ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: CONNECTING POLITICAL DISCUSSION TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF CIVIC KNOWLEDGE, EFFICACY AND CONTEXT FOR ADOLESCENTS

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The relationship between participating in political discussion and civic engagement was examined using survey data collected for the IEA Civic Education Study from a large, nationally representative sample of adolescents in the United States. This study extends previous research by considering the extent to which political discussion occurring in different contexts relates to several kinds of civic engagement and by considering the influence of civic knowledge and efficacy as possible intervening factors. Interviews with a separate sample of 32 14-year-olds provided descriptive data that enriched the presentation of statistical findings with respect to the reasons adolescents see for their participation in discussion.

Results from statistical analyses found that adolescents who report more frequent discussion of politics with peers, parents, and teachers, and perceive their class as a supportive environment for discussion are more likely to believe they will engage in civic activities as adults. This is the case for both conventional activities such as writing a letter to a newspaper about an issue and social movement-related activities such as participating in a non-violent protest. Furthermore, these adolescents were more likely to report that they are currently involved in civic-related organizations. The one exception is that adolescents' perception that their classroom supports the discussion of political issues is not related to their current involvement in civic-related organizations.

Adolescents' civic knowledge was not related to their expectations for future or current civic engagement when controlling for political discussion, nor did it change the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement. When adolescents' reported a sense of competence in politics and in their participation at school, they were more likely to expect they would engage in civic activities as adults and report that they currently participate in a greater number of civic-related organizations. However, these indicators of civic efficacy did not moderate the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement.

These findings affirm the positive role political discussion plays in promoting the civic engagement of young people. Learning more about the quality of political discussions in different contexts and adolescents' sense of competence in politics will help educators and parents strengthen this connection.

CONNECTING POLITICAL DISCUSSION TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF CIVIC KNOWLEDGE, EFFICACY AND CONTEXT FOR ADOLESCENTS

by

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DEDICATION

With love for my husband Chris, who has taught me the true meaning of the "pursuit of happiness."

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The irony of the dissertation process is that it requires a certain level of selfishness to attain completion, when the reality is that it never would have happened without the support of a whole network of people willing to support you, even as you put their needs aside.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Learning more about political discussion has important implications in several spheres including social studies education, aspects of positive youth development, and political socialization. But it also has broader ramifications. Political discussion is frequently considered a vital component of democracy by theorists and its extent and quality is often proposed as a measure for evaluating the strength of a democracy (Barber, 1984; Galston, 2001). Therefore understanding more about political discussion empirically can even be seen as an exploration of the ramifications and appropriateness of democratic theory. More practically speaking, discussion has been identified as a link between citizens and publicly elected representatives. Political discussion skills provide access to public and personal power. Assuming these political theories are valid, then in order to become a successful adult and citizen an adolescent needs to master the ability and develop the motivation to engage in political discussions.

Knowing more about the relationship between the discussion of politics and civic engagement will also provide useful information for improving social studies curriculum and the professional development of teachers. Many social studies educators currently advocate that social studies curriculum should take an issues-centered approach, of which discussion forms a large part. It is not sufficient for students to demonstrate essential knowledge about democratic structures and principles but rather they must also be able to demonstrate the ability to use their knowledge. Social studies educators argue that discussion promotes higher-level thinking, encourages positive democratic attitudes, and improves students' other participation skills (Hahn, 1996; Parker, Ninomiya, & Cogan,

2002). Research on political discussion also has the potential to provide empirical justification for these teaching objectives.

Understanding the process of political discussion and its association with civic engagement also has implications for positive youth development. It will provide guidance for parents interested in raising children who achieve a high degree of social and civic competence and engagement. Policy makers may be convinced to pursue policies that support opportunities for discussion, an activity that some educators feel ambivalent about at present. Teachers may be reluctant to implement discussion in the classroom for fear of community backlash over discussions perceived to be partisan in nature or feel the pressure to design curriculum designed to promote achievement on tests emphasizing standards with little room for student-initiated participation. Research on political discussion will help educators formulate clear objectives and learn strategies useful for implementing discussion in their curriculum.

Ultimately, describing the characteristics and process of political discussion and its influence on civic engagement, will help teachers, parents and the public in general determine how political discussion is related to engagement in society, politics, and the community, as well as enable them to create opportunities for adolescents to participate in such discussions.

Purpose

The focus of this research was to learn more about the relationship between political discussion and various modes of civic engagement and how personal characteristics, specifically knowledge and efficacy, and context in which discussion occurs may impact this relationship among adolescents.

Research has identified connections between political discussion and civic engagement, but the reasons *how and why* discussion is associated with engagement remain unclear. Since most of the research is cross-sectional in nature it remains impossible to determine whether participating in political discussion *causes* other engagement. The relationship between political discussion and civic engagement is undoubtedly a reciprocal one. Participation in discussions may motivate people to take action, and once they have taken action, they are likely to engage in political discussions more frequently. However, it is highly unlikely that young adults will vote for the first time without ever having engaged in a political discussion but it probable that they will have engaged in political discussions without ever participating in other more active forms of civic engagement, such as protesting. Political discussion may also act as an important accompaniment to other forms of engagement (such as reflection for service learning) or it may serve as a stimulus for other engagement. Discussion may provide an opportunity for a visual rehearsal of future action. This study explored the potential direct links from political discussion to civic engagement and possible moderating influences of civic knowledge and efficacy.

Studies focused specifically on political discussion have not often considered the relation of discussion to civic engagement but have instead emphasized discussion's impact on civic knowledge, attitudes or use of media. What is needed is a study on the impact of political discussion on civic engagement that takes into consideration the personal and contextual situations in which the discussions occur. The role that personal characteristics and social context play in the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement may be a key to understanding the process of political discussion.

While it is likely that there are many factors contributing to the correlation between political discussion and civic engagement, three potential factors include knowledge, efficacy, and context. One type of personal characteristic that has the potential to influence the impact of discussion is knowledge about political topics. Beliefs about one's competence in the domain of politics may also influence the impact of political discussion. A sense of understanding or mastery of a topic may prompt a desire to talk about it. Finally, the context in which political discussion occurs may impact the degree of its effect. Discussion within a comfortable setting, such as among parents or friends might provide the environment needed for adolescents to develop a sense of confidence and identity that could influence them to participate in other political activities. Or it may be that discussion in settings with more opportunities for a diversity of opinions, such as a classroom, may provide more opportunities for efficacy and knowledge to impact further participation.

For this study the process of political discussion and its relationship with civic engagement was analyzed using the U.S. data from the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study and was supplemented by brief interviews with adolescents. The IEA Civic Education Study is a cross-national study that surveyed more than 50,000 adolescents in 28 countries on their civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement. The next few sections provide conceptualizations of political discussion and civic engagement, an overview of the approach taken in this study to exploring the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement, as well as other potential intervening mechanisms; knowledge,

efficacy, and context. The effects of socioeconomic status and gender are also considered.

Current Understanding about Political Discussion for Adolescents

Much of what is understood about adolescent political discussion and relationship to civic engagement comes from the inclusion of a few items about the frequency of political discussion in self-report surveys. Therefore most findings are limited to identifying correlations between political discussion and civic engagement, with few details about the characteristics or quality of political discussion leading to such engagement. Clear consensus about causal links or moderating factors has not been established. Most studies that have contributed to our understanding about the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement for youth have not placed political discussion at the center of analysis. In some cases it has been considered one factor, among many others, affecting civic engagement. In others political discussion is considered a manifestation or measure of civic engagement. Below is a summary of relevant findings from research about political discussion.

- Conceptualizations about what constitutes "political" discussion differ (Bhavnani, 1991; Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 1998; Hahn, 1998; Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999);
- Political discussion in the U. S., at least as conventionally defined, is not an activity that adolescents (or adults) engage in frequently. Adolescents discuss politics more often with parents than peers (Galston, 2001; Hahn 1998; Niemi, Hepburn, & Chapman, 2000; Richardson & Amadeo, 2002; Waldman, 2001);

- Political discussion is associated with political knowledge, some attitudes and engagement (Bennett, Flickinger & Rhine, 2000; Galston, 2001; Gastil & Dillard, 1999; Hahn, 1996 & 1998; Lake, Snell, Perry & Assoc., 2002; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Valentino & Sears, 1998);
- A sense of political efficacy is linked to political participation, although distinctions between forms of efficacy and types of political participation vary the strength and nature of these relationships (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990; Finkel, 1985; Hahn, 1998; Krampen, 2000; Pollock, 1983; Stenz & Lambert, 1977; Wolfsfeld, 1986);
- Opportunities for and participation in political discussion vary across communities/social classes (Conover & Searing, 2000; Waldman, 2001);
- Political discussion, as it occurs in everyday life, even among adults, differs considerably from theoretical models of deliberative discussion (Conover & Searing, 2000; Waldman, 2001);
- Although many adolescents do report some participation in discussion in social studies classes, the content frequently does not require use of analytical skills. Furthermore, opportunities for discussion vary depending on context; with fewer opportunities available in urban schools (Alvermann, 1986; Baldi et al. 2001; Hahn, 1996 &1999; Kahne, Rodriguez, Smith & Thiede, 2000; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz 2001);
- A classroom perceived as open for discussion is positively related to civic knowledge and expected likelihood of future voting (Blankenship, 1990; Ehman, 1980; Hahn, 1998; Torney-Purta et al., 2001);

- Implementation of discussion in classrooms is impacted by peer culture and can have unforeseen challenges and sometimes unintended consequences such as students pushing their own ideas at the expense of other students' ideas (Hemmings, 2000; Hess & Posselt, 2001; King & King, 1998; Phelps & Weaver, 1999).

Political Discussion

One of the challenges with interpreting the association between political discussion and civic engagement is that conceptualization and operationalization of both political discussion and civic engagement vary across studies. Research in political discussion has often relied on a single item asking respondents "how often they discuss politics." The terms "politics" and "discussion" both warrant further clarification.

"Politics" has traditionally been defined as issues relating to government activities or activities conducted by representatives in government. However, feminist theory has questioned that notion of "politics." Although there is a diversity of feminist perspectives that range from revising liberal and Marxist traditions to constructing new theories of citizenship, the overarching critique is that politics should take account of issues occurring in both the public and the *private* spheres of life (Dietz, 1992; Fraser, 1997; Gilligan, 1993; Okin, 1979; Sapiro, 1987; Young, 1997). Research on the discussion of politics has generally been constrained to the traditional definition of politics, topics related to public, government institutions, although recently research has included social and economic issues from the personal sphere.

It remains unclear how research participants interpret the commonly used question about political discussion frequency. However, some studies suggest that for

most participants, responses to these questions have been limited in scope to public, governmental institutions. When embedded in a series of questions about government this interpretation is even more plausible. In the absence of a clear conceptualization of "politics" supported by the literature, the statistical analysis of this study is based on the assumption that the term "politics" might include any topic that individuals consider to be relevant to a sense of civic or political identity.

Political "discussion" has received considerable attention from political theorists but distinctions between discussion, deliberation, conversation or talk are often not clearly delineated. There appear to be two general distinctions in the literature about political "discussion." The first form of discussion revolves around rational communication or deliberative discussion. Characteristics of an ideal democratic deliberation show some degree of consistency around some central tenets. Conover, Searing and Crewe (2002) identify three main features; deliberations must be public; they must be non-tyrannical; and have equal opportunities to participate in and influence political discussions (p.24). Others have identified similar tenets (Simon & Xenos, 2000). Often ideal deliberative discussion is perceived to be directed toward a particular action outcome, but does not necessarily require actual action to be considered deliberative. Research about policy decisions and expectancy-value theories often use this conceptualization of political discussion. One additional issue in conceptualizing discussion as deliberation is that it remains unclear as to whether the deliberation can be at an individual, dyadic (micro) level or must have more participants and occur at a community (macro) level to be considered discussion (McLeod et al., 1999a).

A second form of discussion is more broadly conceptualized to be about sharing information and creating understanding between freely participating individuals. Kim et al. (1999) defined political discussion as: "all kinds of political talk, discussion, or argument as long as they are voluntarily carried out by free citizens without any specific purpose or predetermined agenda" (p.362). These discussions could be considered parallels to conversation or talk.

Although goals for political discussions in the classroom may contain elements of more deliberative discussion, in general it is unlikely that many adolescents engage in deliberative discussion on their own time. Research on adult habits of political discussion illustrate that most adult political discussions lack elements of ideal democratic deliberation (Conover et al., 2002). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, political discussion will be considered conversation about any topic participants consider relevant to "politics" that contains the potential for different opinions. Even though this conceptualization of discussion will be used for most of the analysis in this study, another objective for this study is to investigate the meaning of political discussion that adolescents interpret from survey items and to begin to explore how they experience political discussion.

Civic Engagement

Another problem with research on political discussion and civic engagement is that political discussion is both a form of civic engagement and an activity that influences other types of engagement. Political discussion can be seen as a cognitive form of civic engagement ("psychological involvement") much like following news in the media (Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001; Rudolph, Gangl & Stevens, 2000). Clear links have

been identified between psychological involvement and active participation; those with higher psychological involvement are more likely to engage in more active forms of participation. In addition, conceptualizations of civic engagement or political participation vary across studies.

Many studies of political discussion have stressed its association with more conventional political activities such as voting. Barnes and Kaase's (1979) pioneering study on political activity shifted the focus from so-called conventional activities, like participating in a political campaign, to an expanded repertoire of political activities. The use of the phrase "*civic* engagement" has recently been recognized as a more broad interpretation of political participation as it encompasses forms of participation such as social movement activities like protests or volunteering. There is not a consensus about the categorization of specific political activities. For example, some studies consider writing a letter to a newspaper about a political issue to be an activity outside the formal political system, while others consider it to be a form of conventional participation consistent with voting or working on a political campaign (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Kim et al., 1999; Krampen, 1991).

Another important factor to consider in the investigation of political discussion and civic engagement for adolescents is that this age group does not currently have the same opportunities for engagement or the same contextual support as adults (e.g. youth can not vote or run for many public positions nor in some cases can they get adults to take their opinions seriously). Therefore, it is important to consider activities that are available to adolescents that may parallel adult forms of participation, such as participation in student councils, interest groups or non-governmental groups.

Furthermore, some political scientists have emphasized the importance of involvement in community organizations or associations (Putnam, 2000). The opportunities for adolescent participation in civic or community organizations may come as part of the school curriculum. The rising importance of service learning as a part of the social studies curriculum has often been seen as a means to achieving adolescent participation in activities to establish the skills necessary for later civic engagement. Research on service learning has identified reflection, often in the form of discussion, as an essential element to effective programs (Torney-Purta, Hahn, & Amadeo, 2001). However, benefits have also been identified for student participation in civic service not explicitly linked to school curriculum including the development of moral and civic identity, increased cognitive ability, future volunteering, and civic responsibility (Killen & Horn, 1999; Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson, 2003; Yates & Youniss, 1999). For the purposes of this study, civic engagement will include a broad range of activities, from conventional activities (such as writing letters to an elected official), to more social, civic activities (like raising money for a charity), and civic-related organizations that adolescents can currently belong to (such as a student council or an environmental organization).

Civic Knowledge

The first factor that may influence the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement is civic knowledge. Even though civic knowledge has long been identified as a predictor of civic engagement (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Galston, 2001) the measures of civic knowledge used with adults concentrate on discrete facts about political life or transient events and civic engagement was often limited to

participation in political activities related to elections. Conceptualizing knowledge as the static possession of information has limited our understanding about the ways in which knowledge affects engagement. Knowledge conceptualized as a process embedded in context on the other hand (Torney-Purta, 1990; 1992) means seeing civic knowledge as an understanding about the principles and processes that are central to a democracy, which increase in complexity when applied in real situations. As Helwig (1998) has shown the level of understanding demonstrated by adolescents for political concepts, such as freedom of speech, vary depending on whether they are asked to apply the concepts to straightforward situations or complex situations which may present conflicts with other issues, such as moral dilemmas. Another relevant conceptualization of knowledge is Bandura's social cognitive theory (1989). According to his theory, existing knowledge and new knowledge will be used and constructed by observations of the environment to help people make judgments about their abilities. These judgments or efficacy then shape their subsequent behavior. Political discussion is one form of social interaction that may influence knowledge construction. However, since less is known about how knowledge interacts with political discussion to influence civic engagement, this was one focus of this study.

Efficacy

Researchers in both political science and psychology have identified personal beliefs as an important factor influencing behavior. The idea of efficacy is also a prominent part of theory and research in education (Stenz & Lambert, 1977). Notable links have been made between efficacy beliefs and academic or social achievement (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998).

The concept of political efficacy and its relationship to the stability of democracies or the participation of citizens is one belief that has received considerable attention from political researchers. Political efficacy is the "feeling that individual political action does have an impact on the political process…" (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954, p. 187). There are at least two political theories that support the importance of instilling a positive sense of political efficacy in citizens (Finkel, 1985). The first theory attributes the stability of democratic regimes to at least a modest sense of efficacy among a majority of citizens. Citizens who believe that the government is responsive to their needs are more likely to submit to government authority or to grant it legitimacy, thereby contributing to a stable democracy. A second theory, participatory democracy, emphasizes the outcome effects for individuals of a strong sense of political efficacy. Citizens with positive political efficacy are more likely to participate in the political process, thereby ensuring an engaged citizenry which contributes to more than a threshold level of legitimacy.

Initial measurement of political efficacy dates to a study by Campbell et al. (1954), where an index was developed for use in predicting voting. Since that time a number of studies have assessed the reliability and validity of the measurement, which has led to further refinement of the concept of political efficacy into internal and external political efficacy (Acock, Clarke, & Stewart, 1985; Asher, 1974; Balch, 1974; Craig et al., 1990; Hayes & Bean, 1993). Internal political efficacy has been defined as "beliefs about one's own competence to understand and participate effectively in politics," whereas external political efficacy is "beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizens' demands" (Craig et al. 1990).

The issue of efficacy has also received considerable attention in psychology, most notably as part of Bandura's social cognitive learning theory. In Bandura's theory self-efficacy forms the foundation of human capabilities for exercising control over their lives (Bandura, 2001). A number of studies have linked self-efficacy to behavioral and academic outcomes. Self-efficacy beliefs are not static beliefs but rather "vary across domains of activities, situational circumstances, and functional roles" (Bandura, 1997, p. 485; Bandura 1986). This definition would suggest that an individual's political efficacy may vary depending on the mode of political participation. Voting may elicit different beliefs about one's competence than participating actively in someone's campaign for political office or protesting environmental policies.

According to Bandura's theory there are a number of sources of information that individuals use in the process of establishing their sense of self-efficacy, including mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological or affective states. Few adolescents will have the opportunity for mastery experiences in political participation (e.g. they are not eligible to run for political office or vote). Vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion from others (especially adults) are likely to be strong influences on adolescent political efficacy. Accompanying a parent to the voting polls is one example of how a vicarious experience may lead to increased political efficacy. Political discussion may be an especially important situation in which adolescents can enhance their sense of competence. Discussions that are similar to those between adult citizens or among elected officials may give the adolescents confidence that they could engage in similar discussions. Verbal persuasion may also be a route through which adolescents develop a sense of competence in their political abilities.

Political discussions may include encouragement to engage in other political or civic activities. Some research shows that people who are asked to participate in civic activities are more frequent participants than those who are never asked (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002b).

More recently Bandura (1997) has applied his concept of perceived self-efficacy to other domains such as politics. His definition of self-efficacy as it applies to politics is the "belief that one can produce effects through political action" (p. 483). Unlike self-esteem, which is a judgment of self-worth, self-efficacy is a judgment about one's capabilities. It is a judgment about what one can accomplish, not just about the kind of person one is or one's level of understanding. This is an important distinction that is confounded in research on internal political efficacy, where a judgment of one's level of understanding is combined with a judgment about an ability to produce a certain outcome. Bandura does not neglect the importance of evaluating the effect of one's action but he maintains that this expectation of outcomes is distinct from evaluation of one's underlying capabilities. Bandura highlights how a sense of efficacy and outcome expectancies act both in tandem and separately to influence engagement. He notes for example that one can hold a high sense of political efficacy but if one had a low sense of outcome expectancy then action is unlikely to ensue. Additionally one can understand politics but not feel capable of taking action. For example, understanding the role of interest groups may actually reduce a sense of individual efficacy, especially among those who are not wealthy or well placed.

Social cognitive theory also makes a distinction between collective and personal efficacy that has obvious implications for beliefs people have about the actions taken by

individuals and groups of citizens in the political sphere. Collective efficacy is the belief that a group can be effective in a given situation, whereas personal efficacy (or self-efficacy) refers specifically to beliefs about one's own competence. A person might believe that a community civic association (a collective entity) would be able to persuade local officials to build speed bumps in their neighborhood to improve traffic safety but that they would not individually be able to accomplish the same goal. In a similar way students may believe that they collectively can influence school problems but individually feel a sense of impotence.

There are two reasons why efficacy beliefs about participation at school may be important for adolescents. Bandura has dealt relatively briefly with political efficacy but in one of his rare forays into this field he notes that "Children's beliefs about their capabilities to influence governmental functioning may also be partially generalized from their experiences in trying to influence adults in educational and other institutional settings in which they must deal" (Bandura, 1997, p. 491). Schools as a model for democratic practices may constitute a mastery experience. National Research Coordinators from many countries participating in the first phase of the IEA Civic Education Study identified the importance of having schools serve as model democracies as a key goal for civic education (Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999). Measuring the relationship between efficacy beliefs about participation at school and adolescents' current participation in civic-related organizations can test Bandura's theory that efficacy beliefs are particular to activities and institutions that are of interest to individuals (Bandura, 1997, p.485).

If efficacy is in fact a multi-dimensional construct influenced by context, then its various components (internal political efficacy, school efficacy) should have different relationships with external criteria. For example, school efficacy should be more related to increased participation in school councils, and internal political efficacy should be more closely related to participation in more traditional political activities such as running for office.

Context

One important dimension of political discussion that may influence its association with civic engagement is the context in which the discussion occurs. Context in this study includes discussions with different partners (peers, parents, and teachers) and classroom climate. Social interactions can have both positive and negative influences on individual behavior (Berndt, 1984). Understanding the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement requires the consideration of both outcomes.

Political theories of deliberation in a democracy often cite the equality of the participants as a necessary criterion for true deliberation (Conover et al., 2002). Adolescents are in a position where many of their discussion partners are likely to be in positions of authority over them, such as parents or teachers. Political socialization theories have therefore long-studied the impact of parents as a main socializing influence. However, other theories, such as that of Piaget (1932) or moral development theorists (Helwig, 1995; Killen, 1991; Killen & Nucci, 1995; Turiel, 1998), suggest that development of more complex, abstract political thinking may in fact be enhanced by the interaction of equals. This is usually thought of as peers, but could also mean adults who

treat young people as equals (although this is difficult to test with currently available data).

Political discussions occurring in classes offer yet another setting that might influence the relationship between political discussions and civic engagement. Classroom discussions are generally assumed to contain both interactions with people usually in positions of authority (teachers) and equals (peers). These assumptions ignore the agency of the individual students and neglect the unequal social structuring of peer groups, often along such lines as socioeconomic status or race and ethnicity. Theories of social psychology and developmental psychology offer different explanations for the effects of engaging in classroom discussions and challenge these assumptions. Social psychology has emphasized individual's concerns for group approval, both based on social pressure and social comparisons. Developmental psychology (and cognitive psychology) has highlighted how groups expose individuals to new information, thereby changing cognitive structures and reasoning. An integration of both these theories plus consideration of the affective qualities of discussion offers the best approach for explaining how groups may influence individuals through discussion (Berndt, 1984).

Given all of the potential effects of varying contexts this study analyzed whether discussion with peers operates differently than discussion with parents or teachers and whether discussion in classrooms has a different association with civic engagement than discussions outside school.

Other Related Factors

The main emphasis of this study was on the association between political discussion and civic engagement and the potential influence of civic knowledge and

efficacy on this relationship. However, there are several other related factors that were important to consider. Different rates of participation in civic engagement and political discussion by gender, race, and socioeconomic status are frequently the center of attention in both political science and education research. These three factors were considered for this study because evidence of such differences would imply both a failing in the democratic theory of equality and educational opportunities established to support this equality (Conover et al., 2002).

This study considered race and ethnicity as a factor potentially affecting the relationship between discussion and engagement. However, the complexity of the response format for race (where students could choose more than one category from 5 categories: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and White) combined with a question about ethnicity (Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino) available from the database being used suggested that simple comparisons using whites as a referent group would not provide meaningful analysis. As has been noted by other researchers, the construction of ethnic and racial identity is a complex issue and the categories provided on surveys frequently mask the heterogeneity within these categories on things such as cultural values, a subjective sense of identity, and experiences associated with "minority" status (Phinney, 1996). Furthermore, the self-identity of young people may switch depending on question format (Phinney, 1996). A review of frequencies for the ethnicity and race questions from the database used in this study found that this may be an issue for 14-year-olds. For example, 214 students selected responses indicating that their ethnicity was Hispanic or Latino but did not provide a response to the question about race. The issues raised above

may be especially relevant to topics of a political nature. Therefore, consideration of the impact of ethnicity and race on political discussion and civic engagement was left for future research.

Understanding Adolescents' Views of Political Discussion

Although like past research in political science on political discussion the data used in this study was primarily from a survey and correlational in nature, an additional aspect of this study explored how adolescents perceive their experiences with discussing politics and its possible connections to civic engagement by interviewing adolescents. The purpose of this part of the study was two-fold. First, having adolescents' describe their interpretation of the same survey questions used for statistical analyses enriched the results by providing adolescent interpretations of the meaning of the questions. There are currently no published studies that provide information about how adolescents interpret the questions that form the framework for the majority of studies on political attitudes and activities. Second, having adolescents share their perspectives about the influence of efficacy and knowledge on the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement helped lay the groundwork for designing later studies of adolescents' political discussion by identifying prominent situations in which such discussions occur. These interviews also helped identify the degree to which discussion fosters beliefs about expected participation in conventional and social movement-related activities and current participation in civic-related organizations and ways in which political discussion intersects with other forms of civic engagement not considered as outcomes for this study, such as the attention paid to the media.

Summary

Understanding more about the process of political discussion will make a significant contribution to both political science and social studies education. Examining potential mechanisms moderating the influence of political discussion may provide an explanation about how political discussion operates to strengthen civic engagement, and consequently strengthen democracies. Deconstructing the process of political discussion and contextual influences will help educators, especially social studies educators, improve pedagogical strategies to foster the development of adolescent skill for engaging in political discussions. Civic knowledge and efficacy represent two potential factors influencing the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement. The interaction of these two factors with political discussion will be considered along with other demographic and contextual variables, as outlined in the specific research questions below.

Research Questions

1. Is the model that proposes four distinct types of political discussion (with peers, parents, teachers and in the classroom) plausible for the data from the U.S. sample of the IEA Civic Education Study?

2. Is the model that proposes two distinct types of civic engagement (conventional political and social movement-related activities) plausible for the data from the U.S. sample of the IEA Civic Education Study?

3. Is the model that proposes three domains of civic-related efficacy (political efficacy, discussion efficacy and school efficacy) plausible for the data from the U.S. sample of the IEA Civic Education Study?

4. To what extent does each type of political discussion predict adolescents' belief that they will be engaged in conventional political activities and social movement-related activities as adults, when controlling for home literacy resources and gender?

5. Does each type of political discussion predict adolescents' current participation in civic-related organizations, when controlling for home literacy resources and gender?

6. To what extent is civic knowledge related to adolescents' belief that they will be civically engaged in the future and their current civic participation, when controlling for home literacy resources, gender, and discussion of politics?

7. To what extent is the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement affected by civic knowledge?

8. How are three different measures of efficacy (political efficacy, school efficacy, discussion efficacy) related to expected and current civic engagement?

9. To what extent is the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement affected by each type of efficacy?

10. How do adolescents experience political discussion? What is the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement for adolescents?

    a. How do adolescents interpret survey items about political discussion? What meaning do they attach to terms, such as "discussion" or "politics?"

    b. How do adolescents describe their experiences with political discussion? What connections do they see between discussion and engagement? What do they feel is the impact of knowledge and efficacy on discussion and engagement? Do they perceive discussion differently across contexts (peer, parent, teacher, and classroom)?

In order to test questions one through three confirmatory factor analyses were conducted using the IEA Civic Education Study data for the U.S. sample of 14-year-olds. Based on the results of these analyses, multiple measures of political discussion, efficacy, and measures of several modes of civic engagement were constructed. Research questions four through nine were addressed using a series of hierarchical linear regressions. The measures of civic engagement were used as the dependent variables. The independent variables included each of the four measures of participation in political discussion, civic knowledge, and each of the three types of efficacy. Each of the analyses controlled for possible effects of home literacy resources and gender. Question ten was addressed using interview data from a separate group of 32 14-year-olds who responded to a shortened version of the same instrument used in the IEA Civic Education Study. A more thorough presentation of the study's methodology is presented in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

Relevant Theory and Research

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework used to explain the influence of context, civic knowledge, and efficacy on the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement for adolescents, followed by a review of relevant research.

This study focuses on the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement specifically for adolescents because theories in both political science and development have identified this time period as one in which people develop the capacity for more sophisticated thinking about abstract concepts. Furthermore, this is an age when youth begin to encounter opportunities to make their own decisions about the sorts of activities in which they would like to spend their time. Theories from both of these fields are reviewed to justify the emphasis of this study on adolescents. To provide a more detailed framework for investigating the connections between political discussion and civic engagement, a theory of social cognitive learning is explained and applied to the research questions of this study.

Following a presentation of the theoretical framework is a section on research that illustrates current understanding about how adults and adolescents experience political discussion, in everyday life and the classroom. Important aspects of the context for discussion including discussion partners and school are reviewed. The next section presents research describing adolescents experience with civic engagement and links with political discussion. Research linking civic knowledge to discussion and engagement is presented next. A subsequent section on efficacy beliefs accomplishes two objectives. It

presents research linking efficacy to political engagement (including discussion) and it reviews previous conceptualizations and measurements of efficacy. The chapter closes with consideration of the impact of gender and socioeconomic status on the process of political discussion.

Since the focus of this research is on adolescents, the majority of studies presented were those conducted with this age group. However, research conducted with adults is included when it allows for a more thorough consideration of a topic. Research with adults is especially important in the case of connecting discussion to engagement since for adolescents engagement will often be a future activity. This literature review is cross-disciplinary, combining research from political science, social studies education, communication, and psychology. The review identifies gaps in the research and presents links to the research questions.

The Importance of Adolescence

According to developmental theories, studying adolescents' habits of participating in political discussion are important for study because adolescence is a time when individuals are increasing their ability for abstract, complex thinking that allows them to take on the perspectives of others and imagine possible implications from future actions. It is also an age at which individuals spend increasing amounts of time with their peers and this relationship with peers is likely to be more influential because they have increased opportunities for independent activities (Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg & Verma, 2002).

Age related differences have been found in children's and adolescents' reasoning about political or civic related concepts. For example, Ruck, Abramovitch and Keating

(1998) found that reasoning about self-determination rights progressed from concrete to more abstract. Helwig (1998) found that older children were more likely to see the consequences of particular government systems, make use of a broader set of rationales and were better able to coordinate conflicting concepts. Helwig and Kim (1999) found that older children showed more sophisticated consideration of context when reasoning about elements of the decision making process, such as autonomy and authority. For example, they could see how a child's capacity for making informed judgments should be considered along with the child's right to be involved in school curriculum. The abilities of young people to reason about rights has policy implications for the application of the U.N. Declaration for the Rights of Children and more importantly for this study, implications for the inclusion of students as full participants in the democratic structures and decision-making processes of their schools and communities. While it appears that participation in political discussions is an activity that is likely to have an influence on all children, adolescence likely to be an age when youth are especially open to the positive and negative effects of social interactions around discussions of political issues.

As highlighted by Larson et al. (2002) preparation for adulthood in today's society is increasingly carried out in the presence of peers. Adolescents are not only spending a large portion of their time in classroom settings with peers but they are also spending more time with peers in after-school activities, work settings and during leisure time. Adolescence is a time period in which youth are developing a sense of identity (in this study civic identity is especially relevant) and increasing their ability for abstraction, complex thinking and perspective taking abilities (Berman, 1997; Yates & Youniss,

1999). The theories of Erickson (1968) and Kohlberg (1969) both identify adolescence as the time in which the capabilities of young people are approaching those of adults.

Political science research has found that adolescence is a period that has important associations with adult engagement. Several longitudinal studies found evidence of the persistence of attitudes developed during adolescence (Alwin, 1991; Jennings, 2002; Jennings and Niemi, 1973 &1981). In addition retrospective studies have shown that adults who report that discussion was a part of their experiences (class/home) in high school are more likely to be engage in political activities (Damico, Damico & Conway, 1998; Keeter et al., 2002a & 2002b). The level of communication about politics increases as adolescents approach young adulthood (Valentino & Sears, 1998).

Early political socialization theories spent considerable time trying to measure the discrete direct effects of social institutions (parents, schools, peers) on the development of adolescent attitudes and subsequent persistence of adolescent attitudes on adult attitudes and behavior. These theories now have a more complex, interactive approach that considers adolescents as individuals capable of constructing meaning and having agency that allow them to participate in civil society.

Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's social cognitive learning theory provides one model for how the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement may be affected by personal and contextual factors. Bandura states that "the capability for intentional and purposive action is rooted in symbolic activity. Future events cannot be causes of current motivation and action. However, by being represented cognitively in the present, foreseeable future events are converted into current motivators and regulators of

behavior" (Bandura, 1989, p. 27). Political discussion represents a symbolic activity that has the potential to shape current civic activity by helping adolescents imagine future engagement. What you know and believe about politics influences whether or not you will "do" politics now and in the future.

Bandura's social cognitive theory posits that there are three elements of human experience that impact learning. Through a process he calls triadic reciprocal determinism personal characteristics, the environment, and behavior interact to impact learning. For Bandura learning is not about a progression through a series of stages but rather, "Learning is largely an information-processing activity in which information about the structure of behavior and about environmental events is transformed into symbolic representations" (Bandura, 1986, p. 51). It follows that a higher level of knowledge would be a more complex network of symbols. The transformation of observations into symbols is the result of four sub-functions. Attention determines what people choose to pay attention to and what they take away from their experiences. Encoding the observations into memory, or retention, is the second sub-process. The third subcomponent is the production process, where symbols are used for guiding appropriate behavior. Motivation processes determine the actual enactment of behaviors specified in production process (Bandura, 1989). The construction, retention and use of symbols are guided by the development of specialized judgment rules applied to each observed experience.

The strength of Bandura's theory lies in his explanation about the process of making judgments about situations. There are a number of characteristics unique to humans that give them the ability to control their behavior in a complex fashion. These

core features of human agency are intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2001). Among these Bandura identifies self-reflection as the most central because through the process of comparing one's knowledge to that of others people can evaluate the effectiveness of actions and adjust their own behavior to aim at a higher level of competence.

Vicarious capability and self-reflective capability are two aspects of Bandura's theory that are most relevant to the association between political discussion and civic engagement. Political discussion is an illustration of vicarious learning because it allows participants to learn more about political participation without necessitating actual engagement. For example, a political discussion about a past protest provides information about the steps involved and the impact of taking part in such an action. Furthermore, since citizens are unlikely to be involved in political activities on a daily basis, discussion allows them to expand their view of political opportunities without direct experience. The self-reflective capability could lead to the development of self-efficacy, or in this case a sense of competence about political activity connecting a variety of politically relevant stimuli coming from different sources (see Chapter 1 for a more detailed description of self-efficacy theory).

Bandura's social cognitive theory provides a framework for exploring the influence that civic knowledge, efficacy, and context have on the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement. For the purposes of this study the multiple modes of political participation, or civic engagement, form the "behavior" point of this theory. The various contexts in which political discussions can occur for adolescents, between peers, with parents or teachers, and in the classroom represent the environment

component of Bandura's theory. The influence of socioeconomic status will be an additional environmental factor considered. Civic knowledge and efficacy are the main personal characteristics that will be explored in this study. However, the effects of gender will also be analyzed because it represents another personal characteristic that influences the interpretation that individuals would make of the political domain, both in the attention they pay to particular experiences and the models which they opt to compare their own thoughts and experiences against.

Political Discussion

Concepts of Political Discussion for Adults

In order to analyze factors influencing the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement it is important to clarify conceptualizations and current understanding about political discussion and civic engagement. This section explores conceptualizations of political discussion and the contexts in which such discussions take place. Special attention is given to the school environment, since this is one opportunity for political discussion that is unique for adolescents. It also presents research findings linking political discussion with civic engagement. Methodological limitations of existing research for both adults and adolescents are identified.

