially divisive, is good for the family – it allows for cohesion in the exchange of opinions and information, along with facilitating flexibility in the child-parent relationship. In our model of the school-family linkage, the parent must adapt to a newly politicized child.

ELECTORAL CONTEXTS

The election year of 2002 provided plenty of stimulation for political socialization, and it was the job of Kids Voting teachers to make sure that students were paying attention to campaign events, controversies, and news. Along with races for governor and other high-profile seats, the contests in Arizona, Colorado, and Florida each featured at least one contentious amendment/proposition. We provide here a brief overview of the electoral contexts for the three study sites.

Arizona. One of the fastest growing states in the nation, Arizona is a mix of Western frontier and high-tech innovation. Arizona boasts one of the nation's fastest growing populations and the expansion of a sophisticated, de-centralized economy that belies its early days of state-hood. Politically, the state is also a paradox of the old and the new. Largely due to the influence of Barry Goldwater, Arizona is predominantly conservative: it is the only state to vote Republican every presidential campaign from 1952 to 1992.

Our study site, Maricopa County, contains more than 50 percent of the state's voters. The vast majority of this population is concentrated in the greater Phoenix area. SES indicators show Maricopa County to be more affluent and slightly less diverse than the rest of the state. The ethnic backgrounds of the county are as follows: 77 percent white, 4 percent African American, 2 percent Native American, 2 percent Asian, and 25 percent Hispanic. (The summed percentages exceed 100 due to multiple responses for the U.S. Census data).

Arizona's gubernatorial election in 2002 saw Democrat Janet Napolitano defeat Republican Congressman Matt Salmon (46 percent to 45 percent). Salmon won Maricopa County, however (47 percent to 45 percent). Napolitano succeeds Goldwater conservative Jane Hull to become Arizona's second consecutive woman to sit in the governor's chair. The election featured three competing gambling propositions: 200, 201, and 202. Only the last of these passed. Proposition 202 requires the governor to approve new tribal gaming compacts. It gives tribes one to four gaming facilities, 475 to 1,400 slot machines, and 75 to 100 card tables. Tribes may offer blackjack, poker, wagering on horse and dog races, lottery games, bingo and keno.

Colorado. Prior to the 1970s, Colorado was politically a bit more Republican and conventionally conservative than the United States as a whole. Since then, two generations of politicians and partisan agendas have shaped the political culture of the state: liberal Democrats in the1970s and the ascendancy of a second wave of Republicans in the late 1990s that continues to hold political power into 2003.

The liberal movement of the 1970s was driven by concerns about limiting growth and preserving the splendor of the Rocky Mountain state. The current trend toward conservative priorities has its roots in the high-tech explosion along the Front Range in the mid 1990s. Since 1990, 300,000 people moved to the state—many of them coming from Southern California and bringing a preferred moral and political climate.

El Paso County is home to conservative initiatives such as Focus on the Family. Activists from Colorado Springs authored the "Tax-Payers Bill of Rights" in 1994, which restricts the growth of state government. El Paso County voters are solidly Republican – they cast ballots in near opposition to the state in the 1996 presidential election. The county is comparable to the rest of Colorado in SES indicators. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the county median household income was $46, 844. The ethnic breakdown is 83 percent Anglo, 11 percent Hispanic, 7 percent black, 2 percent Asian, and 1 percent Native American.

The 2002 election featured the breezy

re-election of Governor Bill Owens by a 63-to-34-percent margin over Democrat Rollie Heath. Voters turned down Amendment 31 in a highly publicized and financed campaign. The amendment would have required that all public school students be taught in English unless they were explicitly exempted. It would have required students who do not speak English to be taught English through sheltered language immersion programs. It would have authorized a parent to sue for enforcement and provided detailed penalties for teachers and school board members. Partisan rhetoric featured conservatives advocating "English only" amidst the patriotism of post 9-11 America. Opponents cited racially motivated invective. The amendment narrowly failed statewide. With its substantial Hispanic base, El Paso County also voted no (55 percent to 45 percent).

Florida. Half a century ago, Florida was the least populous state in the South, with 1.4 million people. Today it is the fourth most populous state in the United States with 14 million people. Florida is on the leading edge of a nation-wide shift to service-oriented economies and tourism. With the influx of sun-seeking residents, the Florida of today is a hybrid of emerging, blended cultures. It is also a state whose various subcultures are seen by many as Balkanized. Quite separated from one another are the Latino-Cuban populations of Miami-Dade County, the newer affluent communities south of Tampa, the high-tech Space Coast communities and family suburbs around Cape Canaveral, the heavily Jewish retirement communities of the Gold Coast, and the more traditionally "Southern" western Panhandle bordering Georgia. Politically, Florida has become the most Republican of the nation's ten largest states.

Palm Beach County borders Broward County along the Gold Coast. Both counties are markedly more Democratic than the prevailing Republican ethos of Florida. Electoral districts in Broward County alone account for 43 percent of the state's 7 current Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives. The median household incomes (Census 2000) for the counties are in the $42,000 to $45,000 range, compared with the state median of $38,819. The ethnic breakdown for Broward is 71 percent white, 20 percent African American, 17 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Native American, and 2 percent Asian. Palm Beach has a similar ethnic makeup, although not quite as diverse.

In 2002, incumbent Jeb Bush easily handled Democrat Bill McBride (56 percent to 43 percent). Meanwhile, Amendment 9 proposed that the Legislature provide funding for sufficient classrooms to reduce class size. The amendment passed 52 percent to 48 percent statewide, and 70-30 in Broward County.

METHODS

Using quantitative and qualitative methods, our intent is to examine long-term influences of Kids Voting on high school juniors and seniors and their parents. The entire project consists of multiple waves of data collection, of students and parents in the same families, over a three-year period. We have completed the first year of data collection using standardized questionnaires supplemented by a series of focus group interviews to gain additional insights. Here we will provide a brief overview of the panel design and then concentrate on procedures used for the baseline year of data collection.

The design calls for documenting effects in the context of three field experiments. We compare at each site Kids Voting schools with a comparison group of non-Kids Voting schools. Our intention is that this initial study can stand alone. However, in our overall conception of this project, 2002 survey data would provide a baseline for follow-up interviews in the fall of 2003 and 2004. With subsequent funding

support, we would contact and re-interview the graduated seniors in 2003 and 2004, as well as those students who were juniors in 2002. We would contact the parents also for interviews in 2003 and 2004. Figure 2 describes the overall project, which entails a three-wave panel design.

The first phase of data collection involved post-curriculum interviews of students and parents. While families in both the control and experimental groups were exposed to the election campaign, only the Kids Voting families included a student who participated in the extensive curriculum experiences. S1 and P1 in Figure 2 represent the first wave of student and parent interviews, which were conducted after Election Day of 2002. S2 and P2 are the planned interviews one year after the curriculum experience, and S3 and P3 are planned interviews two years after the curriculum exposure, conducted after Election Day of 2004.

QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

This study takes advantage of field settings that create condition for a series of natural experiments. Each of the three sites included the presence of both Kids Voting schools and non-participating schools. Similar demographics between the two groups would help us to eliminate extraneous factors as explanations for Kids Voting effects. We will test our assumption of demographic matching in the Results section. The design does not fit entirely the requirements for a fully controlled experiment in that we as the investigators did not randomly assign students to independent variable conditions. We consequently characterize this study as a quasi-experiment, in which the selection to contrasting conditions is unbiased but not literally randomized (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). A particular student's participation in the curriculum was determined by decisions made by school administrators and teachers, making exposure to Kids Voting functionally equivalent to random assignment.

Kids Voting programs vary from community to community depending on the amount of volunteer support and the discretion of district administrators and individual teachers. Instructors in most school districts have a great deal of autonomy in how they teach curriculum components, and in this case any given teacher might decide to use all, some, or none of the Kids Voting lesson plans. Consequently, we conceptualize Kids Voting exposure as a continuous – rather than

Figure 2. Panel Design: Three Waves

	First Phase		*Second Phase*	*Third Phase*
	Sept. to Nov. 5 2002	Nov. 19, 2002 to Feb. 25, 2003	Fall 2003	Fall 2004
	Election campaign			Election campaign
Students:	Kids Voting for experimental group	S1 interview	S2 interview	S3 interview
Parents:		P1 interview	P2 interview	P3 interview

a dichotomous – variable. The sites thus do not create for us clearly contrasting experiment vs. control group conditions. All of the students and parents could have been exposed to various forms of political stimulation from school activities, electoral events, or news coverage. And we expect that many teachers who did not formally adopt the Kids Voting curriculum could have used similar lesson plans. However, the diffusion of Kids Voting activities within many but not all classrooms added to variation in the types and intensity of civics instruction.

SITE SELECTION

Data collection from several regions adds further to variation in activities such as the frequency of classroom debates about candidates. The three sites – one in the Southwest, one in the Rocky Mountain West, and one in the Southeast – increase our capacity to make generalized inferences about the processes and outcomes of curriculum influence. Furthermore, each community has a unique political environment provided by local candidates, issue controversies, and news coverage. Multiple field settings provide an opportunity to investigate how a school intervention might exert influence within the particular context of a community. Many Kids Voting lesson plans, in fact, take advantage of the ongoing stimulation provided by an election campaign and news coverage. For instance, we might find that a curriculum is particularly effective when it is taught in connection with media coverage of a contentious proposition. We used the following selection criteria for the sites:

• Strong implementation of Kids Voting.
• The existence of both Kids Voting and comparison (control) schools with the two groups having similar demographics.
• Ethnic and SES diversity. Our previous research showed that curriculum influence – via student-initiated discussion at home – is most pronounced within low-income families. The current study will explore whether the school intervention also interacts with ethnic background to close gaps in citizenship.
• Proximity to the principal investigators. This is the case for the Colorado Springs area and the Florida counties.

After talking with several state directors – and noting programs that earn special recognition from the national office of Kids Voting USA – we believe that the locations chosen represent three of the strongest Kids Voting sites. While the program has expanded to 39 states, participating school districts vary considerably in the success of implementation. For example, some programs were inactive for the 2002 election due to lack of funding or community support. Kids Voting is indeed an ambitious endeavor as it represents the coordination of school district administrators, teachers, and community volunteers. Consequently, we chose carefully.

