ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: BUILDING GOOD CITIZENS: THE ROLES OF
SCHOOL SIZE AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC VALUES

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This project examines the role of place in the socialization of young people into civic values, such as participation and tolerance. Are smaller communities better able to foster democratic values than larger ones? Are young people growing up in racially, economically and politically heterogeneous environments more likely to be politically active than those in homogeneous communities? These questions are related to perennial issues within political science, and are also closely tied to important questions in education policy related to school size. The case made by educational scholars that smaller schools are better for most educational outcomes is similar to the arguments others make about the benefits of small communities. I test whether smaller schools are better for democratic values, and examine the relationship between school size and community context. Are smaller schools better because of their size, or because they are most often found in smaller, more homogeneous communities?

The results show that young people growing up in smaller towns, and those in less heterogeneous communities have higher levels of political knowledge and participation in

school activities, but are less racially tolerant than adolescents living in larger, more diverse communities. In addition, the findings show that school size has very little influence on democratic values, except that young people in smaller schools are more likely to participate in school activities; and, small schools are of some benefit to children in urban areas. The final chapter discusses these results in terms of their normative and policy significance.

BUILDING GOOD CITIZENS: THE ROLES OF SCHOOL SIZE AND COMMUNITY
CONTEXT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC VALUES

by

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Chapter 1

Places and Political Socialization

Most of the work on American political behavior examines individual attitudes

and choices as if individuals make decisions alone, living within a vacuum. Except for

one of the earliest studies of voting behavior (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954),

scholars rarely incorporate contextual factors into their analyses of individual political

behavior. The scholarship on political socialization is much the same. Although there

has been recognition that political socialization is somewhat generationally contingent

(Sears and Valentino 1997), this literature has largely examined individuals outside of the

contexts in which they live. In this project, I show that the socialization of young people

into democratic values is contingent, at least in part, on the geographic environments in

which they come of age.

The agenda for this chapter is to explain the major theoretical constructs that have

shaped my project and to define and discuss the main concepts that will be used

throughout the dissertation. First, I explain the basis for the spatially contingent nature of

socialization, drawing from the literature on social context and adult attitudes and

behavior. Then, I discuss how I define "social context." Communities can be defined in

many different ways, and I justify my choice to examine them in terms of the local

geographical area in which adolescents live and go to school. I introduce the data that I

use to conduct my analyses, but more detail is found in the next chapter. Here, I also

discuss each dimension of context that I examine in the dissertation and explain my main

hypotheses for the relationships between context and the development of democratic

values. The third section of this chapter defines my conception of "democratic values" and discusses why I have chosen to focus on political knowledge, efficacy, participation and tolerance.

The final part of this chapter introduces a separate, but related, aspect of this project centering on one aspect of education policy. Public schools are both important agents of socialization and critical institutions within communities. Their size and composition are often closely linked to the community's size and composition. I have chosen to examine school size for several reasons. First of all, most political socialization research related to education policy focuses on curriculum and pedagogy. Even though research in education shows the importance of school organization or school climate (Torney-Purta 1983; Torney, Oppenheim and Farnen 1975; Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993), most political scientists studying political socialization have not focused on these factors.

Secondly, the educational literature on school size has neglected to study political socialization. Scholars have examined retention, graduation, achievement and discipline, but have ignored the implications of smaller school size in the development of democratic values, even though civic values are related to many of these other outcomes. Finally, school size is related to community context; smaller public schools are often located in smaller towns and the largest public schools are usually found in large, urban areas or in the suburbs surrounding large cities. I wish to analyze the potential benefits of reducing school size after controlling for various aspects of the community context. Are smaller schools more beneficial in some places than in others? Advocates for smaller

schools argue that widespread policy change is necessary; yet, if smaller schools are only advantageous in urban areas, for example, widespread change may not be necessary.