Some researchers have developed measures of political discussion based on their own interpretations of political theory about what constitutes "political" discussion. For example, part of a national survey of adults by Kim et al. (1999) analyzed the effect of three types of political conversation on different forms of political participation. They developed three different measures of conversation. The first measure was "political talk" and contained four items including frequency of discussion about national or

foreign affairs. A second measure, "personal talk," included such issues as crime and schools, as well as more cultural affairs such as religion or sports. A third measure focused on issue-specific political conversation. Even though Conover et al. (2002) used focus groups to identify political issues about which people had serious discussions, rather than researcher selected issues, these issues were used to evaluate the degree to which everyday political discussions contained characteristics theorists postulate as essential for democratic deliberation. The three characteristics are that discussions must be public, non-tyrannical, and equal.

Other researchers have tried to analyze adults' everyday understanding of politics or political discussion. Peterson (1990) used phone interviews to ask adults what politics meant to them. He concluded that while many people initially named government institutions, they also considered other institutions such as work or church as containing politics. Those respondents with higher levels of education and income were more likely to perceive politics in spheres besides government institutions. Cramer's (1998) observations of adults discussing politics at a local community restaurant found that "doing discussion" was not characterized by participants as political deliberation, even though political content was both overtly and subtly a part of their discourse. In developing a sample for analysis about political discussion and public opinion Huckfeldt, Beck, Dalton, and Levine (1995) found that asking respondents to identify people with whom they discussed "important matters" resulted in a different list of discussion partners than asking for people with whom they discussed the events of the recent presidential election (p.1030). These results suggest that political discussion may be considered a particular form of communication.

Political Discussion among Adults

A number of studies have been carried out to compare the actual habits of political discussion among citizens with the democratic theories of discussion. A characterization of discussion habits has emerged. From studies that use a single item asking respondents how often they discuss politics, it appears that in general most citizens discuss politics infrequently. Bennett et al. (2000) provide a comparison across time of several studies of political discussion including the American National Election Studies and report that a majority of people respond that they discuss politics occasionally or once a week. These findings are consistent with results of a recent survey of registered voters conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, where Waldman (2001) found that most citizens are infrequent talkers, with about half of the respondents only discussing politics once a week. Keeter et al. (2002b) found that across generations more than 60% report talking "very often" about current events, however fewer than 35% of people report that these discussions are about politics or government.

Waldman (2001) found that the socioeconomic elite, the educated, wealthy, white males were more likely to engage in discussion. He also reviewed research that concludes that discussions occur most often among close social networks and that disagreement in discussion occurs relatively infrequently. Bennett et al. (2000) also found that gender and education were predictors of participation (males and more educated reported higher levels of discussion). Like Waldman, Bennett et al. conclude that discussions occur most often with family and friends. Furthermore, people generally eschew disagreement in discussion.

Using a quasi-experimental design Conover et al. (2002) identified three American and three British communities matched on a number of characteristics such as size and education. They conducted extensive interviews, focus groups and a random sample of some citizens investigating several aspects of citizenship including political discussion. They asked more specific questions about the types of content people discuss but their frequency distribution of discussion on all the topics revealed that nearly 50% of people report very low or low amounts of discussion. The study by Conover et al. (2002) moved beyond previous studies relying on participants self-reported discussion frequency on one survey item. The study provides a rich exploration about how and why discussions occur, using criteria for ideal deliberations as a framework for comparison. Results are based on survey interviews with a randomly selected sample of 125 adults in three U.S. and three British communities. They found that more discussion occurs in private settings, particularly in the home. Furthermore, more than 60% of people never or rarely discuss political topics with people they do not know well. They note that only a very small number of people talk in public and not at home. They hypothesize that "frequent private discussion appears to be a necessary condition for public discussion" (p.37). Women, the poor, and the old report significantly lower levels of public discussion largely due to lower levels of social connection and attitudes that are more likely to discourage discussion. Unlike democratic theorists who often describe discussion as a means to gain information or persuade others, citizens valued social and personal reasons for discussion. They described listening and learning from the views of others to be an important motivator for participating in political discussions. While some participants mentioned a lack of competence about political issues as a reason for not

engaging in political discussion, more people identified a caution about revealing their preferences and a desire to avoid conflict. They considered revealing personal stances to be revealing part of their identity. The implication of this finding is that improving the potential impact of political discussion has less to do with helping people improve their confidence about discussion skills and more to do with convincing them of the personal value from engaging in such discussions. At first a low sense of competence appears contradictory to Bandura's theory of efficacy, but his theory would explain that the motivation for participation is related to the judgments people are obviously making about the risk and value of engaging relative to their other personal goals they may value more highly.

In summary, participating in political discussions is not an activity that most adults engage in everyday. When discussions do occur they most often take place with family or friends and disagreement is not often present. Opportunities for discussion vary across community contexts, gender, age, and income. It should be noted that most of the research on which these findings are based utilize a narrow conception of political discussion and are often based on a single item about the frequency of political discussion. A broader conceptualization of discussion may change these findings or interpretations.

These findings present an interesting paradox. Despite the low frequency and limited scope of political discussions there is still abundant evidence that reports of engaging in political discussion are associated with higher levels of political engagement. It is no wonder that educators and adolescents remain reluctant about the potential of political discussion for impacting their lives. As Preskill (1997) states, "convincing

students that discussion is an important way to learn and a necessary preparation for democratic living stymies even the most persuasive educator given the infrequent opportunities to engage in discussion outside of school and the specter of powerlessness that haunts the everyday citizen" (p.330). Convincing adolescents about the importance of political discussion may hinge on finding out more about how and why political discussion is related to civic engagement, as well as identifying its meaning and proximal cues that prompt adolescents to engage. Developing a description of how adolescents experience political discussion is an important first step in exploring possible mechanisms influencing the process of discussion (namely context, knowledge, and efficacy).

The Domain of Politics, as Perceived by Adolescents

In research on political socialization that considers both the development of civic knowledge and attitudes there have been several calls for revising the conceptualization of politics (Flanagan & Gallay, 1995). Narrow definitions of politics may have attenuated the degree of correlation between political discussion and civic engagement found in previous studies. We need to understand how adolescent thinking in the abstract about politics relates to political action. It may be that adolescents view both national and local politics as something entirely irrelevant to their own experiences.

Some research has suggested that adolescents hold a rather narrow conceptualization of politics. For example, in an international comparative study by Hahn (1998), that included qualitative measures in addition to surveys of political attitudes, when students were asked what they thought of when they pictured "politicians," most students mentioned "men in suits who were based

in…Washington….and who appeared on the nightly news" (Hahn, 1998, p. 128). Hahn also noted that "no students…ever said they associated 'political' with decisions that are made in the school, family, or community" (p.56). In another international study, of Central and Eastern European adolescents, Van Hoorn, Komlosi, Suchar and Samelson (2000) found that politics is viewed as "foreign policy issues observed on television" (p. 134). Politics was limited by those students to macrosystem levels, and was therefore deemed irrelevant to their lives.

In an ethnographic study of youth in Britain Bhavanni (1991) investigated how youth discussed political views in the context of unemployment. In the pilot study Bhavanni found that "to use the word 'politics' in the interviews was taken to refer to British party politics" (p.140). An expanded concept about the domain of political that included issues of power and domination was used to get a broader and deeper understanding of how the youth perceived the connections between personal and political issues. Under this broader umbrella, issues of unemployment, racism, and marriage were included in discussions along with issues of voting and democracy. Bhavanni found that the youth were more confident and gave more details about issues in the less overtly political domain (e.g. racism, unemployment) than about democracy or voting.

In a random sample of U.S. youth age 15-25, Keeter et al. (2002b) found that there was a noticeable difference in the percent of students who reported that they talked "very often" with family and friends about current events and what percent of that conversation was about politics or government. For the Dotnet generation (born after 1976) 51% reported that they talked "very often" about current events but only 22% of

the time about politics and government. For Generation X respondents 58% reported talk about current events, while only 28% reported talking about politics or government.

Richardson and Torney-Purta (in press) found that adolescents' understanding of concepts of democracy (such as the rule of law) was not associated with political participation, whereas their concepts about which activities a good adult citizen should do was related with the intent to vote, join a political party and volunteer in the community. In addition, adolescents' who reported higher levels of interest in politics were also more likely to report that they intended to vote and join a political party but not volunteer in the community as adults. Taken together these results suggest that adolescents' conceptualization of politics does not extend to community civic activities.

If these narrow conceptualizations of politics are extended to political discussion, the resulting correlation between political discussion and civic engagement may appear more limited than the actual relationship. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, if adolescents perceive political activities to be irrelevant to their own experiences they are likely to judge their own capabilities in the political domain as inadequate or to decide that activities in the political domain do not fit their personal goals. In either case this would lead to further avoidance of engaging in political activities by adolescents. Exploring the extent to which adolescents move between the domain of the personal and the political may enhance our understanding about the process of political discussion. Other studies have begun to consider intersections between politics and other domains such as moral reasoning (Helwig, 1995 & 1998; Raaijmakers, Verbogt, & Vollebergh, 1998). For example, Helwig (1995) found that children and adolescents demonstrated different notions of freedom of speech depending on whether they are asked to consider

the principles in a straightforward scenario or a complex situation that presented potential conflicts with other modes of thinking such legitimacy of authority. As Buckingham (1998), a British social scientist who is especially interested in media points out, "the personal can become political, but this requires a fundamental shift in how issues are framed or defined. At the most general level, 'political thinking' implies a view of the individual self in collective or social terms" (p.126). One aim of the interview portion of this study is to explore these boundaries by asking adolescents to share their conceptualizations of politics and discussion. Despite the possibility that limited definitions of the political domain constrain the impact of political discussion, research has found some connection between political discussion and engagement for adolescents.

Contexts of Political Discussion for Adolescents

Unlike many other forms of civic engagement adolescents have plenty of opportunities for engaging in political discussion, at least potentially. Since political discussion is by nature a social interaction, the conditions that support and enhance the effects of discussion also need further identification and description. It is unlikely that an adolescent will engage in or observe political discussion solely in the context of school. Political discussions could make up a portion of their time spent with parents, peers, teachers, or other citizens. Opportunities for discussions will come at home, at work, or in the community. Classrooms offer an additional setting for political discussion specific to adolescents. With the exception of educators, the majority of adults do not have frequent opportunities for academic discussions.

Factors that influence discussion in classrooms may differ from those that affect political discussion with family members or friends. It may be for example that political

discussion in school can make up for deficient opportunities for discussion in the home. On the other hand, deficient opportunities for discussion at home may make students less able to take advantage of opportunities in school. Or it may be that discussion in both locations, acting in a complementary fashion, can have a stronger influence on civic engagement. One objective of this study is to explore these possibilities by identifying patterns in the way political discussion across the school and personal contexts relate to civic engagement.

Early research about political discussion in the personal sphere has been dominated by an emphasis on the influence of parents. Political socialization theory identified interactions with parents as a key component of political development. More recently research has expanded to include consideration of discussion with peers and other community members. Consideration of the nature and quality of the discussion and the affective relationship between discussion partners have been considered more closely in the developmental psychology field, although the emphasis tended to be on moral, not political, development. Another influential aspect of context is the nature of relationships among discussion partners and social norms about the value and practice of political discussion.

Interactions with parents and peers and the school setting have all been found to be influential on adolescents' political engagement. Many of the studies focused specifically on political discussion have only considered one context (family or classroom). Studies that have investigated political discussion in multiple contexts (Conover & Searing, 2000; Hahn, 1998; Torney-Purta et al. 2001) do not make a comparison of the differential effects. A specific aim of this study is to compare the

relationship between discussion and civic engagement with the potential moderating influences of knowledge and efficacy to evaluate whether the patterns vary across context.

Parents and Peers

Examining the nature of the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement across contexts may provide important insights into the socialization process in the political domain. One important context would be the microsystem existing between discussion partners. Early research in political socialization has long identified the family, more specifically parents, as important agents of socialization (Hess & Torney, 1967; Sunal, 1991). This research suggests that interactions with parents have a positive impact on development, albeit not always strong and often varying by attitude (Jennings & Niemi, 1973; 1981).

Several studies have demonstrated that family communication styles can influence political participation (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001; Chaffee, McLeod & Wackman, 1973; Liebes & Ribak, 1992; Meadowcroft, 1986). The effect families' communication styles have on adolescent participation in political discussion is not always straightforward however. For example, parents who stress the importance of having their children express their own views had a positive impact on discussion frequency for 11th and 12th graders but not for younger children (Meadowcroft, 1986). It seems reasonable to expect that communication styles will also affect the quality of political discussion and its subsequent impact on civic engagement.

Few studies have investigated the relative impact of political discussion with peers and parents for adolescents, although more recent reviews of research have

identified this gap (McLeod, 2000). However, research in the areas of socialization and moral development has considered the impact of interaction with peers in comparison to parents. Recent studies in socialization have taken into consideration the potential effects of peers and parents, and in some cases, the community.

Flanagan et al. (1998) found that students who reported that their parents emphasized an ethic of social responsibility were more likely to consider a public goal, like helping their country, to be an important life goal. This finding was robust across eight countries and for both boys and girls. Although not an exact measure of peer relationships a sense of membership at school was a predictor for girls' public commitments but not for boys. Boys were more influenced by the authority the teachers provided for school governance rather than a sense of student body power.

In a longitudinal study of more than 20,000 adolescents in the United States, Steinberg and Darling (1994) found that authoritative parenting had an impact on academic achievement. However, they found that this effect was moderated by the adolescent's friend and peer network, as well as the neighborhood context. For example, among minority youth in comparison with European-American youth, peer encouragement was more highly correlated with academic success than parent encouragement (p. 34). In an article reviewing research on the social influences on school adjustment Wentzel (1999) suggested that processes linking peer and parent relationships to academic achievement may share similar characteristics rather than contributing unique influences. She also noted that student perceptions of teacher support for student success can off-set potentially negative effects of peer or parental influences. In an exploratory factor analysis using IEA Civic Education Study data,

Richardson (2002) found that adolescents' political discussions with parents were more correlated with their discussion with peers than discussions with teachers.

Findings in moral development may be useful for shaping our understanding of the effects of political discussion on civic engagement, although most studies have focused on the development of moral reasoning or cognitive development, as opposed to the influence of discussion on behavior. Theories in this field have considered the potential negative influence of interactions with parents, arguing that parents may instead inhibit cognitive development by providing inconsistent modeling and limiting opportunities for children to construct their own knowledge (Killen & Nucci, 1995). Research in this area has explored the effects of peer relationships in comparison with parental relationships. This provides a contrast to much of the political socialization literature that stresses the importance of parental influence. Some research found that peer discussion leads to more frequent use of higher level reasoning (Damon & Killen, 1982; Kruger & Tomasello, 1986). Distinctions have also been found between peer groups and friends (Killen, Lee-Kim, McGlothlin & Stangor, 2002; Wentzel, 1997). Hartup and Stevens (1997) found that talk among close friends was more assertively collaborative than discussion with peers. Walker and Taylor (1991) found that discussions where parents made more supportive, probing comments or questions was a predictor of moral development but discussions in which the parents raised challenging questions were not. They suggested that for discussions in which participants challenge each others' positions a peer context might be more influential, whereas such discussions with parents are impacted by the adolescent's perceptions of adult authority.

Another way in which discussions with parents as opposed to peers may differ could be due to the nature of parental understanding of their children's rights. For example, Ruck, Peterson-Badali, and Day (2002) noted that mothers' support for self-determination rights of children depended on the age of the child. Mothers of tenth grade students were more likely to support requests for self-determination than mothers of younger students. This suggests that how parents perceive the rights and abilities of their children may influence the nature and purpose of the political discussions they have with their children. Some parents may be interested in helping their children develop their own opinions while others may be more interested in ensuring that their children adhere to their own values. Valentino and Sears (1998) found that parental support for their child's interest in politics, ability to form opinions and opportunities to discuss politics was associated with increased participation in political discussions by the child. Helwig (1998) has found some evidence that children and adolescents are able to make distinctions about appropriate decision making procedures and the people who should have the authority based on varying contexts of the situation. This may influence the perspective of adolescents in discussion. The weight given to the views expressed by figures in varying positions of authority may impact the persuasiveness of the discussion and its influence on future behaviors.

Other Relationship Characteristics

The relationship and characteristics of those involved, or potentially involved in a political discussion may also make a difference. Conover et al. (2002) found that people perceived discussion of politics as an exposure of their identity and were therefore reluctant to engage in such discussions. Furthermore, people did not believe it was their

place to convince others to change their opinions and were reluctant to risk the quality of their relationships with family, friends, and colleagues over a political discussion. Waldman (2001) draws similar conclusions and adds that disagreement in discussion occurs even less frequently than political discussion despite some evidence of positive impacts of conflict. Most adults discuss politics in a benign form with groups that share common opinions, especially with their spouses. However, Anderson, Paskeviciute, and Tverdova (2002), in a comparative study of 15 countries, found that individuals holding opinions different from the mainstream and in opposition to the incumbent government were more likely to engage in political discussion. Furthermore, they found that in countries with higher levels of political heterogeneity political discussion occurred more frequently. Other characteristics of discussion networks such as heterogeneity and size have been investigated by Huckfeldt and others (1991, 1995, & 1998), McLeod et al. (1999b), and Price, Cappella, and Nir (2002).

The frequency of discussing politics is affected by income, education levels and age (Huckfeldt et al., 1995; La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998) and as this frequency increases so does the likelihood of participation in an election campaign (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). Leighley (1990) also found that social interaction affects political participation. Better educated, wealthier, and younger people have been found to have larger discussion networks (Huckfeldt et al., 1995). These larger networks suggest that these people have more exposure to differing viewpoints. The relation between discussants also has effects on voting choices but these effects are complicated by interactions of degree of familiarity and accuracy of perceiving the other's views (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1991). For example, discussions with non-relatives have stronger

effects than discussions with relatives, at least when views are accurately perceived. Furthermore, the influence is greater where there is agreement between the two views.

McLeod et al. (1999) found that heterogeneity of discussion networks affects the frequency of discussion and participation for adults. In a review article of communication and civic socialization he calls attention to the importance of investigating whether peer networks operate in a similar manner (McLeod, 2000) – an idea to be tested here indirectly by analyzing the patterns of discussion with peers and classroom discussion, as well as through interviews with adolescents about their discussion experiences.

Price et al. (2002) found that a higher level of disagreement with discussion partners was related to improved ability to give reasons for one's own opinions and the opinions of others. Disagreement with acquaintances, but not family members remained a significant predictor of number of reasons provided about others position after controlling for other factors such as political knowledge and media use. They concluded that "disagreement with acquaintances – disagreement encountered not among family and close friends in one's "private" sphere, but instead in the "public" sphere outside the home – is the apparent stimulus to forming an understanding of others" (p. 108). In a telephone survey of candidate preferences during the 1992 presidential primary, Mutz (1997) found that public opinion cues that were positive about the candidate made it more likely for respondents to support that candidate. However, among individuals who generated counter-arguments in response to the cues, generally expressed candidate preferences were in the direction opposite from the cues. These findings from these two

studies suggest that both explicit disagreement and self-generated disagreement can influence the outcomes of political discussion.

Classroom Discussion

Classrooms represent a context that offers the potential for significant opportunities for engaging in political discussion. Students spend a significant portion of their time at school; on average more than 25% percent of their waking hours are devoted to schoolwork and homework (Larson, 2000). Schools are places where important aspects of positive youth development take place such as the development of initiative (Larson, 2000). Furthermore, the curriculum objectives of many social studies classes include helping students develop skills in deliberation, problem-solving, or moral reasoning. While schools offer opportunities for engaging in political discussions outside of the classroom, these discussions have not been well researched. Therefore, the studies reviewed here are primarily from research on classroom discussions.

Research conducted on discussion in social studies classrooms has primarily been limited to correlational relationships or convenience samples that cannot be generalized to wider populations (Hahn 1996; 1998). Furthermore, the operationalization of "discussion" varies from teacher-led recitations of text information or discussion of current events to sustained, deliberative dialogues between students. Therefore, findings should be interpreted with caution. However, such studies have found that engagement in sustained discussion of controversial issues has been related to increased civic knowledge, higher-order thinking, interest in politics, more positive political efficacy, sense of civic responsibility, tolerance (Hahn, 1996), and improved skills in participating in controversial issues discussions (Hess & Posselt, 2001).

There is some evidence that discussion in classrooms has positive effects on other desirable outcomes such as increased political involvement or changes in political attitudes. In one case study about the impact of discussion in social studies classes (not political discussion per se) comparing two junior high school classes on ancient Egypt, Aull (1998) found that the classroom with more discourse led to higher conceptual understanding, content recall and learning strategies than the class which was more teacher-directed. Conover and Searing (2000) found that reported discussion at school was positively related to discussion of political issues in other settings. Ichilov (1991) found that political efficacy was higher for students who reported participating in classroom discussions in Israel. Students participating in the Student Voices Program in Philadelphia, where students had opportunities to search the Internet for information about election campaigns and other curriculum support, reported an increase in their level of discussion with classmates about local problems and about the election by more than a day per week from pre to post participation. Discussion with family members and close friends followed this positive trend, although the results were not significant (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2001).

Conceptualizations of classroom discussion. The method used to research discussions in social studies classrooms has often been limited to student reports of their participation in discussion. This method has the advantage of providing a view from students about what discussion means to them, but it provides only limited information about the nature and quality of discussions as an educator would view it. Two chapters from the 1991 *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning* reviewed self-report and observational research from 1900s to 1980s and concluded that

discussions in social studies classes largely entail recitation between teacher and students (Cuban, 1991; Wilen & White, 1991). Recitation is conceptualized as discourse consisting of teacher initiation, student response and either a teacher's evaluation or feedback (Cazden, 2001). Classroom situations consisting of recitation differ significantly from conversations in everyday life. In most classrooms the discussion is centered on the teacher and one student but observed by others, unlike in social life where either many people may participate in one conversation or the conversation is private between two people.

Despite the evidence suggesting that discussion in classrooms enhances other desired outcomes, requiring that students participate in discussions carries with it a paradox. More specifically, if a central principle of democracy is the freedom of speech, this implies the converse; the freedom to remain silent. Students may already be aware of this tension. Hess and Posselt (2001) found that even though students thought discussion was a skill they should acquire in high school, they did not like having it as part of their grade.

Opportunities for classroom discussion. Some observational studies have confirmed this conceptualization of classroom discussion as primarily recitation. In observations of seventh grade classes in four content areas in Georgia, Alvermann (1986) found that the social studies teachers were more likely than science and health teachers to have recitation interactions with their students form the normal classroom procedure. From observations of English and social studies classrooms in nine high schools, Nystrand, Gamoran, and Carbonaro (1997) reported that more than 60% of the social

studies classes had no discussion daily; instead recitation formed the majority of class time.

More recent large-scale studies with representative national samples cloud the previous consensus about the prevalence of recitation. In some cases apparently more students are discussing political issues, or at least think they are. In a secondary analysis of the U.S. NAEP data Niemi and Junn (1998) found that 80% of students reported that they discuss current events daily or once/twice a week and 84% report that they discuss and analyze the material they have read (p.78). A comparable percent of adolescents in the U.S. reported similar types of discussions in their social studies classes in the IEA Civic Education Study. More than 70% of students report that they discuss current events and discussed television or videos used in class. A smaller percent (nearly 45%) report that they debate and discuss issues when studying social studies (Baldi et al. 2001, p. 33).

In her comparative study of five countries Hahn (1998) found that a majority of students reported discussing current events or politics in classes. The percent of students in England and the Netherlands was notably lower than for students in Denmark, Germany and the U. S. Interviews with students revealed varying experiences of classroom discussion. In some cases discussion was a regular, planned part of the curriculum. In other cases, discussion was used to illustrate other aspects of the curriculum. For example, classes in the U.S. and Denmark were more likely to investigate controversial issues, whereas when German students confronted controversial issues it occurred in between lessons focused on acquiring factual information.

However, other studies suggest that while a discourse may be occurring between students and teachers more often the nature of the discourse may be in fact be recitation or the simply expression of opinions without reactions to them. In a study of Chicago public high schools Kahne et al. (2000) found that fewer than 10% of the students had opportunities to engage in substantive dialogues about controversial topics that required an analysis of evidence or multiple perspectives.

Models of classroom discussion. A number of studies have focused specifically on observing classrooms that exhibit models of discussion that move beyond recitation or reports of discussing current events. However the objectives and forms of discussion vary dramatically. Rossi (1995), a social studies teacher who has done research in his own classroom, identified at least four different approaches to classroom discussion that have slightly different objectives; problem solving, controversial public issues (CPI), decision making and moral reasoning. Although a topic such as physician assisted suicide could fit under each approach, the process and outcomes would differ. For example, CPI would generally include an analysis and discussion of factual, definitional and moral aspects of a policy question, whereas moral reasoning would emphasize thinking about the ethical dilemmas.

The formats in which these discussions can occur also vary. Discussions take place at a class level or in small groups. Role-playing and debates can also constitute forms of discussion (Rossi, 1995). The large or small group discussions can be formulated as a seminar or deliberation. The purpose of a seminar is to help students achieve an "enlarged understanding (both widened and deepened)" whereas deliberation is a "discussion with an eye toward decision making" (Parker, 2001). Positive outcomes

for citizenship have been associated with issue-centered discussion including critical thinking, political efficacy, political trust, tolerance and knowledge (Hahn, 1996). In a survey of students enrolled in a course based on CPI discussions, Hess and Posselt (2001) found students believe that engaging in CPI helped them learn more, listen to others more, and enjoy class (p. 21). Some of these models of discussion clearly expect that students will be prepared on a topic in advance and follow formal rules for discussion (Harris, 1996), whereas others will be more exploratory in nature.

Personal risks and perceptions of support for classroom discussion. Cazden (2001) cautions that giving students' autonomy over the course of the discussion can be empowering but may also lead to issues of other inequities among students that replace the teacher-student inequities. For example, students who like to talk more may end up dominating the discussion. Teachers in the research conducted by Hess and Posselt (2001) identified this potential pitfall and attempted to address this imbalance by organizing groups. However, Hess and Posselt found that this had the unintended consequence of reifying existing social and ability divisions between students. Hemmings (2000) found that a teacher's intention to empower students by allowing students autonomy in group selection also resulted in groups that reflected the social divisions within the school as a whole.

Another potential, albeit unintended consequence, is that by exposing personal views in public through discussion, students leave themselves vulnerable to peer criticism (Phelps & Weaver, 1999). Or they become more concerned with presenting their own views and cease to hear the perspectives of others (King & King, 1998). There is the ever-present possibility that conflicts about ideas will turn into personal conflict (Brice,

2002). Although more structured approaches to class discussion may provide clear rules of procedure and may make more progress on the intellectual objectives of discussion, such approaches may leave out "the emergent relational work essential to effective group discussion" (Brice, 2002, p. 68).

Wentzel (1999) and others make a distinction between relationships among peers and those among friends. This distinction may be informative about the potential differences between discussion in the classroom and discussion with peers outside the classroom. Wentzel noted, "friendships reflect relatively private, egalitarian relationships whereas peer groups, although often self-selected, are likely to have publicly acknowledged hierarchical relationships based on personal characteristics valued by the group" (p. 63). Discussions with peers outside the classroom may occur with friends, thereby constituting a safe environment. In addition to adolescents' self-selection of their friends, parents may constrain the potential friend network in a number of direct and indirect ways (e.g. restrictions on friends, selection of neighborhood and support given to the child's participation in certain activities).

As evidenced by the potential personal conflicts emerging from discussion another important thing to consider about classroom discussion is students' perceptions about whether the classroom climate supports discussion. There is consistent evidence that an open classroom climate for discussion has a small, positive correlation to civic knowledge, political attitudes and some forms of engagement such as voting (for a review of these findings see Hahn, 1998). Achieving this form of classroom climate may help overcome some of the unintended (negative) consequences of discussion. Hahn (1998) in her cross-national study found small positive correlations between open classroom

climate and political interest, political efficacy, political confidence, and political trust. Keeter et al. (2002a) also found that when students report that their teachers encouraged open discussion and students were encouraged to make up their minds, students were more likely to be involved in other activities especially cognitive activities such as paying attention to media news. The IEA Civic Education Study of 1971 (Torney, Oppenheim & Farnen, 1975) found that open classroom climate was a positive predictor of civic knowledge, anti-authoritarian attitudes and participation in political discussions with parents, friends and teachers. Open classroom climate predicted higher levels of civic knowledge and the likelihood of voting in the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study in the majority of countries with factors such as home background controlled (Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

As the research in this section on political discussion demonstrates adolescents experience political discussion in a variety of ways. Everyday experience with discussion outside school specifically about politics appears to be an infrequent activity for most adolescents. It remains unclear whether these numbers would increase if students were encouraged to perceive "politics" as a more inclusive term, including such social issues as racism or unemployment. Many more students report the opportunity to engage in discussions in school. Again, the specific nature of these discussions ranges from simple teacher-student recitation to more in-depth discussions that challenge students both intellectually and socially. While these obvious differences in experiences make interpreting the impact of discussion on engagement more challenging, clear associations have been shown. What remains unknown is whether contexts for discussion have different associations with various types of civic engagement and if

specific mechanisms, such as civic knowledge or efficacy, influence the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement.

It is expected that the role of civic knowledge in the relationship between discussion and engagement will be more influenced by school related discussions than discussions with parents or peers. Since discussions with teachers and an open classroom climate potentially offer increased exposure to heterogeneity of opinions and often have goals that explicitly aim to achieve a higher level of deliberation they are likely to support the development of civic knowledge. In contrast, it is likely that efficacy beliefs will moderate the relationship between discussion and engagement when discussion with parents and peers is considered rather than with teachers or in class, especially in the case of social-movement related engagement and current activities. This is due to the fact that parents and peers are more likely than teachers to serve as salient and valued models for youth as suggested by Bandura's vicarious learning theory.

Civic Engagement

Early research on engagement in the political domain was often limited to voting or participation in other activities directly related to the election process. However, conceptualizations of political participation have been expanding to include an increasing repertoire of activities. There is now widespread agreement that political participation may be more accurately labeled "civic engagement." Civic engagement might include activities such as participating in a protest march, collecting money for a charity, working to solve a community problem or paying attention to news in the media. Disagreement remains about how to categorize different forms of participation, however. One approach has divided engagement into psychological involvement (engaging in political

discussions or following the news) and action (voting, running for political office) (Cohen et al. 2001). Another approach is to consider political participation as activities pertaining to election or the institutions of the state and civic participation to be other activities intended to benefit the community. It remains unclear just what category of civic engagement political discussion fits in. For the purposes of this study political discussion is considered a form of civic engagement, but not necessarily political action. Political discussion is viewed as a precursor to other more active forms of political action intended to influence government institutions or solve community problems. Both discussion and action are "political" when the actor considers the activity to have implications for a collective or social identity (Buckingham, 1998).

In general, the model of multiple modes of engagement is more appropriate for assessing the engagement of adolescents because youth have fewer opportunities to engage in election-related politics or state institutions. The civic engagement of youth is comprised of two components; beliefs about their future engagement and their current activities. Relying solely on adolescents' beliefs about their future behavior is problematic because evidence shows that these beliefs do not always materialize into actual behavior. One case in point is that a majority of young people in the U.S. believe they will vote but data shows that less than one third of voters age 18-29 actually vote (Galston, 2001). Therefore, consideration of adolescents' current civic engagement is also important because such activities have been identified as associated with the development of political attitudes and identities (Ehman, 1980; Ferguson, 1991; Holland & Andre, 1987; Larson, 1994; Yates & Youniss, 1999; Youniss & Yates, 1997, 2000) and are precursors to engagement in adult activities as found in longitudinal or

retrospective adult studies (Burns, Schlozman & Verba, 2001; Damico et al., 1998; Jennings & Niemi, 1973, 1981; Jennings & Stoker, 2001; McAdam, 1988; Stolle & Hooghe, 2002).

Recent research has identified an increasing number of youth interested in volunteer activities, where they feel they can make a difference through individual behavior. There has been a comparable decline in interest for conventional political activities such as through joining a political party (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). However, adolescents appear to see these volunteer activities without political or policy implications. A preference for participation in youth organizations and modes of engagement outside conventional elections may be bridging the gap between the every day lives of adolescents, their experience with politics, and the "official" domain of politics controlled by adults. Adolescent withdrawal from traditional modes of participation, their reports that politics is boring or too difficult to understand may all be a deliberate and rational, albeit subconscious, solution to the gap they feel between their daily experience and a sense of disempowerment in the political world of the state (Bhavanni, 1991; Buckingham, 1998; Rettinger, 1993). Volunteer activities have been described as a form of engagement in which adolescents feel like they matter or are making a difference. In fact they may believe that community activities are a more effective route to social change than government (Harvard University, 2000). The danger with an emphasis on community service is that adolescents may focus on the positive personal outcomes of such participation (e.g. increased self-esteem) and lose sight of the importance of sense of responsibility for the community (Youniss & Yates, 1997).

Another form of current civic engagement for adolescents is participation in extracurricular activities that may have civic-related objectives such as a student council or environmental club. These organizations are often affiliated or supported by schools. Participation in extra-curricular activities has been found to have a positive association with identity development (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Youniss & Yates, 1997).

The "civic" qualities of extracurricular activities are not so clear. Some people argue that all forms of activities have the potential to contribute to the development of civic skills and disposition because they implicitly emphasize the place of the individual as part of a larger community (personal communication 10/28/03 elaborating on Wiseman, 2003) or offer a path to more explicit forms of political participation (Burns et al., 2001).

Another approach taken to defining "civic-related" organizations is consideration of the main outcomes of the organizations. Instrumental associations are "those organizations considered to be externally oriented, whose primary activities serve as a means to an end" (Hanks, 1981) such as student council, school newspaper or honor clubs. Expressive organizations are "those organizations considered to be internally oriented, whose primary activities serve as ends in themselves" (Hanks, 1981, p.215) such as athletic teams or hobby clubs. Hanks (1981) found that adolescent participation in both types of organizations predicted participation on discussion of issues, campaign participation, and voting rates. Participation in instrumental organizations was more strongly associated with the non-voting activities than expressive organizations. Using a similar division, Glanville (1999) also found that participation in instrumental extracurricular activities positively predicted political involvement.

One limitation of the research in this area is that self-selection as a spurious cause has not been ruled out. In other words, it may be that adolescents who participate in extracurricular activities are already more likely to be successful for some other unidentified reason.

Based on the fact that adolescents select different modes of engagement, it follows that they perceive some differences between them. Furthermore, it is possible that each form of engagement is influenced by different factors. For example, it may be that civic knowledge about democratic principles is more influential on conventional engagement than on volunteering. Some research by McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy (1999) with adults demonstrates the possibility of factors varying by mode of engagement. They found that interpersonal communication had an impact on participation in civic forums and institutional organizations, whereas paying attention to news in the paper only impacted participation in institutional organizations.

A similar trend of having different factors account for different modes of engagement has been identified for adolescents. Crystal and DeBell (2002) found that adolescents have different beliefs about who should be responsible for solving social problems. The different beliefs have different impacts on multiple forms of engagement. Students who expressed the belief in individualistic attribution were more likely to run for student government, students with more collective action attributions were more likely to express concepts of public and private citizenship.

Different factors were found to impact the intent to participate in four activities (informed voting, joining a political party, volunteering and participating in non-violent protest march) measured by the IEA Civic Education Study in Australia, England, Greece

Norway and the United States (Torney-Purta & Richardson, in press; Torney-Purta and Richardson, 2002). The intention to vote was influenced by civic knowledge, school curriculum and efficacy about student participation at school. Political interest was the most influential factor for the intention to join a political party. Learning about community problems and current engagement in volunteer activities were associated with future volunteering. The intent to participate in a non-violent protest march was not well predicted by any of the factors tested, although discussion with parents did have a small effect.

In another secondary analysis of the IEA Civic Education Study using a sample that equally weighted all 28 countries, home literacy resources and expected future education had little impact on four different modes of future engagement; voting, conventional (e.g. join a political party), accepted social movement (e.g. volunteering), and controversial social movement activities (e.g. occupying a building) when political discussion and efficacy beliefs were considered (Richardson, 2002). Internal political efficacy was the strongest predictor of conventional and controversial social movement participation. Efficacy about discussion at school was the largest predictor of accepted social movement activities and the second strongest predictor of the intention to vote. These findings also point to a complex interpretation of civic engagement and influencing factors.