DATA COLLECTION & SAMPLING

Our original intent for data collection was to work with a Kids Voting and a comparison school district in each region to obtain permission for distributing questionnaires to students in classrooms. However, with funding not secured until the late summer of 2002, this option became problematic given the amount of time necessary to work with multiple school-site administrators. While working with the schools would have represented a cost effective method for obtaining student respondents, we were still left with the task of reaching parents. We were also concerned about the lack of external validity due to the selection of just two schools for each of the states. We consequently shifted to population-based screening, in which we purchased sampling frames for the three sites,

thereby bypassing the schools in terms of questionnaire administration. Due to increased costs associated with this method, our sample size was reduced substantially but we obtained more diverse groups of respondents as the families came from school districts throughout a given region. The total sample includes students representing more than 150 schools.

We obtained lists of students and parents from Survey Sampling, Inc., the leading vendor for survey research sample frames. To maximize the response rate for a self-administered mailback, we used Dillman's (1978, 2000) Total/Tailored Design Method, which includes follow-up contacts to non-respondents. In addition, we included small incentives ($5 phone cards) in the initial mailing and a 1-800 number in case students or parents had questions. Along with asking respondents to complete the questionnaire, we requested extensive contact information so that we could reach them for the subsequent interviews. We also provided a web-based survey, anticipating that this option would be especially attractive for the adolescents. Finally, we conducted telephone interviews to reach students and parents who failed to respond initially.

In accordance with federal regulations, questionnaires and cover letters for both students and parents were sent in a single packet addressed "To the parents of (student)." The cover letter requested parent cooperation and consent for the child to participate. In the telephone follow-up calls (when questionnaires were not already received), parents were contacted first to gain consent to interview the minors.

The initial questionnaire packet mailing took place on November 19, 2002. Questionnaires were coded such that parent and student responses could be linked through identification numbers. The cover letter included web survey ID numbers that could be used in lieu of the paper questionnaire. Reminder post cards were mailed to non-respondents on December 9. Telephone follow-up began December 17. During this phase, at least 10 attempts were made before coding a number as unreachable. Web surveys were completed throughout the field period. Data collection ended on February 25, 2003. The N for the final sample is 559 student-parent dyads (1,118 respondents).

Response Rates. A confluence of design factors created a daunting challenge for us in trying to achieve a high response rate. Adolescent children represent a difficult-to-reach population, and we needed to gain cooperation from both a parent and a student to complete a dyad. Meanwhile, the interview topics involved controversial issues (i.e., politics) and sensitive questions (i.e., about family interaction and parenting style). Even with our extensive follow-up requests and incentives, the overall cooperation rates were lower than anticipated. The sample frame also yielded a smaller than expected percentage of eligible respondents. The original sample frames were comprised of 2,400 student names per location. Feedback from the 800-number and the telephone follow-up phase revealed that a large percentage of the sample frame in each location was ineligible (that is, did not have a high school junior or senior living in a household). Approximately 32 percent of the Arizona sample frame, 42 percent of the Colorado sample frame, and 35 percent of the Florida sample frame were ineligible. Three to four percent were undeliverable (bad addresses) across the sites.

The cooperation rate for completed parent-student dyads represents the ratio of completed questionnaires/interviews to eligible respondents contacted. The percentages are 58 for Arizona, 62 percent for Colorado, and 55 for Florida. These rates are consistent with a recent survey effort to reach young adults on matters of civic engagement without the benefit of school-site administration (National

Survey of Student Engagement, 2002).

The sampling frame is defined as all families in the three regions with at least one student in the eleventh or twelfth grade. The sample obtained is upwardly biased due to differential rates of cooperation, mobility, and availability of respondents in different SES and ethnic categories. We provide demographic portraits of the student sample in Appendix Table 1 and of the parent sample in Appendix Table 2. We tried to counteract somewhat the tendency for an upward tilt in SES among cooperative respondents by offering the $5 phone card incentives, but the total sample undoubtedly under-represents low-SES groups and parents who speak Spanish as their first language. These sampling biases should be kept in mind while interpreting the results, but they would not pose problems for inferences about Kids Voting influence if we find that there are no appreciably demographic differences between Kids Voting families and the comparison group.

MEASUREMENT OF KIDS VOTING PARTICIPATION

A continuous scale represents the reality of Kids Voting implementation better than a dichotomous indicator in that a teacher might opt to use a component but not all of the curriculum. The student questionnaire included 10 items used to trigger a respondent's recall of Kids Voting experiences. No single item is definitive evidence of participation, but responses to the items collectively provide a probabilistic approach to measurement based on a summed scale. The more likely a student recognized activities as part of her instruction, the more likely the student was exposed, and the stronger we assume the curriculum was in intensity for that student.

For the first two questions, students used a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "never" and 5 meaning "very often." Students then answered "yes" or "no" to the remaining questions. These items were coded as yes=1 and no=0.

1. In school this fall, how often has the election been discussed in your classes?

2. How often have your teachers encouraged you to say what you think about politics, even if the topic is controversial?

Consider only what you did this year in school, not in previous grades. This year, did you:

3. Take sides in a debate?
4. Analyze a political cartoon?
5. Analyze a political ad?
6. Participate in a "service learning" program?
7. Work at a polling site on Election Day?
8. Encourage people to register to vote?
9. Do any homework assignments on the election that involved family participation?
10. Vote with a parent on Election Day?

Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .62.

We also asked students, with a single item, to recall how often they participated in these activities in prior grades.

Please recall what you did in previous grades. How many of the activities just mentioned did you participate prior to this year? Coded: none=0, 1-2=1, most=2, all or nearly all of them=3.

INDICATORS OF CURRICULUM INFLUENCE

We included an array of civic involvement indicators involving media use, cognition, discussion, opinions, and civic intentions and behaviors. Appendix tables 3, 4, and 5 report descriptive statistics respectively for the student, parent, and family indicators.

The Appendix provides the item wording and coding schemes for these variables along with demographics.

DEMOGRAPHIC MEASURES

The following demographic variables were measured for students: gender, ethnicity, religious group membership, grade level, and grades earned in school. For parents, the indicators are gender, ethnicity, SES, religious group membership, and frequency of prior voting.

VALIDITY

Most of the criterion variables for curriculum effects are based on self-reports of political behavior. These measures are subject to exaggeration or selective recall as respondents seek to make themselves appear more civic minded than they really are. However, our concerns about internal validity are alleviated due to several design elements:

- The questionnaires included a knowledge test for students and parents, creating at least one category of effect not subject to demand characteristics of the interview. If knowledge is then strongly correlated with curriculum exposure and other criterion indicators, there is evidence that the overall pattern of curriculum influence is real.
- A general bias in reports about civic involvement might not affect correlations across an entire sample in that adding a constant to everyone's score would not alter correlation coefficients. And while social desirability in survey responses is potentially related to particular attributes of respondents, we controlled for demographic influence in statistical tests of Kids Voting effects.
- The students – not their parents – were asked about participation in Kids Voting. Consequently, the questionnaire design reduces the chance that statistical associations between curriculum participation and parent behaviors would result as merely an artifact of measurement.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

While our original funding proposal called solely for the administration of standardized questionnaires, we recognize the limitations of this method in gaining insights about motivations for civic involvement. We supplemented the survey data with a series of focus group interviews at two schools in Florida. This triangulation of methods allows us to take advantage of both the external validity offered by a large, standardized data set and the insights produced by the more intimate settings of small-group conversation. The focus groups provide a chance to explore some of the intriguing findings from the standardized questionnaires.

We chose to conduct the focus groups in Broward County because of the demographic diversity of south Florida, its large immigrant population, and its proximity to the co-principal investigator. The opportunity to talk with diverse groups of teenagers added value to the overall project given that the samples obtained for the standardized questionnaires were not as diverse as the populations themselves for the three regions. The high percentage of immigrant families in Broward allowed us to test a hypothesis derived from the trickle-up scenario. We will explore whether student-to-parent influence takes the form of first-generation Americans socializing parents to the host civic culture.

We conducted four focus groups of nine to ten students per group over a two-day period: May 8 and 9, 2003. Each session lasted approximately one hour. The students were all juniors or seniors. For students who reported their ethnicity in post-discussion

questionnaires, the breakdown is as follows:
- African-American: 48 percent
- Hispanic: 29 percent
- white: 19 percent
- Asian: 3 percent

The Kids Voting director for Florida, along with school-district administrators, helped us to arrange the group discussions at Miramar and Stoneman Douglas high schools. Miramar serves a relatively low-SES population and Stoneman a higher-SES population. While we are pleased with the ethnic diversity of the student groups, we recognize that the discussants are not likely to be typical of high school students with respect to interest in politics. Those students who participated did so voluntarily, suggesting that many of them are probably quite enthused about civic participation. We did provide $5 phone cards as incentives for discussants, however, which may have increased the variance within groups involving political interest.

Each focus group was moderated by the co-principal investigator and videotaped by a research assistant. The moderator asked questions involving the following topics:

School Influence. Students commented on what they think are the curriculum activities that get them most excited about public affairs. The moderator began this part of the discussion by listing the 10 Kids Voting activities that comprised the curriculum exposure scale used for the standardized questionnaires.

Use of News Media. We asked students to comment on their media use habits and preferences and the value they saw in using news programs or Internet sites to strengthen knowledge and opinions.

Trickle-up Influence. The moderator asked students whether their conversations about politics at home put pressure on parents to increase their awareness of public issues. Other questions were intended to uncover the motivations for why students want to talk about politics with parents and how parents respond. For example, we asked whether students sometimes get frustrated if their parents do not care about politics. Additional queries centered on the opportunities and barriers for openly talking about controversial topics at home.

Boomerang Influence. The moderator described this process as a hypothetical scenario and asked students if this occurred in their families. If it did, we asked them to explain why parents became more interested in their formal civics education.