Political Socialization and Social Context

Political socialization research within political science has undergone a renaissance in the last few years. Interest in political socialization "tends to increase during periods when there are heightened concerns about the stability of democratic regimes…" (Flanagan and Sherrod 1998, 448). In the 1950s, scholarship in socialization focused on the development of diffuse support for political systems in response to World War II and the spread of communism. Work in the 1960s and 1970s responded to the social movements of that time. Today, scholars are concerned about young people's alienation from and disdain for government and politics. The alarm about declining "social capital" (Putnam 2000) and political knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996) has created a resurgence in an almost extinct literature (Beck and Jennings 1991; Niemi and Jennings 1991; Sears and Valentino 1997; Flanagan and Sherrod 1998; Hahn 1998; Niemi and Junn 1998; Conover and Searing 2000; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald and Schulz 2001; Sherrod, Flanagan, and Youniss 2002; Gimpel, Lay and Schuknecht 2003).

Yet, even though political socialization research is reviving, much has remained the same. Most socialization scholarship examines high school and college students. It is difficult to conduct research using minor students, and the younger they are, the harder it is to obtain consent for research. This does not pose too much of a problem for political socialization scholarship, however. The period of adolescence is the time when individuals begin to develop their self-identities (Erikson 1963), including civic identities

(Youniss, McLellan and Yates 1997). Research points out that it is not until adolescence, or late adolescence that individuals begin to settle upon the opinions and values that many will maintain throughout their lives (Beck and Jennings 1982; Jennings and Marcus 1984; Alwin and Krosnick 1991; Fendrich and Lovoy 1988; Marwell, Aiken and Demerath 1987; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995).

Researchers today are still interested in many of the same outcomes as examined in studies many years ago: political knowledge, interest in politics, trust in government, and intention to participate. Largely because of an interest in civic engagement, researchers today have also begun to analyze participation in school and civic activities, especially community service (Mann and Patrick 2000; Walker 2002; Astin, Sax and Avalos 1999). Some are looking at political discussion and generalized trust in other people.

Most scholars also continue to focus on the same agents of socialization as those who conducted research 30 years ago. Even today, scholars are focused predominantly on the role of parents (Jennings and Niemi 1968, 1974; Langton 1969; Connell 1972; Tedin 1974; Beck and Jennings 1975, 1982, 1991; Dalton 1980; Niemi and Jennings 1991), peers (Langton 1969; Tedin 1980; Campbell 1980) and the role of civics instruction (Hess and Torney 1967; Langton 1967; Langton and Jennings 1968; Finifter 1974; Merelman 1980; Niemi and Junn 1998) in the process of adolescent political development.

My project diverges only slightly from these works. I examine the same population – high school students – as well as most of the same outcomes – political knowledge, efficacy, and participation. I also include tolerance for diversity as an

outcome related to democratic values. Where my project departs most significantly from others is with the factors that influence socialization. Instead of analyzing the roles of parents, peers, or civics curricula, I focus on the communities in which these traditional socialization agents are located. In causal terms, I will take a step back in the "funnel of causality" of attitude development by looking at the larger set of factors that then influence the socialization by parents and schools. The theoretical model is illustrated in Figure 1.1. I expect to find both direct and indirect effects of community context.

Figure 1.1: Illustration of Theoretical Model of Community Context and Democratic Values

| Community Context | | Individual-Level Predictors | Democratic Values |

Community Context
Comm Size & Composition

Social Interaction

Info Processing

Individual-Level Predictors
Race/Ethnicity
Parent's SES
Edu. Aspirations
Grade
Civics
Pol. Ideology

Democratic Values

Knowledge
Efficacy
Participation
Tolerance

In essence, I will show that the agents of socialization are not located in a vacuum. Parents, peers, and schools are part of larger communities. The direct link between community context and democratic values is through objective resources and characteristics of a community. A poor neighborhood, for example, has fewer resources for libraries and community centers. To the extent that these, and other facilities give

young people advantages in school and in life, those growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods and communities are less likely to see these benefits.