In summary, limiting research on civic engagement of adolescents to the traditional sphere of activities related to elections or the affairs of the state would reveal an uninvolved portion of the public. However, by expanding the conceptualization of civic engagement to encompass a broader range of activities, adolescents demonstrate

active participation in activities that are intended to benefit the common good. The main focus of this study is to understand how one form of civic engagement, political discussion, relates to other forms of engagement. To better understand this relationship several important factors will be explored. Each of the factors will be reviewed in the following sections.

Links between Discussion and Engagement

Kim et al. (1999) measured the effects of three different of political conversation for two different forms of political participation. The survey's first measure of participation included "campaigning" which had questions about participatory activities *within* the political system, such as working for a political campaign. A second participation measure focused on activities they categorized as more *outside* the political system such as demonstration or writing letters to the media. They found that political talk was a significant predictor of participation within the system (campaigning), whereas personal talk and issue-specific talk were small but positive, significant predictors of participation outside the system. The regression model, including predictors for demographics, socioeconomic resources, political interest, media use, and three types of political talk explained more of the variance for within system participation, than participation outside the system. The Kim et al. (1999) findings show that the content of political discussion might have varying impacts for different forms of political activities.

Several surveys of adolescents have found links between the reports of discussion and of engagement. However, as with adults the direction of influence remains undetermined. A recent survey of 15 to 25 year olds found that students who report discussing politics, government, or current events with parents are more likely to think

voting is important, have higher levels of trust, and believe they can make a difference (Lake, Snell, Perry, & Associates, 2002). Valentino and Sears (1998) found that adolescents who discuss politics more frequently experienced higher stability and consistency in their evaluations of candidates during an election campaign. Niemi et al. (2000) analyzed the 1996 National Household Education Survey data and found that talking about politics is not an activity that high school students do often with their parents. Nearly 50 percent of the respondents hardly ever discussed politics with their parents. However, sustained participation in community service (regular participation or more than 35 hours of participation per school year) was a significant predictor of increased talk about politics with parents. In a study that included a telephone survey and an Internet survey of randomly selected U.S. samples of current high school students, high school graduates under the age of 25 and current college students, Keeter et al., (2002a) found that students' reports of frequent political discussion in their homes predicted engagement. In the case of the high school graduates such discussions predicted cognitive engagement (staying informed about politics). For high school students discussions at home predicted cognitive engagement and engagement in election activities.

One longitudinal study by Krampen (2000) measured the frequency of political activities in German adolescents' everyday life, where 5 of the 12 items were about discussing politics with others. The frequency of such political activities was predicted by self-concept about political competence, internal locus of control and knowledge. The frequency of such activities in adolescents predicted the frequency of participation by young adults.

In an international study comparing youth from Denmark, England, Germany, the Netherlands and the U.S., Hahn (1998) found that a majority of students in Denmark, Germany and the U.S. reported discussing current events or politics with their parents "sometimes" or "very often" in both 1986 and 1993. Fewer than half the students reported talking with their friends about politics in England, the Netherlands and the U.S. Interviews with students confirmed these general patterns.

In a study of four different communities Conover and Searing (2000) found that a relatively small percent of students engage in serious conversation on specific issues provided by the interviewer such as the economy. Less than 10 percent discussed politics "often," whereas more than 15 percent reported that they "almost never" discussed politics. Another measure of adolescents' experience with political discussion was their perception about engaging in discussion as a characteristic of a good citizen. Fewer than 30 percent of students perceived participating in public discussions as a duty of citizens. Furthermore, these beliefs about citizen duties (to discuss politics and stay informed) were not correlated with student opportunities for discussion habits in the rural community. Those students who had stronger beliefs that adult citizens had the responsibility to engage in political discussion were from the immigrant community but they reported fewer opportunities for discussion. In the suburban community students reported more opportunities for discussion but did not have beliefs about the responsibility to engage in discussion at levels equivalent to students in the immigrant community. Unlike beliefs about discussion as a characteristic of good citizenship, civic engagement (as measured by involvement in extracurricular activities associated with school) did have a strong, positive association with discussion of issues.

The recent IEA Civic Education Study asked a series of questions about adolescents' participation in political discussion with parents, teachers and peers. The U.S. National Report notes that students in the U.S. are more likely to report that they discuss national and international politics with parents and teachers, not peers (Baldi et al., 2001). Nearly 60% of students report discussing national politics with parents and teachers. There is a notable difference in the level of discussion about international politics at home and in school; for this topic, more students report discussing international politics with their teachers than parents. Only around 30% of the students report that they discuss national politics with their peers and even fewer (18 %) report discussing international politics.

Some secondary analyses of the IEA Civic Education Study data (that included the U.S. sample) have demonstrated a connection between discussion and various forms of political participation, and the importance of considering the impact of background characteristics and interpersonal relationships on such political discussions. For example, structural equation modeling found that discussion with parents was a significant predictor of civic knowledge and likelihood to vote only for students from families with more home literacy resources – the high SES group in the study (Torney-Purta & Stapleton, 2002). In another analysis of Australia, England, Norway, and the U.S., discussion with parents was a significant predictor for the intention to be an informed voter, join a political party, volunteer in a community activity and participate in a non-violent protest march (Torney-Purta & Richardson, in press). Another analysis found that discussion (a composite measure of discussion with peers, parents, and teachers) was a predictor of conventional political participation (in 5 countries) (Richardson & Amadeo,

2002). In Denmark, Poland, and the U.S. discussion with peers was a significant, positive predictor of likelihood to vote and both conventional and social movement-related activities. Discussion with peers was a stronger predictor for conventional participation than for social movement participation in two of the countries (Amadeo, 2002).

The assumption behind most of this research is that that discussion of politics increases the relevancy of narrowly conceived political topics and interest, thereby increasing the attention paid to various aspects of the topics. In other words political discussion is a product of increased exposure to politics. There is no evidence about whether or not discussion specifically about politics has an impact distinct from discussion of other more general topics. Most studies about political discussion do not ask questions about discussion of other topics. A recent study by Keeter et al. (2002b) is an exception to this approach. They asked respondents how often they talked about current events *and* how often those topics were related to politics or government. Notably they found large differences between the percent of youth reporting discussion of current events and government. Far more youth reported discussing current events, but not issues related to politics or government.

A major limitation of these studies based on self-report surveys is that the measures do not offer a clear picture about the quality, nature or content of these discussions. However, studies about classroom discussions offer insight about these elements.

Civic Knowledge

This section will explore how civic knowledge might operate as an intervening variable in the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement. Relevant research about civic knowledge as it relates to political discussion generally follows one of two approaches. The first approach is to investigate the degree to which participating in political discussion leads to higher levels of civic knowledge. The second approach is analyzing the reverse, the effects that civic knowledge has on political discussion as an outcome. Fewer studies have assessed the association between political discussion and civic engagement.

Political Discussion Aids Knowledge Construction

One possible explanation about how discussion is related to civic engagement is that it helps participants construct meaning and revise their conceptualizations about engagement (Torney-Purta, 1995), in other words discussion helps them to change their knowledge about engagement. In this explanation the quality and characteristics of the discussion and the context in which it occurs potentially become more important than their mere frequency. Social interactions allow participants to compare their understanding with that of others and through these comparisons change their own knowledge. Drawing on observations of adolescents negotiating positions on scenarios of world issues during the International Communications and Networking Simulation (ICONS) Torney-Purta (1995) found that through their discussions adolescents developed more complex understandings about the situation.

Several other studies have focused on the quality of the relationships between discussion partners, especially with peers and parents, to explain differences in outcomes

that result from these discussions. Some tested Piaget's theory that interaction among peers leads to more reasoning and subsequently more developmental change than interaction with parents (Damon & Killen, 1982; Kruger & Tomasello, 1986). In a study of 5th and 6th graders, Williams and Minns (1986) found that the perceived creditability and receptivity of the partner influenced whether the children saw that person as important reference for understanding. These factors impacted the degree to which attitudes were transmitted from partner to child. The partners included teachers, parents and friends. Westholm (1999) found that similarities between adolescent and parental opinions depended in part on the accuracy of adolescent perceptions about their parents' attitudes. Findings by Walker and Taylor (1991) suggest that supportive discussions with parents predicted moral development. They also found that parents adapt their level of discussion to move closer to the level of moral development of the child if asked to discuss a real-life situation (although not as much in a hypothetical situation).

Research from the field of political communication has provided some evidence supporting an information processing model of media use, which is congruent with some of the social cognitive approaches described above. Measures about the use of the media often include descriptions about how the information is obtained from the news media. This information processing model argues that political knowledge is gained through exposure to information in the media. Similarly, according to Bandura's social cognitive theory, exposure to the media would be an example of a vicarious experience that offers people the opportunity to construct symbolic representations of the environment (construct knowledge).

A consistent body of evidence has been found that demonstrates that a certain level of knowledge is associated with complex, reflective thinking. Rhee and Cappella (1997) found that people who had more complex political representations not only consumed more news but were able to learn more from the news. The attention paid to the news by people with more knowledge demonstrated more differentiated constructs and higher quality arguments. Hsu and Price (1993) present a review of previous studies showing that political experts use media information differently from novices; including different selection principles, choice of sources, and better memory for information that is inconsistent with their current understanding. They tested the assumption that political experts process information differently than novices in the context of different affective conditions. They found that political experts generate more issue-relevant thoughts in the negative affect condition.

Cognitive processing has also been found to explain changes in voters' candidate preferences. In a cross-sectional national telephone survey about the 1992 Democratic presidential primary Mutz (1997) found that although individuals reporting that the decision was very important reported more thoughts overall than those for whom the decision was only moderately important, providing public opinion cues prompted the moderately involved respondents to generate more thoughts about their candidate choice than the highly involved respondents. Even though this increase in cognitive processing was prompted by an impersonal source (e.g. public opinion cues) rather than direct interpersonal contact it still suggests that "information about others' views may actually stimulate greater political thought and reflection" (p.120). It is therefore likely that

engaging in political discussion stimulates cognitive processing by providing a similar opportunity to be exposed to the opinions of others.

Knowledge Effects on Political Discussion

Investigations of how knowledge affects the relationship between political discussion and engagement are not common. However, research has considered the impact of knowledge on the frequency or quality of political discussion as an outcome. Gastil & Dillard (1999) found that adults' level of education did not influence the cognitive effects of their participation in National Issue Forums (NIF) discussions. Participation in NIF affected participants with a high school education in the same way as those with a college education. McDevitt and Chaffee (2000) found that an intervention encouraging students to discuss the news with their parents was more influential for students in the low SES group. Students in the low SES group were more likely to pay more attention to the media and to engage in discussions with their parents as a result of the curricular intervention. In one study where the impact of knowledge on a relationship between discussion and civic outcomes was measured Valentino and Sears (1998) found that a gap in student knowledge favoring students who discussed politics often over those who did so less often, was maintained and in the case of political symbols actually increased during the election campaign period. In a longitudinal study of political participation Krampen (2000) found that political knowledge was a significant predictor of everyday political activities (a measure that included several items about political discussion).

Political Discussion and Civic Engagement

The work of Sotirovic and McLeod (in press) connects these findings about knowledge and media interaction to civic engagement. They found that people who engage in reflective processing after paying attention to media stories had more complex thinking whereas reflection did not impact knowledge. Furthermore reflection had a direct impact on both traditional participation and non-traditional participation. While the impact of knowledge on traditional participation was higher than reflection and complex thinking, it had the smallest impact of all three on non-traditional participation. Traditional participation was a 7-item scale with activities like voting in a local election or working on behalf of a candidate. Non-traditional participation was based on four questions pertaining to action taken on the issue of urban growth such as participating in a local forum. From this research, it is clear that higher levels of knowledge impact the way in which people process the news. This more complex cognitive processing in turn impacts the types of political activities they engage in.

Higher levels of civic knowledge, as measured by a 38-item test of democratic principles was found to be a significant, positive predictor of students' intent to vote in the future, and join a political party but not their intent to volunteer in the community (Richardson & Torney-Purta, in press; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). However, using students' understanding of concepts of democracy and of good citizenship as an indicator of civic knowledge, Richardson and Torney-Purta (in press) found that conceptual knowledge about democratic principles was not related to voting, joining a political party or volunteering. In contrast conceptual knowledge about the characteristics of a good adult citizen had a positive relationship with all three forms of civic engagement.

Although civic knowledge has been shown to be a direct predictor of civic engagement, cognitive theories suggest that civic knowledge could also have an indirect effect on civic engagement by moderating the impact of political discussion. The question is to what extent is the relationship of political discussion to civic engagement affected by civic knowledge? It may be that when a student discusses politics, their knowledge of politics and related topics such as knowledge of various modes of political action is activated. This stimulation or reflection on the connection between issues and possible actions leads to an increased understanding of political activities and the belief that they will engage in them in the future. Political discussion may also have a stronger indirect effect on engagement (through political knowledge) for students with higher political knowledge than students with less political knowledge. As suggested by political communication research this is because students who already have a high level of knowledge are more capable of linking issues covered in a discussion with other potential activities. The impact of discussion on engagement through knowledge may be strongest for conventional forms of political participation because measures of civic knowledge assess principles of democratic institutions. This type of civic knowledge may be most related to conventional forms of political participation than it would be for other more social-movement types of participation.

Efficacy: A Sense of Agency

In addition to civic knowledge, efficacy beliefs, especially efficacy pertaining to politics, may play a role in the process of political discussion and its relationship to civic engagement. Political efficacy has been shown to influence both psychological political involvement (political discussion/following the news media) and active participation

(Cohen et al., 2001). Personal variables such as efficacy are better for explaining behavioral tendencies not actual behavior; that is, they are a good predictor for "propensity" or readiness to engage.

Efficacy Research for Adults

There has been an abundance of research positively linking political efficacy to political participation including voting (Finkel, 1985), campaign involvement (Finkel, 1985; Rudolph et al., 2000) and scales made of up of various types of participation (Cohen et al. 2001; Burns et al. 2001). These consistent links have led political science researchers to consider alternative conceptualizations of political efficacy and the differential effects of internal and external political efficacy on varying modes of participation.

One alternative model of efficacy posits that people can believe in citizens' effectiveness at change through the existing government system (institutional efficacy) and/or that citizens can be effective change agents by working outside the current system (mobilization efficacy) (Wolfsfeld, 1986). This model was used in a reanalysis of the data used by Barnes and Kaase's (1979) eight-nation study. Individuals who believe that working within the government system is effective are called conformists, those outside the system, dissidents, and those who believe both methods work, pragmatists. Wolfsfeld's research found that these various efficacy attitudes were linked to different forms of political participation. In particular, mobilization efficacy was found to be the most consistent predictor of protest behavior. Another study (Pollock, 1983) took a slightly different approach, categorizing people into high or low internal political efficacy and high or low external political efficacy. Similar to Wolfsfeld, Pollock found that

people with low external political efficacy (or low institutional efficacy) and high internal political efficacy were more likely to engage in nonconformist activities. However, they were also more likely to engage in conformist activities.

Finkel (1985) used structural equation modeling with a three-wave panel from the Survey Research Center's Election Study to investigate the reciprocal effects of political efficacy and participation. He found that external political efficacy impacts voting and campaign participation and is also impacted by the two activities. In contrast, internal political efficacy also predicts voting and campaign activity but these activities do not predict changes in internal political efficacy. The author hypothesizes that this differential effect may be due the closer correspondence of voting and campaign activity to attitudes about government responsiveness (external political efficacy) than individual effectiveness (internal political efficacy). His findings offer some support for Bandura's idea that efficacy is a multi-dimensional, domain specific construct.

Although few studies specifically consider political discussion simultaneously with political efficacy and participation there are some that have measures containing political discussion or measures that may have similar properties to discussion such as critical thinking.

Guyton (1988) found that political efficacy was a mediator between critical thinking and political participation. While Guyton's use of the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal to measure critical thinking is certainly not synonymous with political discussion, some discussions may contain certain elements of critical thinking such as an evaluation of arguments. Political discussion seen in this way parallels Cohen et al.'s (2001) conceptualization of political discussion as a form of psychological

involvement. Although Cohen et al. (2001) did not test the mediating effect of efficacy they found that SES has an indirect impact on political participation. SES affects personal characteristics like self-esteem and locus of control, which in turn impact political efficacy. Political efficacy has an impact on both active participation and involvement (like discussion). This finding supports the value of further exploration about the impact of political efficacy as a factor influencing the impact of discussion on engagement.

The connection between political efficacy and political participation has been supported by consistent findings in the research on adults. What remains less clear is evidence that measures of efficacy exhibit domain specific effects, although there is certainly a prevalent belief about the existence of at least two dimensions of efficacy, internal and external.

Efficacy Research for Adolescents

Research about adolescents' efficacy beliefs in the political domain presents challenges because the questions used to assess political efficacy are potentially less relevant for youth due to the lack of opportunities for them to participate in political activities generally measured in adult studies such as voting. However, political efficacy was found to be a valid construct for young children (Hess & Torney, 1967) and has been measured in many studies subsequently.

In a sample of high school students participating in the Close-Up program (an experientially civic education program) Stentz and Lambert (1977) tested items of efficacy designed to be more closely aligned with a concept of efficacy that is a judgment of personal competence. These efficacy items were more strongly correlated to interest

in politics and interest in school politics, than the traditional efficacy measures which were more correlated to a measure of government responsiveness (p.81).

In a cross-national study of adolescents from five countries Hahn (1998) measured two different aspects of efficacy. She used the traditional measure of internal political efficacy measuring beliefs about citizens' ability to influence the government. She also used a measure called "political confidence" which is more consistent with Bandura's definition of efficacy as judgment about one's competence in influencing an outcome. In this political confidence measure (revised from an earlier measure developed by Ehman and Gillespie, 1975) she included both general items such as influencing decisions made by groups and more explicitly political items like influencing how others vote in an election. For both political efficacy and political confidence, students from Denmark and the U. S. reported higher levels than students from Germany, Netherlands and England. Data from qualitative interviews and observations supported these differences. The percent of students from these countries reporting high levels of political confidence were notably lower than for political efficacy. Hahn hypothesized that this might be due to conflicting personal experiences students had had trying to influence various political groups. More students expressed higher levels of political confidence about influencing decisions made in groups but less confidence for influencing explicitly political decisions, such as influencing how other people decide to vote.

Salomon (1984) found that a group of U.S. sixth graders' efficacy about media use varied depending on whether it was TV or print. Their differing sense of efficacy was related the amount of effort they put into processing each media and the subsequent

amount of inferential learning. This study supports Bandura's idea about context specific efficacy beliefs.

Although the NAEP Civics test did not use conventional measures of political efficacy, there were two questions that asked students about their beliefs of government responsiveness (how much attention the government pays to people and whether elections make government accountable). Students who reported that they participated in mock elections, student councils and mock trials were more likely to believe that the government was responsive and that elections mattered (Niemi & Junn, 1998). Discussing current events, on the other hand, was not related to a higher sense of external efficacy.

Although Bhavanni (1991) did not specifically set out to explore students' efficacy in politics, students' responses during the interviews indicated that while they had views about political issues, excuses such as politics is boring or too hard to understand were often used as justification for a lack of political engagement (p. 149). Bhavanni hypothesized that these reasons implied a lack of political efficacy, a belief that their actions would not bring about political change.

Efficacy and Political Participation

A number of studies have found that political efficacy is associated with various types of political participation or the intent to participate in the future. Hess and Torney (1967) found that higher levels of political efficacy were associated with higher levels of participation in service and school activities. Using the Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study, Paulsen (1991) found that a strong sense of political efficacy predicted participation in two forms of collective action; protest and community problem-solving.

In a longitudinal study of German adolescents Krampen (2000) used two measures comparable to political efficacy items: self-concept of political competence and locus of control for politics. Both measures were associated with voting and other political activities such as reading political news. Smith (1999) found that participation in extra-curricular activities did not increase efficacy but did increase political trust. The effects of participation on efficacy are not always positive, however. In a comparison of two service learning programs Kahne (2002) discovered that the goals and outcomes of service activities have differing impacts on political efficacy. Participation in a service activities planned in the community that resulted in successful experiences led to increased efficacy. Students participating in activities aimed at enacting social justice changes that met resistance reported a decline in their sense of efficacy.

School Efficacy

As many models of political participation have noted, attitudes may be more important than knowledge in motivating citizens to engage. Political efficacy or judgments about one's competence in the political domain or government responsiveness to citizens has been established as an important influence on political participation. However, less is known about how political efficacy functions in adolescents to impact their participation. Due to the limitations placed on their ability to engage in certain forms of political participation (e.g. voting) adolescents' political efficacy may operate differently than it does for adults. It may be that more abstract evaluations of one's effectiveness in politics are not meaningful to adolescents, whereas efficacy about participation at school or in classroom discussions may influence adolescents' participation.

Valaitis (2002) conducted a focus group study of youth attitudes about their involvement in their communities. She found that most of the seventh and eighth grade youth from Canada believed that they had only limited power over decision making in their community. However, despite the obvious barrier to the participation in the community the youth still felt that they could make a difference, especially in their schools. They also expressed confidence that if they worked together their collective action would have a bigger impact.

The relationship between school climate and students' commitment to public goals was investigated in an eight nation study (including the U.S.). School climate was measured in two ways. First, a measure of democratic climate was intended to tap the degree to which students are involved in school governance. The second measure, a sense of membership, concerns the degree to which students feel part of a collective community. Flanagan et al. (1998) found that for boys in the U.S. democratic school practices were related to public interest goals. For girls a sense of school membership was related to valuing community goals.

The IEA Civic Education Study included several measures of efficacy (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Some items were included that were designed to measure internal and external political efficacy. However, the findings from these items were not analyzed for the initial international report. Additionally, since participation in many government activities is not available to adolescents the instrument also included seven items measuring students' sense of competence about participation at school. In an IRT scale formed from four of these items a majority of students across countries expressed a sense of confidence about participation at school participation. In an analysis of the IEA data

from Australia, England, Greece, Norway, and the U. S., Torney-Purta and Richardson (2002) found that confidence about participation at school was a predictor of students' intention to vote and volunteer in the future but not join a political party after taking into account civic knowledge, classroom climate, political interest and other factors. Similar results were found in a comparison of Chile, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Switzerland and the U.S. (Richardson & Torney-Purta, in press). In a secondary analysis of the IEA data Richardson (2002) used the unanalyzed items from this section of the instrument to form a scale of efficacy related to discussion at school. She found that adolescents' sense of efficacy about discussion at school was a significant predictor of intended voting and accepted social movement activities such as collecting money for a charity.

Beliefs about the importance of discussion itself, not just efficacy about engagement may also be relevant. Students who believe that engaging in political discussions is a characteristic of an adult who is a good citizen were more likely to believe that they will engage in conventional political activities (Richardson, 2002). Such connections between beliefs and participation may be constrained by social context. Conover and Searing (2000) found that although immigrant communities were more likely to identify political discussion as an important characteristic for adult citizens then suburban adolescents, they were had fewer opportunities at home in and in school for such discussions.

Research on political efficacy has found consistent associations with civic engagement. However, the conceptualization and measurement of efficacy has not been consistent across the studies making it difficult to conclude exactly what type of judgments about competence are more pertinent. The findings offer modest support for

Bandura's theory that efficacy beliefs are domain-specific. Efficacy about participation at school and political confidence appear to be relevant for adolescents. Traditional measures of internal political efficacy appear to be more related to more traditional forms of political engagement. What remains to be tested is the influence of civic-related forms of efficacy on the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement and whether the influence of efficacy varies across forms of engagement and by the context in which the discussions take place.

It is expected that efficacy beliefs will moderate the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement. The effect of internal political efficacy will be strongest for conventional political participation whereas efficacy beliefs related to participation at school will have their biggest effect on current participation in organizations.

Gender

Since past research has identified differences in political participation and attitudes by gender, this personal characteristic will be considered in addition to civic knowledge and efficacy. Differences in both opportunities for and engagement in political discussion and other civic activities vary by gender. Rosenthal, Feiring, and Lewis (1998) found that girls were more likely to volunteer in political and non-political activities. This finding was confirmed by Flanagan et al. (1998), although volunteering predicted commitment to public goals for boys but not for the girls. Rosenthal and Rosenthal (2003) found that females were underrepresented among participants in a mock legislative debate competition, comprising only 30 percent of the initial contestants. Furthermore they found that during the debates the females exhibited fewer

dominating characteristics than males in their speaking styles. In a secondary analysis of the Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study Paulsen (1991) found that being female was associated with lower political efficacy.

Research on knowledge and attitudes suggest that there may be gender differences in how adolescents interpret the meaning of the term politics. A study by Rettinger (1993) concludes that students see government in terms of a hierarchical paradigm focused power and control over others. She notes that this doesn't match the girls' beliefs in a coming together of community members to solve problems. In a study of German 10th grade students Kuhn, Isermann, Weiss and Oswald (1999) found gender differences in the types of politics the students expressed interest in. Boys reported more interest in "Front page policies" (e.g. foreign affairs or the federal government) and girls expressed more interest in new policies (e.g. peace and ecology) and women's policies. The research did not include students' interpretations of survey items but results from the scales of the particular types of politics were compared with a commonly used single item, "How strongly are you interested in politics?" They found that interest in Front page policies was the strongest predictor of interest in politics based on the single item. This suggests that the scope of the single item is more closely aligned with Front page policies, or more traditional political issues.

Gender differences in civic knowledge have also been found. Males performed higher than females on the 1971 IEA Civic Education Study knowledge test (Torney, Oppenheim, and Farnen, 1975) and the U.S. National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in civics (Chapin, 1998; Niemi & Junn, 1998). Evidence from a recent secondary analysis of the 1988 NAEP showed that although the gap is small; 3

percentage points on 150 multiple-choice items; it remains significant (Niemi & Junn, 1998). However, the 1998 NAEP showed females have higher average scores than males at grades 8 and 12. The males continue to outperform females at the advanced level in all three grade levels (Lutkus, Weiss, Campbell, Mazzeo & Lazer, 1999).

Socioeconomic Status

Another important context is socioeconomic status. Although it may not have a direct effect on participation it may influence the degree to which there are opportunities for discussion and the attitudes and skills involved in a high propensity to engage in discussion, and finally the degree to which discussion is influential on civic engagement (Burns et al. 2001; Cohen et al. 2001; Hahn, 1999).

Children with a higher social status and intelligence have reported more frequent participation in political discussions and higher sense of political efficacy (Hess & Torney, 1967). In Paulsen's secondary analysis of the Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study (1991), he found that higher SES was associated with more political efficacy.

Findings about the impact of SES on discussion between parents and their children have been inconsistent. Torney-Purta and Stapleton (2002) found that discussion with parents for students from homes with fewer educational resources was not a significant predictor of civic knowledge; suggesting that the ability of the parents to engage in meaningful discussion may enhance the impact of discussion. However, McDevitt and Chaffee (2000) found that a curriculum intervention (Kidsvoting) increased the level of political discussion between parents and kids, and more for parents from lower SES than higher SES. Conover and Searing (2000) have found that not only does SES influence the process of political discussion but also impacts the opportunities for

engaging in discussions. Although adolescents from immigrant communities identified political discussion as an important characteristics of being a good citizen (more so than adolescents from other communities) these adolescents had fewer chances for discussion both at home and school. Inconsistent findings have been found regarding the impact of SES on opportunities for engagement. Hart, Atkins and Ford (1998) found differences in opportunities to volunteer. However, Rosenthal et al. (1998) found no differences in reported frequency of volunteering by level of SES.

Interestingly with adults Eveland and Scheufele (2000) found that the gap in political knowledge between high and low education groups was narrower for heavy TV users compared with light TV users. They hypothesize that TV viewing help those with lower levels of education and heavy TV users with higher education may not apply their full cognitive attention to TV and therefore do not experience the substantial benefits of the lower education group.

The 1971 IEA Civic Education Study found that across ten countries students from higher socioeconomic status performed better on the test of civic knowledge (Torney et al., 1975). In the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study two measures of SES, the number of home literacy resources and expected years of further education predicted civic knowledge across 28 countries (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). More specifically to the United States adolescents in schools with large percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches perform lower on the civic knowledge test than other schools (Baldi et al., 2001).

The findings of differences by gender and socioeconomic status on some of the variables of interest in this study, political discussion, civic engagement, civic

knowledge, and efficacy, suggest that excluding these factors from consideration would be a major limitation of analyses. Therefore, the analyses in this study will control for potential effects of gender and socioeconomic status.

Contributions of This Study

Research in political science, developmental psychology, and education have identified participating in political discussion as an important socializing experience for adolescents that helps them develop the skills and motivation for future engagement in the democratic system as adults. However, much of the work in political science has merely identified associations between political discussion and other factors deemed important to civic engagement, such as linking discussion with political knowledge. Little of the work has focused on discussion as a process. Political communication research has used a more dynamic approach to discussion, considering it part of a cognitive process mediating environmental observations and future behavior. Developmental psychology and social studies education have also considered discussion as a process but social studies education research has been limited largely to classroom experiences and developmental psychology to family or peer contexts without consideration of discussion in the political domain. This study utilizes a cross disciplinary approach that considers *political discussion as a process* and takes into account the social context emphasized in developmental literature, the implications for social studies education and important associations identified by political science research. This study begins to explore *how and why* political discussion is related to civic engagement by considering the potential effects of two mechanisms involved in social cognitive learning, knowledge and sense of efficacy.

This study expands the conceptualization of the domain of politics in ways that are more relevant to adolescents than in past research. First, civic engagement is broadly defined to take in to account opportunities for engagement that are both available and meaningful for adolescents, such as participation in school government or contributing to solving community problems. Second, Bandura's detailed theory about self-efficacy is used to extend past work in political science by including efficacy items that tap adolescents' sense of competence in the more abstract, adult political sphere and their sense of competence in the domain of more concrete experiences, the school setting.

Finally, the addition of interviews with adolescents about their perspectives on political discussion enriched previous findings and those of the proposed study by providing a way to make the conclusions drawn from the analysis of data collected through self-report survey instruments more practically meaningful. Furthermore, the interviews provided descriptive examples that illustrate results from more quantitative analyses.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate how civic knowledge and political efficacy influence the relationship between political discussion and various modes of civic engagement. Furthermore, the potential impact of the context in which political discussions occur was assessed. The specific questions described in Chapter 1 were addressed using a multi-method approach. The main technique was quantitative analysis of existing survey data measuring 14-year-olds' participation in discussions about political issues, civic knowledge, attitudes, and civic engagement. The second approach consisted of a more qualitative technique designed to complement the interpretation of the statistical analysis. A smaller sample of students was asked to complete an abbreviated version of the same survey instrument consisting of the items about political discussion, efficacy, and engagement that had been used to collect the data subjected to secondary analysis. This was followed by a short interview asking students to elaborate on their thinking about certain questions from the survey and more open-ended questions about how they experience political discussion in various contexts. These interviews provided descriptive data about how students interpreted the survey questions. This chapter provides additional details about both the statistical and qualitative analysis methods.

Secondary Analysis of Existing Civic Education Data

One of the limitations of previous research about political discussion among adolescents is that most research has been limited to samples using a cross-sectional design and in many cases non-representative samples. This study enhances existing

understanding about the process and effects of political discussion on civic engagement for adolescents by utilizing U.S. data from a recent international study on civic education conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Although this study is still limited by a cross-sectional design it offers an unprecedented opportunity to analyze adolescent experiences with political discussion and its impact on civic engagement based on nationally representative samples. Since one objective for this study was to assess the effect of different types of contexts for political discussion across several forms of civic engagement and patterns of civic engagement vary across countries (Torney-Purta et al., 2001), the analysis of this study was limited to the U.S. sample. However, using U.S. data gathered as part of an international study offered a broader perspective on issues of civic education that may not have been gained through a national study, since the survey instrument had been designed to be appropriate theoretically and practically comparable across 28 countries. Moreover, the study had the benefit of world-class consultation about sampling design and measurement.

Background on the IEA Civic Education Study

In the early 1990s members of the IEA General Assembly expressed interest in conducting a study of civic education. Many of the member countries had been experiencing dramatic changes in their government structures and were interested in learning more about the knowledge, attitudes, and engagement of their adolescents regarding democracy. More established democracies were similarly interested in obtaining detailed information about their youth. In 1994 the IEA General Assembly voted to conduct such a study. The study proceeded in two phases. The first phase

consisted of an assessment of the state of civic education in each of the participating countries using a set of common framing questions. National research teams in 24 countries conducted case studies consisting of reviews of recent research, curriculum, and findings from focus groups on civic education in their respective countries. Findings from the case studies were published in *Civic Education Across Countries: Twenty-four National Case Studies from the IEA Civic Education Project* (Torney-Purta, Schwille & Amadeo, 1999). These case studies led to the development of consensus about a core set of issues of civic education present in most of the countries. These core issues were organized into three domains: Domain I – A) Democracy and its defining characteristics, B) Institutions and practices in democracy, and C) Citizenship – rights and duties; Domain II – A) National identity, and B) International/regional relations; Domain III – Social cohesion and diversity. These domains were used extensively in the development of the instrument that was administered in Phase 2 of the study. The first part of Phase 2 consisted of the development of a test of civic knowledge, and a survey of student concepts, attitudes, participation, and demographic information. Additionally, two short questionnaires were developed for teachers and schools. These instruments were translated into 22 languages and piloted twice in subset samples of the participating countries (see Schulz, Lehmann, & Husfeldt, in press or Torney-Purta et al. 2001 for further details). The final instrument was administered in 1999 to more than 90,000 14-year-olds in 28 participating countries, including the United States. A similar instrument was administered to upper secondary students, ranging in age from 16-19 in sixteen countries (the United States did not participate in the older population study).

Sampling Procedure

Although twenty-eight countries participated in Phase 2 (the instrument administration and data collection) of the IEA Civic Education Study, the analysis of this study was limited to the United States. In consultation with IEA sampling experts in 1998 the following sampling procedures were established. The modal age of 14 was selected for two reasons. First, age 14 is a standard IEA population for testing and the 1971 IEA Civic Education Study sampled students of this age. Second, the National Research Coordinators in many countries noted that testing populations older than 14 might present significant problems with drop-out rates, differentiated education or tracks. A two-stage stratified cluster sampling design was used in which schools were selected using a probability proportional to size approach. Next, one intact class per school from the target grade was chosen. The target grade in the U.S. was ninth grade. The class was to be un-tracked. Due to variation in the curricular implementation of civic education objectives across countries it was impossible to require administration of the instrument in intact, civic education courses. Many countries do not have a separate civic education course, opting instead to embed civic objectives in courses such as history or religion (Schwille & Amadeo, 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 1999). However, countries were asked to select a civic-related subject when possible. To account for the two-stage stratified cluster design of the sample, that resulted in a disproportional selection probabilities, a relative weighting procedure, that was developed according to IEA guidelines, was applied to the data. In addition, this study used a program in SAS software, SURVEYREG, which estimated the covariance-variance matrix based on the Taylor Series expansion theory (SAS Institute Inc., 1999).

In the United States, administration of the surveys occurred in October 1999, to ensure that most enrolled students would be age 14 (due to varying school entry dates). The sampling procedures resulted in a total of 124 participating public and private schools and 2, 811 students with an average age of 14.7 years (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). According to reports from state social studies specialists presented in the U.S. Phase 1 case study (Hahn, 1999) it appears that students in a majority of districts in 20 states would have had the opportunity to take a course in civics or government by grade 9. However, a sizable number of students may not have had such opportunities. Nearly 65 percent of students participating in the IEA Civic Education Study report that they study social studies in school almost every day (Baldi et al. 2001).

Instrument Development

The development of the test and survey instrument began with a thorough review of the study's Content Guidelines and other documents produced as part of the Phase 1 case studies. The 1971 IEA Civic Education Study instrument, released items from other studies, and suggestions from National Research Coordinators were also carefully reviewed for fit with the domains established during Phase 1. It was clear that there was an insufficient number of existing items to cover all areas of interest. Therefore, a 140-item data base of potential items was created for the knowledge test. The data base included items assessing both content knowledge and interpretative skills. All the items were reviewed for their suitability of administration across the participating countries. Eighty items were selected for pilot testing with convenience samples of 14-year-olds in 20 countries. Based on statistics gathered from these pilot tests, National Research Coordinators met in March 1998 and agreed to retain 62 items and constructed additional

items to fill gaps in the content matrix. A second pilot test was conducted in 25 countries between April and October of 1998. The few items that were statistically unacceptable to one-fifth of the participating countries were eliminated, in accordance with IEA rules designed to ensure test fairness across countries. At a meeting in November 1998 the National Research Coordinators agreed by consensus to 38 multiple choice items for the final knowledge test. Each item had one correct answer and three distracters. Most of the selected items had discrimination indices greater than .30.