RESULTS

Our first task in data analysis is to confirm that we have the basis for a quasi-experimental evaluation, in which exposure to Kids Voting is not associated with demographic factors. Table 1 reports the results from a multiple regression equation in which the following variables were used to predict student exposure to the Kids Voting composite scale: student ethnicity, gender, grades earned in school, parent SES, and the frequency of parent voting in prior elections. The same measures will be used later in this section as control variables in analyses predicting civic outcomes. As Table 1 shows, the demographic predictors make no significant contribution to variance explained. The "R^2" of .01 indicates that all of the measures taken together account for only 1 percent of the variance in Kids Voting exposure.

Table 1: Effects of Demographics and Parent Prior Voting on Student Exposure to Kids Voting (Multiple Regression)

Predictors	r	Beta
Ethnicity (dummy white)	.03	.02
Student gender (dummy male)	-.06	-.06
Grades earned in school	.04	.02
Family SES	.03	.01
Parent prior voting	.06	.06
R^2		.01

This result supports our assumption of random assignment and our characterization of the overall evaluation as a series of naturally occurring experiments. The lack of association between demographics and Kids Voting helps us to rule out alternative explanations. For example, it could be argued that a finding such as increased political knowledge is not attributable to Kids Voting but simply due to the tendency of students with greater intelligence, curiosity or other attributes to recall civics lessons. However, such cognitive or psychological dispositions would likely be related to key demographic factors we included in the study, particularly grades earned in school. Because grades earned in school is not correlated with Kids Voting exposure, we have some assurance that the results we find are real and not due to a hidden factor that both (a) accounts for strong political involvement and (b) predisposes students to recall or exaggerate their involvement in Kids Voting.

Similarly, Table 1 helps us to discount other types of alternative explanations. For example, one might speculate that students who are most likely to feel pressure to give socially acceptable answers in a survey – involving political behavior, for example – are also more likely to over-report involvement in civics exercises at school. But once again this tendency would likely be associated with factors such as grades earned in school or family SES. Because the grades earned variable is uniformly stratified across Kids Voting and non-Kids Voting groups, it is reasonable to conclude that the tendency toward social desirability bias is similarly dispersed across the sample. We note finally that parents prior voting – a variable not used in our prior Kids Voting evaluations – is included among our set of control variables. This variable helps to guard against spurious results that might be due to modeling in the home rather than Kids Voting influence at school. Parents' history of voting also lacks a statistically significant relationship with students' Kids Voting participation.

DIRECT EFFECTS ON STUDENTS

We created a rigorous test of Kids Voting effects given the many demographic factors controlled for

in statistical analysis. For example, prior studies have shown that boys tend to be more interested in politics compared with girls and white students tend to know more about public affairs compared with minority students. Age (grade level), grades earned in school, and membership in a religious organization are also associated with progress in political socialization. The set of control variables also includes two parenting factors – SES and prior voting habits – typically associated with a child's interest in citizenship.

As shown in Table 2, a hierarchical regression model controls first for the demographic variables and parent voting. The second equation incorporates prior curriculum exposure, which allows us to assess the capacity of Kids Voting to stimulate civic growth beyond what it may have already contributed to in previous years. The final equation adds the current Kids Voting measure. With respect to the second equation, we should note that Kids Voting USA is no longer a new program, and its popularity has resulted in some school districts using the program for several electoral cycles. We know from the previous studies in San Jose that the intervention is more effective in the middle grades and that the older students seem less responsive. Thus, it might be the case that Kids Voting already exerted most or all of its potential influence in the students' earlier grades. By controlling for demographics, parent voting, and prior curriculum influence, we have established a stringent test for assessing Kids Voting as taught in the fall of 2002. (For the sake of terminology, we will refer to 2002 Kids Voting as the "current" intervention).

Table 2: Effects of Kids Voting on Student Dependent Variables (Hierarchical Regression)

	Dependent Variables	Control R^2	Prior Curriculum Exposure R^2 Change	Present Curriculum Exposure R^2 Change	Total R^2	Prior Curriculum Beta	Current Curriculum Beta
Media Use	Attention to election news	.03	.01^	.11***	.15***	.10^	.35***
	Attention to key state issue	.01	.02*	.11***	.14***	.13*	.35***
	General TV viewing	.06*	.00	.02**	.08**	-.01	-.16**
Cognition	Knowledge	.13***	.00	.02**	.15***	.03	.15**
	Salience of key state issue	.01	.01*	.03**	.05**	.12*	.17**
	Information integration	.03^	.03**	.04***	.10***	.17**	.20***
Discussion	Discussion with parents	.06**	.03***	.09***	.18***	.17***	.32***
	Discussion with friends	.05**	.03***	.13***	.18***	.18***	.39***
	Willingness to express views	.01	.02*	.01^	.04*	.12*	.10^
	Listening to opponents	.02	.02*	.01	.05*	.13*	.09
	Disagree with others	.05*	.03***	.04***	.12***	.19***	.20***
Political Opinions	Holding opinions	.04*	.00	.02**	.06**	-.01	.15**
	Strongly held views	.05*	.00	.01^	.06*	.01	.10^
	Partisanship	.07***	.00	.02**	.09***	-.01	.15**
Civic Behaviors & Intentions	Support for conventional politics	.08***	.01*	.03***	.12***	.12*	.18***
	Support for unconventional activism	.02	.00	.03**	.05**	-.03	.18**
	Propensity to attend college	.11***	.00	.01^	.12***	-.04	.10^
	Student government	.02	.00	.02*	.04*	.01	.14*

^ p<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Note: The first column reports the amount of variance accounted for by ethnicity, year in school, grades earned, gender, religious group membership, parental SES, and voting history of parent, which were entered simultaneously in the first equation. The second column reports the amount of incremental variance attributed to prior exposure to Kids Voting, which was entered in the second equation. The third column reports incremental variance attributed to current exposure to Kids Voting, which was entered in the third equation. The fourth column reports the variance attributed to the combination of curriculum exposure and the control variables. The fifth column reports the beta produced by the second equation. The final column reports the beta produced by the third equation.

Considering first the media use variables, Kids Voting provided a strong impetus for increased attention to election news and to the key state issue (gambling in Arizona, bilingual education in Colorado, and class size in Florida). While prior curriculum experiences did appear to stimulate news attention, the most recent intervention accounted for much more influence: 11 percent of the variance for both attention measures (Table 2). These results replicate findings from the San Jose studies, which found that while the curriculum did not affect appreciably the frequency of exposure to newspapers and TV news, it did prompt increased mental effort via attention.

The current Kids Voting program also influenced students to spend less time in general TV viewing (as opposed to the more desirable attention to news). The negative beta (last column) for general TV viewing provides evidence for the inverse relationship. We find this to be an intriguing result given that TV viewing – like many habits – can be difficult to break. If Robert Putnam (1995, 2000) and other scholars are correct in blaming TV viewing for eating up time that could be used for citizenship, this Kids Voting influence is indeed noteworthy.

Looking next at cognition, the current Kids Voting accounted for significant amounts of variance in political knowledge beyond what could be attributed to the control variables. While the magnitude of the effect is modest (the beta is .15), this is a particularly important finding as it builds support for the internal validity of the study – unlike the self-reported measures, knowledge was directly tested and thus not subject to exaggeration or selective recall. The present curriculum also strengthened to a modest extent the two other cognitive indicators: salience of the key state issue (gambling/bilingual education/class size) and the integration of new information. In other words, Kids Voting students were more likely to evaluate that the election issue is important (salient) and more likely to actively reflect on how new information from media and discussion is related to their existing knowledge. The results, however, are not as strong as those associated with the two news attention indicators. While paying more attention to news is a positive step, the tasks of gaining knowledge and of contemplating how to integrate new information represent perhaps higher levels of effort.

With regard to interpersonal communication, the current intervention accounted for strong gains in frequency of discussion with parents and with friends. The combination of the past and current curriculum accounted for 12 percent of the variance in discussion with parents and 16 percent of the variance in discussion with friends. These effects once again replicate our findings from the San Jose evaluations. Discussion with parents is particularly important to our overall model of how schools and families establish a civic bond. We note here the direct Kids Voting effect, but we will return later to student-parent discussion as the lynchpin behavior that triggers a sequence of family processes. The present Kids Voting exerted only minor influence on students' willingness to express opinions and willingness to listen to opposing views. But in both cases the prior curriculum generated statistically significant betas. Both the prior curriculum and the current Kids Voting did a better job of stimulating motivation to openly disagree with others. This finding supports the argument that interactive civics instruction, such as that designed by Kids Voting administrators, helps to promote autonomous citizens with the conviction to take unpopular stands.

Moving on to political opinions, prior curriculum activities had no detectable influence on holding opinions, strongly held views, or strength of partisanship. The present Kids Voting accounted for modest amounts of variance in these indicators (1-2

percent) beyond what was attributed to the control variables. While the results are not spectacular, this evidence of opinion-formation is accompanied by active news media use and cognitive processing, as previously discussed. We can reasonably presume, then, that opinion acquisition originated at least partially in rational effort and that partisan views are backed up with contemplation.

With respect to civic behaviors and intentions, the current Kids Voting accounted for three percent of the variance in both support for conventional politics and unconventional activism. The school intervention cultivated notions of citizenship that encompass both traditional activities such as voting and alternative forms of engagement such as protests and boycotts. Students are apparently gaining a foothold into the conventional politics of the two-party system, as evident by both the outcome discussed here and by increased partisanship as previously mentioned. But they are also taking a step toward a brand of activism that bypasses traditional politics.

The present Kids Voting also affected, at least to a small degree, students' propensity to attend college. We are not sure what the causal connection is here, but one possibility is that the curriculum instilled confidence and self-empowerment as adolescents expressed autonomous opinions. The lesson plans and news media use, meanwhile, might promote curiosity about issues and ideas that can be explored further in college. Students might have come to the revelation that politics is largely a battle over ideas, and if they want to participate effectively in future debates they would be wise to consider college.

Finally, Kids Voting increased somewhat the likelihood that a student would participate in student government. While the effect is small, students have acquired some intrinsic motivation for continuing on with civic participation outside the confines of the school intervention.