The indirect link is through a combination of social interaction, information processing and individual characteristics, such as race, grade level, or civics exposure. The agents of socialization impart information to young people that forms the basis of their political attitudes and behavior. The social and political context influences the content of this information, as well as how individuals process it. I do not mean to say that all agents are spatially contingent; for instance, the national media are an important socializing force, but the content is largely the same whether children live in Maine or Arizona. However, even with the media, although the content may not vary across communities, the perception and meaning of the information will likely vary across different contexts.

First, the environment influences the information that is given to young people in their schools and homes. Information is transmitted through a variety of social interactions, both face-to-face discussions and non-verbal communications. Social context matters because it provides opportunities and imposes constraints on the types and frequencies of social interactions (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). Cialdini indicates

> Individuals learn appropriate social behavior from observing each other. This proposition emphasizes the interconnected nature of social life, underlining the centrality of observing and copying others as people perceive, evaluate, and make decisions about how to act...Whether the question is what to do with an empty popcorn box in a movie theater, how fast to drive on a certain stretch of highway, or how to eat a chicken at a dinner party, the actions of those around us will be important in defining answers (1984, 117).

Individuals look to one another for information on all sorts of things – from dining etiquette to the candidate most qualified to hold office. Interactions provide important information that is used in making choices and forming political attitudes (Mutz 2002; Beck, Dalton, Greene and Huckfeldt 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Books and Prysby 1991; Huckfeldt 1983, 1986; Putnam 1966; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954).

Interaction can include face-to-face encounters with others in one's family or at work, as well as with strangers one meets in the supermarket or the post office. Theories based on social cohesion hold that intimacy or trust among friends is responsible for personal influence on political attitudes (Burt 1987). Early work on vote choice found that informal social pressures from those with whom an individual lives and works have a significant impact on vote choice (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1944; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954). Recent work suggests that discussions with co-workers and others with whom one may have "weak ties" continue to be important for political attitudes and behavior (Mutz 2002; Granovetter 1973).

Interaction also encompasses a variety of behaviors that do not entail actual discussion among individuals. Political yard signs in an affluent neighborhood and bumper stickers on a pick-up truck offer information about the attitudes and opinions of those associated with a particular group. Theories of "structural equivalence" contend that a person is influenced by another individual to the extent that they share structural characteristics, such as occupations or religions, not necessarily personal relationships (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). Burt states, "in structural equivalence models, the analytical frame of reference shifts from dyads" as in social cohesion models, to the

"social system" (1987, 1294). Thus, a person behaves in the way he thinks *someone like him* would or should behave. Social interaction provides information that aids individuals in making their political choices, and in developing political attitudes.

The content of the information is not the only factor that is influenced by the local context. The environment also affects the processing of information. In a social environment, individuals are routinely exposed to particular biases based on the composition of the environment. Some communities are strongly Republican, some are all black, and others have many elderly residents. These biases not only affect the content of information, they also make certain information more cognitively accessible. It would be difficult for someone to have at hand personal knowledge about the lives of immigrants if they live in a community where there are no recent immigrants. The environment "may alter which content is most likely to be used" in making political decisions (Burbank 1995, 623). Individuals develop a heightened sensibility to particular information based on the biases in their environments. Because individuals consume massive amounts of information at all times, that which is most accessible is most likely to be used in making judgments about new information (McGuire 1968).

Although the research on the effects of context has been almost exclusively conducted on adults, the theories translate easily to the political socialization of adolescents. The traditional "agents" of socialization – parents, peers, and schools – are all a part of the social and political fabric of a local community. Their opinions, and thus, the information they transmit to young people, are shaped by and maintained through the interactions within their local environment. Based on the compositional biases within the context, information is passed on to children and youth as social norms and community

values that many young people then adopt as their own. Just as context influences adult political behavior, it also shapes the socialization into these values and opinions among young people.

What is Social Context?