There were a number of areas of the content domains for which developing items with correct answers was difficult. Therefore a parallel process of item development and selection was carried out for items designed to measure how students understand concepts about democracy, their attitudes in a variety of areas including their confidence about civic engagement and attitudes towards immigrants' and women's rights, and students' current and expected participation in a variety of actions related to politics. Many items were selected from existing measures described in the research literature. Some items were adapted to make measures used previously with adults appropriate for use with adolescents. The survey instrument was pilot tested in mid-1998 along with the knowledge test. The final survey included 52 concept items, 62 items about attitudes, and 22 items asking students about their civic-related actions. Unlike the knowledge test, the survey items were scored using a Likert-type scale format, with responses ranging from 1 to 4, 0 for don't know. The precise response choices varied depending on the questions. For example, questions about concepts of democracy asked students if a particular principle was 1 – very bad for democracy, up to 4 – very good for democracy, whereas items assessing attitudes might range from 1 – strongly disagree to 4 – strongly

agree. The final instrument also included a series of items about students' current organizational participation and demographic background. The full survey instrument and 16 publicly-released items from the knowledge test are available at www.wam.umd.edu/~iea.

Initial analysis of the IEA data included the development of a number of scales designed to measure underlying constructs considered during part of the design process. Confirmatory Factor Analyses were conducted, based on data from an international random-sample (200 students per country) and national sub-samples, to assess the theoretical justifications of these latent variables. Item response theory (IRT) scaling methods with Rasch scores were used in the development of the scales to ensure that scales could be compared across countries. The Rasch score for the knowledge scale was set at a mean of 100, with a standard deviation of 20. The means for the ten attitudinal scales analyzed in the IEA reports were set at 10, with a standard deviation of 2.

Variables and Measures

Although participants in the IEA Civic Education Study completed more than 150 survey and demographic questions only a portion of these questions were analyzed for this study, in addition to using the summary score on the full civic knowledge test. The selected items are described in the following sections, along with additional details about the knowledge test (see Appendix A for specific wording of the items). Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to assess the plausibility that the IEA items for the U.S. sample represented four different contexts for political discussion, two different forms of civic engagement and three different domains of civic-related efficacy as outlined by research questions one through three. The results of the CFAs were used to construct

variables for discussion, engagement, and efficacy by summing the means for each item in the scale. Cronbach's alphas were then calculated to check the reliability of each scale. These variables were then used to address the research questions (described in Chapter 1) exploring the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement and the impact of civic knowledge and efficacy on this process. Furthermore, the IEA data allow consideration of how the relationship may differ across contexts, viewed in two ways-the discussion context and mode of civic engagement.

Political Discussion

For this analysis political discussion encompassed a broad range of possible experiences in which adolescents have a conversation on topics they deem relevant to politics and that contain the potential for different opinions.

The most common measurement of political discussion is a variation on the question, "How often do you discuss politics with…" Forms of this question used with adolescents most often ask them about discussion with parents or peers. The term "politics" is rarely defined specifically. Therefore, respondents may interpret the question to be limited to issues pertinent to national government or may consider more social issues. Another measure pertinent to discussion in classrooms is a measure designed to tap students' perceptions about the climate for discussion. A similar version of this scale was used in the 1971 IEA Civic Education Study (Torney et al. 1975) and by Hahn (1998).

The current IEA instrument presented several opportunities for assessing students' experiences with political discussion in various contexts. In the survey portion of the instrument, students were asked a series of six questions about their discussion

habits. Students were asked how often they discuss happenings in the U.S. government and international politics with people of their own age, parents or other adult family members, and teachers (see Appendix A1). Responses were 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes and 4 = often.

Students' opportunities for discussion were assessed using a second series of twelve items about classroom climate. Initial IEA analysis used CFA to establish that six of these items represent a measure of the students' perception about the climate for discussion present in their class (see Appendix A2). These items differ qualitatively from the other questions about discussion in that the questions about discussion with peers, parents, and teachers ask students to consider discussion of national or international politics, whereas the classroom discussion items are phrased more broadly to inquire about a climate for discussing differing opinions on political and social issues.

A CFA was conducted using the six items asking about discussion with peers, parents, and teachers and the six items from the section about classroom climate pertaining to discussion. The analysis was used to examine the potential presence of a four-factor structure, testing the hypothesis that adolescents have differentiated forms of discussion. Research on adolescence suggests that discussion with peers might form an important context and opportunity for development. Based on theories of social psychology and cognitive development, discussion with peers may provide opportunities to feel among equals, thereby promoting development or providing relevant models for future engagement. Perceiving discussion with peers as discussion among equals parallels political theories about the importance of equal opportunity needed for democratic deliberation. It is therefore hypothesized that discussion with peers forms one

distinct type of political discussion. The type of discussion will be evaluated using two items L1, "discussing what is happening in the U.S. government with people your own age" and L4 "discussing international politics with people your own age" (DISPEER).

The basic premise underlying political socialization research is that attitudes and propensities for civic engagement develop in young people and persist through adulthood (Sears, 1990). Early research in political socialization focused on the effects of parental influence and found some evidence that parents' beliefs and engagement are strongly related to the beliefs of their children when they are young and as adults (Jennings & Niemi, 1981). Research in adolescent development also finds parental influences and communication to be influential (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001; Chaffee et al., 1973; Flanagan et al., 1998; Liebes & Ribak, 1992). While it is clear that parents are not the only socializing influence on adolescents' political development it is likely that interactions with parents, including political discussion, differ in some respects from interactions with peers or other adults. Two items measuring students' reported participation in discussions with parents about "what is happening in the U.S. government" (Item L2) and in "international politics (Items L5) were used in the confirmatory factor analysis to test the distinctness of discussion with parents (DISPAR).

Teachers, especially social studies teachers, have long had the additional role of modeling civic behavior in addition to establishing appropriate, positive learning environments. Therefore, this CFA will assess the degree to which discussion with teachers represents a distinct form of political discussion, as measured by two items about discussion over "what is happening in U.S. government" (Item L3) and "international politics" (Item L5) (DISTEACH).

Research on civic education, including the previous IEA Civic Education Study found that students who perceived their classrooms as more open to the discussion of political and social issues were more likely to have higher levels of civic knowledge and more likely to believe that they would engage in civic activities as adults. This CFA evaluates the plausibility that a sense of open classroom climate is distinct from other forms of political discussion using 6 items about students' perceptions about the degree to which their teacher establishes a classroom environment that encourages discussion on issues about which people can hold different views (CLIMATE).

While the confirmatory factor analysis provided some indication about whether or not adolescents experience discussion differently by context, it did not provide any information about how they interpret the topics for discussion. For example, the open classroom climate items ask students about "political and social" issues, whereas the other discussion questions ask about happenings in the U.S. government and international politics. Therefore, the qualitative portion of this study helped to shed light on how the different questions were interpreted.

Civic Engagement

Although much research in the area of political science still focuses on adult voting as the primary outcome of interest, there is wide-spread consensus that civic engagement consists of multiple forms of participation, from voting, to running for office, volunteering or participating in a protest. There has been little consistency across studies in how civic engagement is measured both in the items asked and the categorization of participation. For example, paying attention to an election campaign in the news may be considered a conventional form of political participation or may labeled

political involvement. Considerable effort was taken by the IEA Civic Education Study researchers to develop measures of engagement that take in to account a broad repertoire of civic activities. Since one of the research questions for this study aimed to investigate how political discussion impacts various modes of engagement, several modes of engagement from the IEA study were used.

The IEA Civic Education Study contained 12 items asking students to estimate future political activities (See Appendix A3-4). Five of the items were intended to measure more conventional activities such as voting or joining a political party. The study also included four items measuring forms of participation that are generally considered to be more related to social-movements or activity in the community, such as collecting money for a social cause. Finally, three items were asked about activities that are illegal in many countries such as occupying a building as a form of protest. Due to the low frequency of reported participation in illegal activities, these three items were not included as part of this study. Confirmatory factor analysis, calculated with data from all 28 countries to assess different forms of participation, identified only one scale, consisting of three items about Conventional Political Activities that met IEA criteria for use across all countries (Schulz et al., in press).

Psychometric information from this CFA was not provided by country. Therefore, given previous findings of the presence of multiple modes of participation, a CFA of nine items about a student's future political action was conducted to test the presence of latent variables measuring two dimensions of participation described above in the U.S.: conventional participation and social-movement related participation. Conventional political participation (CONV) was measured using Items M1, M2, M3,

M4, and M5. Social-movement related participation was measured using Items M6, M7, M8 and M9 (SOC).

Finally, since the scales described above ask students about the likelihood of future political activities not actual behavior, a measure of students' current engagement in civic-related activities was also used. The IEA instrument asked students about their participation in 15 different types of organizations. However, not all of these organizations have an obvious civic focus. For example, students were asked about their participation on sports teams. For this study organizations that are likely to provide explicit opportunities for engaging in democratic processes (such voting to elect student council representatives), model political institutions (like a political party), generally have activities related to taking a stance on political or social issues, or contribute to the common good of society were considered to be civic-related. Nine organizations were included in this summative scale (CURRENT) (see Appendix A5).

Efficacy

Efficacy, or beliefs about one's competence, is a complex construct that varies by context. A CFA was conducted for this study to assess the presence of efficacy beliefs in three civic-related domains; students' internal political efficacy, efficacy related to participation in discussions about school problems (discussion efficacy), and efficacy related to students acting together to address school problems (school efficacy). The next few paragraphs describe the theoretical justifications for the three domains of efficacy and the relevant items from the IEA Civic Education Study available for assessing the plausibility of this model.

A consensus about the most appropriate conceptualization for political efficacy remains elusive in political science and political socialization research. However, there is recognition of a distinction between external political efficacy (beliefs about the responsiveness of government to citizens) and internal political efficacy (beliefs about one's own ability to influence the government). Since the focus of this study was on efficacy beliefs that would have relevance for adolescents, measures of external political efficacy were not considered.

Although parallels exist between concepts of internal political efficacy in political science literature and Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, existing measures in political science neglect the distinction in Bandura's theory between beliefs about outcomes expectancies and judgments about one's own capabilities. The internal political efficacy measures include both judgments about one's capabilities for action and understanding.

The most common measure of internal political efficacy comes from the U.S. National Election Study (Craig et al., 1990). Versions of this scale have been widely utilized in political science research. Less common are measures that attempt to consider the relevance of politics for adolescents. In a scale developed by Ehman and Gillespie (1975), adolescents are asked to judge their ability to have an impact in settings that are likely to be part of their daily life. This scale called political confidence has been used in several studies with adolescents (Hahn, 1998).

Three items used in the IEA instrument fit the conceptualization of internal political efficacy measure from political science, asking students to judge their knowledge and understanding about politics (see Appendix A7). These items were used

in the CFA to assess the distinction between political efficacy and efficacy related to student participation and discussion at school.

The IEA instrument also contains a series of seven items measuring students' judgment about the value and effectiveness of student participation in school. Initial analyses conducted for the IEA report based on random sample of 200 students per country identified a two-factor solution using confirmatory factor analysis. Two scales were identified and called Confidence in Participation at School scale and Self-Confidence in School Participation scale. However, due to financial constraints only the Confidence in Participation at School (see Appendix A8) scale was used in the final IEA report. While this scale was of interest for this study, the unreported scale (see Appendix A9) has items more specifically related to discussion at school that are especially relevant to this study. Therefore the CFA conducted for this study used both sets of items measuring efficacy related to school, along with the three items measuring political efficacy to test the plausibility of three domains of efficacy beliefs.

Civic Knowledge

The concept of civic knowledge measured in this study is defined as understanding the principles and processes of democratic governments. The measure was developed for use across 28 countries by IEA researchers. However, most studies measuring civic knowledge have focused more narrowly on country-specific facts about government. In the U.S. this might include asking questions about the number of representatives in the Senate or for the name of a current governor. One example of such a test of civic knowledge is the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) for civics, conducted with nationally representative samples every ten years, with most

recent administration in 1998. NAEP Civics is the most comprehensive test measuring civic knowledge in the U.S. for students in grades 4, 8, and 12. The emphasis of this test is on the foundations of the U.S. political system and roles of citizens in the U.S. (Niemi & Junn, 1998).

The measure of civic knowledge used for this study was the 38-item test portion of the IEA instrument (see Appendix A6). The civic knowledge test items were constructed using the three content domain areas established from Phase 1 of the study. There were two different types of items in this section of the instrument. The first type of item assessed content knowledge, determined according to the three core domains of civic education identified during Phase 1 of the study. The second type of item measured students' skill at interpreting civic-related materials such as a political leaflet or cartoon. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to confirm these two components. Overall, the Cronbach's alpha for this test in the U.S. was .90; .86 for the content section, .81 for the interpretation skills (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, p. 209). Using IRT, the international mean of the knowledge scale was set at 100, with a standard deviation of 20. This IRT Rasch score for total civic knowledge (KNOW) was used in this study, since the subscales of content and skills are highly correlated (r =.91) and such a distinction is not the emphasis of this study.

Demographics

A portion of the IEA instrument was devoted to obtaining some demographic information about the participants. Individual items about participant gender and race were included (GENDER). The reported number of books in the home was used as a measure of socioeconomic status (HOMELIT). This has been a socioeconomic indicator

used in many IEA studies, including the IEA Civic Education Study international report. Although other measures of family background are available such as parental education, some research (Buchmann, 2002) suggests that imputation methods similar to the one used in this study (see Chapter 4) are less meaningful when the amount of missing data for these variables exceeds twenty percent. For this study twenty-eight percent of the students are missing a response for mother's education, and thirty-three percent are missing a response for father's education.

Analysis

Several statistical analyses were conducted to ascertain the relationship between political discussion in various contexts, and multiple modes of civic engagement. Variables of interest include political discussion (DISPEER, DISPAR, DISTEACH), open classroom climate (CLIMATE), civic knowledge (KNOW), internal political efficacy (POLEFF), school efficacy (CONF), discussion efficacy at school (DISEFF), and several variables for participation having to do with the future (CONV, SOC), and one with current participation (CURRENT). The specific items used to comprise each of these variables may be found in Appendix A. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were generated to ensure the fit of the data with assumptions needed for more complicated statistical procedures. These assumptions include measurement error, specification error and problems associated with error terms. A bivariate correlation matrix was calculated to investigate the relationship between the relevant variables.

The complex sample design of the IEA study made the calculation of standard errors based on simple random sample formulas more likely to result in the

underestimation of standard errors (increasing the possibility of a Type I error). A design-based analysis was used to account for this potential problem (Hox, 1998; Lee, Forthhofer & Lorimor, 1989). The SURVEYREG procedure of the statistical software SAS was used to take the sampling design into account.

The fourth research question asked to what extent four types of political discussion are related to student's expectations for engaging in civic activities as adults. Research question five asked to what extent the same four types of political discussion were related to student's current participation in civic-related activities. The relationship between political discussion and civic engagement were further explored by considering the association between civic knowledge and efficacy with civic engagement (research questions 6 and 8) controlling for the effects of home literacy resources, gender and each type of political discussion. Research questions seven and nine assess the extent to which civic knowledge and efficacy influence the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement.

A series of hierarchical regressions were conducted to test these research questions. The first set of regressions assessed the impact of discussion with peers on three modes of civic engagement; conventional, social-movement and current organizational participation. The demographic variables of home literacy resources (HOMELIT) and gender (GENDER) were entered first (see Equation 1) to consider the effect of peer discussion without potential confounding effects from home literacy resources or gender. A peer discussion variable (DISPEER) was entered into the model to assess its effect on one form of engagement (Y1 = CONV) (Equation 2a). If the addition of DISPEER to the model produced a significant change in R-squared then

DISPEER was interpreted as having a statistically significant effect on civic engagement. This was repeated for the other two forms of engagement (SOC, CURRENT). This process was repeated for discussion with parents, teachers, and classroom climate to determine the extent to which different discussion contexts also have an impact (Equations 2b-d).

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT] + [GENDER] \quad (1)$$

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + DISPEER \quad (2a)$$

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + DISPAR \quad (2b)$$

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + DISTEACH \quad (2c)$$

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + CLIMATE \quad (2d)$$

(Y1 = conventional political participation (CONV) - repeated for Y2 = social movement participation (SOC) and Y3 = current organizational participation (CURRENT)

In order to explore the potential moderating effect of civic knowledge a term for a main effect of knowledge (KNOW) and an interaction term for knowledge and discussion were entered into the series of regression models following the inclusion of the discussion variable (as described above – see also Equations 3-5). The model of the relationships to be tested appears in Figure 1.

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + DISPEER \quad (3)$$

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + [DISPEER] + KNOW \quad (4)$$

Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + [DISPEER] + [KNOW]

+ PEER * KNOW (5)

(Repeated for Y2 and Y3; repeated the whole process for DISPAR, DISTEACH, CLIMATE)

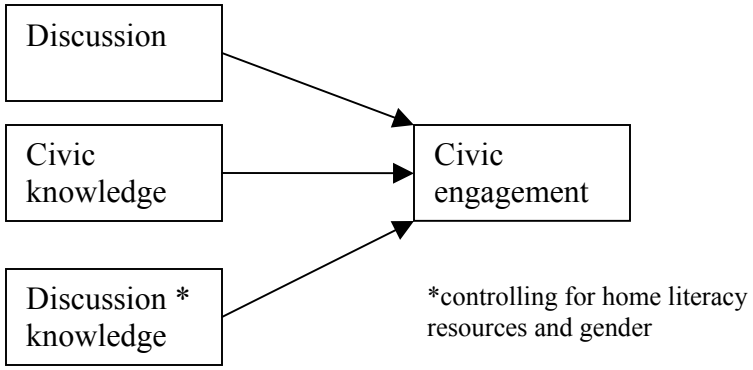

Figure 1: Model of Relationships

Determining if different forms of efficacy have moderating effects required a process similar to that for knowledge, for each form of efficacy. Main effect terms for efficacy and interaction terms combining discussion with each of the three forms of efficacy were developed and entered into the series of regression models following the entry of each discussion term (See Equations 6-8 for political efficacy, 9-11 for discussion efficacy, and 12-14 for school efficacy).

Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + DISPEER (6)

Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + [DISPEER] + POLEFF (7)

Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + [DISPEER] + [POLEFF]

+ PEER * POLEFF (8)

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + DISPEER \quad (9)$$

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + [DISPEER] + DISEFF \quad (10)$$

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + [DISPEER] + [DISEFF] + PEER * DISEFF \quad (11)$$

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + DISPEER \quad (12)$$

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + [DISPEER] + CONFEFF \quad (13)$$

$$Y1 = [HOMELIT + GENDER] + [DISPEER] + [CONFEFF] + PEER * CONFEFF \quad (14)$$

(Repeated for Y2 and Y3; repeated all equations for DISPAR, DISTEACH and CLIMATE).

In summary, in order to analyze the relationship between the four different types of political discussion and three forms of civic engagement, controlling for home literacy resources and gender, 12 regression analyses were calculated. To examine the influence of civic knowledge and three types of efficacy an additional series of 24 regressions were calculated for each of these factors. Results are presented in Chapter 4 organized into 4 groups by civic knowledge, political efficacy, discussion efficacy, and school efficacy. Within each group there are four tables; one for each type of discussion (with peers, parents, teachers and open classroom climate). All three types of civic engagement are presented in each table.

Qualitative Study

Adolescents' Experience of Political Discussion

The purpose of this part of the study was to add to the depth of interpretations that can be made from the results of the secondary analysis. Although the IEA instrument was tested extensively psychometrically, checks for interpretation from a student perspective were not part of the pilot testing. So, for example, when students were asked how often they discuss what is happening in the U.S. government with their parents, students' consideration of specific topics remains unknown. There is some research with adolescents that suggests that they might hold very narrow conceptualizations of the political domain (Bhavanni, 1991; Hahn, 1998; Keeter et al., 2002a, 2002b; Kuhn et al., 1999; Van Hoorn, 2000), limited to ideas about official government structures. This could affect their interpretation of the IEA questions. Having students respond to questions about how they interpreted the survey items provided a better understanding of the meaning that students make of the items. This has implications both for interpreting these results and for future instruments.

This portion of the study was also designed to explore how adolescents experience political discussion. The objective was to provide some descriptive information about the meaning students give to the terms used to reference political discussions and the connections they make between discussion, knowledge, efficacy, and their own political engagement. It might be that discussion occurs most often along with other forms of civic engagement or it might take place as an isolated activity. Previous studies about political discussion have largely relied on student responses to surveys about political discussion (one exception is a study by Hahn, 1998 that included focus

group data and observations). A few studies have observed discussions conducted in a laboratory setting (Leadbeater, 1988) or a classroom (Hess & Posselt, 2001). This portion of the study suggested directions for future research that might observe students engaging in political discussions in natural settings by identifying areas that the youth themselves designate as important.

Design and Procedures

The primary purpose of the qualitative portion of the study was to supplement the interpretation of the secondary analysis of the IEA Civic Education Study data. This portion of the study was accomplished in two steps in April 2003. In the first step, a sample of 32 14-year-olds were asked to answer the demographic questions, civic knowledge test, and selected portions of the survey from the IEA instrument. These sections included the questions about political discussion, open classroom climate, confidence in participation at school, efficacy and civic engagement. The abbreviated instrument took students approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Students were asked to think retrospectively about how they interpreted the survey items. The questions related specifically to the survey were followed up by a series of probing questions designed to help the students elaborate on their thinking about political discussion, and its relationship to civic engagement, civic knowledge, and efficacy. Most interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Sample

The participants for the interview portion of this study were recruited from a population of 9th grade students from a public high school in the Northeast[1]. The total number of students at this school is 1321, with 345 9th graders[2]. Nearly all of the students

are white (95.6%) and only a small portion of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch (<5%). The participants were the students of two teachers, on separate ninth grade teams, from a total of 8 different classes. The World History classes had just begun a unit on the United Nations, which culminated in a Model UN activity in May. Eighty students completed the IEA instrument. From this sample 32 students agreed to participate in the interviews (19 females, 13 males). Parental consent and student assent forms were collected in accordance with Institutional Review Board policies (Appendix B). Students from one teacher were offered extra credit for participating in the interviews. This teacher took an active role in recruiting students for the interviews. The extra credit opportunity was not offered by the second teacher.

Participants took an abbreviated version of the IEA civic knowledge test. The majority of items on the civic knowledge test were retained by IEA for possible use in future studies. Therefore, only the publicly released items were administered. The sixteen publicly released items had been psychometrically tested on a calibration sample (500 students per country) and found to be reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha of .76. There is at least one released item from each subcategory of the three content domain categories. There is also a split between content items (9 items) and interpretative skills (7 items). The original administration of the full instrument was designed to take two class periods. The abbreviated version of the civic knowledge test, survey and demographic questions took the majority of students 20 minutes to complete (range from 15-35 minutes).

Interviews

After students completed the survey items they were asked a series of questions designed to help them elaborate on their thinking about political discussion and civic engagement germane to this study (see Appendix C). A number of steps were taken to develop the questions for the interviews. The questions in the IEA instrument that could potentially have multiple meanings were identified. Several other studies have contained interviews or focus groups with students about political discussion (Conover & Searing, 2000; Hahn, 1998; Keeter et al., 2002a, 2002b; Valentine & Sears, 1998; Van Hoorn et al., 2000). The procedures and questions used for these studies were reviewed and selected where relevant.

The interview questions were developed to guide students in expressing their understanding of specific aspects of the survey items. For example, in the question, "How often do you have discussions of what is happening in international politics...with people of your own age…?" there are several terms for which student's conceptualizations could vary such as "politics," "peers" or even "how often." Students were asked to explain what they think the terms mean. In order to get a broader understanding of how students experience political discussion, a few open-ended questions ask them to describe the connections they see between political discussion, civic engagement, civic knowledge and their sense of efficacy both inside and outside of the school context.

The interview session lasted no longer than 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted one to two days following the student's completion of the survey instrument in a conference room in the school. Students participated either during their study period or

team course. Interviews were conducted by the researcher and an assistant. Training of the assistant consisted of two practice interviews, a discussion of objectives, agreement about interviewing techniques and subsequent revision of some of the questions. Each interview was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Analysis

Analyses of the interviews began with an initial review of each transcript. Themes and categories were developed based on patterns across students' responses. In some cases these categories were limited to short, specific answers, especially for the interview questions pertaining directly to students' interpretation of the survey questions (i.e. categories for frequency included "once a month," "almost daily"). In other cases, categories were developed to capture my interpretation of the students' justifications for their responses. For example, the question about whether participation in school leads to action as adults included categories such as "model of larger community" or "experience increases probability of participation." Transcripts were reviewed a second time using these categories. Simple frequency tallies were made using the categories and examples were selected to illustrate both student interpretations and characterizations of discussion. Some revisions were made to the categories during this second review and responses were reconsidered wherever necessary. The categories are presented in Appendix D by research question. The purpose for the interviews was to enrich the interpretation of the statistical analyses. Therefore, more rigorous evaluation of the reliability of these categories was left for future analyses.

Integration of Methods

The final step in analyzing the data used in this study was to integrate the findings of the secondary analysis of the large representative data set with the descriptive data of the interviews. The interview data was used to enrich the interpretation of the results from the statistical analyses. In particular the data from the interviews helped identify limitations of the findings from the secondary analysis, as well as provided a context from which implications and generalizations could be made.

The combination of quantitative methods and more descriptive data provides a more detailed analysis of the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement that begins to explore possible mechanisms (namely knowledge and efficacy) that affect this relationship. This dual methodology takes into consideration the context in which political discussions occur in two ways. First, it makes a statistical comparison of discussion with different partners for multiple modes of engagement. Then it supplements these findings by providing narrative descriptions from the perspective of adolescents about how discussion influences their civic engagement across various contexts.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Introduction

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between civic discussion and various forms of political discussion and to assess the effects of civic knowledge and efficacy on this relationship using data from the IEA Civic Education Study. A second objective was to develop a description of how adolescents experience political discussion, from their own perspectives. Results from statistical analyses addressing the main objective are presented first, followed by findings from interviews with adolescents. The chapter begins with a presentation of descriptive data for the variables of interest. Part of this descriptive section includes a presentation of the results from three confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) used to assess the degree to which several survey individual items together provide a consistent measure of latent characteristics pertaining to students' civic attitudes and engagement. The three CFAs assess multiple modes of civic engagement, forms of political discussion and political efficacy. The relationships between the variables of interest are then explored using bivariate correlations. The results from a series of hierarchical linear regressions addressing the specific research questions about political discussion, civic engagement, civic knowledge, and efficacy are presented next. SAS (Version 8.2) software was used to carry out all the statistical procedures for this study. The findings from the interviews are presented in two parts. The first part presents student interpretations of the same survey items used in the statistical portion of the study. The second part provides a description of how 14 year olds think about political discussion and civic engagement.

Descriptive Data

Variables were selected from the IEA Civic Education Study as described in Chapter 3. Descriptive statistics from this original data set are presented in Appendix E. However, a number of modifications were made to prepare this data set for use in the statistical analyses used to address the research questions for this study. These changes include an imputation procedure to address the issue of missing data, review of frequencies for the race and ethnicity questions, confirmatory factor analyses, and subsequent construction of composite variables to form scales (including several not used in either the IEA analysis or subsequent secondary analysis).

The percent of missing data for all the original items was under 21% and ranged from less than one percent (knowledge) to 20.4% for item I2 (know more about politics) (See column 4 of Appendix E). The missing values were subsequently handled using a single imputation procedure that inserts a value randomly selected from a probability distribution constructed from a covariance matrix of other responses (SAS Institute, Inc., 1999). Following the imputation procedure, observations for three students who were missing values for all 43 items of interest were deleted.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses Relating to Research Questions 1 - 3

Previous research and theories about civic engagement provided in Chapter 2 suggest that when some of the items from the IEA study are considered together they provide measures of the latent dimensions of political or civic discussion, efficacy, and engagement. Three models for the underlying dimensions of these variables were tested using confirmatory factor analysis. The indices used to evaluate model fit were selected according to the guidelines suggested by Bentler and Hu (1999) where the Comparative

Fit Index (CFI) ≥ .96 and Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) ≤ .06 should be paired with a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) ≤ .09. CFI and RMSEA account for errors in the factor loadings and SRMR accounts for error in the proposed latent structure. The SAS software program for confirmatory factor analysis does not produce SRMR. Therefore, SRMR was only calculated when both CFI and RMSEA met the selected criteria.

Political Discussion

The first confirmatory factor analysis was modeled to evaluate the possibility of four distinct types of political discussion; discussion with peers (DISPEER), discussion with parents (DISPAR), discussion with teachers (DISTEACH), and a classroom climate open to the discussion of different issues (CLIMATE). Using the selected fit criteria the original model fit was poor. The Lagrange Multiplier Tests were used to identify new paths that could improve the model. Two new paths were added iteratively to obtain a good model fit (see Table 1 for fit indices for the original and final model). First the covariance between the error for discussion of U.S. government with peers and the error for discussion of U.S. government with parents was added. This is theoretically justifiable because discussions with peers and parents both occur outside a class setting and may be of a more personal nature. The second respecification was adding a covariance path between the error for teachers encourage discussion of political or social issues and the error for teachers present several sides of an issue. This addition makes sense because both of these items attempt to measure a teacher's role in establishing a classroom where different sides of political and social issues are explored. The final model with factor loadings is presented in Appendix F. Four scales were subsequently

constructed for these factors. Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each scale to assess its reliability (see Appendix E for a report of all alphas). The Cronbach's alpha for discussion with peers (DISPEER) was .76, discussion with parents (DISPAR) was .79, discussion with teachers (DISTEACH) and open classroom climate were both .81.

Table 1

Model Fit Indices for Political Discussion

	χ^2	df	CFI	SRMR (RMR)	RMSEA	RMSEA 90% C. I.
Original Model	1050.5	48	.917	(.039)	.0863	.0818,.0908
Respecified Model	574.2	46	.956	.049	.0640	.0593,.0687

Civic Engagement

A second confirmatory factor analysis was designed to evaluate the distinct forms of civic engagement. The theoretical justification for the original two factor model was based on political science theory. Much of this theory is based on long-standing views about what sort of activities constitute traditional political action such that activities such as voting and writing a letter to a newspaper are the "normal" activities. Continued use of this approach is in part due to the desire to evaluate participation over time. Large scale surveys have contained these measures for decades. However, since Barnes and Kaase's 1979 study indicating an expanding repertoire of activities, more recent research in political science has been exploring a greater diversity of activities, but a consensus about how to categorize activities has yet to emerge. Although analyses for the IEA Civic Education Study (Schulz et al., in press) failed to confirm the same model with two forms of civic engagement, results by country were not available. Therefore, given that this model may in fact have been appropriate for the U.S. sample, a two factor model was

tested for this study (see Appendix G). Fit indices for this two factor model failed to meet the selected criteria, even after several respecifications (see Table 2).

More recent research in civic engagement suggested an alternative approach to evaluating types of civic engagement. There is some research that suggests that voting and related activities are often perceived as "duties" rather than a form of civic or political engagement (Conover & Searing, 2000; Williamson et al., 2003). Therefore a second model was constructed with the measures of voting removed. This second model, as originally specified, did not meet the model fit criteria. The Lagrange Multiplier Tests were used to make modifications to improve the model fit. A path was added from the error for volunteering in the community to the error for raising money for a charity. This respecification produced a good model fit (see Table 2). The final model and factor loadings are presented in Appendix H. Two scales were subsequently constructed with the reliabilities assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The scale for expected conventional political participation (CONV) had an alpha of .73 and the scale for expected social movement-related participation (SOC) had an alpha of .75.

Table 2

Model Fit Indices for Civic Engagement

	χ^2	df	CFI	SRMR (RMR)	RMSEA	RMSEA 90% C. I.
Original Model (1)	1521.1	26	.799	(.058)	.1431	.1371,.1493
Revised Model (2)	284.9	13	.948	(.031)	.0863	.0778,.0952
Respecified Model 2	76.3	12	.988	.024	.0437	.0346,.0533

Efficacy

The final confirmatory factor analysis was designed to evaluate Bandura's (1997) theory about the domain specificity of efficacy. The domains pertinent to this study include a sense of internal efficacy related to politics (POLEFF), efficacy related to discussions in school (DISEFF) and efficacy about student participation in school (CONF). The three factor model did not produce good model fit. However, the addition of a path for the covariance between the error terms for knowledge of politics and understanding politics, both part of political efficacy produced a good model fit (see Table 3 for original and respecified results). The final model with associated factor loadings is laid out in Appendix I. Three scales were constructed and subsequently tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha. The alpha for political efficacy was .64, discussion efficacy .69 and school efficacy .76.

Table 3

Model Fit Indices for Efficacy

	χ^2	df	CFI	SRMR (RMR)	RMSEA	RMSEA 90% C. I.
Original Model	344.1	32	.953	(.029)	.0589	.0534,.0646
Respecified Model	273.4	31	.963	.037	.0528	.0471,.0586

Finally to develop a measure of students' current participation in civic-related organizations a scale was constructed summing their participation in nine activities. These items were scaled 0 (did not participate) and 1 (participate). Confirmatory factor analysis was not used for these items because student reports of participation may be more reflective of the availability of these activities, rather than an underlying propensity to engage in civic-related activities. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .65.

In sum, the results of the confirmatory factor analyses conducted to address the first three research questions confirmed the plausibility of the proposed models for political discussion and efficacy beliefs related to politics with a few minor changes. Four scales were created for discussion; discussion with peers, discussion with parents, discussion with teachers and open classroom climate. Three scales were created for efficacy; political efficacy, discussion efficacy, and school efficacy. The proposed model for civic engagement required a revised model, dropping those items associated with voting. Two scales were created based on the results from the second CFA; conventional political participation (expected) and social movement-related participation (expected).

Descriptive Statistics for Scales

Following the development of measurement scales descriptions of all the variables used in the statistical analyses are presented in Table 4. In addition, Appendix E provides the skew, and kurtosis for each variable, and all the descriptive statistics for each item.

Table 4

Unweighted Descriptive Statistics for the Sample

Variable	Description	N	M	SD	α
HOMELIT	Number of books at home	2808	3.276	1.336	
GENDER	Gender (0=male, 1=female)	2808	0.503	0.500	
DISPEER	Discussion of U.S. and international topics with peers	2808	1.900	0.786	.76
DISPAR	Discussion of U.S. and international topics with parents	2808	2.450	0.886	.79
DISTEACH	Discussion of U.S. and international topics with teachers	2808	2.559	0.891	.81
CLIMATE	Open classroom climate	2808	3.017	0.625	.81
KNOW	Civic knowledge score (IRT)	2808	104.908	22.169	
POLEFF	Political efficacy	2808	2.448	0.651	.64
DISEFF	Discussion efficacy	2808	2.900	0.663	.69
CONF	School efficacy	2808	3.123	0.574	.76
CONV	Expected conventional political participation	2808	2.055	0.683	.73
SOC	Expected social movement-related participation	2808	2.580	0.636	.75
CURRENT	Summative scale of participation in 9 civic-related organizations	2808	1.959	1.769	.65

Political Discussion Measures

On average, most students report that discussion of what is happening in the U.S. government and international politics is an activity that they only "rarely" engage in with their peers. Their discussion of such topics with their parents and teachers occurs with only slightly more frequency. The perception that their classroom has a climate open for discussion is something that students report to be the case "sometimes". The potential opportunities students have for engaging in such discussions should be kept in mind relative to the large portion of their time spent in class (Larson, 2000). Furthermore, the

response categories for the questions about discussion ranging from 1=never to 4=often may not interpreted or estimated in the same way by all students (Sudman, Bradburn & Schwarz, 1996).

Civic Engagement Measures

On average students think that they will only rarely or sometimes engage in conventional political activities, such as joining a political party, and in social movement-related activities, such as collecting signatures for a petition, as adults (remember that voting did not form part of the conventional participation variable and is not included in that measure). It appears that more students expect to engage in social movement-related activities than conventional political activities. In general, students report that they currently participate in an average of two civic-related activities. Based on the means for the individual items, participating in activities to help the community was the most common, followed by participation on a student council and collecting money for a charity. Since the question does not ask students for frequency or how recently they have participated, an average of two activities seems a bit low. However, while this may be due to individual students' interest and proclivity towards participation it may also be a reflection of the opportunities that their various communities provide for such participation (or do not provide). In addition, the larger standard deviation for this variable (1.77) is in part a product of the dichotomous variable codes, where 1 = yes and 0 = no for participation.