Interactions of Kids Voting & Ethnicity

In an effort to replicate findings from the San Jose study, we examined the potential for a gap-closing effect associated with family SES. However, the restricted SES variance in our sample, due to differential rates of respondent cooperation, puts us at a disadvantage in showing this outcome. Despite this limitation, we did find modest evidence for gap narrowing within the Florida sample. Gaps narrowed for the following Kids Voting effects:

- Knowledge
- Integration of new information
- Support for conventional participation
- Support for unconventional activism

Given the premise that Kids Voting can foster equality of civic growth, we explored as well the possibility that the intervention might close gaps due to ethnicity. While we found only sporadic evidence of this in Arizona and Florida, there was a strong and consistent pattern of ethnicity-based gap closing in Colorado. Table 3 reports the means of each dependent variable for four groups. The groups were created by dichotomizing the Kids Voting scale as low and high exposure, and by categorizing students as either white or non-white. In the case of El Paso County, the vast majority of non-white students are Hispanic. The final column provides the
F-value for the curriculum-ethnicity interaction, generated from an analysis of variance.

Table 3: Effects of Kids Voting & Ethnicity on Student Dependent Variables in Colorado (ANOVA)

		Low KV Condition			High KV Condition			
	Dependent Variables	Non-White Mean	White Mean	Diff.	Non-White Mean	White Mean	Diff.	F-values for Interaction
Media Use	Attention to election news	1.92	2.29	.37	2.51	2.34	.17	2.76*
	Attention to key state issue	1.96	2.61	.65	2.63	2.70	.07	2.02^
	General TV viewing	1.80	1.85	.05	1.91	1.82	.08	1.42
Cognitions	Knowledge	4.56	5.75	1.19	5.38	5.61	.23	3.62*
	Salience of key state issue	3.29	3.40	.11	3.73	3.73	.01	.09
	Information integration	4.72	5.56	.84	6.06	5.79	.27	5.31**
Discussion	Frequency of discussion with parents	1.88	2.34	.46	2.21	2.30	.09	1.17
	Frequency of discussion with friends	1.40	1.83	.43	1.98	1.92	.06	2.17^
	Willingness to express opinions	2.33	2.90	.57	3.05	2.98	.07	2.26^
	Listening to opposing opinions	3.42	4.07	.66	4.37	4.29	.08	5.79**
	Disagree with others	2.09	3.13	1.04	3.51	3.49	.02	8.71***
Political Opinions	Holding opinions	3.00	3.35	.35	2.95	3.15	.20	.33
	Strongly held views	2.39	2.57	.18	2.23	2.46	.23	.04
	Partisanship	2.70	2.97	.26	2.81	3.19	.38	.17
Civic behaviors & intentions	Support for conventional politics	5.33	6.17	.83	6.93	6.79	.13	2.80*
	Support for unconventional activism	6.66	6.60	.01	7.88	7.75	.13	.01
	Propensity to attend college	4.56	4.71	.15	4.74	4.86	.12	.01
	Participation in student government	1.21	1.07	.14	1.20	1.21	.01	.79

^ p<.10; * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

While the F-values are not statistically significant in every case, for each indicator the direction of the Kids Voting/ethnicity interaction is toward a narrowing of gaps. In many cases the gaps close entirely and in some instances the non-white students end up with stronger levels of civic involvement due to Kids Voting. The gap-closing effects were statistically significant for attention to election news, attention to the key state issue, knowledge, information integration, willingness to listen to opposing views, willingness to disagree, and support for conventional politics.

By way of example, Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the gap-closing pattern for two of the indicators. For willingness to disagree, Figure 3 shows that the curriculum eliminated the entire gap between whites and non-whites. The same narrowing effect occurs with knowledge as shown in Figure 4, although the interaction is not as strong.

Figure 3: Interaction Effect of Kids Voting & Ethnicity on Willingness to Disagree:

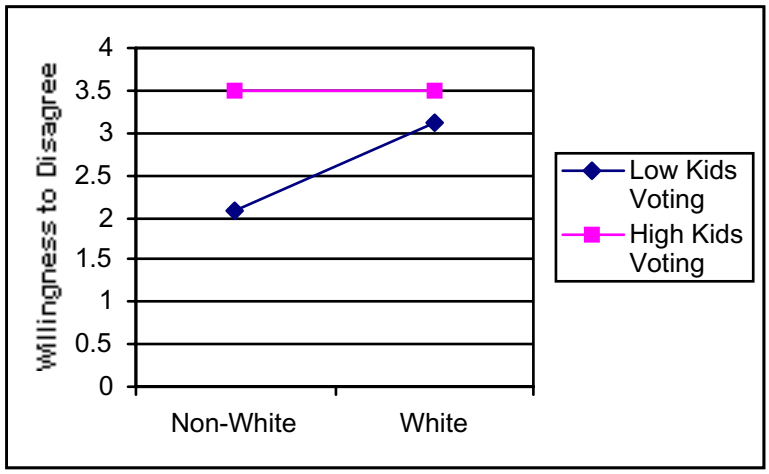
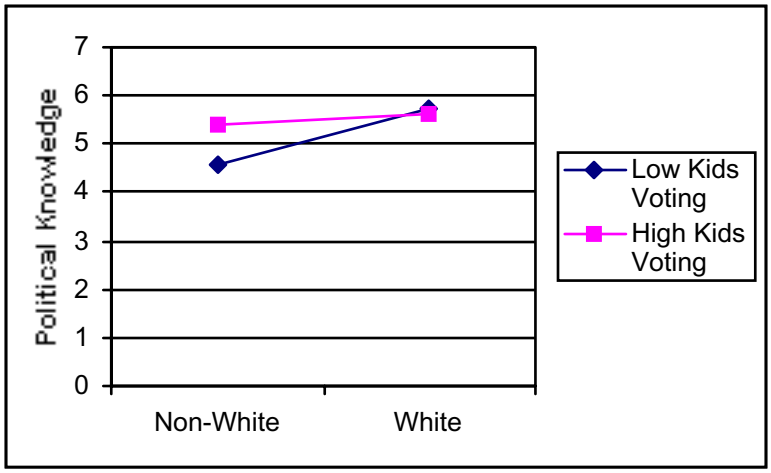


Figure 4: Interaction Effect of Kids Voting & Ethnicity on Knowledge



The question arises as to why this pattern of gap closing was not found in Arizona or Florida. The explanation seems clear once we consider the contexts of the three election campaigns. Only in Colorado was there a key state issue of particular concern to Hispanic families. The defeated Amendment 31 – an anti-bilingual education measure – raised a great deal of concern among Hispanic voters and activists. The proposal generated widespread interest among Hispanic adolescents as well, particularly when they were encouraged through civics instruction to pay attention to the election campaign.

EFFECTS OF KIDS VOTING COMPONENTS

We turn next to an exploration of influence attributable to specific curriculum activities. As a backdrop for examining effects of individual components, we looked at the frequency of implementation of the various activities across the three study sites. Table 4 reports the percentage of Arizona, Colorado, and Florida students indicating that they were exposed to particular aspects of Kids Voting. The three sites were fairly uniform with respect to teachers' preferences for certain components. The most frequently used activity was classroom debates, as 61 percent of our student respondents reported that they participated. This was followed closely by analyzing political cartoons. Conversely, relatively few teachers asked students to work at a polling site or to accompany parents to the polls on Election Day to cast mock ballots. While mock voting has proven to be a highly effective program for the younger students (Chaffee et al., 1995), apparently many teachers have found that the older students would rather express citizenship independent of parents when it comes to voting.

Table 4: Frequency of Instruction for Kids Voting Components in the Three Sites (Percentages)

	Arizona	Colorado	Florida	Total Sample
1. Class discussion of election*	46	28	49	40
2. Teacher encourages opinion expression*	49	45	45	47
3. Class debate	64	60	57	61
4. Analyze political cartoon	64	58	52	59
5. Analyze political ad	50	39	43	44
6. Service learning	27	16	22	21
7. Work at polling site	4	3	8	5
8. Encourage others to vote	37	29	30	33
9. Homework involves family members	24	16	18	20
10. Vote with parent	3	4	10	5
	n=224	*n=218*	*n*=117	*N=559*

* These two items were originally coded with a 1-to-5 scale. To create dichotomous measures in keeping with the other indicators, scores of 4 and 5 were re-coded as 1 and all other scores were re-coded as 0.

To assess the impact of specific curriculum components on student outcomes, we generated partial correlations in which we first controlled for the influence of all the demographic variables, parent prior voting, the students' prior exposure to Kids Voting, and the nine other Kids Voting components. This is a stringent test indeed given that much learning would occur due to a combination of educational experiences. These curriculum components are probably symbiotic with respect to influence. With that said, we recognize the importance of generating insight as to which activities are most effective. Kids Voting is, after all, a complicated and time-intensive endeavor and not every school district will be convinced that it has the time and resources to implement the entire curriculum. Thus, there is great value in identifying the most effect components.

A series of appendix tables report the effects of the components on student outcome measures within the domains of media use, cognition, discussion, opinions, and civic behaviors and intention. We will highlight here in the main text what we consider to be the most important findings, but readers are encouraged to examine the appendix tables to look at the results in more detail.

First, regarding media use (Appendix Table 6), frequent discussion in class and students encouraging people to vote are clearly the strongest factors within the overall curriculum. We can imagine that classroom discussions nurtured the curiosity of students to the extent that they were paying more attention to election news. The connection between encouraging voting and media use seems less clear, but for now we can surmise

that students gained a sense of civic efficacy through this activity, and the feeling of empowerment increased the perception that attention to election news is worthwhile.

None of the curriculum components by themselves seem to stand out with respect to the three cognition indicators (Appendix Table 7). But frequent discussion in class does generate a statistically significant correlation with political knowledge despite the many control variables. The same is true for analyzing political cartoons. Encouraging people to vote, meanwhile, has a strong impact on the integration of new information.

Looking next at the discussion outcomes, the two most consequential components are once again frequent discussion in class and encouraging people to vote (Appendix Table 8). The latter activity is particularly strong as an impetus to discussion outside the classroom: the partial correlations are statistically significant for frequency of discussion with parents, frequency of discussion with friends, willingness to express opinions, and listening to opposing opinions.