Context varies across both space and time. Generational effects are the products of differences in context across time. Children of the "Greatest Generation" often have different opinions from the Baby Boomers because of distinctive events and circumstances occurring as they came of age (Sears and Valentino 1997; Valentino and Sears 1998; Beck and Jennings 1991). Context also varies across space. Customs and traditions are different across different countries, which helps explain differences in political behavior and attitudes (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald and Schulz 2001). I argue that the experience of growing up varies not only across generations and countries, but also across local communities, and these variations influence political attitudes.

The term "community" can have many different theoretical meanings and could be operationalized in different ways. Many perceive of communities as places with identifiable boundaries, as in the area immediately surrounding where one lives. They can be thought of in this way as concentric circles, where in the middle lies one's home. The first circle includes the neighborhood, or the town, depending on its size. Cities are often broken up into several neighborhoods, while residents of small towns may either live "in town" or "out of town." After the immediate local surroundings, one also belongs to states, regions, and countries. Researchers looking at communities in

geographic, or spatial, terms examine them using zip codes, Census areas, political precincts, or school districts.

Others think of communities that do not correspond to points in space (Fischer 1982; Wellman 1988). One can belong to professional "communities" or support groups, like Alcoholics Anonymous, that become a group, or "community," of importance for individuals. Given technology, many individuals belong to online discussion groups or internet gaming groups. In these cases, individuals may never meet face-to-face, but many insist they should still be considered communities. Scholars empirically define these types of communities by asking individuals questions about feelings of belonging, and about their memberships and activities.

I analyze communities as the geographic places where young people live and/or go to school. This type of examination of places assumes that the social relations in these places constitute a particular "social fabric" that influences particular outcomes, and that it is possible to make inferences about the social relations by looking at the locations geographically. In this way, a "community" is both a point in space that has geographic boundaries, as well as a social construction, consisting of "friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and on-going socialization processes" (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974, 329). Because communities and neighborhoods are the "foci of emotional and financial investments," I contend that communities and neighborhoods are worthy of attention (Campbell and Lee 1992, 1078). This is especially true for adolescents and children, as they do not have the mobility and life experience of adults. While it is possible for a middle class, middle-aged man to have a variety of contexts that influence his attitudes, this is much less likely for the

average student in a public high school. Their personal networks are more closely fastened to their local community.

I use two sources of survey data on adolescents in public high schools to conduct my analyses. The National Household Education Survey (1999) is a set of national data used among both educational scholars (Schreck, Miller and Gibson 2003; Yarosz and Barnett 2001) and political scientists (Niemi, Hepburn and Chapman 2000). The other source, the Metro Civic Values Study (1999-2000), is based on surveys conducted in 29 distinct communities across the state of Maryland. These data include students in affluent suburbs, inner cities, as well as rural schools. The attitudinal and behavioral variables I use come from these data. In order to examine young people within their communities, I use the zip codes in which the respondents live. I match these zip codes to U.S. Census data and data from the National Center for Education Statistics in order to input the necessary community variables for analysis. The next chapter gives frequencies of the main variables in the analysis, along with a much more detailed description of the sampling procedure and methodology.

I examine four main aspects of the community context that are most likely to affect political socialization, and that depict the social and political fabric of communities: community size, economic composition, racial composition, and political composition. I am especially interested in the role that heterogeneity in the environment plays in political socialization, and will create measures of the diversity in the communities across these dimensions. In the following section, I detail the hypotheses driving this study, and briefly review the literature that led me to these expectations.

Community Size

A great deal of literature in sociology and political science has examined whether large cities are advantageous or detrimental to their residents. Democratic theory tells us that deliberation in the form of face-to-face interaction with other citizens, and as such, direct democracy, is only possible on a small scale. As units increase in size, the practice of democracy becomes increasingly complicated (Dahl and Tufte 1973). Small size not only allows for better personal communication among citizens, it makes communication with leaders easier, helping constituents hold their representatives accountable.