Civic Knowledge Measure

The IEA Civic Education study used item response theory to develop a civic knowledge scale from the 38 items measuring civic knowledge. The international mean

for the scale was set at 100, with a standard deviation of 20. With the modification made to address the missing data for the U.S. sample, the civic knowledge score was 105 with standard deviation of 22. As presented in the international report (Torney-Purta, et al., 2001) students from the U.S. scored significantly above the international mean and were in the top group of 10 countries. This was the only IRT scale used in the analyses for this study.

Efficacy Measures

In general, students appear more confident about their ability to participate meaningfully in school, both through discussions and collective action, than about understanding politics more generally. The mean for political efficacy or their judgment of their abilities to know, understand and discuss political issues appears slightly smaller than the means for discussion efficacy and school efficacy.

All the data were examined for skew and kurtosis to check whether the data met accepted criteria for normality. All estimates were within standard criteria for determining normality (Cohen et al., 2003; Lomax, 2001).

Bivariate Correlational Analyses Relating to Research Questions 4-9

A bivariate correlation matrix provided a preliminary look at the statistical questions addressed in this study (see Table 5). These correlation estimates were calculated using the unweighted sample which did not take into account the complex sample design and may therefore have smaller standard errors. All four types of civic-related discussion had positive and significant correlations with all three types of civic engagement. Correlation coefficients ranged from .07 for open classroom climate with current organizational participation to .38 for discussion with parents and expected

conventional political participation. The association between peer and parent discussion and engagement differed slightly from that of discussion with teachers and classroom climate and engagement. The correlations between peer or parent discussion and conventional forms of participation (r =.33, r =.38) are larger than the comparable correlations between discussion with teachers or open classroom climate and conventional forms of participation (r = .21, r = .13). The size of the correlations was similar across all four types of discussion for social movement-related participation. Associations of all four types of political discussion with current organizational participation were the smallest of the three forms of engagement. These correlations suggest that in general when students report more frequent discussion with peers, parents, and teachers and perceive their class as more open to discussion, they are also more likely to report that they will engage in several different types of civic activities in the future.

The relationship between discussion with peers and the three types of efficacy (political, discussion and school efficacy) was similar to that of engagement. All three types of efficacy had significant and positive associations with discussion among peers (r = .35, .23, .10 respectively). The pattern of association was similar for discussion with parents, with the association of discussion and political efficacy being the largest (r =.40), and with school efficacy the smallest (r = .20). The correlations between discussion with teachers and the efficacy measures were also positive and significant. However, discussion efficacy had the largest association with discussion with teachers (r =.21). As might be expected school efficacy had the largest association with open classroom climate (r = .37). Discussion efficacy also had a significant and positive relationship to

open classroom climate (r = .26). The association of open classroom climate and political efficacy is notably smaller (r = .09).

The pattern of relations between civic knowledge and the four types of discussion differed from that of efficacy and engagement. In this case, civic knowledge showed significant and positive associations with open classroom climate and discussion with parents (r = .22, r = .20). The size of the correlation between discussion with teachers and civic knowledge (r = .08) was much smaller than the association with open classroom climate and discussion with parents. Unlike for efficacy and engagement, the relationship between discussion with peers and civic knowledge did not parallel that of discussion with parents. Instead, civic knowledge did not have a significant association with discussion with peers. Civic knowledge had significant and positive associations with all three types of efficacy and the three measures of civic engagement, although the correlations with civic engagement were notably smaller.

Home literacy resources had significant and positive correlations with all the variables of interest with the exception of discussion with teachers and gender. The association between home literacy resources and civic knowledge was the largest (r = .34).

Gender was significantly and positively related to all three types of engagement, although the strength of the relationship with conventional participation was notably smaller (r = .05). Females reported lower levels of political efficacy. The association between discussion and school efficacy and gender was positive and significant.

The correlations presented above indicate that there appears to be a relationship between each form of political discussion and civic engagement. It also appears that the

pattern of associations between these variables may differ depending on which type of engagement is considered. However, the main objective of this study was to learn more about how differences in levels of students' expected and current civic engagement may be explained by political discussion, controlling for the influence of home literacy resources and gender. Furthermore, the study aimed to assess the potential moderating effect of civic knowledge and civic-related efficacy on the association between political discussion and civic engagement. Therefore, hierarchical regression analyses were calculated because this statistical test is better suited for evaluating both direct effects and moderating effects.

Table 5

Unweighted Bivariate Correlations of Variables for this Sample

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Types of Political Discussion											
1. Discussion with Peers	---										
2. Discussion with Parents	.56***	---									
3. Discussion with Teachers	.28***	.36***	---								
4. Open Classroom Climate	.17***	.25***	.32***	---							
Civic Engagement											
5. Conventional Political Participation	.33***	.38***	.21***	.13***	---						
6. Social Movement-related Participation	.25***	.31***	.24***	.23***	.44***	---					
7. Current Organizational Participation	.14***	.20***	.16***	.07***	.21***	.33***	---				
8. Civic Knowledge	.05	.20***	.08***	.22***	.09***	.09***	.09***	---			
9. Political Efficacy	.35***	.40***	.16***	.09***	.39***	.23***	.17***	.20***	---		
10. Discussion Efficacy	.23***	.29***	.21***	.26***	.30***	.42***	.25***	.12***	.37***	---	
11. School Efficacy	.10***	.20***	.16***	.37***	.16***	.32***	.17***	.18***	.14***	.49***	---
Demographics											
12. Home Literacy Resources	.06**	.14***	.01	.09***	.10***	.07***	.15***	.34***	.11***	.12***	.07***
13. Gender (1=female)	-.02	.06**	.06***	.14***	.05**	.23***	.18***	.04	-.08***	.24***	.16***

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

Table 5

Unweighted Bivariate Correlations of Variables in this Sample

	12	13
Types of Political Discussion		
1. Discussion with Peers		
2. Discussion with Parents		
3. Discussion with Teachers		
4. Open Classroom Climate		
Civic Engagement		
5. Conventional Political Participation		
6. Social Movement-related Participation		
7. Current Organizational Participation		
8. Civic Knowledge		
9. Political Efficacy		
10. Discussion Efficacy		
11. School Efficacy		
Demographics		
12. Home Literacy Resources	---	
13. Gender (1=female)	0.02	---

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

Hierarchical Regression Analyses Relating to Research Questions 4-9

As noted in Chapter 3, additional computational procedures were necessary to make statistically valid inferences from the complex sample used in the IEA Civic Education Study. The statistical software SAS provides an option, PROC SURVEYREG, which uses the Taylor series expansion theory to estimate the covariance-variance matrix for the estimated regression coefficients (SAS Institute Inc., 1999). The Taylor series expansion theory was used to account for the stratified, clustered sample of the IEA study. Due to the fact that such a large sample size (N=2808) is likely to result in small standard errors and very high power, a conservative p value of <.001 was selected for most significance tests and presented in the text, although values for $p < .01$ are reported in the tables. The variables were mean-centered to reduce possible effects from multicollinearity and to yield interpretable interaction effects.

Research Questions 4 and 5

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement. To what extent does each type of political discussion predict students' belief that they will be engaged in conventional political activities and social movement activities as adults? Does each type of political discussion predict students' current participation in civic-related activities? Bivariate correlations suggested that four different types of political discussion (discussion with peers, parents, teachers and in the classroom) all have significant and positive associations with all three types of civic engagement considered in this study; conventional political participation, social movement related participation and current organizational participation. To assess whether political discussion predicts civic

engagement, controlling for the effects of home literacy resources and gender, four hierarchical linear regressions were calculated for each type of civic engagement (for a total of 12 regressions). A small number of independent variables were used since the objective was to examine the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement, not identify factors that best explained adolescents' civic engagement. A significant change in the proportion of variance accounted for in the dependent variable by each independent variable (R^2) would indicate that the variable predicted a unique portion of the variance of student's engagement in civic activities. For each of these regressions home literacy resources and gender were entered as the first step. Step 2 was the addition of one of the types of political discussion. These models then formed the starting point for assessing the effect of civic knowledge, political efficacy, school efficacy, and discussion efficacy. Each of these variables was entered in as a Step 3 for each of the three types of engagement (for a total of 48 regressions). Step 4 was a test of possible a possible interaction between each type of discussion and civic knowledge or the three forms of efficacy. In addition, the resulting unstandardized regression coefficients indicate the degree to which each individual variable predicts a change in engagement.

The results are presented in four groups, one for each of the independent variables civic knowledge, political efficacy, discussion efficacy and school efficacy. Within each group there is one table for each type of political discussion, discussion with peers, discussion with parents, discussion with teachers and open classroom climate. Each table contains the results for one type of discussion across all three types of the outcome

variable, civic engagement. Columns 1 and 2 are identical for each group because they present the results from the initials models (Steps 1 and 2).

Regression of Conventional Political Participation on Political Discussion

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis of student's likelihood of engaging in conventional political activities on home literacy resources, gender, and discussion of politics with peers are presented in Table 6 columns 1-2 of the section for Expected Conventional Political Participation. The proportion of variance in conventional political participation accounted for by home literacy resources and gender was small but significant $F(2, 2805) = 17.62$, $p < .001$. When entered in Step 2 political discussion with peers accounted for a significant change in the amount of the variance in conventional political participation, $F(3, 2804) = 332.72$, $p<.001$. At the individual predictor level home literacy resources, gender, and political discussion with peers significantly and positively predicted their belief that they were likely to engage in conventional political activities as adults.

The regression of conventional political participation on discussion of politics with parents, teachers, and the perception that a classroom has a climate open to discussion followed the same procedure as the regression on political discussion with peers for the first two steps. Step 2 regressed conventional political activities on discussion with parents. The addition of political discussion with parents to the model resulted in a significant change in the amount of variance explained in conventional political participation, $F(3, 2804) = 451.79$, $p<.001$ (see Table 7). At the individual predictor level only political discussion with parents was a positive and significant predictor, home literacy resources and gender were not.

The addition of discussion with teachers in Step 2 to the regression of conventional political participation produced a significant change in the amount of variance explained of conventional political participation, $F (3, 2804) = 110.38$, $p<.001$. Table 8 shows that home literacy resources and discussion with teachers are both significant and positive predictors of conventional political participation.

In Step 2, open classroom climate was added after home literacy and gender. Open classroom climate accounted for a significant amount of variance in conventional political participation, $F (3, 2804) = 38.0$, $p<.001$ (see Table 9). At the individual predictor level home literacy resources and open classroom climate are positive and significant predictors of conventional political participation.

Regression of Social Movement-related Participation on Political Discussion

Tables 6-9 also present the results from the regression of social movement-related participation on home literacy resources, gender, and the four types of discussion entered into the model using the same procedure followed for conventional political participation. Home literacy resources and gender accounted for a significant portion of social movement-related participation, $F (2, 2805) = 84.21$, $p<.001$. The addition of discussion of politics with peers to the regression accounted for a significant portion of the variance of social movement-related participation, $F (3, 2804) = 205.46$, $p<.001$. Discussion with peers and gender were both significant and positive predictors of students' reported likelihood for engagement in social movement-related activities.

The addition of discussion with parents, in place of peers at Step 2, also had a significant effect on students' reported likelihood for social movement-related engagement, $F (3, 2804) = 278.76$, $p<.001$. However, for this model only discussion with

parents was a significant, positive predictor at the individual level; home literacy resources and gender were not.

Computing the regression model for discussion with teachers (Step 2) accounted for a significant portion of variance in social movement-related participation, $F (3, 2804) = 149.67$, $p<.001$. Home literacy resources, gender, and discussion with teachers were all significant and positive predictors at the individual level in this model.

Finally, entering open classroom climate at Step 2 produced a significant increase in the amount of variance accounted for in students' reports of future social movement-related participation, $F (3, 2804) = 102.93$, $p<.001$. Gender and open classroom climate were significant and positive predictors in this model.

Regression of Current Participation in Organizations on Political Discussion

The process used to assess the effect of political discussion on students' current participation in civic-related organizations was the same as the one used for conventional and social movement-related participation (see Tables 6-9 for results). Home literacy resources and gender were entered into the model in Step 1. These two variables accounted for a significant portion of the variance in student responses about their current participation in civic-related organizations, $F (2, 2805) = 83.08$, $p<.001$. Adding discussion with peers to the model had a significant effect on the portion of variance accounted for by these variables, $F (3, 2804) = 58.01$, $p<.001$. All three variables were significant and positive individual predictors. The addition of discussion with parents as the second step in the model, regressing current organizational participation on the two demographic variables, produced a significant change in the amount of variation accounted for by this model, $F (3, 2804) = 110.11$, $p<.001$. All three variables remained

significant and positive predictors at the individual level. Entering discussion with teachers at Step 2 also produced a significant change in the amount of variance, $F(3, 2804) = 66.11$, $p<.001$. Home literacy, gender and discussion with teachers were all significant and positive individual predictors. In contrast to the other three types of discussion, adding open classroom climate to the model as Step 2 did not account for a significant portion of the variance in students' current organization partition, $F(3, 2804) = 4.67$, $p<.001$.

Summary for Regression of Three Modes of Civic Engagement and Political Discussion

The series of hierarchical regressions conducted to assess whether political discussion predicts students' perceived likelihood of civic engagement provided empirical evidence that all four types of political discussion predicted likelihood of conventional and social movement-related engagement, controlling for the effects of home literacy resources and gender. Discussion with peers, parents, and teachers predicted higher levels of students' current participation in civic-related organizations. Open classroom climate did not significantly predict students' current participation in organizations.

The unstandardized regression coefficients suggest that the associations of discussion with peers and parents with conventional political participation were larger than the associations between discussion with teachers and open classroom climate and conventional political discussion. Although it is not possible to compare across all four types of discussion simultaneously these differences were compared using a t test of statistical difference for two dependent correlations (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jure, 1979)[3]. The results of these bivariate comparisons found that the association between discussion

with peers and conventional organizational participation is significantly different from the association between open classroom climate and conventional political participation ($t = 6.71$, $p < .001$). The correlation between discussion with parents and conventional political participation and between open classroom climate and conventional political participation was also significantly different ($t = 5.76$, $p < .001$). However, the association between discussion with peers and conventional organizational participation was not significantly different from the association between discussion with teachers and conventional political participation ($t = 2.14$, $p > .001$). The correlation between discussion with parents and conventional political participation and the correlation between discussion with teachers and conventional political participation was also not significantly different ($t = .31$, $p > .001$).

The Effect of Civic Knowledge

The second research question of this study was to assess to the extent to which the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement was affected by civic knowledge. As with the analysis for the first research question, Step 1 of the model was to regress home literacy resources and gender on each of the three types of civic engagement to control for potential effects of these variables. Step 2 was the addition of each type of political discussion (in separate regressions). The results for Steps 1 and 2 are presented in the previous section and are not presented again here. Civic knowledge was then added as the third step. A significant change in R-squared would have indicated that civic knowledge had an effect on engagement, above and beyond the effect of political discussion. To test for possible effects from an interaction between political discussion and civic knowledge, interaction terms were constructed for each type of

discussion and civic knowledge and entered into the regression models as a fourth step. This procedure was repeated for discussion with peers, parents, teachers and open classroom climate on the three measures of civic engagement; conventional participation, social movement-related participation and current organizational participation (for a total of 24 regressions). Complete results are presented in Tables 6-9 and are summarized below.

The addition of civic knowledge to the regression of conventional participation on home literacy resources, gender, and discussion of politics with peers did not result in a significant change in the amount of variance accounted for by these factors, $F(4, 2803) = 7.0$, $p < .001$. The addition of an interaction term between discussion with peers and civic knowledge did not produce a significant effect on conventional political participation. Civic knowledge also did not have a significant effect on conventional political participation when discussion with parents, teachers, or open classroom climate was in the regression model ($F(3, 2803) = 0, 5.23, 3.95$ respectively, $p < .001$).

Carrying out the regressions in an identical fashion for both social movement-related participation and current organizational participation, the addition of civic knowledge resulted in no significant change in the amount of variance accounted for by the models. The addition of interaction variables (discussion and civic knowledge) also produced no significant change in the variance.

Since order of entry into hierarchical regression attributes any shared variance between two variables to the variable entered into the model first, the order of entry for civic knowledge and each type of political discussion was reversed to assess the effect of civic knowledge on engagement, independent from political discussion. When entered

into the regression at Step 2 civic knowledge had a significant effect on conventional political participation, $F (3, 2804) = 11.39$, $p < .001$. However, it should be noted that the total amount of R-squared accounted by the three variables was less than two percent ($R^2 = .016$). Civic knowledge did not have a significant effect on the amount of variance accounted for when social movement-related participation or current participation in civic-related organizations was the dependent variable, $F (3, 2804) = 8.95, 5.95$ respectively, $p > .001$.

Summary for Civic Knowledge

While civic knowledge appeared to have a small association with all three types of civic engagement according to a bivariate analysis ($r = .09$), when considered in a multiple regression analysis this relationship did not remain significant above and beyond the effect of any type of political discussion used for this study. An additional multiple regression analyses assessing the effect of civic knowledge on engagement independent from political discussion, showed that civic knowledge had a significant effect, albeit small, on the amount of variance accounted for in students' expectations for participation in conventional political activities as adults but not on their expected participation in social movement-related activities or current organizational participation.

Table 6

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Peers and Civic Knowledge: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.040***	.031**	.031**	.031**	.024	.016	.016	.203***	.192***	.175***	.174***
	(.010)	(.021)	(.01)	(.01)	(011)	(.010)	(.011)	(.011)	(.030)	(.030)	(.032)	(.032)
Gender	.071	.082**	.079**	.079**	.286***	.293***	.291***	.292***	.637***	.648***	.643***	.644***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.01)	(.026)	(.03)	(.029)	(.027)	(.027)	(.027)	(.074)	(.074)	(.075)	(.075)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.283***	.281***	.282***		.205***	.204***	.203***		.315***	.312***	.312***
with Peers		(.018)	(.018)	(.018)		(.016)	(.016)	(.016)		(.054)	(.053)	(.053)
Step 3:												
Civic			.002	.002			.001	.00			.003	.003
Knowledge			(.001)	(.001)			(.001)	(.001)			(.002)	(.002)
Step 4:												
Civic				-.001				.001				.002
Knowledge				(.001)				(.001)				(.002)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.117***	.119***	.119***	.057***	.121***	.123***	.124***	.056***	.075***	.076***	.077***
Change in R^2		.105***	.0025	0		.064***	.002	.003		.019***	.001	.001

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 7

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Parents and Civic Knowledge: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.023	.023	.023	.031**	.011	.010	.011	.203***	.166***	.163***	.164***
	(.010)	(.01)	(.011)	(.011)	(011)	(.011)	(.012)	(.012)	(.030)	(.030)	(.032)	(.032)
Gender	.071	.044	.045	.045	.286***	.266***	.266***	.266***	.637***	.601***	.600***	.597***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.026)	(.026)	(.026)	(.029)	(.027)	(.027)	(.027)	(.074)	(.073)	(.073)	(.073)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.288***	.288***	.288***		.210***	.209***	.210***		.382***	.380***	.382***
with Parents		(.012)	(.012)	(.012)		(.014)	(.013)	(.013)		(.038)	(.039)	(.038)
Step 3:												
Civic			-.0002	-.0002			.0001	.0002			.001	.001
Knowledge			(.001)	.001)			(.001)	(.001)			(.002)	(.002)
Step 4:												
Civic				.0003				-.001				-.002
Knowledge				(.001)				(.001)				(.002)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.149***	.149***	.149***	.057***	.142***	.142***	.143***	.056***	.092***	.092***	.092***
Change in R^2		.137***	0	0		.085***	0	.001		.036***	0	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 8

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Teachers and Civic Knowledge: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.049***	.041***	.041***	.031**	.030**	.024	.024	.203***	.201***	.188***	.187***
	(.010)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(011)	(.011)	(.012)	(.012)	(.030)	(.030)	(.032)	(.032)
Gender	.071	.056	.054	.054	.286***	.270***	.268***	.268***	.637***	.606***	.603***	.603***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.023)	(.028)	(.028)	(.029)	(.027)	(.027)	(.027)	(.074)	(.071)	(.071)	(.071)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.149***	.146***	.146***		.156***	.154***	.154***		.297***	.292***	.292***
with Teacher		(.015)	(.015)	(.015)		(.013)	(.013)	(.013)		(.036)	(.037)	(.037)
Step 3:												
Civic			.001	.001			.001	.001			.002	.002
Knowledge			(.001)	(.001)			(.001)	(.001)			(.002)	(.002)
Step 4:												
Civic				-.0004				-.001				.001
Knowledge				(.001)				(.001)				(.002)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.049***	.051***	.051***	.057***	.105***	.106***	.106***	.056***	.078***	.079***	.079***
Change in R^2		.037***	.002	0		.048***	.001	0		.022***	.001	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 9

Relating Civic Engagement to Open Classroom Climate and Civic Knowledge: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.044***	.037***	.037***	.031**	.022	.019	.019	.203***	.197***	.182***	.182***
	(.010)	(.010)	(.011)	(.011)	(011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.030)	(.030)	(.032)	(.032)
Gender	.071	.049	.049	.051	.286***	.253***	.253***	.251***	.637***	.616***	.615***	.617***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.030)	(.029)	(.029)	(.029)	(.029)	(.029)	(.029)	(.074)	(.073)	(.073)	(.074)
Step 2:												
Open		.127***	.118***	.120***		.191***	.187***	.186***		.118	.10	.101
Classroom		(.029)	(.029)	(.029)		(.021)	(.022)	(.022)		(.060)	(.062)	(.062)
Climate												
Step 3:												
Civic			.001	.001			.001	.001			.003	.003
Knowledge			(.001)	(.001)			(.001)	(.001)			(.002)	(.002)
Step 4:												
Civic				.002				-.002				.001
Knowledge				(.001)				(.001)				(.003)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.025***	.027***	.028***	.057***	.091***	.091***	.093***	.056***	.058***	.059***	.059***
Change in R^2		.013***	.002	.003		.034***	0	.002		.002	.001	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

The Effect of Three Types of Civic-related Efficacy

The third research question of this study asked whether three different forms of efficacy, political efficacy, school efficacy, and discussion efficacy, had an effect on the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement. The process for assessing the effect of each type of efficacy followed the same procedure used for civic knowledge, where home literacy resources and gender were entered at Step 1, followed by a type of political discussion at Step 2. Results for the first two steps are summarized in the section above presenting findings for research question number one. Like the regression models testing the effect of civic knowledge, each of the three types of efficacy were entered as Step 3 in the regression model. Interactions between each type of discussion and each type of efficacy were tested by entering an interaction term as Step 4 in the regression model. Complete results for the regressions are presented in Tables 10-13 and are summarized below.

Regression of Conventional Political Participation on Political Efficacy

The results of regressions for conventional political participation and political efficacy are provided in Tables 10-13, Columns 1-4. The addition of political efficacy at Step 3 to a model where conventional political participation is regressed on home literacy, gender, and discussion with peers resulted in a significant change in the proportion of variance accounted for by the model, $F(4, 2803) = 315.29$, $p < .001$. At the individual predictor level all four variables are significant and positive predictors of the likelihood that students will engage in conventional political activities as adults. The effect of political efficacy is also significant for a regression that has discussion with parents in place of discussion with peers, $F(4, 2803) = 257.53$, $p < .001$. For this model,

gender, discussion with parents, and political efficacy are significant and positive predictors of conventional engagement. When discussion with teachers was Step 2 of the regression, the addition of political efficacy at Step 3 also produced significant change in variance explained, $F (4, 2803) = 464.69$, $p < .001$. The result was similar for open classroom climate, where political efficacy resulted in a significant change in variance accounted for by the model, $F (4, 2803) = 501.71$, $p < .001$. Home literacy, gender, and each of these two forms of discussion were significant and positive individual predictors.

Regression of Social Movement-related Participation on Political Efficacy

Political efficacy had a significant effect on the regression model assessing the likelihood that students' would engage in social movement-related activities. Results are presented in Table 10-13, Columns 1-4 in the social movement-related participation section. Even after controlling for the effects of home literacy resources, gender and discussion with peers, political efficacy added at Step 3 produced a significant change in the amount of variance accounted for by the model, $F (4, 2803) = 94.65$, $p < .001$. Political efficacy, gender and discussion with peers were positive and significant predictors of social movement-related participation at the individual level. Adding political efficacy to the separate models for each of the other three types of discussion, discussion with parents, discussion with teachers, and open classroom climate, also produced significant incrementation in the explanation of the likelihood of students' social movement-related participation, $F (4, 2803) = 68.29$ for discussion with parents, $F (4, 2803) = 153.58$ for discussion with teachers, and $F (4, 2803) = 175.14$ with $p < .001$.

Regression of Current Participation in Organizations on Political Efficacy

Tables 10-13, Columns 1-4 of the current organizational participation section show the results for models regressing current participation in organizations on home literacy resources, gender, each of the four types of political discussion, and political efficacy. In each case, the addition of political efficacy to the model at Step 3 produced a significant change in the amount of variance attributed to the factors in each model. When discussion with peers was entered at Step 2, the addition of political efficacy was significant with $F(4, 2803) = 60.97$, $p < .001$. At the individual level home literacy, gender, discussion with peers and political efficacy were all significant and positive predictors of students' current participation in organizations. With discussion of parents in the model, political efficacy was significant with $F(4, 2803) = 40.45$, $p < .001$. Again, all four variables were significant and positive predictors at the individual level. Political efficacy produced a significant effect on students' current participation in organizations, even after taking home literacy, gender, and discussion with teachers into account, $F(4, 2803) = 78.26$ $p < .001$. In the model with open classroom climate entered at Step 2, adding political efficacy at Step 3 produced a significant change in the amount of variance attributed to these variables, $F(4, 2803) = 96.71$, $p < .001$. In this model, home literacy resources, gender, and political efficacy remained positive and significant predictors at the individual level but open classroom climate did not.

Summary for Political Efficacy

Political efficacy has a significant and positive association with all three types of civic engagement, controlling for the effects of home literacy resources, gender, and each type of political discussion. The entry of political efficacy into the regression after

political discussion meant that any shared variance between the two factors would be attributed to discussion. To isolate the effect of each type of discussion, the order of entry was reversed. The change in R-square remained significant when discussion was entered in Step 3. At the individual level the regression coefficients for political efficacy and each type of political discussion were the same, both in size and significance.

Table 10

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Peers and Political Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.040***	.025**	.025**	.031**	.024	.016	.016	.203***	.192***	.173***	.173***
	(.010)	(.009)	(.009)	(.009)	(011)	(.01)	(.010)	(.010)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)
Gender	.071	.082**	.115***	.115***	.286***	.293***	.311***	.311***	.637***	.648***	.689***	.689***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.026)	(.024)	(.024)	(.029)	(.027)	(.025)	(.025)	(.074)	(.074)	(.075)	(.075)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.283***	.183***	.184***		.205***	.153***	.150***		.315***	.194***	.192***
with Peers		(.017)	(.019)	(.019)		(.016)	(.017)	(.017)		(.054)	(.057)	(.057)
Step 3:												
Political			.339***	.338***			.177***	.178***			.413***	.414***
Efficacy			(.024)	(.025)			(.020)	(.020)			(.061)	(.062)
Step 4:												
Political				-.009				.022				.014
Efficacy				(.024)				(.025)				(.061)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.117***	.206***	.206***	.057***	.121***	.150***	.150***	.056***	.075***	.095***	.095***
Change in R^2		.105***	.089***	0		.064***	.029***	0		.019***	.02***	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 11

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Parents and Political Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.023	.014	.014	.031**	.011	.007	.007	.203***	.166***	.157***	.158***
	(.010)	(.010)	(.009)	(.009)	(011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)
Gender	.071	.044	.087***	.087***	.286***	.266***	.287***	.287***	.637***	.601***	.648***	.647***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.026)	(.024)	(.024)	(.029)	(.027)	(.025)	(.025)	(.074)	(.073)	(.073)	(.073)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.288***	.196***	.196***		.210***	.164***	.165***		.382***	.281***	.284***
with Parents		(.012)	(.014)	(.014)		(.014)	(.014)	(.014)		(.038)	(.044)	(.043)
Step 3:												
Political			.310***	.310***			.152***	.151***			.342***	.339***
Efficacy			(.025)	(.025)			(.019)	(.019)			(.064)	(.064)
Step 4:												
Political				-.001				-.009				-.052
Efficacy				(.023)				(.025)				(.052)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.149***	.221***	.221***	.057***	.142***	.163***	.163***	.056***	.092***	.105***	.105***
Change in R^2		.137***	.071***	0		.085***	.021***	0		.036***	.013***	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 12

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Teachers and Political Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.049***	.029**	.028**	.031**	.030**	.018	.018	.203***	.201***	.177***	.176***
	(.010)	(.011)	(.009)	(.09)	(011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)
Gender	.071	.056	.104***	.105***	.286***	.270***	.296***	.295***	.637***	.606***	.660***	.663***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.028)	(.025)	(.026)	(.029)	(.027)	(.025)	(.025)	(.074)	(.071)	(.073)	(.072)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.149***	.101***	.101***		.156***	.130***	.130***		.297***	.244***	.244***
with Teacher		(.015)	(.014)	(.014)		(.013)	(.013)	(.013)		(.036)	(.036)	(.036)
Step 3:												
Political			.395***	.395***			.213***	.213***			.441***	.445***
Efficacy			(.022)	(.023)			(.018)	(.018)			(.057)	(.057)
Step 4:												
Political				.013				-.007				.064
Efficacy				(.024)				(.026)				(.063)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.049***	.185***	.185***	.057***	.105***	.151***	.151***	.056***	.078***	.103***	.103***
Change in R^2		.037***	.136***	0		.048***	.046***	0		.022***	.025***	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 13

Relating Civic Engagement to Open Classroom Climate and Political Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.044***	.024**	.023	.031**	.022	.010	.001	.203***	.197***	.173***	.170***
	(.010)	(.010)	(.009)	(.009)	(011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)
Gender	.071	.049	.102***	.102***	.286***	.253***	.282***	.282***	.637***	.616***	.679***	.681***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.030)	(.026)	(.026)	(.029)	(.029)	(.026)	(.026)	(.074)	(.073)	(.073)	(.073)
Step 2:												
Open		.127***	.082**	.082***		.191***	.166***	.166***		.118	.065	.064
Classroom		(.029)	(.025)	(.025)		(.021)	(.019)	(.019)		(.060)	(.057)	(.057)
Climate												
Step 3:												
Political			.409***	.412***			.226***	.228***			.490***	.500***
Efficacy			(.021)	(.021)			(.019)	(.019)			(.056)	(.056)
Step 4:												
Political				.048				.042				.213
Efficacy				(.036)				(.032)				(.082)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.025***	.173***	.174***	.057***	.091***	.144***	.145***	.056***	.058***	.089***	.092***
Change in R^2		.013***	.148***	.001		.034***	.053***	.001		.002	.031***	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Regression of Conventional Political Participation on Discussion Efficacy

The next series of hierarchical regressions were calculated to assess whether student beliefs about their efficacy in participating in discussions relating to school problems (discussion efficacy) had an association with the three types of civic engagement measured in this study. Results are presented in Tables 14-17. The first set of models regressed conventional political participation on home literacy resources and gender entered in Step 1, discussion with peers entered in Step 2, followed by the entry of discussion efficacy at Step 3. The addition of discussion efficacy to the model produced a significant change in variance accounted for in conventional political participation, $F (4, 2803) = 155.78$, $p < .001$. At the individual predictor level, home literacy resources, discussion with peers and discussion efficacy were significant and positive predictors. The significant effect of adding discussion efficacy to the model at Step 3 remained for the models where discussion with parents was entered at Step 2, $F (4, 2803) = 129.23$, $p < .001$, discussion with teachers was added at Step 2, $F (4, 2803) = 199.90$, $p < .001$, and where open classroom climate was entered at Step 2, $F (4, 2803) = 220.57$, $p < .001$. At the individual level, gender not a significant predictor for any of the models. Home literacy was not a significant predictor when discussion with parents was part of the model, but was a positive and significant predictor for the model with discussion with teachers and the model with open classroom climate. School efficacy was a significant and positive predictor for all three models at the individual level. Open classroom climate was not a significant predictor at the individual predictor level.

Regression of Social Movement-related Participation on Discussion Efficacy

The same process was used to assess the impact of discussion efficacy on students' belief about their future engagement in social movement-related activities. As with conventional political participation, discussion efficacy had a significant effect on social movement-related participation above and beyond the effect of all four types of political discussion on such engagement. The change in the amount of variance accounted for by the model containing discussion with peers and the model where discussion efficacy was added at Step 3 was significant with $F(4, 2803) = 367.74$, $p < .001$. The effect of discussion efficacy was significant with $F(4, 2803) = 335.56$, $p < .001$ for the model where discussion with parents was entered at Step 2. When discussion with teachers was entered at Step 2, adding discussion efficacy produced a significant change in R-square where $F(4, 2803) = 394.31$, $p < .001$. With open classroom climate in the model at Step 2, discussion efficacy was significant with an $F(4, 2803) = 398.53$, $p < .001$. The significance of individual predictors was similar across all four models. Gender, each discussion variable, and discussion efficacy were all significant and positive predictors, whereas home literacy resources were not a significant predictor in any of the models.

Regression of Current Participation in Organizations on Discussion Efficacy

The final set of regressions assessed the effect of discussion efficacy on students' current participation in civic-related organizations. In each of the models taking account for a different type of political discussion, the addition of discussion efficacy produced a significant change in variance accounted for by the model. When discussion efficacy was added to the model regressing current organization participation on home literacy,

gender, and discussion with peers, the effect of discussion efficacy was significant, F (4, 2803) = 108.48, p < .001. Adding discussion efficacy to the model where discussion with parents was entered at Step 2 also resulted in a significant effect on the amount of variance in student responses about their current participation in organizations with F (4, 2803) = 90.54, p < .001. Home literacy resources, gender and discussion with parents were significant and positive predictors at the individual level. For the model containing discussion with teachers at Step 2 and discussion efficacy at Step 3 the test for significance of the change in variance accounted by the model was F (4, 2803) = 110.41, p < .001. As with the previous two models, home literacy resources, gender and discussion (in this case with teachers) were significant and positive individual predictors. Discussion efficacy produced a significant effect for the model with open classroom climate entered at Step 2 with F (4, 2803) = 136.72, p < .001. Discussion efficacy was also a significant and positive individual predictor along with home literacy and gender, whereas open classroom climate was not a significant individual predictor.

Summary for Discussion Efficacy

When students are willing to participate in discussions about school problems they are also more likely to believe that they will engage in conventional and social movement-related participation in the future. The number of civic-related organizations they report they currently participate in was also associated with the degree to which students reported that they participated in discussions of school problems. These effects hold true taking into account the effect of home literacy resources, gender and all four types of political discussion. Discussion efficacy was a significant and positive predictor at the individual level for all three types of civic engagement. The significant and

positive effect of discussion with peers, parents, teachers and open classroom climate on all three types of engagement did not change even when entered into the model after home literacy resources, gender, and discussion efficacy.