The composite Kids Voting scale did not have a particularly strong impact on student opinion formation, so it is not surprising that the individual components were ineffectual (Appendix Table 9). But there was one exception – the partial correlation for encouraging people to vote and holding opinions is significant.

In the final area of effects, civic behaviors and intentions, no single component emerged as the dominant influence, although there were three significant effects: teacher encouragement to express opinions is associated with propensity to attend college; analyzing political cartoons appeared to influence participation in student government; and involvement in service learning is associated with support for unconventional activism (Appendix Table 10).

Looking at the results in aggregate, the most effective curriculum components are frequent discussion about election issues and students motivating others to vote. We can conclude, then, that adolescents acquire civic efficacy through contributing to conversations and through helping others in the most fundamental of political acts.

INDIRECT EFFECTS ON PARENTS

Our prior research on Kids Voting effects demonstrated that the intervention can stimulate parent political involvement, primarily through the mechanism of student-initiated discussion. This influence is essentially indirect in that parents are not exposed to the curriculum itself. Table 5 reports findings for Kids Voting effects on the parent dependent variables. We used the same hierarchical regression model developed for the assessment of student effects in Table 2 with a control block of variables entered first. For parents, the control variables include prior voting, ethnicity, SES, gender, and religious group membership. The second equation adds the students' exposure to prior Kids Voting, and the third equation adds present Kids Voting.

Table 5: Effects of Kids Voting on Parent Dependent Variables (Multiple Regression)

	Dependent Variables	Control R^2	Prior Curriculum Exposure R^2 Change	Present Curriculum Exposure R^2 Change	Total R^2	Prior Curriculum Beta	Current Curriculum Beta
Media Use	Attention to election news	.07***	.00	.00	.07***	.07	.04
	Attention to key state issue	.04*	.00	.01	.05*	.03	.08
	General TV viewing	.06***	.00	.01	.07***	-.02	-.09
Cognitions	Knowledge	.19***	.00	.00	.19***	.03	.01
	Salience of key state issue	.02	.00	.01^	.03^	.03	-.09^
	Information integration	.09***	.00	.00	.09***	-.01	-.03
Discussion	Discussion with children	.11***	.02**	.01^	.14***	.15**	.09^
	Discussion with friends	.05**	.01	.03***	.09***	.08	.18***
	Willingness to express views	.08***	.00	.00	.08***	.03	.05
	Listening to opponents	.02	.02**	.00	.04**	.15**	.05
	Disagree with others	.03*	.01	.00	.04*	.07	.00
Political Opinions	Holding opinions	.06***	.01	.00	.07***	.07	.02
	Strongly held views	.03	.01	.03***	.07***	.08	.18***
	Partisanship	.06***	.01*	.01*	.08***	.10*	.11*
Civic behaviors & intentions	Support for conventional politics	.16***	.00	.01*	.17***	.07	.12*
	Support for unconventional activism	.03^	.01^	.01*	.05*	.09^	.12*
	Voting in 2002 election	.27***	.00	.00	.27***	.07	.02

^ p<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Note: The first column reports the amount of variance accounted for by ethnicity, gender, SES, religious group membership, and prior voting, which were entered simultaneously in the first equation. The second column reports the amount of variance attributed to prior student exposure to Kids Voting, which was entered in the second equation. The third column reports the amount of variance attributed to current student exposure to Kids Voting, which was entered in the third equation. The fourth column reports variance attributed to the combination of curriculum exposure and control variables. The fifth column reports the beta produced by the second equation. The final column reports the beta produced by the third equation.

As evident in Table 5, the indirect effects of Kids Voting on parents were certainly not as strong as the direct effects on students (Table 2). However, there were statistically significant effects (at $p<.05$) in the areas of discussion, political opinion formation, and civic behaviors and intentions. With respect to discussion, prior Kids Voting exposure accounted for 2 percent of the variance in parents' discussion with children and in parents' willingness to listen to opposing opinions. The current Kids Voting affected frequency of discussion with friends, generating a statistically significant beta of .18. Here we can see that political discussion, apparently initiated by students, triggers a chain reaction that results in parents engaging in more frequent conversations about politics outside the family, with friends.

The present Kids Voting also prompted parents to crystallize opinions with more strongly held views, and both the past and current curriculum contributed to parents developing a stronger partisan identification. Finally, the current Kids Voting had a small but statistically significant impact on parents' support for conventional politics and support for unconventional activism.

EFFECTS ON FAMILIES

We consider next possible influences of Kids Voting on the family as a social system in which political communication occurs. By moving beyond the individual level of analysis, we can explore whether the intervention alters family norms. This conceptual approach fits with our understanding of the family as a potential domestic sphere in which news media use is encouraged and family members feel confident and comfortable about initiating discussion. One result should be a microclimate of opinion in the family characterized by strongly held views. To measure these domestic sphere attributes, we created composite scales based on summing scores for identical student and parent indicators. (Item wording and coding are provided in the Appendix). The measures are:

- Frequency of student/parent encouraging media use.
- Perception that it is easy to engage family members in political conversations (discussion efficacy).
- Strongly held views about election issues.

Table 6 reports the results of a hierarchical regression in which we entered first the student and parent demographic variables and parent prior voting. The second equation adds the Kids Voting composite measure. The school intervention strongly affected all three attributes of the family, suggesting that Kids Voting acts as a catalyst for new patterns of family interaction in which the vigorous exchange of ideas and active media use become norms of family life.

Table 6: Effects of Kids Voting on Family Attributes (Hierarchical Regression)

Dependent Variable	Control R^2	Curriculum R^2 Change	Total R^2	Curriculum Beta
Encouragement of Media Use	.05**	.08***	.13***	.28***
Discussion Efficacy	.06**	.06***	.12***	.25***
Opinion Climate of Strongly Held Views	.04^	.03**	.07**	,18**
Perception of Cohesion	.03^	.02*	.05*	.13*
Flexibility of Leadership	.04*	.01^	.05*	.09^

^ p<.10; * p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001 (n=671)

Note: The first column reports the amount of variance attributed to the following variables: parent SES, gender, ethnicity, and religious group membership, along with student gender, year in school, grades earned, and religious group membership. The second column reports the amount of incremental variance attributed to the Kids Voting measure, which was entered in the second equation. The third column reports the total amount of variance explained. The fourth column reports the beta coefficient for Kids Voting.

A vitalized domestic sphere, in turn, should reflect healthy family functioning whereby family members perceive a strong sense of cohesion. However, this cohesion should not come at the expense of adolescent development; this requires flexibility of leadership so that both parents and children contribute to decision making. Once again we created composite measures based on summing identical student and parent indicators. The operational measures represent:

- perception of family cohesion.
- perception of flexible leadership.

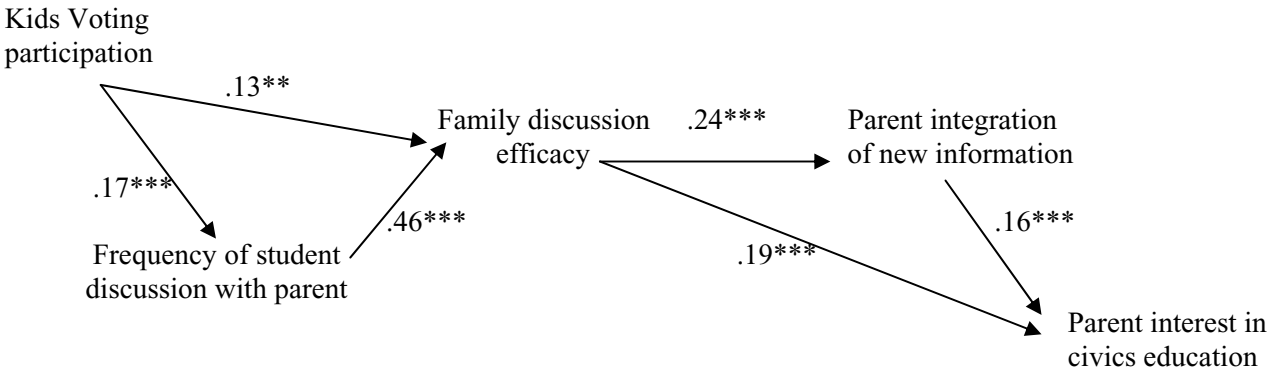
Table 6 shows that Kids Voting increased the likelihood that students and parents would perceive strong family cohesion. Political communication activities at home – both media use and discussion – apparently contribute to this feeling of cohesion even though political topics by definition are contentious. The fact that cohesion is enhanced in the context of increased opinion expression suggests that family members are developing political maturity and tolerance as well. In terms of flexible leadership, Kids Voting only marginally influenced this family characteristic beyond the variance attributed to the control block. The Kids Voting beta is approaching statistical

significance, however.

CIVIC BONDING OF SCHOOL AND FAMILY

Our final analysis explores the possibility of boomerang influence, in which parents would develop a stronger interest in their children's civics education at school. We used a path analysis to test this proposition given the sequential dynamic. As an extension of multiple regression, path analysis cannot establish causality but it can demonstrate the pattern of relationships among multiple variables given an assumption of direct and indirect effects. Figure 5 depicts a "trimmed path model," meaning that only the statistically significant paths are shown. We did not incorporate demographic variables because exploratory analysis revealed that they did not significantly alter the magnitude of the path coefficients as reported here.

Figure 5: Boomerang Influence: Indirect Influence of Kids Voting on Parents' Interest in Civics Education (Trimmed Path Model)



** p<.01; *** p<.001

Figure 5 shows that the curriculum directly affected frequency of student conversations with parents and discussion efficacy within the family. The conversations themselves also contributed to efficacy. However, this is where the direct influence of Kids Voting ends. That is, Kids Voting effectively triggered the beginning stage, but student and parent interaction in the home, once set in motion, keeps the momentum going. Once discussion efficacy becomes a family norm, parents increase their effort at integrating new information from media and conversation. One outcome of this mental effort is stimulated interest in the student's civics education. Discussion efficacy also promotes this interest, which becomes manifest in parents encouraging students to express views in class.

RESULTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

We report here the highlights of the focus group discussions, which were conducted in May of 2003 at two high schools in Broward County, Florida. We have changed the names to preserve anonymity of students.