Table 14

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Peers and Discussion Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.040***	.026**	.026**	.031**	.024	.005	.005	.203***	.192***	.160***	.160***
	(.010)	(.009)	(.009)	(.009)	(011)	(.01)	(.010)	(.010)	(.030)	(.030)	(.031)	(.031)
Gender	.071	.082**	.004	.004	.286***	.293***	.188***	.188***	.637***	.648***	.475***	.475***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.026)	(.027)	(.027)	(.029)	(.027)	(.027)	(.027)	(.074)	(.074)	(.073)	(.073)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.283***	.237***	.237***		.205***	.143***	.139***		.315***	.213***	.214***
with Peers		(.017)	(.019)	(.019)		(.016)	(.016)	(.015)		(.054)	(.053)	(.052)
Step 3:												
Discussion			.242***	.242***			.329***	.334***			.541***	.539***
Efficacy			(.022)	(.022)			(.020)	(.020)			(.068)	(.069)
Step 4:												
Discussion				.003				.049				-.018
Efficacy				(.026)				(.026)				(.071)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.117***	.163***	.163***	.057***	.121***	.223***	.225***	.056***	.075***	.110***	.110***
Change in R^2		.105***	.046***	0		.064***	.102***	0		.019***	.035***	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 15

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Parents and Discussion Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.023	.013	.013	.031**	.011	-.004	-.004	.203***	.166***	.143***	.143***
	(.010)	(.010)	(.009)	(.009)	(011)	(.011)	(.010)	(.010)	(.030)	(.030)	(.031)	(.031)
Gender	.071	.044	-.021	-.020	.286***	.266***	.173***	.173***	.637***	.601***	.454***	.454***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.026)	(.026)	(.026)	(.029)	(.027)	(.026)	(.026)	(.074)	(.073)	(.072)	(.071)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.288***	.246***	.246***		.210***	.149***	.149***		.382***	.288***	.287***
with Parents		(.012)	(.013)	(.031)		(.014)	(.014)	(.014)		(.038)	(.041)	(.040)
Step 3:												
Discussion			.219***	.217***			.315***	.316***			.495***	.496***
Efficacy			(.021)	(.021)			(.021)	(.020)			(.069)	(.069)
Step 4:												
Discussion				-.015				.007				.008
Efficacy				(.020)				(.021)				(.056)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.149***	.187***	.187***	.057***	.142***	.234***	.234***	.056***	.092***	.120***	.120***
Change in R^2		.137***	.038***	0		.085***	.092***	0		.036***	.028***	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 16

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Teachers and Discussion Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.049***	.032***	.032***	.031**	.030**	.008	.008	.203***	.201***	.167***	.167***
	(.010)	(.011)	(.010)	(.010)	(011)	(.011)	(.010)	(.010)	(.030)	(.030)	(.031)	(.031)
Gender	.071	.056	-.028	-.028	.286***	.270***	.168***	.168***	.637***	.606***	.445***	.444***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.028)	(.028)	(.028)	(.029)	(.027)	(.026)	(.026)	(.074)	(.071)	(.070)	(.071)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.149***	.108***	.109***		.156***	.107***	.108***		.297***	.219***	.221***
with Teacher		(.015)	(.016)	(.016)		(.013)	(.013)	(.014)		(.036)	(.034)	(.035)
Step 3:												
Discussion			.280***	.283***			.340***	.343***			.540***	.549***
Efficacy			(.022)	(.022)			(.019)	(.019)			(.067)	(.068)
Step 4:												
Discussion				.021				.022				.076
Efficacy				(.022)				(.022)				(.054)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.049***	.113***	.113***	.057***	.105***	.215***	.216***	.056***	.078***	.113***	.113***
Change in R^2		.037***	.064***	0		.048***	.110***	.001		.022***	.035***	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 17

Relating Civic Engagement to Open Classroom Climate and Discussion Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.044***	.028**	.028**	.031**	.022	.003	.004	.203***	.197***	.165***	.165***
	(.010)	(.010)	(.009)	(.009)	(011)	(.011)	(.010)	(.010)	(.030)	(.030)	(.031)	(.031)
Gender	.071	.049	-032	-032	.286***	.253***	.158***	.158***	.637***	.616***	.450***	.450***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.030)	(.029)	(.029)	(.029)	(.029)	(.027)	(.027)	(.074)	(.073)	(.072)	(.072)
Step 2:												
Open		.127***	.056	.056		.191***	.109***	.107***		.118	-.026	-.021
Classroom		(.029)	(.028)	(.028)		(.021)	(.020)	(.020)		(.060)	(.058)	(.058)
Climate												
Step 3:												
Discussion			.299***	.299***			.347***	.343***			.609***	.620***
Efficacy			(.022)	(.022)			(.020)	(.021)			(.068)	(.071)
Step 4:												
Discussion				.009				-.039				.113
Efficacy				(.033)				(.027)				(.082)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.025***	.096***	.096***	.057***	.091***	.204***	.205***	.056***	.058***	.101***	.102***
Change in R^2		.013***	.071***	0		.034***	.113***	.001		.002	.043***	.001

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Regression of Conventional Political Participation on School Efficacy

To determine the effect of school efficacy on students' belief that they will engage in conventional political activities as adults, school efficacy was entered in as Step 3 in a hierarchical regression. Results are presented in Tables 18-21. The variables entered at Step 1 and 2 were the same process as the regression models for civic knowledge and political efficacy. As shown in Table 18 adding school efficacy at Step 3 for the model containing discussion with peers at Step 2 resulted in a significant change in variance attributed to the variables in that model, $F (4, 2803) = 46.13$, $p < .001$. Home literacy resources, discussion with peers, and school efficacy were significant and positive predictors at the individual predictor level. When discussion with parents was in the model at Step 2, the effect of school efficacy was also significant, $F (4, 2803) = 25.60$, $p < .001$. In this model, only discussion with parents and school efficacy were positive and significant predictors at the individual level. For the model containing discussion with parents, the addition of school efficacy at Step 3 produced a significant change in variance accounted for by the model, $F (4, 2803) = 47.38$, $p < .001$. Home literacy resources, discussion with teachers, and school efficacy are positive and significant predictors at the individual level. School efficacy had a significant effect on conventional political participation with open classroom climate in the regression, $F (4, 2803) = 43.54$, $p < .001$. In this model each of the variables, except gender, was significant and positive predictors of conventional political participation.

Regression of Social Movement-related Participation on School Efficacy

The results of the regressions for social movement-related participation and school efficacy are similar for all four types of political discussion. With home literacy

and gender entered at Step 1, the type of discussion entered at Step 2, school efficacy has a significant association with students' reports about the likelihood that they will participate in social movement-related activities as adults. The change in variance accounted for by the model containing discussion with peers is significant with $F (4, 2803) = 215.03$, $p < .001$. In the model where discussion with parents is added at Step 2, school efficacy has a significant effect with $F (4, 2803) = 177.95$, $p < .001$. School efficacy accounts for a significant change in the variance attributed to the factors in the model where discussion with teachers was entered at Step 2, $F (4, 2803) = 201.72$, $p < .001$. With open classroom climate in the model the significance of school efficacy has an $F (4, 2803) = 166.81$, $p < .001$. All four types of discussion, gender, and school efficacy are significant and positive predictors at the individual level.

Regression of Current Participation in Organizations on School Efficacy

Tables 18-21, Columns 1-4 in the section on current organizational participation present the results of the regressions assessing the effect of school efficacy. The change in variance accounted for in the model regressing the two demographic variables, discussion with peers and school efficacy on students current participation in organizations is significant, $F (4, 2803) = 57.43$, $p < .001$. All four variables are significant and positive predictors at the individual level. When discussion with parents replaced discussion with peers in the model, the addition of school efficacy still resulted in a significant change in the amount of variance accounted for by the model, $F (4, 2803) = 43.63$, $p < .001$. The effect of school efficacy on current organization participation was also significant when discussion with teachers was added at Step 2, $F (4, 2803) = 51.72$, $p < .001$. All four individual variables in the two models containing discussion with

parents and discussion with teachers were significant and positive predictors of students' current participation in organizations. The model with open classroom climate entered at Step 2 and school efficacy at Step 3 also resulted in a significant change in variance accounted for with $F(4, 2803) = 64.13$, $p < .001$. Home literacy resources, gender, and school efficacy were significant and positive predictors at the individual level but open classroom climate was not.

Summary for School Efficacy

Students who report higher levels of confidence about the value of participating in school (school efficacy) are also more likely to report that they expect to participate in conventional and social movement-related political activities as adults and that they are currently engaged in civic-related organizations. The relationship between school efficacy and civic engagement exists even after controlling for the effects of home literacy resources, gender, and all four types of discussion. In order to assess whether each type of political discussion would continue to have an effect on the three types of engagement the regressions were also calculated with school efficacy entered at Step 2, followed by a type of political discussion. The regression coefficients for school efficacy and each of the discussion variables remained significant and did not change in size.

Table 18

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Peers and School Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.040***	.035***	.035***	.031**	.024	.031	.013	.203***	.192***	.176***	.176***
	(.010)	(.009)	(.010)	(.010)	(011)	(.01)	(.010)	(.010)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)
Gender	.071	.082**	.056	.055	.286***	.293***	.243***	.244***	.637***	.648***	.571***	.571***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.026)	(.027)	(.027)	(.029)	(.027)	(.027)	(.026)	(.074)	(.074)	(.072)	(.072)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.283***	.272***	.272***		.205***	.183***	.182***		.315***	.282***	.282***
with Peers		(.017)	(.018)	(.018)		(.016)	(.015)	(.015)		(.054)	(.053)	(.053)
Step 3:												
School			.147***	.146***			.282***	.284***			.434***	.434***
Efficacy			(.027)	(.027)			(.025)	(.025)			(.070)	(.070)
Step 4:												
School				-.005				.036				-.010
Efficacy				(.031)				(.027)				(.069)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.117***	.131***	.131***	.057***	.121***	.184***	.185***	.056***	.075***	.094***	.094***
Change in R^2		.105***	.014***	0		.064***	.063***	.001		.019***	.019***	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 19

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Parents and School Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.023	.020	.020	.031**	.011	.004	.004	.203***	.166***	.155***	.156***
	(.010)	(.010)	(.010)	(.010)	(011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.030)	(.030)	(.031)	(.031)
Gender	.071	.044	.027	.026	.286***	.266***	.224***	.224***	.637***	.601***	.539***	.541***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.026)	(.026)	(.026)	(.029)	(.027)	(..027)	(..027)	(.074)	(.073)	(.071)	(.071)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.288***	.275***	.276***		.210***	.179***	.180***		.382***	.338***	.336***
with Parents		(.012)	(.012)	(.012)		(.014)	(.013)	(.013)		(.038)	(.039)	(.039)
Step 3:												
School			.109***	.105***			.258***	.257***			.379***	.388***
Efficacy			(.026)	(.026)			(.025)	(.024)			(.070)	(.071)
Step 4:												
School				-.035				-.008				.087
Efficacy				(.022)				(.027)				(.063)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.149***	.157***	.158***	.057***	.142***	.194***	.194***	.056***	.092***	.106***	.106***
Change in R^2		.137***	.008***	.001		.085***	.052***	0		.036***	.014***	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 20

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion with Teachers and School Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.049***	.043***	.043***	.031**	.030**	.019	.019	.203***	.201***	.185***	.185***
	(.010)	(.011)	(.010)	(.010)	(011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)
Gender	.071	.056	.030	.030	.286***	.270***	.224***	.224***	.637***	.606***	.538***	.539***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.028)	(.028)	(.028)	(.029)	(.027)	(.027)	(.027)	(.074)	(.071)	(.070)	(.070)
Step 2:												
Discussion		.149***	.134***	.134***		.156***	.129***	.130***		.297***	.257***	.260***
with Teacher		(.015)	(.015)	(.015)		(.013)	(.014)	(.014)		(.036)	(.036)	(.036)
Step 3:												
School			.155***	.154***			.278***	.283***			.414***	.428***
Efficacy			(.028)	(.029)			(.025)	(.024)			(.070)	(.071)
Step 4:												
School				-.006				.044				.112
Efficacy				(.027)				(.024)				(.058)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.049***	.065***	.065***	.057***	.105***	.165***	.166***	.056***	.078***	.095***	.096***
Change in R^2		.037***	.016***	0		.048***	.06***	.001		.022***	.017***	.001

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Table 21

Relating Civic Engagement to Open Classroom Climate and School Efficacy: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Variables	Expected Conventional Political Participation				Expected Social Movement-related Participation				Current Participation in Civic-related Organizations			
Steps	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
N = 2808												
Step 1:												
Homelit	.051***	.044***	.040***	.041***	.031**	.022	.015	.016	.203***	.197***	.186***	.185***
	(.010)	(.010)	(.010)	(.010)	(011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)
Gender	.071	.049	.030	.030	.286***	.253***	.221***	.221***	.637***	.616***	.558***	.558***
(1=female)	(.029)	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)	(.029)	(.029)	(.028)	(.029)	(.074)	(.073)	(.071)	(.071)
Step 2:												
Open		.127***	.077**	.075**		.191***	.106***	.102***		.118	-.037	-.026
Classroom		(.029)	(.029)	(.029)		(.021)	(.022)	(.022)		(.060)	(.060)	(.062)
Climate												
Step 3:												
School			.158***	.156***			.270***	.265***			.489***	.506***
Efficacy			(.028)	(.029)			(.027)	(.027)			(.074)	(.078)
Step 4:												
School				-.013				-.029				.097
Efficacy				(.032)				(.027)				(.085)
*Discussion												
R^2	.012***	.025***	.040***	.040***	.057***	.091***	.142***	.142***	.056***	.058***	.079***	.079***
Change in R^2		.013***	.015***	0		.034***	.051***	0		.002	.021***	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses.

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

Additional Considerations of Gender

From a review of the regression models for each of the three types of civic engagement, gender appears to have a strong, positive association with students' expected participation in social movement-related activities and their current participation in civic-related organizations but not for expected participation in conventional political activities. In order to further investigate the effects of gender, the regressions for the four types of discussion and three types of efficacy were calculated again separately by gender for social movement-related participation and current organizational participation. The addition of civic knowledge was not statistically significant for any of the models and was therefore not included in these additional analyses. Tables J1-J3 in Appendix J presents the results from these regressions. Participation in political discussion appears to be related to civic engagement in slightly different ways for males and females. For females, participating in political discussions with peers is not a significant predictor of students' current participation in civic-related organizations, when the effects of political efficacy, discussion efficacy and school efficacy are also considered. In addition, discussion with teachers is not a significant predictor of current organizational participation when the effect of discussion efficacy is also considered, and open classroom climate is not a predictor when school efficacy is part of the model. Female's perception that a classroom is open for discussion is also not a predictor of social movement-related participation when the effects of political efficacy or discussion efficacy are considered at the same time. Discussions of all types appear to be more consistently associated with both types of engagement for males and where discussion is not a significant predictor for males (i.e. for current organizational

participation with political efficacy also taken into account) that is also the case for females. These findings suggest that further research should be conducted analyzing how political discussion and civic-related efficacy may operate differently for males and females to affect participation in civic activities.

Summary of Hierarchical Regressions

According to the results of the hierarchical regression analyses, student reports of more frequent participation in political discussions with peers, parents, or teachers and perceiving that a classroom is open for discussion explained some of the variance in student responses about how likely it is that they will engage in conventional and social movement-related political activities as adults. Participation in political discussions with peers, parents, and teachers also explained some of the differences in students' responses about their current participation in civic-related organizations. This was not the case for open classroom climate. The small association between open classroom climate and current organizational participation found in the initial bivariate correlation analysis did not hold when the effects of home literacy resources and gender were taken into account.

Civic knowledge was not significantly related to any form of engagement when the effects of home literacy resources, gender and any of the types of discussion were taken in to account, nor did civic knowledge moderate the influence of discussion on engagement.

In contrast, all three types of civic-related efficacy explained a significant portion of variance in student reports about their expected engagement in conventional and social movement-related political activities and current civic-related organizations. Furthermore it appears that political efficacy explains more about students' expected

participation in conventional political activities, whereas discussion efficacy explains more about students' expected participation social movement-related activities and their current participation in civic-related organizations. Despite its significant independent effects on engagement, none of the civic-related efficacy beliefs moderated the relationship between participating in political discussions with peers, parents, and teachers or open classroom climate and the three types of civic engagement assessed in this study, indicating that the civic engagement of students will be related to political discussions in similar ways regardless of whether they have high or low levels of civic-related efficacy.

Interview Findings

Adolescents' Interpretations of Survey Items

A second objective of this study was to gain an enriched understanding about the findings from the statistical analyses. As described in Chapter 3, this was accomplished by interviewing 32 students about how they interpreted survey items and their general perspective about political discussion and civic engagement. While the findings from these interviews should not be generalized to adolescents in the U.S. more broadly, their responses do offer insight about how 14-year-olds may think about political discussion and engagement and suggest potential explanations for the statistical findings from the nationally representative sample. The first set of findings presented is based on student responses to questions about how they interpreted items from an abbreviated version of the IEA Civic Education instrument. Findings from more open-ended questions are presented next.

Discussing Politics

An analysis of the means for the U.S. sample found that in general most 14-year-olds "rarely" discuss politics with peers, parents, and teachers and only "sometimes" perceive that their classroom is open for discussion. However, the average response choice of "rarely" or "sometimes" might not provide an adequate description of adolescents' participation in discussions about politics. There are a number of ways in which this question format fails to limit individual variation. One limitation of survey research is that response choices can be interpreted in multiple ways. Based on my interviews, "rarely" was generally interpreted to be either once a month or several times a month. However, nearly as many students reported that "sometimes" meant several times a month.

Another way to measure the frequency of student participation in discussion is to ask them to quantify the percent of all of their conversations that contain political topics. In response to the question "what percentage of your discussions with others is about political topics?" nearly half of the students estimate that they spend 10-20% of their conversations with others discussing politics. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Keeter et al. (2002b) where young people estimated that they spend 22% of their conversations discussing politics. However, more than a quarter of the students' that I interviewed estimated that their conversations were about politics 30-40% of the time and another quarter that estimated less than 10% were about politics. A number of students appeared to have difficulties with estimating percentages. For example, one student noted that "sometimes I'll bring it (politics) up….it's not a huge hobby of mine" but then also reported that 15-20% of all the discussions s/he has with other people are

about politics. If the student is really spending one fifth of her/his discussions on the topic of politics, it might be argued that politics is something that s/he demonstrates a large interest in. Not all students interpreted the response categories in a calendar time frame, but instead described each category relative to one another.

Different interpretations about what topics are considered "political" is another source of possible variation in student answers with the additional possibility of reducing the amount of time that students report they discuss politics. Students' conceptualizations of "politics" are described in more detail in its own section.

Contexts

There was a series of two questions asking students "How often do you have discussions of what is happening the U.S. government or international politics with people your own age, parents or other adult family members, and teachers?" Students were asked how they interpreted these different contexts. About half the students interviewed interpreted "people your own age" to mean other students in 9th grade but nearly as many considered all students in high school. While some students said they had their friends in mind, some other students considered both friends and classmates. Distinctions between "friends" and "classmates," often prominent in other studies of adolescent development, were not apparent in this study. Nearly all the students mentioned that they discussed politics with both their mom and dad. Grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles were also mentioned, however. When asked about discussion with teachers, the majority of students mentioned that they mainly considered conversations with their social studies (history) teacher, in class. More than one quarter

of the students appeared to have also considered discussions in other classes and with teachers outside of class.

What is Politics?

In order to draw practical inferences from the statistical analyses assessing the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement it is important to understand the boundaries of what 14-year-olds consider political. The interviews helped to provide detail about these boundaries in three ways. First, students were asked to describe or give detail the topics they thought of when answering how often they talked about politics. Then they were asked how they interpreted the phrase "political and social issues" and whether or not this was the same as current events. Finally, they were asked to identify which sort of activities they considered political from the list of activities that adults might engage in and the list of current organizations often available for student participation.

The question designed to assess what sort of topics students considered when responding to the survey question about how often they discussed politics was significantly influenced by prominent current events and their curriculum unit on the U.N. All but two students mentioned the war with Iraq for both the discussions about the U.S. and internationally, and nearly one half mentioned the U.N. as an international topic. Clearly students responding to the IEA instrument in the fall of 1999 would not have mentioned war with Iraq. It is impossible to determine from this study whether the magnitude of the war with Iraq influenced its dominance in students' minds for the interviews. However, the majority of students noted later in the interviews that the media was the main way conversations about politics typically got started. Slightly more than

half of the students mentioned watching something on TV but nearly that many mentioned reading something in a newspaper. Therefore, it is also possible that prominent coverage of topics in the media serve as the main topic of discussion for adolescents. Some students seemed to be less confident about international topics with one quarter noting that they weren't sure what was considered an international topic or that they responded to the question without distinguishing it from the previous one about topics in the U.S. government.

The open classroom climate scale used for the statistical analyses in this study contained two questions that asked students to consider their opportunities for discussion in the classroom on political and social issues. Since this was different than the other discussion questions of what is happening in the U.S. government or international politics, asking students to describe how they interpreted "political and social" issues provided more insight about what sort of issues adolescents consider relevant to discussions of politics. Students demonstrated varying abilities to respond to this question. A few students defined "social" only in terms of relationships between people. However, when probed to distinguish between political and social, most students gave responses that demonstrated an increasingly complex understanding of the relationship between political and social issues. Most often students associated "political" with the government or elected representatives and "social" with community. However, their comments also implied that the size of the issue and the distance from the people affected were also part of the difference between political and social. Political issues were those that were bigger and more abstract, whereas social issues were more local and were therefore perceived as affecting more people. They either did not see or failed to mention

issues, such as racism or health care that affect large numbers of people and may cut across communities. A few students attempted to describe the distinction between the two but many expressed uncertainty about this task.

> (1) Student: I think that more social issues are political issues, but you know, not really the other way around. Cause something that's political isn't necessarily social, but all social issues really are, you know, political problems also.
>
> (2) Student: Well, like terrorism is both political and social, usually.
>
> Interviewer: And can you tell me how you think it would be political and social?
>
> Student: Cause a lot of the times, terrorists are motivated for political reasons, like that's why they're doing what they're doing. But they're also using the social aspects of things to prove their point, sort of.
>
> Interviewer: what kind of social aspects are they using?
>
> Student: Like, using the population to do what they want to do. Like, if they had the population, if they threaten the population…

These two students demonstrated an understanding about the distinctions between political and social issues that many students struggled to articulate. Despite their uncertainty with their responses most students eventually provided distinctions similar to the examples above.

Research in social studies education has often asked students about how frequently they discuss "current events" but it is unclear whether students interpret this in the same way as questions about discussing political and social issues. So these interviews were used to explore the degree to which students distinguish between classroom discussions on "political and social issues" and discussions of current events. The majority of students considered discussing current events to be the same thing as discussing political and social issues. However, explaining their reasoning proved to bit

more challenging for these students. A few students tried to explain that a political or social issue was a current event if it had taken place recently, however this did not lead them to conclude that there could be political and social issues that were not recent – and therefore not the same as current events. A few students did have a more sophisticated approach for making this distinction by trying to explain how the implications of the current event could make it political or social.

> Um, yeah, I think that's [political/social issues and current events] pretty similar. I mean, sometimes, current events are…like there was a flood…but it kind of wraps around to political, because there's money that has to go into it, and how it'll affect the economy…

In sum, students are not necessarily grasping the political and social implications of current events. Placing current events in a political or social (and often historical) context is a primary purpose for social studies education but few of the students interviewed here appear to be able to make this distinction. This may be another possible reason why the association between students' reports of participating in political discussion and civic engagement found in the statistical analyses of this study is not larger. If students are not able to grasp the implications of current events on politics, they may also be unable to grasp the future implications for political issues, including civic engagement related to that issue.

Which Future Activities are Political?

The three activities that make up the conventional political participation scale measure types of participation that fit with a more classical understanding of what constitutes "political"; be a candidate for office, write a letter to public official, join a political party. Consensus about what sort of other activities constitute "political" activity has not been reached. This study hypothesized that there was a second type of

political participation, labeled "social movement-related participation" (see Appendix A4 for activities included in this list). While confirmatory factor analysis suggested that these activities provided a reliable measure of this alternative view of engagement, asking students to evaluate whether or not they perceive these activities as political could help improve future measures of civic engagement.

When presented with the list of social movement-related activities nearly three quarters of the students identified participation in a peaceful protest as political. Their reasoning about what made protesting political generally followed one of two explanations. The first reason why protesting was considered political was because the protestors were trying to change something about the government; as one student put it "anything that involves protesting is supposed to be considered political, because, and see, 'cause people … have protests because… they want the government to make this change…." The second reason protest could be political was because it was people stating their opinions. Although students did not explicitly say it this way, the implication was people were exercising their freedom of speech. "Well, that's political because, well, it can be – yeah, it most definitely would be political, because it's a means of voicing your opinions on different issues."

Half of the students also identified collecting signatures for a petition, spray-painting a protest slogan, occupy public buildings as a form of protest, and block traffic as a form of protest as political activities. The term "protest" in three of these activities seemed to be the key for their identification of these activities as political. As one student put it "Anything to do with protest, basically, 'cause you're standing up for your right, and it's a political right, so."

Only two students out of 32 noted that volunteering was political and only five associated raising money for a charity with politics. One of the students who perceived volunteering as political noted that volunteering was similar to the government helping people, only on a more local level and the other student mentioned that volunteering would be political if a politician did it to maintain their elected position. Those who mentioned charity as being political believed the intended purpose behind the cause or the person collecting money established the activity as political. For example as one student put it "collecting money, I, I don't know, I think I could consider it political, because you're trying to collect something to, I don't know if you're gonna want to change something…" The other students who commented on these two activities perceived them to be social. These activities were social because they were "helping fellow citizens" or "social because they're not helping like the whole country, they're more helping parts of it."

Which Current Activities are Political?

Nine organizations were selected from 15 organizations in the IEA instrument for a summative scale measuring students "current organizational participation" (see Appendix A5). Of these nine activities only four of them were identified by majority of the interviewed students as political: student council, youth organization affiliated with a political party, UN club, and human rights organization. Around one quarter of the students also perceived a group which prepares a school newspaper, an environmental organization and a charity collecting money for a social cause as political. Not very many students provided a justification for their reasoning except when it came to student council. Quite a few students noted that the student council was a model of the

government; "basically like our government but its more miniature"; "kind of acting like government," or "mini version of real thing." The students based their evaluation about the nature of student council on the similarity of its structure to government, apparently not on its specific activities.

A few students appeared to have a more sophisticated understanding about the potential for the activities to be political. Their responses pointed out that the context or the purpose behind the organization was the determining factor of its political nature. As one student put it, "culture, yeah, that could be political, 'cause a lot of the time, ethnicity and ethnic groups are trying to find a place in politics, so that could be the approach of the organization." As this example illustrates, some students appear to be able to distinguish between organizations that have obvious political connections, such as the example of an organization affiliated with a "political" party and organizations that may be political in some contexts but not others.

The Perceived Effects of Knowledge and Efficacy

Another aspect of this study was assessing the effect of knowledge and efficacy on political discussion and engagement. All but one of the students thought that if they knew and understood more about politics that they would be more likely to participate in political discussions. The two reasons cited most often by the students were that they would have more confidence about participating and that they felt like they would have more to contribute to the substance of the discussion. The comments below illustrate each one of these reasons.

> Well, if I didn't know anything, I think I'd probably be too nervous to talk about it, if I don't know what's going on. And if I knew about it, I could actually, like, come in during an argument and talk about it.

> But if I understand it a lot better, there's a lot of good points I could make, and analyzing facts that I've heard on the radio and news, or whatever."

The majority of students (23) also thought that knowledge would make it more likely that they would engage in other political activities. However, for those students who did not think this was the case, it wasn't that knowledge was not related to engagement but rather additional criteria such as interest in politics or the right kind of personality were also needed to increase participation. Knowledge was generally seen as a precursor to action in one of two ways. Either knowledge provided information about choices for participation. For example, "I'll be more aware of what's going on, and what my choices are." Or knowledge was also perceived as informing beliefs or providing a reason for action as comments from several students illustrate.

> Yeah. Like – if you know more about what's going on politically, then you're going to find things that you don't like, and so you'd be more inclined to go to protests, or things like that."

> Yeah…because if I understand I'm doing it for something, I'm not just doing it to do it.

> Um, yeah, 'cause if you know more about politics, then you might want to go to a protest or something, when, more than if you don't really understand…

> Yeah, I think so. I mean, it, it's probably not wise to, uh, to go and vote or join some big political movement, if you really don't even understand what you're standing up for.

The findings of these interviews suggest that civic knowledge may be a necessary precursor to civic engagement but not sufficient on its own to result in actual participation in political or civic activities. Civic knowledge may help lay the foundation for a strong sense of competence in politics and as this study showed, a strong sense of civic-related efficacy is associated with higher levels of expected participation in

conventional and social movement-related activities as well as current participation in civic-related organizations.

School Efficacy

Based on student responses and requests for rephrasing and repetition of the question about school efficacy, the wording of the question was apparently unclear about whether students' current participation in school would influence student's participation in the community as adults or if current participation in school would influence their participation in the community as adolescents.

For those students who interpreted the question to be about the effects of current involvement in school on successful participation in the community as adults, most agreed participation in school would have a positive effect. Using the words of two students, the school was seen as a "reflection of the community and the government" where participation as adults "…might be a little easier, 'cause you've had more experience..."

However, there seemed to be a different opinion about whether current participation in the school community would have the same effect on participation in the larger community right now as adolescents. Students who perceived the question as referring to their ability to go out into the community as adolescents were less likely to believe they could bring about change, unless they had a large enough group. As one student put it:

> It depends, like if there was like one student trying to do something, I don't think an adult would pay much attention, but then if there was like a group of students, then they would take note of it moreso.

The Process of Political Discussion

In addition to providing an explanation about how they interpreted specific survey items pertaining to the process of discussion, students were also asked more broadly about where they discuss politics, how discussions get started, roles they play during discussions and the influence of partners on the discussion. The findings from these interview questions are presented below.

When asked where they discussed politics most often outside of classroom discussions, nearly two-thirds of the students reported that they discussed politics most often at their house. Some students further specified that these conversations took place at the dinner table. Political discussions occurring in class were the second most frequently mentioned location.

The majority of students report that the media is the main catalyst for political discussions. Students noted that watching TV, listening to the radio or reading the newspaper prompted political discussions. For students who reported that political discussions typically got started because others brought the subject up, when probed about where those individuals got their ideas from, they most often commented that they got their idea from the media. Some students did mention that topics covered in school also influenced the discussion of politics. An interesting explanation offered by some students was the notion that political discussions were the result of "spin off" from another, non-political topic.

> Um, we start talking about, I don't know, dogs, and then that moves into someone that knew a dog that was sick, and then the disease that they had, and then that goes to, that disease that children have, and then that gets into like, we need to give them more money, and then we get into the economy, and then how Bush is doing with that…

This example is useful for two reasons. First, it suggests that while most adolescents are influenced to talk about politics as a result of their interactions with the media, there are other ways that politics may be part of their experiences. Second, while most students struggled to articulate a distinction between political and social issues they already have some sense of the ways in which political and social issues intersect despite the fact that they may not be able to clearly describe their understanding.

Students are likely to describe their roles during political discussions in one of two ways, either they listen or they give their own opinions. Most of those who perceived their role as a listener saw this as an active role where they were learning about the views of others or carefully constructing their own responses. Students who said they gave their opinions tended to place more importance on the influences of the setting, the knowledge of the discussion partner, and the strength of the attitude of the discussion partner as opposed to their own civic knowledge or interest. The degree of comfort felt about speaking out in class, at home, or with friends varied across the students but was generally related to their perception about the knowledge of the discussion partner or the perceived openness of the partner. For example, if the students perceived that the discussion partner held especially strong opinions on one side of an issue, they were not as likely to give their own opinions. It appeared as though they thought people who held strong opinions were unlikely to be open to hearing their views.

Teachers and parents were perceived to be more knowledgeable about politics than peers. Some students liked speaking out in this environment, others preferred to stay silent. One thing noted only about their teacher by some students, not about friends or parents, was the perception that their teacher remained neutral during discussions, not

revealing his or her opinions. Most of these students believed that this was done intentionally to help students form their own opinions and valued this approach. Even though teachers and parents were perceived as more knowledgeable than peers, a few students commented that discussions with peers tended to be "deeper" or more philosophical than the factual discussions about current events they had in class or with parents. In addition, some students noted that their experiences discussing politics with more knowledgeable parents at home made them more knowledgeable than their peers at school.

Disagreements during political discussion were seen by some students as something to avoid. These students liked to keep things civil or even polite. They also noted that they would be less likely to express their own views, or avoid discussion altogether, when other people held strong views on a particular issues. Students stated that they were more likely to share their own views when they perceived an opportunity for having their opinions validated or at least respected. However, just as many students saw a number of benefits to having political discussions with people who disagreed with their own opinions. They believed that these discussions often made them learn more, required more challenging preparation or skill, and could be more fun or interesting.

The Purpose of Political Discussion

The main purpose for political discussion as described by these students was to become more aware about things going on in the world. Many students noted that an important part of becoming more aware through discussion was to learn about the perspectives of others. One student said it this way,

> …you get exposed to…way more perspectives than you already have, you can learn new things and maybe even change your opinion, and conversely, you're

> helping to educate other people and give them new perspectives. And it's just, when everybody's more, more, um, uh, well I don't, I don't know the word, but when everybody knows more, there's, um, a lot more could be accomplished if everybody got multiple perspectives on issues."

Although this student hints at the connection between gaining new perspectives and taking action, only a few students made explicit links between political discussion and specific types of civic engagement. In particular they thought the understanding gained through discussion would help people make more informed choices when voting in the future. Some students noted that being informed was especially important for people who intended to be directly involved in government as adults. An underlying reason implied by many students was that forming opinions was an essential characteristic of a democratic society. As one student put it,

> The United States government is currently is based on a democratic system, where everyone gives their opinion. And if you aren't giving your opinion, you aren't participating in the system, which kind of negates the whole reason we have it.

Forming opinions was seen both as the exercise of their right to free speech and an important role of the citizens in "checking" the actions of the government.

The description of political discussion provided by these adolescents suggests that the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement is generally not seen by them as a direct causal one. Rather, participating in political discussion helps students become more aware of political issues, which in turn may lead to future civic engagement. In addition, the comments of these students demonstrate that the process of political discussion varies in complex ways depending on the knowledge and efficacy of the student and the perceived knowledge of the discussion partner.

Chapter Summary

The statistical results presented in this chapter found that four types of political discussion did relate to students' reports that they are likely to engage in conventional political participation (including writing a letter, being a candidate for a local office or joining a political party, but not voting which did not scale with the other activities). Political discussion did relate to expected social movement-related participation and their current participation in civic-related organizations. Students' efficacy related to politics, students' participation at school (school efficacy) and willingness to discuss school problems (discussion efficacy) also predicted these measures of civic engagement. Civic knowledge, on the other hand, did not have a significant association with any of the three types of civic engagement when entered in the analysis after political discussion. When entered into the regression before political discussion, civic knowledge was significantly related to conventional political participation, but not social movement-related participation or current participation in civic-related participation.

Student interpretations of the survey items used in the statistical analysis add meaning to the frequency measure of students' engagement in political discussions, their conceptualization of "political" topics and activities. The interviews with students also provided a picture of political discussion as a process where students become more aware and form opinions about political issues. Students' perceptions about the knowledge of the discussion partners and the climate for discussion shape students' participation in political discussion.

The statistical analyses and interview findings are integrated in the final chapter to provide a more complete picture about the relationship between political discussion and

civic engagement. Implications from this study for social science educators, political scientists, and youth development specialists are also considered in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Implications, and Future Research

Theories of human development and political socialization both identify adolescence as an important period for ensuring that individuals become successful citizens. One of the ways in which adolescents can develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and motivation for successful citizenship is through political discussion. The goal of this study was to understand more about the ways in which the relationship between participating in political discussion and civic engagement are influenced by the context for the discussions, types of civic engagement, civic knowledge and efficacy. This study extended previous research by connecting theories of efficacy from political science and developmental psychology, as well as by broadening and differentiating the contexts in which discussion was studied.

Overall, adolescents who reported that they participate in political discussions are also more likely to report that they will engage in conventional and social movement-related activities as adults and are already involved in more civic-related organizations. There appear to be different patterns of associations when one considers political discussion with peers, parents, and teachers and adolescents' perceptions about classroom support for engaging in political discussion. Engaging in political discussions with peers, parents, and teachers is associated with both beliefs about future civic engagement and current participation. This is not the case for adolescents' perception of support for discussion in the classroom as measured in this study. Perceiving a sense of support for discussion in the classroom does predict adolescent expectations for future civic engagement; however it is not associated with current levels of participation.

According to the analyses in this study, civic knowledge and efficacy beliefs do not moderate the relationship between political discussion and engagement. However, higher levels of efficacy were independently related to the likelihood of future and current civic engagement, whereas civic knowledge was not. Adolescents who *believe* they possess an understanding of politics and feel competent in civic-related activities are more likely to believe that they will take part in civic activities as adults. Moreover, their level of efficacy predicted their current participation in civic-related organizations such as student council.

This chapter will place these findings in the context of previous research and offer possible explanations for the pattern of results. Implications of the findings will be presented for social studies education, political science and adolescent development. Suggestions will be made for improving the methods used in future research on political discussion, civic engagement, and civic-related efficacy. As with any research on human beliefs and behavior, measures need to be designed to gather information about the characteristics of interest. In order to investigate the aspects of political discussion and civic engagement described above, this study constructed and examined statistically several measures using items from the IEA Civic Education Study in new ways that contributed to a set of high quality measures for use in future studies. Findings from interviews with adolescents helped elaborate statistical findings and suggest interpretations of the findings. This chapter begins with a presentation of the contributions made to measures of political discussion, civic engagement, and efficacy. The remainder of the chapter describes interpretations of the findings and potential implications for educational practice, public policy, and future research.