School Influence. Students emphasized that classroom discussion and debates on current issues are the most effective tools for involving them in political issues. Peer-group discussion generates excitement as student choose partisan sides, but the social interaction also forces students to acquire information and carefully consider the meaning of issues. Beth commented:

> "Students have their opinions in class discussion but they don't have facts to back them up. The teacher wants them to form their opinions based on facts rather than on media talk or parents' viewpoints. When people have facts to back their opinion, then there will be a good discussion."

Carlos echoed this sentiment: "Sometimes it is so frustrating to be sitting there. You argue with someone – you know your facts are right. They don't know any facts. 'Well, you are wrong, because I think this …' It doesn't make any sense."

Students seem to rely on insights from their peers, including the exchange of information, as a foundation for forming political opinions. Several students stressed the importance of sharing information, which seems to provide a kind of consensus about what issues are most relevant and what opinions are most valid.

Peer-group discussions – moderated by a skilled teacher – also help adolescents to develop democratic dispositions such as tolerance, careful listening, and mutual respect. John noted that, "During a debate, I don't think you lose your morality unless you attack people personally. If you do that, you are going to live with it. We saw that happen in our political debate in our (student) senate."

Students we interviewed, in fact, were not only eager to talk about public affairs, they virtually insisted on their right to do so in class. Speaking about the aftermath of September 11, Beth said, "My teacher doesn't let us talk about it in the class. Some people are really mad about it because people really need to talk about it." Two students claimed that the problem of motivation rests with teachers, not with students. Mikhail said, "Our English teacher is a good teacher, but he wasn't interested in politics. He is not motivated." Added Omar, "Sometimes it is more important to get teachers involved than to get students involved."

Active Processing of News. Several students expressed concern about political bias in mainstream media. In many cases this belief seemed to come from parents. The concern about media fairness motivated active information seeking from multiple sources. Said

Jose:

> "I come from a more liberal family. My parents think that most of the news on TV is right-wing kind of stuff, especially in times of war. So we get most of the news from the Internet. If you are liberal, you can go to the liberal web site. Mostly from the Internet like CNN.com. And on the Internet you can find a lot of international news rather than just local news."

Some scholars have argued that perceived media bias invokes public cynicism and thereby dampens civic involvement (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). But among the students we interviewed, the perception of bias appeared to motivate active information seeking. Bill explained: "I don't like watching much TV because they talk a lot from their perspective and impose their opinion on me rather than just report what happened. On the Internet, you can search the origin and the reality of the story."

While students found news media helpful, they also relied on family members to help them interpret news content. Elena described her mother as her primary news source: "the mediator of the media." Students are using multiple channels of communication – both interpersonal and mass media – to find information and integrate it into their existing knowledge. Students act as gatekeepers for information as they critically assess various sources. According to Beth:

> "My home basically watches the news all the time. Usually there is a lot of stuff that I didn't understand and didn't know why they (news pundits) had their opinions on that. My dad is one-sided; strong on one side. I always go to my mom. She gives me a two-sided opinion and why they say that."

Trickle Up Influence. One of our goals with the focus groups was to gain insight as to how and why children encourage parents' interest in politics. Students relished the chance to talk about this reversal of influence in the family. The influence takes many forms, judging by student comments. Students nudge parents to talk about issues, to explain why they hold certain views, to explain why they pay attention to particular news shows and pundits, and why they failed to vote in previous elections. Said Beth, "I told my dad, 'Dad, you need to vote.' I got him interested in what is going on and told him to vote." She explained that "My mother works for a computer company. She comes home expressing what is going on like in the stock market and how this is going to affect her and she asks me. She hopes that I will bring about some other aspects to help her understand what is going on." Renee observed: "My parents don't know whom to vote for. I ask (my dad) and sometimes he changes his opinion."

Students from immigrant families, especially those in which parents are not fluent in English, talked about how they act as translators and interpreters of political information. Some students said that their parents' voting decisions were based on their children's research.

Several students, meanwhile, expressed a great deal of curiosity about why their parents had opted for one partisan side or another. According to Jean:

> "My dad likes to yell at the television all the time when he watches the news. We have that caught on tape. Usually I like to challenge my dad on his views … I just want to make him explain to me the way he feels about everything. He actually got me to watch the Washington news and I would like to know why he's always yelling at it."

This statement reveals not just curiosity but a prodding of parents that appears to be quite challenging. Political involvement provides teenagers with an opportunity to demonstrate

expertise as emerging adults. This requires equal footing with parents when it comes to political discussion, and here we can see how political socialization benefits adolescents as they seek an autonomous identity in the home. This assertion of personal identity can come cause tension in many families, however, given that political opinions might represent a threat to parents with limited formal education. This was evident from Regina:

> "The parents always think since they are older they are wiser than us. When we try to give them information, they said, 'No, you are wrong' or 'You are too young; you don't know nothing.' I told them when you grew up your time's education was not as good as my time period. We are going through more than what you were going through. But they don't like that."

While this assertion of an adult identity might entail edgy debates, students expressed a desire to maintain social harmony in the family. Said Jean: "I associate my political party belief with (my parents) and I do agree with them most of the time. But every time we talk about politics it is about sharing information."

Boomerang Influence. Comments from students reveal that parents become interested in civics instruction for several reasons. Some parents, particularly those from immigrant families, begin to realize that their children can relay useful information from school to home. For example, Kevin said, "My parents came from Venezuela. They are interested in some topics and what I learned from class because they didn't know based on their education." Greg said, "My father doesn't follow a lot of news, neither does my mom. So when I talk about it they ask questions and my mom begins to understand."

Some adolescent spark parents' curiosity about both politics in general and topics discussed in social studies courses. Jean observed: "When I talk about something new they asked, 'They teach you this in school?' My mom was amazed that I can use what I learned in my discussion."

But students can find themselves in an ideological tug of war once parents question the views of teachers and peers as relayed to the home. This dynamic is evident in the following exchange between Sally and Sarah:

"Teachers are stubborn too. (One teacher said,) 'Your mother is wrong!'"

"When that happens, you don't listen to that teacher for a year."

CONCLUSIONS

Findings from this study seem to invoke the spirit of John Dewey, who imagined the genesis of civic virtue and competence emerging out of grassroots interaction – in settings such as classrooms and peer-group discussion centered around school activities (1916/66). Civic growth organic to the daily lives of students is appealing from a normative perspective as it implies a self-initiated pathway to civic involvement, such that both individuals and the political system benefit. Public and private schools represent what is perhaps the best institutional opportunity to instill civic instincts and to recapture a culture of political commitment. While genuine civic involvement must entail voluntary initiative, students are, in fact, captive to social studies instruction and even parents with long histories of disengagement are not likely to escape the influence of politically precocious children.

Our findings validate a Jeffersonian idea – a public school system can and should serve as a training ground for citizenship. While this notion is deeply rooted in American conceptions of participatory democracy, the empirical dynamics of civic development in schools have been poorly understood. We hope this study has brought light to this process by illustrating how schools activate – through the initiatives of students – political communication in the

home.

Highlights of our findings include:

New Indications of Civic Growth. One of our basic contentions is that civic development ought to be defined in such a way that transcends traditional indicators such as textbook knowledge or voting. We found that Kids Voting accounted for statistically significant effects involving several behaviors usually not measured in political socialization research. For example, the curriculum appeared to reduce the amount of time that students spend in general viewing of TV. We consider this a positive outcome as it implies – in conjunction with other findings – that adolescents are spending more time in activities conducive to active citizenship.

We also included a measure of unconventional activism to evaluate whether the curriculum fosters a broad conception of political participation. While many students develop commitments associated with conventional involvement (such as allegiance to a political party), they also express support for unconventional activism. We note this finding because it is indicative of a pattern in which Kids Voting engenders citizenship through critical contemplation as opposed to indoctrination. Active media use and knowledge acquisition, meanwhile, are accompanied by increased willingness to disagree openly with others. These new indicators of civic growth bring us to a conception of development far removed from earlier studies on political socialization, which essentially tried to document how young people adopt attitudes supportive of regime stability (McDevitt, 2002).

In addition, we included a series of family-level indicators to illustrate how a school intervention can animate the home as a domestic sphere. In future years we hope to document how schools promote norms of civic competence in families that, in turn, predict outcomes such as:

- Likelihood of adolescent and parent voting in 2004.
- Parent involvement in school activities.
- Likelihood of students attending college.
- Likelihood of students and parents making further gains in knowledge, in opinion crystallization, and in conversational dispositions such as willingness to disagree and willingness to listen to opposing views.

Closing Gaps. We detected some evidence of gaps narrowing between families of high and low SES, but the pattern was not as strong as that found in a prior study in San Jose. However, we documented systematic evidence of gap-narrowing along ethnic lines. This occurred in El Paso County, where Hispanic students apparently became concerned about a proposed state amendment to enforce English-only instruction. Kids Voting interacted with ethnicity to narrow or completely close gaps in attention to news, attention to the amendment campaign, knowledge, integration of new information, willingness to listen to opposing views, willingness to disagree, and support for conventional politics.

Curriculum Components. We were also able to conduct, for the first time, a comprehensive analysis of effects associated with individual components of Kids Voting. Two activities stood out as most influential. The first was frequent discussion about election issues in class. In discussion, teenagers can experience the social value of acquiring political competence: they can assert a political identity by demonstrating expertise among peers. These interactions offer students real-time feedback on the adequacy of their knowledge and the soundness of their arguments.

The other curriculum activity of note was an exercise in which students were asked to encourage other people to vote. We are not sure of the causal mechanisms by which this activity promotes media use, discussion, and opinion formation. But we can surmise that persuading adults to vote is an empowering experience for adolescents. This is another instance in which a trickle-up effect benefits

both students and the adult recipients of the influence.

Domestic Sphere. Our conception of the family as a domestic sphere led us to develop family-level indicators for representing household norms. Kids Voting impacts transcended individual influence and altered patterns of family interaction. Once activated by student-initiated discussion, reciprocal influence took hold in behaviors such as students and parents encouraging each other to use news media. One result of political communication in the home is "boomerang influence," whereby parents encourage students to participate actively in civics courses. In the long-term, parent interest in civics instruction might lead to other positive outcomes such as parents volunteering for school activities or otherwise becoming more involved in communities. In this regard, boomerang influence could be particularly beneficial for immigrant or politically disengaged parents.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

We offer the following suggestions for civics instruction based on insights from the standardized questionnaires and the focus groups.