Measuring Political Discussion, Civic Engagement, and Efficacy

Researchers in the areas of adolescent development and political socialization have spent considerable effort attempting to parse out distinctions regarding the socializing influences of parents, peers, and schools on adolescents. However, in political science, studying the relative effects of political discussion with several different partners has not often been the focus of research. The studies tend to consider discussion with only one or possibly two types of partners or may leave the interpretation of the partner with whom the discussions occur with up to the respondent. For example, Jennings and Niemi (1981) asked about conversations with spouses or other family members. Keeter et al. (2002a) reported how often people talk with family *and* friends[4] and about how often politics was discussed at home. Conover and Searing (2000) did not specify discussion partners but rather discussion settings such as at work or home. This study extends previous research by demonstrating that an empirical test of a model separating types of political discussion was plausible for a large, nationally representative sample and by evaluating separately the effect of each type of political discussion on civic engagement.

Results from a confirmatory factor analysis found that a model with four types of political discussion was plausible for the U.S. IEA data used in this study. The results from these analyses suggest that discussion of what is happening in the U.S. and international politics has distinct qualities for adolescents when it occurs with people their own age, with parents, or with teachers. Furthermore, the association between these one-on-one or small group discussions and civic engagement are distinct from students'

perception that their classrooms provide environments where respectful discussion of political and social issues is encouraged.

Although the magnitude of the association between political discussion and civic engagement is moderate at best, there are several measurement issues that may have attenuated the relationship. Survey items about the frequency of participation in political discussion had the response choices never, rarely, sometimes, and often and as noted, from the interviews, these categories could be estimated in different ways. For example, rarely could be once a month or several times a month and sometimes could also be considered several times a month. Furthermore these categories did not ask adolescents to consider the quality of these discussions. Conover and Searing (2000), for example, asked respondents to consider only "serious" discussions lasting more than five minutes. Moreover, interviews with adolescents' revealed that they held a rather limited interpretation of "what is happening in the U.S. government" or "international politics." The timing of the interviews is somewhat problematic because they took place on the eve of the war with Iraq and after the events of 9/11, whereas adolescents responding to the IEA survey in 1999 were not similarly affected. This may have biased the topics that came to mind for these students. However, the limited number of topics they provided considered in conjunction with the topics they provided for explaining how they interpreted "political and social issues" make it seem likely that students reported participation in political discussions only for those discussions that had direct connections to issues they perceive as related to government (mostly national government) or elected representatives. It may be that if they had specifically been asked to include topics such as poverty or pollution that the strength of the relationship between

their participation in political discussions and civic engagement would have increased. This is an issue that is especially important for this generation, when conventional politics is relatively unpopular among adults and community volunteering in poor neighborhoods or participation in environmental clean-up is likely to be part of adolescents' experiences but unlikely to be labeled "political."

The distinctions between discussion contexts received further confirmation from the interviews conducted for this study. While the nature of political discussions with peers, parents, teachers and in class was not described in the same way by all students, it was clear that most of the students perceived each of these contexts to have distinct qualities. One of the characteristics mentioned included the perceived knowledge of the partner. For some students discussion with people of their own age provided a safe environment to try out new ideas, while for other students, discussion with parents provided that environment.

This study also made contributions to conceptualizations of civic engagement by evaluating the plausibility of a model proposing distinct forms of civic engagement for adolescents. It appears that adolescents distinguish between activities directly associated with government institutions or political representatives and civic-related activities. The higher frequency of adolescent participation in social movement-related activities offers support for those that argue that adolescents are seeking out civic engagement through less conventional means. Furthermore, apparently voting is considered a form of participation distinct from other conventional political activities such as joining a political party. Student responses to items in this study about voting were not strongly interrelated with other conventional activities. This result is consistent with the findings

of other studies that have begun to suggest that voting is seen more as a civic duty than a form of meaningful civic engagement (Conover & Searing, 2000; Williamson et al., 2003).

Another objective of this study was to bridge some of the gaps between political science and developmental research. The idea of efficacy or individuals' judgments about their abilities, has received considerable attention in both fields, but few efforts have been made to link the theories. Research in political science has concentrated on both individuals' perceptions about government responsiveness to citizens and individual's beliefs regarding their own ability to bring about change in the political sphere, most specifically government. In contrast, Bandura's theory of efficacy has been applied more broadly in terms of behavioral outcomes including aggression and academic achievement.

One potential problem with applying measures of internal political efficacy from political science for use with adolescents is that these measures may be too abstract for many of them, since they may not be able to visualize and certainly cannot participate in all forms of political activity. Without regular exposure to political activities, either vicariously or directly, it seems unlikely that most adolescents will develop a sense of competence in the political domain. Therefore it made sense to explore alternative measures of efficacy that are more relevant to political experiences adolescents are likely to encounter. The two alternative forms of efficacy evaluated in this study were items about students' sense of collective efficacy about student participation at school and other items measuring student efficacy about participation in discussions at school. The plausibility of these two measures of efficacy relevant to students' experiences at school

was part of the initial analysis of the data from the IEA Civic Education Study, the same data analyzed for this study. However, this study proposed a model that considered these two measures along with a measure of political efficacy. This study found some support for the proposed model of three distinct forms of civic-related efficacy.

The reliability for two of the scales constructed from these analyses, political efficacy (r = .64) and discussion efficacy (r = .69) are lower than the alpha level of .70 recommended by Nunnally and Berstein (1994). However, these reliabilities are not inconsistent with other studies on this topic, but are not as strong as other measures in this study. The lower reliability for political efficacy may be affected by adolescents' narrow conceptualization of politics which seems limited to government institutions and representatives. Therefore politics may feel too abstract for them due to their lack opportunities for participation in these institutions and lead to inconsistent answers when they are asked about their sense of competence. This lower reliability is consistent with reports of measures of political efficacy for adolescents (Hahn, 1998; Kahne, 2002). Although a scale was developed by Ehman and Gillespie (1975) asking questions about activities in which adolescents can already take part (such as influencing others in decision-making situations) this measure has not been widely utilized in studies of adolescents. One exception was Hahn (1998) who used this measure of "political confidence" along with the political efficacy measure for her cross-national study. Notably Hahn (1998) found that the items pertaining directly to electoral politics were supported by fewer students than those items pertaining to groups in general. For example, in the 1994 sample only 32% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were "the kind of person who can influence how other people decide to vote in

elections," whereas 55% agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to "influence others in decision-making situations" (p. 51).

One possible explanation for the lower reliability of the discussion efficacy scale is that two of the items ask about an individual's participation in discussions about school problems (their interest and confidence about contributing) whereas the third item is a bit different, asking students about their willingness to speak to a teacher on behalf of another student. The factor loading for this third item is lower than the other two.

In conclusion, the confirmatory factor analyses conducted for this study extend conceptualizations about political discussion to consider the importance of context, bridge the efficacy theories of political science and developmental psychology, advance efforts to make political efficacy measures more relevant for adolescents, and corroborate other research suggesting that voting, conventional activities and social movement related activities are distinct forms of civic engagement. The new scales resulting from these analyses join a growing body of secondary analyses of the IEA Civic Education Study data that can subsequently be used and tested in other studies of varying methodologies.

Relationship of Political Discussion and Civic Engagement

Overall, students who report that they discuss politics more often than their peers, regardless of the context for that discussion, are more likely to believe that they will engage in both conventional and social movement-related political activities as adults and are also more likely to report that they currently participate in civic-related organizations. This finding confirms previous research in political science which has found consistent associations between reports of participation in political discussions and various types of civic engagement.

This study extends research about the links between political discussion and civic engagement by considering the influence of political discussion in different contexts on several types of civic engagement. The correlational data used for this study does not make comparisons of the relative effects of each type of discussion possible. However, analyses of the associations of each context for discussion suggest some ways in which the association between the context for political discussions and civic engagement may differ depending of the specific type of engagement considered. Adolescents' expectations for future engagement in conventional political participation (not including voting) appear to have a stronger association to political discussions that occur with people their own age or with parents than to the context of a classroom's supportive discussion environment. The context in which the discussion takes place appears to have less of a differential influence on expected social movement-related activities. Discussion with peers, parents, teachers and an open classroom climate appear to have similar associations with this form of engagement.

The relationship between political discussion and current participation in civic-related organizations suggests a different pattern. Students who report higher levels of participation in one-on-one or small group discussions of politics with peers, parents, and teachers more often report engaging in a larger number of civic-related organizations. However, the perception that their classroom supports discussion of political and social issues is not associated with increased reports of engagement in civic-related organizations. Even though these civic-related organizations (such as a student council or an environmental organization) are most often affiliated or supported directly by the school, adolescents are not connecting their classroom experiences with their extra-

curricular activities. Adolescents may not perceive their classroom discussions about political and social issues as an opportunity to develop skills that can be used when they participate in civic-related organizations. It should be noted that none of the types of discussion account for a large portion of the variance in students' responses about current participation. The total R-squares range from six to nine percent. Participation in political discussions appears to be more predictive of their beliefs about future engagement than of current participation.

In conclusion, it appears that discussing politics with people one has a familial or close personal relationship to, such as peers or parents, may be more likely to influence future participation in political activities formally aligned with government institutions or officials. In terms of social movement-related activities, the context for discussion may be less important. Discussion with peers, parents, teachers and in the classroom all have a positive associations with engaging in social movement-related activities. Participating in political discussions with peers, parents, and teachers predicts students' current participation in civic-related activities that are often supported by schools, but ironically perceptions about having a classroom open for discussion does not have a significant association with these activities. The classroom setting and the extra-curricular activity setting, in other words, are distinct.

The strength of the relationship between discussion with peers and parents and conventional political participation may be influenced by the nature of those relationships as well as by perceptions about conventional activities. The relationships adolescents have with peers and especially their parents are more likely to have affective qualities and long term commitment than those relationships held with teachers and classmates. This

may make adolescents less willing to participate in political discussions that could lead to disagreements. As noted by some students from the interviews in this study they like to "keep things civil." But these affective bonds could also be a safe environment for trying out new opinions. Although this study did not find whether students interpreted "people of their own age" to mean friends or classmates, interviewed students did seem to refer most often to discussions with friends when talking about political discussions occurring outside the classroom. The finding that discussion with parents has a positive association with intended future participation is also consistent with prior political science research (and adolescent research) which finds that the attitudes and engagement of adolescents have strong associations with those of their parents (Alwin, 1991; Jennings and Niemi, 1981; Jennings, 2002).

Another possible explanation for the apparently stronger association between political discussions with peers or parents and conventional political participation as opposed to discussions in school is how adolescents perceive various types of civic engagement. Although this study does little to solve the current academic debate about what sort of activities constitute civic engagement, it adds to the growing body of evidence about distinctions between more manifest forms of political participation, those dealing directly with government institutions or officials, and more civic or social movement-related activities. These are activities that might or might not be considered "political" depending on an individual's perspective on the intended purpose of the activity and/or his or her own reasons for participating. The activities in the conventional participation scale, being a candidate for office, writing a letter, and joining a political party, require a commitment to a specific political agenda and represent formal

government institutions eschewed by many adult citizens, as well as adolescents (Keeter et al., 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). That is, the purpose for each of these activities is often explicitly to support a political agenda and furthermore, to persuade others to hold similar views (sometimes resulting in a clash of views). Another explanation is that students simply do not know enough about these forms of participation. The emphasis of school curriculum is on national government institutions and processes, such as how a bill becomes a law or court systems, with less attention paid to practical areas of electoral politics that may serve as an entry point for adolescent participation in government (MacManus, 2000; Niemi & Junn, 1998). Learning explicitly about how political parties mobilize voters around issues or candidates or the about the role of civil servants in the federal government could present adolescents with the opportunity to make more informed decisions about participation in conventional activities. This differs from deriving their perceptions of the government based on the presentation in the media, whose "watchdog" role often emphases negative aspects of government. The potential also exists for adolescents to learn about conventional politics through service learning activities or internships in government organizations. Unfortunately most service learning opportunities associated with schools are purposefully apolitical to avoid the appearance of inculcating a particular political ideology among students. And although service to one's country is the motto for the military, the "service" in service learning is more often associated with non-governmental organizations.

On the other hand the social movement-related activities could be perceived as less contentious. They allow young people to express their views without being perceived as for or against political figures or the government. The paradox is that the

individual expression of his or her views, protected by democracy and supported by our culture, may lead to a diminished sense that the government is really an extension of the people, ("government *by* the people") and instead focus attention on "government *for* the people." It is this loss of participation in "official" government that worries so many political theorists, leaders, and citizens. The danger is that if no one is willing to be *part* of the government, there may no longer *be* a government (or at least not one with political legitimacy). This study suggests that students may need explicit instruction about the actual practice of national politics as well as assistance interpreting the political purposes of social movement-related activities. A similar conclusion was drawn by Williamson et al. (2003). In their evaluation of students' perceptions of civic engagement presented as civic duties or important citizenship action, the authors also concluded that students endorsed a model of democracy where citizens could choose to participate but were not required to do so (p. 213).

Findings from the interviews offer some additional support for the distinction between conventional and social movement-related activities. When asked the difference between political and social issues many students identified "government" as an example of a political issue. Their conceptualization of "social" was less clear. Some students mentioned social issues like helping the elderly but the majority struggled to come up with an example of a social issue. Additionally, the students clearly identified student government, organizations dealing with the U.N. and human rights as political but there was less consensus about whether environmental organizations or school newspapers constituted political activities. Virtually no students perceived volunteering as a political activity.

One reason why adolescents' current participation in civic-related organizations was not associated with their perception that their classroom was a respectful environment for political and social discussions could be an indication that these discussions are not seen as a related to action. Parker (2001) makes a distinction between seminars and deliberations that may be useful here. He defines seminars as discussions that enrich understanding, whereas the purpose for deliberations is to engage in discussion to reach a decision. The measure of an open classroom climate used in this study may not be appropriate for classroom discussions that can be characterized as "deliberations." Many of the adolescents interviewed for this study thought that the purpose for political discussions was to become more aware of political issues and to learn the opinions of others. Only a few students even mentioned persuading or hinted about negotiating compromise as purposes. Finally, even when a classroom has deliberative discussions about controversial issues, these decisions rarely lead to action. They are in effect, "academic" exercises and the students see them in this way. We make the assumption that adolescents can take what they have learned in class and apply it in the "real" world.

This study suggests that the practical implications stemming from discussion of political and social issues needs explicit consideration in the classroom. For example, an abstract discussion about pros and cons of physician assisted suicide may be less likely to teach students about the principles of democracy in practice than a classroom discussion on a current political issue in their local communities. The selection of a local issue for a discussion about democratic principles would allow students to observe the political process as it unfolds through the media and interactions among citizens in their

community, including their parents. Opportunities for action would be clearer and more immediate. Furthermore, students could use the classroom to engage in a period of reflection and evaluation about the process after observing and participating directly. This opportunity has been identified as a critical component of service learning experiences (Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson, 2003). An issues-centered approach advocated by social studies educators (Hahn, 1996) is step in the right direction. However, without connections to action these discussions and research about issues may also be perceived as academic exercises. For example, one such issue-centered program, Project Citizen, ends with a simulated legislative hearing where students present their policy proposal (Vontz & Nixon, 1999). Even when students fail to persuade policy makers to follow their suggestions, students feel successful. While this may be a good outcome for raising students' self-efficacy in the short term, the long term consequences are less clear. When students try to bring about substantive changes as adults they may become quickly disillusioned with the conflict, failure and compromise that are regular parts of the democratic process (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Kahne, 2002).

Results from the regression analyses suggest that discussion with teachers and open classroom climate have different associations with current organizational participation. Students who report that they discuss politics more often with teachers are more likely to report participation in more civic-related organizations. This is not the case for students who perceive their classroom as open for discussion. According to the interviews most students interpreted the question about discussion with teachers to be discussions they had with social studies teacher in class. So the question remains, why are there different patterns of association for discussion with teachers and open classroom

climate? It may be that students recalled "discussions with teachers" as situations in which they raised a question in class or engaged in a give and take with the teacher. And although other students had the opportunity to be involved, the exchange remains to a certain degree an exchange between that one student and the teacher. It also could be that some students were recalling discussions with teachers in the hall or as an advisor to an activity. In contrast, when evaluating the openness of a classroom for discussion students may be recalling how teachers interact with other students, encouraging comments from all students or stepping in to ease tensions surrounding different opinions. Observational studies could help to sort out these possible distinctions.

Interestingly, when asked how discussions may be different depending on who they were talking with, none of the students interviewed mentioned that participation in classroom discussion or with teachers could affect their academic grade and only a few noted that negative reactions from peers would decrease their willingness to engage in political discussions in these settings. These were issues raised as potential problems by other research on classroom discussion (Hess and Posselt, 2001).

Another objective for this study was to consider what other adolescent attributes may be associated with the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement. The first factor considered in this study was students' level of civic knowledge. Civic knowledge did not moderate the relationship political discussion and civic engagement, controlling for home literacy resources and gender. If one student had a higher (or lower) level of civic knowledge than another student, this did not change the degree to which their participation in political discussion is related to engagement. While civic knowledge did have a small independent association with conventional political

participation, the effect was not significant when considered above and beyond the effect of political discussion. Civic knowledge did not have a significant independent effect on social movement-related participation or adolescents' current participation in civic-related organizations.

This finding may appear a bit surprising in light of previous research which has found connections between civic knowledge and engagement. However, it should be noted that a conservative significance level $p < .001$ was used to interpret the results presented in this study to adjust for potential problems with estimates of the standard errors due to the large sample size ($N = 2808$). Previous research may have interpreted results based on a less stringent p value such a $p < .05$. If the p value for this study had been $p < .05$, the effect of civic knowledge on all three types of civic engagement would have been significant (although small) when considered independently from political discussion and would have been significant for conventional political participation when considered in a model with discussion with peers, discussion with teachers or open classroom climate. In addition, closer examination of the forms of civic engagement and measurement of civic knowledge used in previous studies suggests reasons for the divergent results.

The initial report for the IEA Civic Education Study found that civic knowledge was related to at least one belief about future engagement, voting (Torney-Purta, et al, 2001). [Voting was not included in the measures used for the current study, because it did not scale with other conventional political activities.] Gimpel, Lay and Schuknecht (2003) also found that political knowledge had a positive effect on adolescents' intent to vote. A frequently cited study of adults found that civic knowledge was related to

measures of electoral political participation (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). The confirmatory factor analyses conducted for this study found that students' perceptions about voting may differ from their views about other conventional forms of political participation.

The way in which civic knowledge was measured may also have influenced its apparent lack of influence on the three forms of civic engagement used in this study. Understanding abstract principles of democracy or information about democratic institutions may not be sufficient for forming opinions about political issues or visualizing potential outcomes from civic engagement.

The sort of civic knowledge presented in the typical U.S. civic education curriculum would emphasize the same democratic principles and institutions included in the civic knowledge measures described above. What would be notably absent from most students' experiences is the encouragement to develop strong opinions about issues, perhaps just the sort of opinions that motivate people to take action. Some adolescents interviewed for this study noted that their teacher stayed neutral during class discussions. A majority of teachers from many countries in the IEA Civic Education Study noted that the emphasis of civic education is often on knowledge but they believed it should take a more balanced approach including participation, values, and critical thinking (Torney-Purta & Richardson, 2002).

The finding of this study that civic knowledge does not change the association between political discussion and civic engagement offers some support for Bandura's theory that knowledge helps belief formation but that it is beliefs that lead to action. Adolescents interviewed for this study noted that increased levels of knowledge would

help them develop their opinions, which would then lead to action. However, these students already demonstrated a baseline of civic understanding, with more than 80 percent of the interviewed students selecting the correct response for at least 14 out of the 16 items from an abbreviated version of the IEA civic knowledge measure. Therefore, they clearly have more than a basic level of civic knowledge. It is still worth noting that they saw knowledge as a tool used to form beliefs. Civic knowledge is necessary but insufficient for enhancing engagement that moves beyond simple duty (such as voting). The potential effects of beliefs in the political domain may prove to be more influential.

This study also considered the role that efficacy beliefs play in civic engagement and found consistent positive associations. Adolescents' civic-related efficacy beliefs were hypothesized to be a potential factor moderating the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement. When considered together, political discussion and each type of the efficacy beliefs accounted for a significantly larger portion of the variance in adolescents' reports about their likelihood of participation in all three measures of civic engagement, than when considered separately. Higher levels of all three types of efficacy predicted that adolescents would be more likely to believe they would engage in future civic activities and their current participation However, the level of efficacy does not change the degree to which political discussion is related to civic engagement. Students with lower levels of efficacy are just as likely to have higher levels of engagement when they report that they participate more frequently in political discussion as students who report higher levels of efficacy.

Additional analyses considered the how efficacy, knowledge and political discussion may operate differently for males and females. For males, participation in

political discussions has a positive association with civic engagement, when taking into account efficacy and knowledge. In contrast, for females efficacy appears to be more influential than participating in discussion. Participation in political discussion appears to have a somewhat different character and patterning for males and females. One recent study suggests a possible reason for the different effects of discussion for males and females. In an analysis of adolescent participation in a model Congress competition Rosenthal and Rosenthal (2003) found that more aggressive speaking styles such as refuting or questioning other presenters (often considered to be masculine norms) predicted an increased likelihood of success in the competition. Males were more likely to use aggressive speaking styles than females. These findings suggest ensuring opportunities for males to participate in political discussions will improve the chance that they will engage in civic activities. However, for females making sure that they develop a sense of competence in the political domain is especially important to their engagement in political or civic activities.

This study also extends to our understanding about factors influencing civic engagement (for earlier analyses see Torney-Purta & Richardson, in press). The pattern of association between efficacy and engagement varies depending on the type of engagement. Students' political efficacy, their beliefs about their knowledge and understanding of politics and contributions to political discussions, appear to be the most influential for their beliefs about future engagement in conventional political activities. This finding suggests tentative support for Bandura's theory that efficacy beliefs are domain-specific. Adolescents' beliefs about how much they understand about topics they

perceive as relevant to conventional political activities are likely to influence their actual engagement in these activities.

The likelihood of students' future engagement in social movement-related activities and their current participation in civic-related organizations are better explained by their willingness and interest to participate in discussions about school problems than their political efficacy or school efficacy. One possible explanation for why the measure of school efficacy does not extended beyond the school setting is that students do not perceive the purpose of collective efforts implied by social movement-related activities. The civic knowledge test was much more heavily weighted with items testing conventional participation than with items about social movement activities or civil society. Many students do not see protest or petition as "collective" efforts to bring about political change but rather see these activities as opportunities for individuals to express their opinions or as activities undertaken with a group because of the value of cooperative activity.

Taken altogether, the results of this study suggest that the direct effect of political discussion on civic engagement is small but significant. Civic knowledge and civic-related efficacy do not moderate the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement. The analyses of political discussions across contexts for different types of civic engagement and the positive effect of efficacy suggest that participation in civic activities may have more to do with adolescents' perceptions about their relationship with their discussion partners and their sense of competence about different forms of civic engagement than simple reports about the frequency of participation in political discussions. The affective bonds between peers and parents (and perhaps some teachers)

may be especially important for influencing participation in conventional political activities, since these activities are perceived as requiring stronger opinions and may involve disagreements.

Limitations of the Study

The measurement of civic engagement used in this study poses two limitations. First, the survey items are a measure of adolescents' expectations about their future civic engagement, not their actual behavior. This is problematic since adolescents may implicitly respond with the socially accepted norms for civic behavior. There is some evidence that suggests that adolescents already possess an understanding about what sort of civic activities are expected of good citizens. For example, believing that adults who are good citizens join a political party predicted adolescents' expectations that they would join a political party as an adult (Richardson & Torney-Purta, in press). Second, expectations for future civic engagement do not account for the potential effects of the communities in which adolescents live. The political context in which the adolescents live has been shown to influence their political attitudes and expectations for future engagement (Gimpel et al., 2003). Moreover, in many cases adolescents will become fully participating citizens as adults in different communities than those they grew up in (although the rates at which adolescents move may differ by socioeconomic status). Measuring current expectations may not accurately take into account influences of later events in those individual's lives and the change in social context (Alwin et al., 1991; Valentino & Sears, 1998). The IEA Civic Education Study does offer the possibility for future research that takes into account some aspects of social context because the database includes school and class identification variables.

The scale constructed to measure students' current organizational participation has at least two limitations regarding its validity. The first issue is whether or not the nine organizations selected as "civic-related" organizations do in fact represent organizations that have civic missions, at least in part, either by providing students with opportunities to develop skills for civic participation, such learning how to run a political campaign by running for student council or taking part in more direct civic activities such attending a protest about the destruction of wetlands with the environmental organization (Burns et al., 2001). It is possible that participation in these organizations has more to do with peer interaction than civic activities. For example, student councils may be groups that spend their time planning school dances. The majority of students interviewed for this study identified student council, youth organization affiliated with a political party, a U.N. club or a human rights organization as pertaining to politics. A smaller number perceived school newspapers and environmental organizations and charities as political. Groups conducting voluntary activities to help the community and cultural associations based on ethnicity were not identified as political by these students, however. A second validity issue with this scale is that it is impossible to determine whether students were responding about their participation based on the opportunity to participate or their interest in participating. In other words, some of these activities may not have been available to students through their school or community.

For a number of reasons, conclusions drawn from the interviews should be made with caution. The intention of the interviews was to enrich the interpretation of the statistical findings and to serve as investigation of how adolescents experience political discussion with an eye towards future studies. However, the students interviewed were a

small and non-representative sample, not like the data collected from the test and survey by IEA, which was a large and nationally representative sample. The timing of the interviews relative to the administration of the IEA instrument was likely to have been significantly influenced by major world events involving the U.S. including the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the war with Iraq. As evidenced by their responses to the questions about what sort of topics they thought of when they reported the frequency of their participation in political discussions the majority of students listed the war with Iraq. Furthermore, when some of them were describing the frequency with which they discussed politics they noted that their rate of participation was higher due to these major events. Finally, the amount of time elapsed between when the students took the abbreviated version of the IEA instrument and when they were interviewed ranged from one to three days because of the block scheduling used in the school. Since one objective was to have students provide information about how they interpreted the survey items, it is possible that they were responding to the interview questions in a different way then they might have if they had been interviewed during or immediately following their completion of the instrument.

Like many other studies of political discussion and civic engagement this study utilized cross-sectional, correlational data. While the large, nationally representative sample and the scope of the instrument used in the IEA Civic Education Study set the data used in this study apart from other studies, it should be noted that experimental methodology would allow stronger conclusions to be made about the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement.

Educational Practice

The findings of this study have several implications for civic education. The positive association between open classroom climate and students' beliefs that they are likely to engage in political activities in the future joins a growing body of evidence about the importance of the classroom environment for the development of positive attitudes about civic participation. Future research should be conducted to compare students' reported perception of an open classroom climate with observations of the classroom. This sort of study would serve two purposes. First, it would test the validity of student reports of climate as being specific to openness for discussion of political and social issues about which people have different opinions, as opposed to the reports representing a more generalized positive student attitude towards social studies or school. Second, the observations could identify techniques used by teachers that could later be shared with other teachers about how to establish or maintain such climates. These studies should control for factors such as students' attitudes about school, social studies, and the teacher.

One of the educational goals for constructing classes where students have the opportunity to discuss political and social issues is that such environments will help students to develop the knowledge and skills to participate in discussions in their community now and as adults about political dilemmas. However, real world connections are not necessarily being made by the students, based on the finding that open classroom climate does not have a significant relationship to students' current participation in civic-related organizations. Therefore more explicit connections should

be made between the content and skills learned implicitly in class to other opportunities students may have for practicing democracy such as student government.

As advocated by Parker (2001), Hess and Posselt (2001) and other social studies educators the purposes for engaging students in political discussions should be clear, and consistent with democratic principles. Requiring students to report on the latest current events is unlikely to have strong effects on their current or future engagement. Presenting students with opportunities for sustained deliberative discussions, linked closely to the practice of democracy in the world outside the classroom, are likely to enhance the connections between political discussion and civic engagement.

There are several findings that suggest that students need to be provided with additional opportunities to examine and evaluate different forms of civic participation in class. For example, the finding that discussion with teachers and open classroom climate had a smaller influence on conventional political participation suggests that students are not connecting discussions in school with conventional activities. This idea is further supported by the finding that political efficacy was most strongly associated with conventional political activities, whereas discussion efficacy was associated with social movement-related activities. The interviews demonstrated adolescents' difficulty distinguishing between political and social and their perceptions that petition and protest are not necessarily political activities. They should be given experiences that encourage them to identify the political objectives behind many petitions and protests. Curriculum objectives should strive to help students develop a sophisticated understanding about the processes and implications of citizen responsibilities and how citizen participation is necessary for legitimacy, in addition to the current emphasis on individual rights.

There are several other analyses of the IEA data that converge on this same recommendation. One analyses found that the percentage of students who reported learning about the importance of voting in school was notably lower than the percentage of teachers who reported teaching it (Torney-Purta & Richardson, 2002a). Students who reported learning in school about the importance of voting and solving community problems were more likely to support norms of conventional and social movement participations than those students who did not report learning about these things at school (Richardson & Torney-Purta, in press, Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson, 2003).

The strength of the association between student reports of discussion with peers and parents for all three forms of civic engagement, but especially conventional political participation, suggests that enhancing opportunities for substantive and long-term classroom to community connections may further increase the likelihood of students' civic engagement. If discussions with peers and parents are already related to their reported likelihood to engage in future political activities and current civic-related organizations, these discussions may serve as starting points for increasing the effect of classroom discussions or discussions with teachers. The students interviewed for this study identified connections between classroom discussions and discussions at home that provided opportunities for developing perspective taking abilities and provided models that adolescents use to evaluate their understanding of politics. These opportunities for developing a sense of efficacy regarding political discussion and for understanding related topics support the finding of this study that discussion of politics is positively related to civic engagement, but discussion of politics in combination with efficacy beliefs has an even stronger positive association.

Future Research

The scales developed for this study suggests Bandura's theory of efficacy is related to the domain of politics to a greater extent than has been recognized either in his writing or that of others. However, the measures of political efficacy, discussion efficacy and school efficacy do not provide precise measures of efficacy as defined by Bandura. His theory of efficacy makes clear distinctions between judgments about one's ability and judgments about the outcome of one's action. The measure of political efficacy used in this study contains two items judging knowledge and understanding and one about the ability to contribute to political discussions. In political science the measures of internal political efficacy usually contain both judgments about one's understanding of political topics and judgments about the likelihood that one can change things in government.

The differences in the relationship between political efficacy, discussion efficacy and school efficacy across several types of civic engagement highlight the need to develop better methods for evaluating adolescents' efficacy beliefs in the political domain. Better measures of efficacy should be developed that take into account both the social and political sphere adolescents' associate with adults and often with national government and their efficacy beliefs about their abilities to be effective participants in their local political spheres. Measures of civic engagement also need further refinement to assess the degree to which student organizations provide opportunities for developing political skills and dispositions. For example, it may be that student governments spend the bulk of their time planning social activities and have only limited powers within their school to enact substantive changes. The same critiques may hold for other extracurricular activities (e.g., school newspapers). Environmental organizations may

organize groups to participate in local clean-up efforts without either the root causes of pollution being considered or democratic procedures being adopted in the groups. It seems obvious that discussion of politics, regardless of the context, would not be correlated with students' participation in activities that have little overt relation to either the content or procedures of politics.

Future studies of political discussion would benefit from a number of methodological improvements. First of all, researchers should be clear about how they conceptualize political discussion, both in terms of what constitutes a "discussion" and what topics should be considered "political." Once these terms are clarified, better measures can be developed to assess the frequency, quality, and context of participation in political discussions and its relationship with civic engagement. For example, explicit distinctions between discussions with friends versus discussions with peers may reveal important qualities of discussion that can be used to improve classroom discussion. Measures can also be developed to reduce variance in the interpretations respondents make about rates of political discussion. For example, presenting response categories such as almost daily or once a month may improve validity and reliability of responses. Another technique would be to reduce the amount of estimation used by respondents. Cell phone text messaging and pagers offer new methodologies that could be used to prompt participants to reflect on the political nature and frequency of their discussions, resulting in more accurate reports of political discussions. In a similar but less technology-driven fashion, participants could be asked to keep a running record of their political discussions.

Finally, the majority of studies finding an association between political discussion and civic engagement have been based on cross-sectional, self-report survey methodology, often requiring retrospective estimates of participation. The data used for the statistical analyses of this study is no exception. The question about whether participating in political discussions *causes* individuals to increase their participation in civic activities is answered better by longitudinal and/or intervention studies that are able to measure change in same individuals over time. In addition, learning more about the quality of political discussions remains an under explored area. Political theories emphasize that deliberative discussion can influence civic engagement but this study and others (e.g. Conover et al., 2002; Kim et al., 1999) find that even more casual political discussions are related to civic engagement. Future studies could be based on quasi-experimental designs where individuals do not differ significantly on other characteristics of interest or involve interventions designed to have participants who vary in their habits for participating in political discussion. Additionally, the best practices from the cross-sectional, survey methods used with nationally representative, random samples in political science should be combined with observational and intervention studies conducted in communication (media), human development, and social studies education research to consider the interactive effects of participating in political discussions across multiple contexts. In most cases when research on political discussion in political science has moved beyond survey methodology it has measured the effects of participation in carefully designed deliberations or public forums (Farrar et al., 2003, Gastil & Dillard, 1999; McLeod et al., 1999b). Research in human development has examples of both observational studies of adolescents engaging in discussions in lab settings and

interviews with students asking them to reason through hypothetical scenarios (Leadbeater, 1988; Helwig, 1998; Ruck et al., 2002). Studies of classroom discussion are generally observations of classroom discussions, with surveys occasionally used to extend the reach to spheres outside the classroom (Hahn, 1998; Hess & Posselt, 2001). One example of how studies of school interventions could be extended to other contexts is a study about the effects of the Kids Voting program that interviewed pairs of students and their parents (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2000).

While this study considered how the association between political discussion and civic engagement was influenced by civic knowledge and civic-related efficacy, these suggested improvements in methodology could offer a new understanding about the process of political discussion and the contexts in which it occurs. For example, interview strategies from developmental research asking adolescents to respond to hypothetical situations (see Helwig, 1998; Killen et al., 2003) could be applied to participation in politics or observations of students engaged in classroom discussions could be combined with surveys or observations about their discussions outside of school. This would allow educators and policy makers to make more specific recommendations, in addition to the call for more frequent participation in political discussions.

Supporting high quality studies is one area where public policy could have a significant impact. Policies should be written to support the development of programs designed to assess the impact of participation in political discussions on civic engagement. Funding of such programs by political institutions should require *and support financially* high quality, longitudinal evaluation of program effects. As models

of the democratic principles and processes, government institutions and other political institutions should also provide opportunities for adolescents to directly experience the practices that take place at these institutions. This could be through internships but more generally adolescents should be given the chance for more active participation. Participation in explicitly civic organizations may help students grasp the political nature of community service or service learning activities, as opposed to perceiving these activities as individual assistance to less fortunate others, that in effect reinforces unequal social structures (Kahne, 2002; Yates & Youniss, 1997).

Parents can support the development of their children's civic competence by encouraging schools to develop curriculum that emphasizes opportunities for discussion in a supportive environment. Initiating discussions that help adolescents reflect on the connections between learning in school about democratic institutions and processes and the political reality is another way to support civic development.

Conclusion

As this study has shown, participating in political discussions has a positive association with adolescents' beliefs about their future engagement in conventional political and social movement-related activities and to some degree adolescents' current participation in civic-related organizations. Some people may argue that the relationship between political discussion and civic engagement is too small to be practically meaningful. However, this relationship was identified based on simple measures about adolescents' self-reported frequency of participation in political discussion. The interviews of adolescents suggest that the qualities of the relationship and the discussion matter more for influencing participation in discussions and its subsequent effects on

civic engagement than simple participation in discussions. Although the focus of this study was on political discussion and civic engagement, the lack of effect of civic knowledge on civic engagement suggests that both civic engagement and participation in political discussions may be more influenced by domain-specific, affective characteristics than by knowledge. Likewise, efficacy beliefs had a complex relation to engagement, and it was different for males and females. Enhancing the likelihood that adolescents will participate in civic-related activities as adults and in civic organizations available to them now, is not simply a matter of encouraging them to talk more often about politics. Opportunities need to be provided for adolescents to develop a sense of competence for engaging in political discussions by encouraging links between discussions they have with familiar people and those with whom they are less familiar.

Appendix A

IEA Instrument Items

A1: Political Discussion Items

How often do you have discussions of what is happening in U.S. government?

L1 with people of your own age.

L2 with parents or other adult family members.

L3 with teachers.

How often do you have discussions of what is happening in international politics?

L4 with people of your own age.

L5 with parents or other adult family members.

L6 with teachers.

Response: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 0 = don't know

A2: Open Classroom Climate Items

N1: Students feel free to disagree openly with their teachers about political and social issues during class.

N2: Students are encouraged to make up their own minds about issues.

N3: Teachers respect our opinions and encourage us to express them during class.

N5: Students feel free to express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students.

N7: Teachers encourage us to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions.

N8: Teachers present several sides of an issue when explaining it in class.

Response: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 0 = don't know

Civic Engagement

Common stem for A3 & A4: When you are an adult, what do you expect that you will do?

Response: 1 = I will certainly not do this, 2 = I will probably not do this, 3 = I will probably do this, 4 = I will certainly do this.

A3: Conventional Political Participation Items

M1: Vote in national elections.

M2: Get information about candidates before voting in an election.

M3: Join a political party.

M4: Write letters to a newspaper about social or political concerns.

M5: Be a candidate for a local or city office.

(Note: Only items M3, M4, M5 form the scale used in this study.)

A4: Social Movement-related Participation Items

M6: Volunteer time to help people in the community.

M7: Collect money for a social cause.

M8: Collect signatures for a petition.

M9: Participate in a non-violent protest march or rally.

A5: Current Organizational Participation Items:

Have you participated in the following organizations?

a) A student council/student government.

b) A youth organization affiliated with a political party or union.

c) A group which prepares a school newspaper.

d) An environmental organization.

e) A U.N. or U.N.E.S.C.O. club.

f) A human rights organization.

g) A group conducting activities to help the community.

h) A charity collecting money for a social cause.

i) A cultural organization based on ethnicity.

Response: 1 = no, 2 = yes

(Recoded 0 =no, 1 = yes)

A6: Civic Knowledge Scale

IRT scale score from 38 items, scored with correct responses; mean = 100, s.d. = 20.

A7: Internal Political Efficacy Items:

I2: I know more about politics than most people my age.

I5: When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say.

I8: I am able to understand most political issues easily.

Response: 0 = don't know, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree

A8: Efficacy about Participation in School Items:

J1: Electing student representatives to suggest changes in how the school is run makes schools better.

J2: Lots of positive changes happen in this school when students work together.

J3: Organizing groups of students to state their opinions could help solve problems in this school.

J5: Students acting together can have more influence on what happens in this school than students acting alone.

Response: 0 = don't know, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree

A9: Efficacy about Discussion at School Items:

J4: If members of my class felt they were unfairly treated, I would be willing to go with them to speak to the teacher.

J6: I am interested in participating in discussions about school problems.

J7: When school problems are being discussed I usually have something to say.

Response: 0 = don't know, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree

A10: Demographic Items:

Are you a girl or a boy?

1 = male

2 = female

(Recoded into GENDER variable with male = 0 and female = 1)

About how many books are there in your home? Do not count newspapers, magazines or books for school; tick one box only.

1 – none; 2 – 1-10; 3 – 11-50; 4 – 51-100; 5 – 101-200; 6 – more than 200

(Recoded into HOMELIT variable with categories 1 & 2 were combined)

Appendix B

Consent Forms

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INSTITUTE FOR CHILD STUDY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAND DEVELOPMENT

College of Education
3304 Benjamin Building
College Park, MD. 20742-1131
301.405.2827 TEL. 301.405.2891 FAX

Letter to Parents

April 7, 2003

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We are conducting a study about discussion and civic engagement. We are interested in learning more about how discussion in various settings may impact participation in future civic activities, such as collecting signatures for a petition. The purpose of the study is to assist educators in improving teaching in social studies and related areas.

Students whose parents consent to having them participate will be asked to complete a questionnaire asking them about their experiences with discussion, civic engagement, and related attitudes. The questionnaire should take no more than one class period to complete. Some students will also be asked to participate in an individual interview that will ask them to explain how they interpret and respond to the survey questions, and to describe their experiences with discussion, for example to describe where they discuss politics most often. This interview will last no more than 45 minutes and will be conducted outside of class time at a place and time agreed upon with your child and their teacher, such as the library or media center. The interview sessions will be audio-recorded.

Benefits from this study include: 1) future improvements to social studies education, 2) feedback from this research may be presented to teachers and staff at your child's school, and 3) your child will be prompted to consider important aspects of civic engagement.

We will take a number of steps to ensure your child's privacy and anonymity. Information from individual student's questionnaires and interviews will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the research team. Your child's responses will not have any impact on his/her class standing or classroom evaluations. Participation is voluntary and your child may decline to answer questions or can completely withdraw

from the study at any time. Copies of the questionnaire and interview questions are available in the main office, if you wish to look at them.

As the principal researcher of the study, Wendy Richardson, doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland, will be happy to answer any questions you might have about the study. She can be reached at (301) 314-2670, if you have any questions or concerns. This work is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Judith Torney-Purta, Professor in the Department of Human Development at the University of Maryland. Please indicate if you are willing to give permission for your child to participate in this study by completing the attached form. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Wendy K. Richardson, M.A.
3304 Benjamin Bldg.
Dept. of Human Development
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
(301) 314-2670
wkr@wam.umd.edu

Judith Torney-Purta, Ph.D.
3304 Benjamin Bldg.
Dept. of Human Development
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
(301) 405-2806
jt22@umail.umd.edu

Parent Permission Form: Consent for participation in educational research

Please read the following and sign below. It is important that you have your child return this form as soon as possible.

I consent to my child's participation in the research project about discussion and civic engagement.

I understand that Ms. Wendy Richardson is conducting a study to learn more about how discussion in various settings may impact participation in future civic activities. Participating students will be asked to complete a questionnaire asking them about their experiences with discussion, civic engagement, and related attitudes. Some students will also be asked to participate in an individual interview that will ask them to explain how they interpret and respond to the survey questions, and to describe their experiences with discussion. The interview sessions will be audio-recorded.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that all responses will be kept strictly confidential. My child's responses will not be accessible to anyone except members of the research team and her/his participation will not have any impact on their class standing or classroom evaluations. My child can decline to answer questions or completely withdraw from the study at any time. There are no foreseeable risks involved in this research.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understood this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily.

_____ I give permission for my child to participate in the research project being conducted by Wendy Richardson.

_____ I do not give permission for my child to participate in the research project being conducted by Wendy Richardson.

_____ _____

Parent/guardian (print) Date

_____

Parent/guardian (signature)

_____ _____

Relation to child Researcher (signature)

Contact Information:
Wendy K. Richardson, M.A., 3304 Benjamin Bldg., Dept. of Human Development
University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, (301) 314-2670, wkr@wam.umd.edu

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Student Assent Form

Participation in educational research

I understand that Ms. Wendy Richardson is conducting a study to learn more about how discussion in various settings may impact participation in future civic activities. I will be asked to complete a questionnaire asking me about my experiences with discussion, civic engagement, and related attitudes. I might also be asked to participate in an individual interview, lasting no more than 45 minutes, that will ask me to explain how I interpret and respond to the survey questions, and to describe my experiences with discussion. The interview session will be audio-recorded. Before agreeing to participate I will have the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. My individual responses will not be accessible to anyone except members of the research team and my participation will not have any impact on my class standing or classroom evaluations. I may decline to answer questions or can completely withdraw from the study at any time. There are no foreseeable risks involved in this research.

_____ _____

Name (print) Date

Contact Information:

Wendy K. Richardson, M.A.
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College Park, MD 20742
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Appendix C

Interview Directions and Questions

Interview Session Directions

Purpose: There are two main purposes for this interview. First, I'd like to learn more about how you interpret certain survey questions. Second, I'm trying to develop a description of how young people experience political discussion and civic engagement and would like you to describe your own perspective on these topics.

Directions: First, I'm interested in learning more about the interpretation you have of specific survey questions. I'm going to ask you to respond to some questions about the survey. Providing more detail is more useful than one word answers. Remember there is no right or wrong answer to these questions and the answers you provide will be kept confidential. So you don't have to worry about carefully planning out each of your answers. Just respond with the ideas that come to your mind. At any time you may decide not to answer any question or stop the interview altogether. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

Part 1:
The Political System (Section I) page 14
There was a section with statements about political systems and your personal views on politics. Some of the questions asked you about how much you know and understand about politics and how much you have to say during political discussions.

1. Do you think you are more likely to discuss politics if you know and understand more about politics?

Why do you think this is the case? Or what do you think would make it more likely that you would discuss politics?

2. Does this also make it more likely that you will engage in other political actions?

School (Section J) page 15
The next section asked questions about students' participation in school life.

3. If you had confidence about the ability of students to change things at school, how might this influence your confidence about your ability to change things in your community or in the government?

Why do you think this is the case? Or why not?

Political Action 1 (Section L) page 16
4. What kinds of topics or issues did you consider part of a discussion about "what is happening in the U.S. government?"

Is there anything else that comes to mind?

5. What kinds of topics or issues did you consider part of a discussion about "international politics?"

Is there anything else that comes to mind?

These questions were repeated for several different kinds of people. I'd like to know how you interpreted each phrase.
6. What does "people of your own age" mean to you?
When you answered the questions were you thinking about discussions with friends, classmates, anyone in your age group or some other group?

7. Who did you have in mind when you responded about discussion with "parents or other adult family members?"

8. When you responded about discussion with teachers, what did you interpret that to mean?

Did you consider classroom discussions or just discussions you have with teachers outside of class?
Did you consider only conversations you have with teachers of politically related subjects or all of your teachers?
Did you have one particular teacher (a few) in mind or an average of your discussion with all your teachers?

9. You were offered several choices about the frequency with which you engage in political discussion – Can you tell me what you interpreted "rarely", "sometimes" and "often" to mean?

Would "often" be every day, several times a day or something else?

Open classroom climate (Section N) page 18
This section asked questions about what happens in your social studies classes. Several questions ask you about discussion of "issues."

10. What did you interpret "political and social" issues to mean?

Do you distinguish between political and social issues? If so, what's the difference?

Can you give me an example of each one? (a political issue, a social issue)

Do you consider discussion of current events to be the same as discussing political and social issues?

Future Participation Political Action (Section M) page 17 – point to the bottom
This section asked about types of action a young person could take.
11. In your opinion are any of these activities political? (Items M6-M12)

Could any of these activities be political? Why would you call them political?

Current Participation (Part 2, Question 13)
There were also some other questions that asked about your participation in organizations.
12. Looking at this list of activities are there any ones you think deal with political issues in some way?

Could any of these activities be political? Which ones and why?

Part 2: Student descriptions of political discussion and civic engagement

Directions: Next I'm going to ask you a series of questions that will help me develop a description of your own perspective on political discussion and civic engagement. Remember providing more detail is more useful than one word answers and there are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

12. Could you please describe your participation in political discussions that occur outside of the classroom?

13. What percentage of discussions that you have with other people are about political topics?

14. Where do you talk most often about politics? *(home, work, school, car)*

15. How many people do you usually have political discussions with at one time?

16. How do the political discussions typically get started (*media, school, observation*)?

17. Do you make connections between political topics discussed at home and discussions at school? What kind of connections do you make?

18. How frequently do you talk with your parents about school topics?

19. What is your role during political discussions? (*Initiate, listen, give and take*)

20. Is national politics something you like to talk about, or is it something other people bring up?

21. How might the political discussions you have differ depending on who you are talking with?

22. How often do you talk with people whose ideas are different than yours? Are these discussions different from discussions with people who have similar ideas?

When you talk with (parents, friends, teachers) - how often do you disagree with their point of view?

23. What do you think is the purpose of political discussion?

Can you tell me more?

Appendix D

Codes for Analyses of Interview Transcripts

1. Do you think you are more likely to discuss politics if you know and understand more about politics?
    - Yes/No
    - Interest needed too
    - Confidence to participate
    - Contribution can be made
    - Experience increases probability of participation
    - More substance = ease of conversation
    - Other
2. Does this also make it more likely that you will engage in other political actions?
    - Yes/No
    - Know options, then choose
    - Knowledge informs beliefs which lead to action
    - Knowledge backs reasons and comfort with action
    - Experience increases probability of participation
    - Action doesn't necessarily lead to desired outcomes
3. If you had confidence about the ability of students to change things at school, how might this influence your confidence about your ability to change things in your community or in the government?
    - Yes/No
    - Provides experience
    - Provides model of larger community
    - Voice and empowerment
    - Develop skills
    - Experience increases probability of participation
    - Action doesn't necessarily lead to desired outcomes
    - Interpreted action as adolescents vs. as adults
4. What kinds of topics or issues did you consider part of a discussion about "what is happening in the U.S. government?"
    - Iraq war
    - 9/11 or terrorism
    - North Korea – nuclear weapons threat
    - Economy
    - Social policy or issues
    - Elections
    - Civil rights
    - Miscellaneous government functions
    - United Nations
    - Other
5. What kinds of topics or issues did you consider part of a discussion about "international politics?"
    - Iraq war

9/11 or terrorism
North Korea – nuclear weapons threat
Economy
Social policy or issues
Human Rights
Relations with other countries
United Nations
Other

Discussion Partners

6. What does "people of your own age" mean to you?
   - Friends
   - Classmates, 9th grade
   - High school
   - Other

7. Who did you have in mind when you responded about discussion with "parents or other adult family members?"
   - Mom
   - Dad
   - Grandparent
   - Other Relative
   - Family friend

8. When you responded about discussion with teachers, what did you interpret that to mean?
   - Social studies
   - All teachers
   - Mostly during class
   - In and out of class

9. You were offered several choices about the frequency with which you engage in political discussion – Can you tell me what you interpreted "rarely", "sometimes" and "often" to mean?
   - Once a month
   - Several times a month
   - Once a week
   - Several times a week
   - Almost daily
   - Event related
   - Class related
   - Frequency of participation during discussions
   - Estimation difficulties
   - Interviewer probed for timeframe

10. What did you interpret "political and social" issues to mean?
    - Government
    - People in government
    - Community
    - Deals with people – relations with other people
    - Personal – relates to self

Economy
Current Events
Other
Examples of political issues
Examples of social issues
Current events are the same/different as political and social issues

11. In your opinion are any of these activities political? (Items M6-M12)
Volunteer
Charity
Petition
Protest
Spray-paint
Block traffic
Occupy building

12. Looking at this list of activities are there any ones you think deal with political issues in some way?
Student council
Political party
School newspaper
Environmental org.
UN/UNESCO club
Student exchange
Human rights
Voluntary activities
Charity
Boy/girl scouts
Cultural org.
Computer club
Art, music, drama
Sports
Religious

Open-ended Questions:

13. What percentage of discussions that you have with other people are about political topics?
<5%
5-9%
10-19%
20-29%
30-39%
40-49%
50+%
Consistent/Inconsistent with description
Event related
Other

14. Where do you talk most often about politics?
Class

School
Home
Dinner table
Car
Other

16. How do the political discussions typically get started?
Media
Current events
School
"Spin off" from other topics
Others start it
Own thinking
Other

19. What is your role during political discussions?
Listen
Ask questions
Give opinions
Learn
Persuade
Other

21. How might the political discussions you have differ depending on who you are talking with?
Teachers/parents/friends know most
Knowing more is better
Class-Home differences
Other

22. How often do you talk with people whose ideas are different than yours? Are these discussions different from discussions with people who have similar ideas?
Level of disagreement: Most with friends/classmates/teacher/parents
Listen more
Learn more
Happens often
Keep it civil
Other

23. What do you think is the purpose of political discussion?
Vote
Get other opinions
Learn more about topics/awarenss
State your views
Persuade others
Other

What is political discussion? (This represents an interpretation across all questions)
Give & take
Persuade others
State your views
Formal vs. informal

Appendix E

Table E1

Unweighted Descriptive Statistics on the Variables of Interest for U.S. Sample of the IEA Civic Education Study

Variable	Description	N	Miss	Mean	Min	Max	Std Dev	Skew	Kurtosis	Alpha
Scales										
HOMELIT	Number of books at home	2808	0	3.276	1	5	1.336	-0.112	-1.219	
GENDER	Gender (0=male, 1=female)	2808	0	0.503	0	1	0.500	-0.012	-2.001	
DISPEER	Discussion of U.S. and international topics with peers	2808	0	1.900	1	4	0.786	0.566	-0.433	.76
DISPAR	Discussion of U.S. and international topics with parents	2808	0	2.450	1	4	0.886	-0.024	-0.859	.79
DISTEACH	Discussion of U.S. and international topics with teachers	2808	0	2.559	1	4	0.891	-0.183	-0.842	.81
CLIMATE	Open classroom climate	2808	0	3.017	1	4	0.625	-0.690	0.424	.81
KNOW	Civic knowledge score (IRT)	2808	0	104.908	9.780	162.560	22.169	0.526	0.239	
POLEFF	Political efficacy	2808	0	2.448	1	4	0.651	-0.069	-0.179	.64
CONF	Discussion efficacy	2808	0	3.123	1	4	0.574	-0.733	1.371	.76
DISEFF	School efficacy	2808	0	2.900	1	4	0.663	-0.390	0.070	.69
CONV	Expected conventional political participation	2808	0	2.055	1	4	0.683	0.306	-0.234	.73

Variable	Label	N	Miss	Mean	Min	Max	Std Dev	Skew	Kurtosis	Alpha
SOC	Expected social movement-related participation	2808	0	2.580	1	4	0.636	-0.173	0.230	.75
CURRENT	Summative scale of participation in 9 civic-related organizations	2808	0	1.959	0	9	1.769	0.801	0.220	.65
Individual Survey Items										
BSGAS01	Participated A Student Council	2621	190	1.329	1	2	0.470	0.731	-1.467	
BSGAS02	Participated A Youth Organization	2570	241	1.108	1	2	0.310	2.531	4.410	
BSGAS03	Participated To Prepare School Newspaper	2581	230	1.200	1	2	0.400	1.498	0.246	
BSGAS04	Participated An Environmental Organization	2578	233	1.241	1	2	0.428	1.213	-0.530	
BSGAS05	Participated A U.N. or UNESCO Club	2563	248	1.021	1	2	0.145	6.609	41.706	
BSGAS07	Participated Human Rights Organization	2562	249	1.057	1	2	0.231	3.840	12.756	
BSGAS08	Participated A Group Conducting Activity	2585	226	1.496	1	2	0.500	0.015	-2.001	
BSGAS09	Participated A Charity Collecting	2579	232	1.390	1	2	0.488	0.449	-1.800	
BSGAS11	Participated A Cultural Association	2556	255	1.095	1	2	0.293	2.763	5.637	

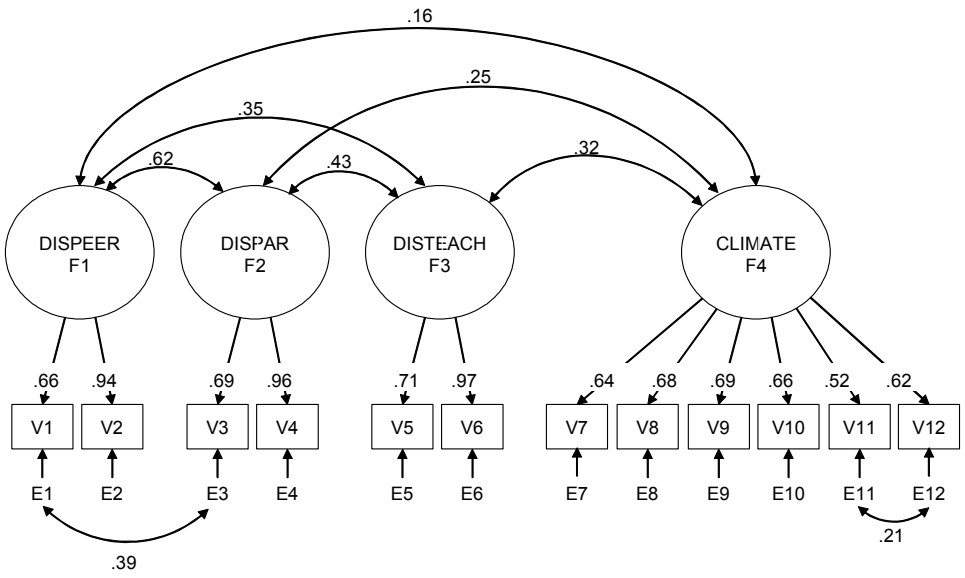
Variable	Label	N	Miss	Mean	Min	Max	Std Dev	Skew	Kurtosis	Alpha
BS5L1	Nat Pol / With People of Your Own Age	2598	213	2.035	1	4	0.915	0.447	-0.751	
BS5L2	Nat Pol / With Parents or Adults	2596	215	2.617	1	4	0.971	-0.213	-0.927	
BS5L3	Nat Pol / With Teachers	2570	241	2.663	1	4	0.976	-0.249	-0.924	
BS5L4	Int Pol / With People of Your Own Age	2553	258	1.741	1	4	0.840	0.903	0.002	
BS5L5	Int Pol / With Parents or Adults	2565	246	2.287	1	4	0.995	0.190	-1.048	
BS5L6	Int Pol / With Teachers	2536	275	2.464	1	4	0.988	-0.060	-1.041	
BS4N1	Feel Free To Disagree Openly With Teachers	2410	401	2.954	1	4	0.914	-0.555	-0.514	
BS4N2	Encouraged To Make Up Own Minds	2447	364	3.277	1	4	0.844	-1.026	0.350	
BS4N3	Teacher Respect and Encourage Opinions	2458	353	3.127	1	4	0.902	-0.776	-0.267	
BS4N5	Feel Free to Express Opinions	2394	417	3.084	1	4	0.862	-0.690	-0.204	
BS4N7	Discuss Political and Social Issues	2333	478	2.824	1	4	0.882	-0.420	-0.490	
BS4N8	Teacher Presents Several Sides of Issue	2360	451	3.072	1	4	0.862	-0.722	-0.089	
BS5M1	Vote In National Elections	2467	344	3.147	1	4	0.867	-0.966	0.419	
BS5M2	Know Candidates Before Voting	2456	355	3.061	1	4	0.908	-0.797	-0.105	
BS5M3	Join Political Party	2302	509	2.096	1	4	0.906	0.523	-0.481	
BS5M4	Write Letters About Social/Political Concerns	2346	465	2.086	1	4	0.843	0.470	-0.327	

Variable	Label	N	Miss	Mean	Min	Max	Std Dev	Skew	Kurtosis	Alpha
BS5M5	Be A Candidate For Office	2285	526	1.906	1	4	0.828	0.732	0.076	
BS5M6	Volunteer Time To Help People	2396	415	2.848	1	4	0.831	-0.496	-0.175	
BS5M7	Collect Money For Social Cause	2310	501	2.644	1	4	0.826	-0.197	-0.475	
BS5M8	Collect Signatures For Petition	2268	543	2.502	1	4	0.845	0.008	-0.599	
BS5M9	Participate Peaceful Protest/Rally	2264	547	2.334	1	4	0.881	0.217	-0.647	
BS4I2	Political: Know More About Politics	2239	572	2.142	1	4	0.859	0.451	-0.376	
BS4I5	Political: Take Part in Political Discussions	2358	453	2.624	1	4	0.890	-0.211	-0.675	
BS4I8	Political: Understand Most Political Issues	2359	452	2.605	1	4	0.829	-0.302	-0.437	
BS4J1	Elect Student Representatives Make Schools Better	2468	343	3.042	1	4	0.806	-0.849	0.628	
BS4J2	Positive Changes When Students Work Together	2483	328	3.165	1	4	0.732	-0.829	0.946	
BS4J3	Organizing Students Help Solve Problems	2447	364	3.125	1	4	0.717	-0.768	0.979	
BS4J4	Go To Teacher With Unfairly Treated Students	2357	454	3.073	1	4	0.808	-0.699	0.153	
BS4J5	Students Working Together Have Influence	2422	389	3.277	1	4	0.744	-1.027	1.159	

Variable	Label	N	Miss	Mean	Min	Max	Std Dev	Skew	Kurtosis	Alpha
BS4J6	Participate Discussions On School Problems	2338	473	2.860	1	4	0.884	-0.426	-0.518	
BS4J7	Take Part in School Discussions	2373	438	2.853	1	4	0.859	-0.470	-0.339	

Appendix F

Political Discussion Path Diagram



DISPEER: Political Discussion with Peers

V1 = How often do you have discussions of what is happening in U.S. government with people of your own age?

V2 = How often do you have discussions of what is happening in international politics with people of your own age?

DISPAR: Political Discussion with Parents

V3 = How often do you have discussions of what is happening in U.S. government with parents or other adult family members?

V4 = How often do you have discussions of what is happening in international politics with parents or other adult family members?

DISTEACH: Political Discussion with Teachers

V5 = How often do you have discussions of what is happening in U.S. government with teachers?

V6 = How often do you have discussions of what is happening in international politics with teachers?

CLIMATE: Open Classroom Climate

V7 = Students feel free to disagree openly with their teachers about political and social issues during class.

V8 = Students are encouraged to make up their own minds about issues.

V9 = Teachers respect our opinions and encourage us to express them during class.

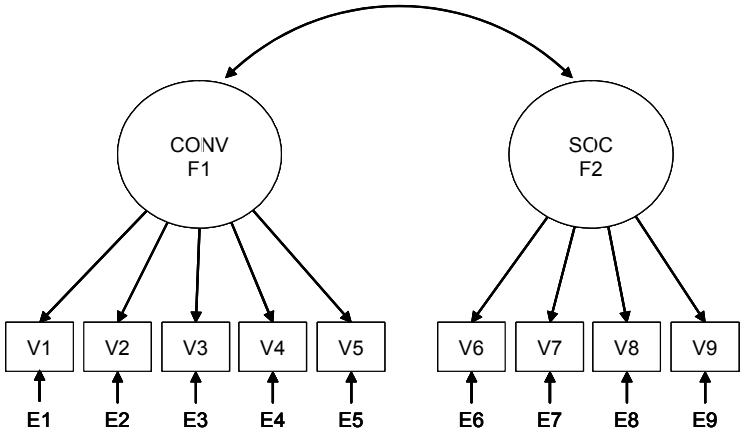
V10 = Students feel free to express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students.

V11 = Teachers encourage us to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions.

V12 = Teachers present several sides of [positions on] an issue when explaining it in class.

Appendix G

Civic Engagement Path Diagram Model 1



CONV: Conventional Political Participation

V1 = Vote in national elections.

V2 = Get information about candidates before voting in an election.

V3 = Join a political party.

V4 = Write letters to a newspaper about social or political concerns.

V5 = Be a candidate for a local or city office.

SOC: Social Movement-related Participation

V6 = Volunteer time to help people in the community.

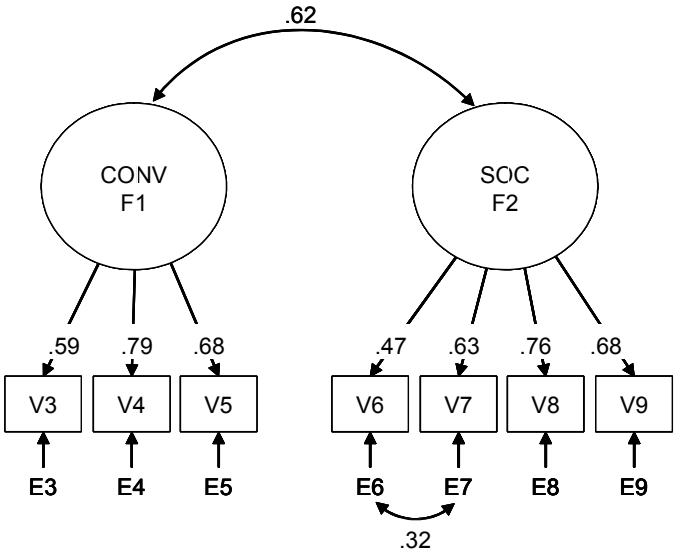
V7 = Collect money for a social cause.

V8 = Collect signatures for a petition.

V9 = Participate in a non-violent protest march or rally.

Appendix H

Civic Engagement Path Diagram Model 2



CONV: Conventional Political Participation

V3 = Join a political party.

V4 = Write letters to a newspaper about social or political concerns.

V5 = Be a candidate for a local or city office.

SOC: Social Movement-related Participation

V6 = Volunteer time to help people in the community.

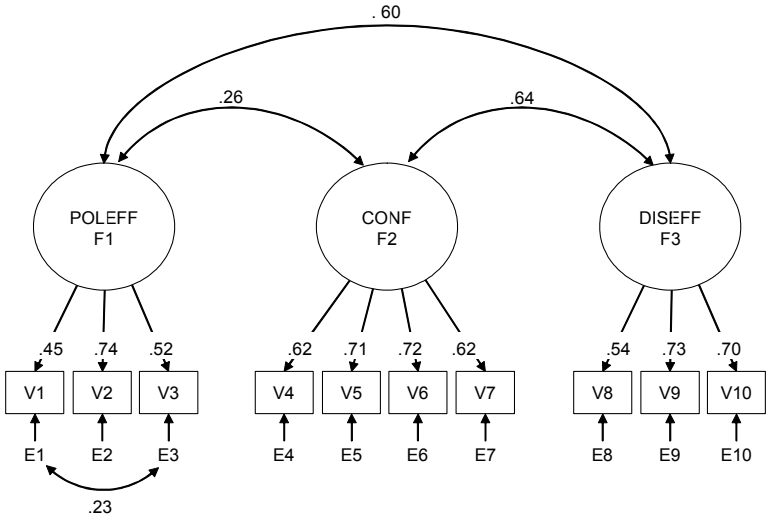
V7 = Collect money for a social cause.

V8 = Collect signatures for a petition.

V9 = Participate in a non-violent protest march or rally.

Appendix I

Efficacy Path Diagram



POLEFF: Political Efficacy

V1 = I know more about politics than most people my age.

V2 = When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say.

V3 = I am able to understand most political issues easily.

CONF: School Efficacy

V4 = Electing student representatives to suggest changes in how the school is run [how to solve school problems] makes schools better.

V5 = Lots of positive changes happen in this school when students work together.

V6 = Organizing groups of students to state their opinions could help solve problems in this school.

V7 = Students acting together can have more influence on what happens in this school than students acting alone.

DISEFF: Discussion Efficacy

V8 = If members of my class felt they were unfairly treated, I would be willing to go with them to speak to the teacher.

V9 = I am interested in participating in discussions about school problems.

V10 = When school problems are being discussed I usually have something to say.

Appendix J

Additional Gender Analyses

Table J1
Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion and Political Efficacy by Gender

Variables	Discussion with Peers		Discussion with Parents		Discussion with Teachers		Open Classroom Climate	
Steps	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Social Movement-related Participation								
Step 1: Home Literacy	.024	.007	.015	-.002	.027	.010	.013	.005
Resources	(.013)	(.014)	(.014)	(.014)	(.014)	(.014)	(.014)	(.014)
Step 2: Discussion context	.193***	.105 ***	.181 ***	.144***	.139***	.121***	.260***	.064
	(.024)	(.025)	(.023)	(.10)	(.021)	(.02)	(.027)	(.028)
Step 3: Political efficacy	.139***	.219***	.127***	.181***	.184 ***	.243***	.196 ***	.259***
	(.029)	(.029)	(.027)***	(.029)***	(.026)***	(.028)	(.027)	(.028)
R^2	.113	.099	.115	.120	.098	.115	.123	.088
Current Organizational Participation								
Step 1: Home Literacy	.152***	.198***	.137***	.181***	.155***	.202***	.147***	.201***
Resources	(.038)	(.038)	(.040)	(.038)	(.039)	(.037)	(.040)	(.037)
Step 2: Discussion context	.287***	.080	.285***	.270***	.290***	.198***	.175	-.053
	(.072)	(.089)	(.066)	(.071)	(.057)	(.056)	(.082)	(.085)
Step 3: Political efficacy	.278***	.570***	.251**	.447***	.322***	.569***	.383***	.611***
	(.075)	(.091)	(.077)	(.098)	(.068)	(.083)	(.070)	(.082)
R^2	.061	.074	.064	.088	.067	.082	.048	.073

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses. N = 1397 for males and 1411 for females.
**p<.01 *** p < .001

Table J2

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion and Discussion Efficacy by Gender

Variables	Discussion with Peers		Discussion with Parents		Discussion with Teachers		Open Classroom Climate	
Steps	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Social Movement-related Participation								
Step 1: Home literacy	.013	-.005	.005	-.013	.017	-.0009	.009	-.004
resources	(.013)	(.014)	(.014)	(.014)	(.013)	(.014)	(.014)	(.014)
Step 2: Discussion context	.166***	.115***	.156***	.142***	.112***	.10***	.187***	.027
	(.022)	(.024)	(.0220	(.021)	(.021)	(.019)	(.027)	(.029)
Step 3: Discussion efficacy	.327***	.31***	.322***	.305***	.345***	.334***	.330***	.358***
	(.028)	(.031)	(.028)	(.030)	(.027)	(.030)	(.028)	(.030)
R^2	.201	.159	.205	.178	.184	.158	.190	.139
Current Organizational Participation								
Step 1: Home literacy	.145***	.176***	.130**	.158***	.158***	.181***	.149***	.181***
resources	(.038)	(.039)	(.039)	(.038)	(.039)	(.039)	(.039)	(.039)
Step 2: Discussion context	.289***	.129	.287***	.276***	.283***	.155**	.089	-.132
	(.067)	(.079)	(.063)	(.056)	(.066)	(.054)	(.084)	(.083)
Step 3: Discussion efficacy	.374***	.739***	.361***	.660***	.381***	.731***	.439***	.801***
	(.074)	(.114)	(.075)	(.119)	(.072)	(.111)	(.076)	(.108)
R^2	.069	.097	.073	.111	.073	.099	.053	.096

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses. N = 1397 for males and 1411 for females.

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

Table J3

Relating Civic Engagement to Political Discussion and School Efficacy by Gender

Variables	Discussion with Peers		Discussion with Parents		Discussion with Teachers		Open Classroom Climate	
Steps	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Social Movement-related Participation								
Step 1: Home literacy	.020	.006	.012	-.006	.026	.012	.020	.009
resources	(.013)	(.014)	(.014)	(.015)	(.014)	(.015)	(.014)	(.015)
Step 2: Discussion context	.201***	.161***	.173***	.184***	.128***	.129***	.171***	.036
	(.021)	(.024)	(.021)	(.019)	(.022)	(.020)	(.031)	(.030)
Step 3: School efficacy	.328***	.220***	.307***	.194***	.330***	.211***	.294***	..228***
	(.028)	(.039)	(.027)	(.039)	(.029)	(.039)	(.032)	(.039)
R^2	.187	.090	.180	.119	.156	.082	.147	.049
Current Organizational Participation								
Step 1: Home literacy	.155***	.197***	.139***	.172***	.164***	.206***	.164***	.206***
resources	(.038)	(.038)	(.039)	(.039)	(.038)	(.038)	(.038)	(.038)
Step 2: Discussion context	.332***	.228**	.313***	.368***	.299***	.212***	.077	-.143
	(.065)	(.082)	(.059)	(.060)	(.054)	(.055)	(.093)	(.083)
Step 3: School efficacy	.342***	.547***	.299***	.484***	.324***	.527***	.368***	.624***
	(.077)	(.116)	(.079)	(.114)	(.075)	(.117)	(.088)	(.112)
R^2	.064	.065	.066	.086	.065	.066	.041	.057

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients reported for individual predictors with standard errors in parentheses. N = 1397 for males and 1411 for females.

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

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Notes

[1] A small number of adolescents (N = 6) were also interviewed from a public high school in Washington, D.C. However, this sample of students differs from the sample from the first school both in terms of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Consideration of this data was left for future analyses to maintain an emphasis on how the interviews enriched the interpretation of the statistical analyses calculated for this study.

[2] The demographic information for the participating school was collected in October 2003 but is unlikely to be different significantly from the population from which the sample was drawn in the spring 2003.

[3] The analyses of coefficient differences was carried out on residuals calculated without taking into account the complex sample design of the data.

[4] From a review of the questionnaires and tabulations used by Keeter et al. (2002) respondents in their national sample were asked about political discussions with family and friends together, whereas respondents in the Knowledge Network sample were about political discussions separately for family and friends. It appears that rates of participation with friends and family are not notably different.