- School administrators and parents should encourage teachers to allow for political discussion and debate, even if the topics are contentious. Time and time again in the focus groups, students stressed the need for enthusiastic teachers who engage students in the learning process with interactive approaches.
- A dominant theme from the focus groups was the need to engage students and families through issues that directly and personally affect them. While many of these students were already interested in politics, they suggested that their peers would only become more involved when issues that were highly relevant to them were stressed at school. Some of these topics include higher education funding, drinking age, voting age, and school policies. Many of the students were highly political but not necessarily about issues and topics salient to adults. Many explained that their media use habits were partially determined by the ability of news sources to present information that was of direct interest to teens. MTV was often cited as a source that was effective at presenting this type of news. Schools would be wise to focus on issues that are of direct interest to young adults. We believe that the ethnicity-based gaps in involvement closed in Colorado because the Hispanic students were intrigued (or perhaps threatened) by the English- only movement.
- Teachers should implement activities such as student campaigns that mobilize adults to vote. We noticed that service learning was not yet implemented as part of the Kids Voting curriculum for most of the schools in the study sites. There was also minimal use of the exercise in which students work at polling sites. Along with classroom discussion, these are the types of activities that empower students and heighten their sense of political efficacy.

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APPENDIX: ITEM WORDING & CODING FOR MEASURES

Student Demographics

Grade Level

A single item determined year in school:
What grade are you in at school? Coded: 11th=1, 12th=2.

Grades Earned

A single item measured grades received in school.
Would you say your grades are mostly A's, B's, C's or D's? mostly A's=4, mostly B's=3, mostly C's=2, mostly D's=1.

Gender

A single item determined gender.
What is your gender? female=1, male=2.

Ethnicity

An item asked about ethnic background.
Of what ethnic group do you consider yourself? Hispanic (including Chicano and Spanish), Native American, African American, Asian, and other= dummy 1; white=dummy 2.

Religious Group Membership

One item asked about membership in religious organizations.
Are you a member of a religious group or club?" no=0, yes=1.

Parent Demographics

Gender, ethnicity, and religious group membership were identical to the student measures.

SES

A two-item scale measured family socioeconomic status based on the parent's report of income and education. We standardized the coded values for each item and summed the standardized scores.
For statistical purposes, we need to estimate household income before tax. Indicate the category that fits you. less than $15,000=1, $16,000 to $25,000=2, $26,000 to $40,000=3, $41,000 to $60,000=4.

Indicate your level of formal education completed. some high school=1, graduated from high school=2, some college=3, graduated from college=4, attended graduate school=5.

Prior Voting

A summed, two-item scale assessed frequency of prior voting.

Did you vote in the 2000 presidential election between Al Gore and George W. Bush? no, don't recall=0, yes=1.

Did you vote in the 1996 presidential election between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole?

Student & Parent Indicators of Civic Involvement

The following measures were identical or nearly identical for students and parents:

Attention to Election News

A single item was used. Respondents answered with a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "none" and 5 "a great deal."

How much attention have you paid to news about the election campaign?

Attention to Key State Election Issues

A single item was used; respondents answered with the same 1-to-5 scale.

How much attention have you paid to new about the proposition to expand gambling/restrict bilingual education/limit class size in Arizona/Colorado/Florida?

Political Knowledge

For students, four questions were used to create a summed scale. Answers were coded 0 for incorrect, 1 for don't know (DK), and 2 for correct.

Which party controls the U.S. House of Representatives?

Which party controls the U.S. Senate?

What is the party affiliation of Matt Salmon/Bill Owens/Jeb Bush?

What is the party affiliation of Janet Napolitano/Rollie Heath/Bill McBride?

The alpha is .60.

For parents, the four questions above were used along with the following:

Which party would you say is more in favor of school vouchers?

Which party has been more supportive of privatizing Social Security investments?

The alpha is .61.

Salience of Key Issue

A single question was used; respondents answered with a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "not important" and 5 meaning "very important."

How important is the issue of expanding gambling/restricting bilingual education/limiting class size in Arizona/Colorado/Florida?

Integration of New Information

Three items comprised this summed scale. Respondents were asked to assess how well

each statement described them. The options and coding were as follows: not at all like me/not sure=1; somewhat like me=2; a lot like me=3.
When I came across election stories, I found myself tying the stories to ideas I had before.
I try to keep track of the opinions of my friends.
When I join in political conversations, I find myself tying the arguments to ideas I had before.
The alpha is .52 for students and .60 for parents.

Frequency of Discussion with Parents/Child

A single item was used. Respondents answered with a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "never" and 5 meaning "frequently."
How often did you talk about the election campaign with your parents/child?

Frequency of Discussion with Friends

A single item was used; respondents answered the same scale.
How often did you talk about the election campaign with your friends?

Willingness to Express Opinions

The questionnaires described a hypothetical scenario in which Congress passed a bill to declare English the official language of the nation. Using a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "definitely no" and 5 meaning "definitely yes," respondents answered the following:
Would you be willing to express your views about this topic at a public meeting?

Willingness to Listen to Opposing Views

A single item was used. Respondents answered with a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "not important" and 5 meaning "very important."
How important is it to listen to people when you already know that you disagree with them?

Willingness to Openly Disagree

A single item was used. Respondents answered with a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "never" and 5 meaning "frequently."
In conversations, how often do you openly disagree with people about politics?

Holding Opinions

Students and parents answered two questions for this composite scale. For the first question, respondents used a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "strongly dislike" and 5 meaning "strongly like." For the second item, respondents used a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "strongly oppose" and 5 meaning "strongly support." We then recoded the responses so that 3=1 (neutral opinions) and all other responses=2
Indicate how much you like or dislike the following person: Matt Salmon/Bill Owens/Jeb Bush.
What best describes your feelings regarding the proposition to expand gambling/restrict bilingual education/reduce class size in Arizona/Colorado/Florida?
The correlation is .10 for students and .06 for parents.

Strongly Held Views

We used the same two opinion items but altered the coding so that 1 and 5 were coded 2 (as strong opinions) and all other responses were coded 1. The correlation is .19 for students and .15 for parents.

Partisanship

A summed, two-item scale measured degree of partisanship regardless of the direction of orientation.

Do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or something like that? Coded: Republican, Democrat=2; Independent, Not a member of another party, DK=1.

When it comes to politics, do you consider yourself as liberal or conservative? Coded: conservative, liberal=2; No, I'm moderate or "middle of the road," No, I don't think of myself that way, DK=1.

The correlation between the two item is .18 for students and .24 for parents.

Support for Conventional Politics

Two items were summed to create a composite measure. Respondents used a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "do not support" and 5 meaning "strongly support."

Voting on a regular basis.

Contributing money to a political party.

The correlation is .30 for students and .27 for parents.

Support for Unconventional Activism

Three items were summed to create a composite measure. Respondents used the same 1-to-5 scale.

Confronting police in a protest.

Participating in a boycott against a company.

Refusing to wear clothes with corporate logos.

The alpha is. .59 for students and .42 for parents.

Student-Only Measures

The following indicators were developed exclusively for students.

Participation in Student Government

A single item was used.

Have you participated in student government? Coded no=0 and yes=1.

General TV Viewing

A single item was used.

On average, how many hours per day, if any, do you watch TV? Coded 0=0, 1=1, 2 or more=2.

Intention to Attend College

A single item was used; respondents answered with a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "strongly disagree" and 5 meaning "strongly agree."

I plan to attend college.

Parent-Only Measure

The following indicators were used exclusively for parents.

Voting in 2002

A single item was used.

Did you vote in this year's election? Coded no=0, yes=1.

Interest in Student's Civics Education

Six items were used. For the first four items, respondents answered with a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "never" and 5 meaning "frequently." For the final two items, respondents answered with a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "not like me" and 5 meaning "a lot like me."

During this school year, how often have you asked your child about homework assignments?
How often have you visited the school to volunteer for activities?
How often have you asked your child about a civics or government class?
How often have you told your child that he or she should express an opinion during a civics class?
I am interested in what my child is learning in a civics class.
I want my child to express his or her political views in a civics class.

The alpha is .72.

Family Interaction

We created a series of measures to assess family-level attributes. In each case we combined identical or nearly identical student and parent items to create composite measures.

Encouragement of Media Use

The two groups of respondents answered the following using a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "never" and 5 meaning "frequently."

In the last month or two, how often, if ever, have you encouraged a parent/your child to pay attention to a news story?

The correlation is .11.

Discussion Efficacy

Students and parents answered the following using a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "strongly disagree" and 5 meaning "strongly agree."

It's easy for me to get a parent/my child to talk about politics.

The correlation is .32.

Family Opinion Strength

We added the student and parent measure for this concept (wording and coding described above for "strongly held views") to create the composite measure. The correlation is .28.

Family Cohesion

Students and parents answered the following using a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "never" and 5 meaning "frequently."
How often does your family spend free time with each other?

The correlation is .43.

Flexibility of Leadership

Students and parents answered the following. Coded: one person usually leads=1; leadership is sometimes shared=2; leadership is always shared=3; no clear leadership=4.
What kind of leadership style is most characteristic of your family?

The correlation is .31.

Appendix Table 1: Demographic Profile for Students (Percentages)

		Arizona	Colorado	Florida	Total Sample
Grade in School	Junior	54	49	58	53
	Senior	46	51	42	47
Grades Earned in School	Mostly As	47	46	45	46
	Mostly Bs	41	41	44	42
	Mostly Cs	9	12	9	10
	Mostly Ds	2	2	2	2
Gender	Female	58	55	58	57
	Male	43	45	42	43
Ethnicity	Hispanic	15	6.3	17	12
	Anglo	66	67	54	64
	Native American				
	African American	1	1	1	1
	Asian				
	Other	5	6	12	7
		3	4	1	3
		11	16	15	13
		n=224	*n=218*	*n=117*	*n=559*

Appendix Table 2: Demographic Profile for Parents (Percentages)

		Arizona	Colorado	Florida	Total Sample
Gender	Female	71	69	68	70
	Male	29	31	32	30
Political Ideology	Liberal	13	19	28	18
	Conservative	40	42	29	38
	Moderate	28	24	23	25
	Neither	12	11	17	13
	Not Sure	7	5	5	6
Party Identification	Democrat	24	20	45	27
	Republican	49	51	30	46
	Independent	21	22	16	20
	Other	6	7	9	7
Voted in 2000	Yes	85	87	84	86
	No	14	12	15	13
	Don't Recall	1	1	1	1
Voted in 1996	Yes	86	85	79	84
	No	13	14	18	14
	Don't Recall	1	1	3	1
Ethnicity	Hispanic	8	7	13	8
	Anglo	79	76	67	75
	Native American	2	3	2	2
	African American				
	Asian	3	5	10	5
	Other	4	2	2	3
		56	7	7	6
Level of Education Completed	Some high school				
	Graduated from high school / GED	2	1	2	2
	Some college / vocational school	13	15	17	14
	Graduated from college	35	34	28	33
	Graduate school	31	31	33	31
		20	18	21	19
Income	Less than $15,000				
	$16,000-$25,000	2	4	6	4
	$26,000-$40,000	4	8	4	6
	$41,000-$60,000	14	17	13	15
	Over $60,000	20	22	21	21
		59	49	56	54
		n=267	n=264	n=140	n=671

Appendix Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Student Civic Measures

	Measure	#Items	Range	Mean	Standard D	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha
Media Use	Attention to election news	1	1-5	2.45	1.10	.41	-.51	
	Attention to key state issue	1	1-5	2.94	1.31	.01	-1.11	
	General TV viewing	1	0-2	1.86	.35	-2.02	2.1	
Cognitions	Knowledge	4	0-8	5.73	1.76	-.19	-1.01	.60
	Salience of key state issue	1	1-5	3.70	1.21	-.65	-.48	
	Information integration	3	3-9	5.64	1.54	-.005	-.75	.52
Discussion	Frequency of discussion with parents	1	1-5	2.43	1.20	.58	-.55	
	Frequency of discussion with friends	1	1-5	2.07	1.16	.86	-.07	
	Willingness to express opinions	1	1-5	3.01	1.34	.004	-1.02	
	Listening to opposing opinions	1	1-5	4.11	1.09	-1.20	.74	
	Disagree with others	1	1-5	3.29	1.13	-.18	-.50	
Political Opinions	Holding opinions	2	2-4	3.18	.82	-.67	-.39	.10*
	Strongly held views	2	2-4	2.49	.75	.44	-.30	.19*
	Partisanship	2	2-4	2.97	.88	-.46	-.61	.18*
Civic behaviors & intentions	Support for conventional politics	2	2-10	6.47	3.52	-.47	-.01	.30*
	Support for unconventional activism	3	3-15	7.41	2.79	.39	-.24	.59
	Propensity to attend college	1	1-5	4.70	.84	-3.19	9.74	
	Student government	1	1-2	1.21	.40	1.42	.025	

* two-item indices report correlation coefficient

Appendix Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Parent Civic Measures

	Measure	#Items	Range	Mean	Standard D	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha
Media Use	Attention to election news	1	1-5	3.32	1.23	-.16	-.93	
	Attention to key state issue	1	1-5	3.78	1.24	-.72	-.50	
	General TV viewing	1	1-16	2.59	1.64	3.00	16.17	
Cognitions	Knowledge	6	2-12	9.28	2.30	-.58	-.46	.61
	Salience of key state issue	1	1-5	3.94	1.17	-.88	-.13	
	Information integration	3	3-9	5.62	1.68	.06	-.79	.60
Discussion	Frequency of discussion with children	1	1-5	3.20	1.28	-.15	-.98	
	Frequency of discussion with friends	1	1-5	3.10	1.22	-.04	-.92	
	Willingness to express opinions	1	1-5	3.01	1.37	-.01	-1.12	
	Listening to opposing opinions	1	1-5	4.18	.95	-.96	.16	
	Disagree with others	1	1-5	3.07	1.06	-.10	-.25	
Political Opinions	Holding opinions	2	2-4	3.34	.75	-.86	-.09	.06*
	Opinion extremity	2	2-4	2.61	.76	.31	-.59	.15*
	Partisanship	2	2-4	3.25	.79	-.66	-.55	.24*
Civic behaviors & intentions	Support for conventional politics	2	2-10	7.13	1.92	-.56	.33	.27*
	Support for unconventional activism	2	3-15	6.75	2.64	.52	.03	.42
	Interest in student's civics instruction	6	6-30	20.80	4.93	-.26	-.43	.72
	Voting in 2002 election	1	1-2	1.77	.41	-1.32	-.25	

* two-item indices report correlation coefficient

Appendix Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Family Civic Measures

Measure	#Items	Range	Mean	St. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Reliability*
Discussion efficacy	2	2-10	5.86	2.56	.05	-1.07	.32*
Encouragement of media use	2	2-10	5.57	2.18	.06	-.55	.11*
Family opinion strength	2	2-8	4.24	1.60	.22	-.51	.28*
Family cohesion	2	2-10	5.66	2.35	.25	-.91	.43*
Flexibility of leadership	2	2-8	3.64	1.65	.40	-.63	.31*

* The correlation is reported.

Appendix Table 6: Effects of Kids Voting Components on Student Media Use (Partial Correlations)

					Curriculum	Components			
	Discussing election in class	Teacher encouragement to express opinions	Taking sides in debates	Analyzing political cartoons	Analyzing political ads	Service learning	Working at polling sites	Encouraging people to vote	Famil home assig
Attention to election news	.16**	.09^	.07	-.01	.02	.11^	.02	.17**	.06
Attention to key state issue	.12*	.10^	.00	.04	.01	.12*	-.01	.19***	.04
General TV viewing	-.04	-.08	.04	.03	-.10^	-.11^	.05	.04	.02

^ p<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Note: The partial correlations are generated from a regression equation that controls for the following variables: student gender, ethnicity, grades earned, year in school, religious group membership, SES, parent voting history, prior exposure to Kids Voting, and all the other current Kids Voting experiences.

Appendix Table 7: Effects of Kids Voting Components on Student Cognitions (Partial Correlations)

	Curriculum				Components				
	Discussing election in class	Teacher encouragement to express opinions	Taking sides in debates	Analyzing political cartoons	Analyzing political ads	Service learning	Working at polling sites	Encouraging people to vote	Fam hom assig
Knowledge	.11*	-.02	.09^	.11*	-.09	.07	.01	.04	-.05
Salience of key state issue	.00	.10^	-.01	.03	-.03	.07	.01	.07	.07
Information integration	-.02	.08	.08	.07	.03	.07	-.03	.17**	-.07

^ p<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Note: The partial correlations are generated from a regression equation that controls for the following variables: student gender, ethnicity, grades earned, year in school, religious group membership, SES, parent voting history, prior exposure to Kids Voting, and all the other current Kids Voting experiences.

Appendix Table 8: Effects of Kids Voting Components on Student Discussion (Partial Correlations)

					Curriculum	Components				
	Discussing election in class	Teacher encouragement to express opinions	Taking sides in debates	Analyzing political cartoons	Analyzing political ads	Service learning	Working at polling sites	Encouraging people to vote	Family homework assignments	Vote with parent
Frequency of discussion with parents	.22***	.02	.06	.05	-.01	.08	03	.18***	-.05	.01
Frequency of discussion with friends	.26***	.06	.10^	-.03	-.02	.11*	.05	.12*	.05	.00
Willingness to express opinions	-.09	.04	.13*	.01	.07	.01	.01	.12*	.05	-.02
Listening to opposing opinions	-.05	.06	.10^	.12*	-.10^	.04	.05	.13*	-.05	-.09
Disagree with others	-.06	.10^	.21***	.08	.03	-.02	-.02	.09^	-.02	-.01

^ p<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Note: The partial correlations are generated from a regression equation that controls for the following variables: student gender, ethnicity, grades earned, year in school, religious group membership, SES, parent voting history, prior exposure to Kids Voting, and all the other current Kids Voting experiences.

Appendix Table 9: Effects of Kids Voting Components on Student Political Opinions (Partial Correlations)

	Curriculum Components									
	Discussing election in class	Teacher encouragement to express opinions	Taking sides in debates	Analyzing political cartoons	Analyzing political ads	Service learning	Working at polling sites	Encouraging people to vote	Family homework assignments	Vote with parent
Holding opinions	.10^	.07	-.10^	.07	-.11*	-.03	-.06	.12*	.02	.07
Strongly held views	.05	.02	-.05	.04	-.08	.00	-.04	.10^	.07	.08
Partisanship	.06	.03	.06	.09	-.11*	-.02	.00	.05	.02	.05

^ p<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Note: The partial correlations are generated from a regression equation that controls for the following variables: student gender, ethnicity, grades earned, year in school, religious group membership, SES, parent voting history, prior exposure to Kids Voting, and all the other current Kids Voting experiences.

Appendix Table 10: Effects of Kids Voting Components on Student Civic Behaviors and Intentions (Partial Correlations)

					Curriculum	**Components**				
	Discussing election in class	Teacher encouragement to express opinions	Taking sides in debates	Analyzing political cartoons	Analyzing political ads	Service learning	Working at polling sites	Encouraging people to vote	Family homework assignments	Vote with parent
Support for conventional politics	.08	.02	.07	.05	-.06	.04	.04	.08	.02	-.01
Support for unconventional activism	-.01	.00	.08	.05	.03	.11*	.05	.10^	.10^	-.04
Propensity to attend college	-.01	.15**	.06	-.04	-.01	-.04	.07	.07	-.11^	.01
Participation in student government	-.01	.02	.07	.15**	-.02	.01	.00	.03	.02	.07

^ p<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Note: The partial correlations are generated from a regression equation that controls for the following variables: student gender, ethnicity, grades earned, year in school, religious group membership, SES, parent voting history, prior exposure to Kids Voting, and all the other current Kids Voting experiences.

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