Sociologists look at the relationship between participation and "community attachment" – or one's feeling that he or she belongs in the community, knows their neighbors, and attends community-related events and activities. Many discover that cities are not as beneficial as smaller towns in fostering strong ties to the community. Early sociological scholarship found that people feel alienated from one another because of the high population density and heterogeneity in large (urban) areas (Toennies 1887; Simmel 1922; Wirth 1938). In response to sensory overload and the high stimulus level in urban areas, people withdraw from others.

More recent literature supports these early findings. People know one another in small communities, and thus, are better able to develop norms of trust and reciprocity, to hold people accountable for their behavior, and to develop habits of participation. In smaller communities, individuals often have greater kinship ties to others within the community, and may have lived there for generations. Cities are thought to promote superficial interactions among strangers and allow individuals to live anonymously. Civic participation is higher in smaller communities because they are contexts in which

people feel efficacious and are interested in local affairs (Oliver 2001; Gimpel 1999; Nardulli, Dalager and Greco 1996; Fischer 1975). Robert Putnam finds high organizational involvement and participation in states without major urban centers, such as North Dakota (2000).

Based on this literature, one would expect that adolescents growing up in smaller towns and rural areas to be more knowledgeable, efficacious and participatory than those in urban areas. Although this may true for these outcomes, the issue of tolerance may be different. There is a paradox about small towns. Even as they are lauded for their high levels of social capital and civic involvement, small towns and rural areas are characterized as intolerant, backward, and unaccepting of both categorical (racial, ethnic, religious) and attitudinal diversity. Recent crimes against homosexuals, such as Matthew Shepard, and racial minorities, such as James Byrd, in rural areas are seen by many as illustrations of their intolerant character. Dahl and Tufte posit that an increase in size contributes to "persistent and overt differences in political outlooks, interest and demands" (1973, 91). Wirth (1938) and Simmel (1922) contend that urban life encourages greater tolerance and support for universalist attitudes as a result of density and heterogeneity in urban areas. I expect that political and racial tolerance will be lower in rural and small towns than in urban areas.

In short, I expect to find that the benefits and costs of living in a city or a rural area depend on the outcome one is interested in analyzing. Growing up in a small town may be better for socialization into political knowledge, efficacy and participation, but not the best places for instilling tolerance and acceptance of diverse peoples and opinions. These differences are likely a product of the composition of small communities versus

larger, urban areas. Smaller towns are much more homogeneous than urban areas, both in terms of their demographics (racial, ethnic, religious make-up) and their attitudes (political and social preferences). Although individual urban neighborhoods are extremely homogeneous, the city as a whole is very diverse compared to a small town. For this reason, it is important to examine the composition, including indicators for the racial, economic, and political composition of communities. Size effects may simply drop out once I control for the composition of the towns.

Socioeconomic Composition

At the simplest level, the socioeconomic composition of the community provides (or denies) objective resources. Affluent communities are more likely to have public schools with new textbooks, excellent equipment, athletic facilities, and a plethora of Advanced Placement classes from which children can choose. They attract the best teachers and administrators because of the salary, safety and desirability of the areas, and the opportunities to teach college-bound students with fewer behavioral and academic problems. Impoverished communities, whether in urban or rural areas, have difficulty attracting good teachers, and often suffer from run-down facilities and little money for new textbooks, equipment and state-of-the-art athletic facilities. Teachers and other personnel are often unwilling to teach in these places because of safety issues, and the likelihood of teaching "problem" students.

Beyond the quality of the schools, the socioeconomic composition confers other objective advantages and disadvantages. In poor communities, there are fewer libraries and community centers, fewer places of (legitimate) business and doctor's offices, and

fewer single-family homes and more rental and public housing. Impoverished

communities, especially those in urban areas, have higher crime and unemployment rates.

These objective differences do not simply mean that individuals in impoverished

communities must travel further to the doctor or to their jobs than those in affluent areas.

The objective criteria bestow psychological and social benefits and burdens that have

serious consequences for socialization.

As discussed earlier, in addition to objective resources, the socioeconomic

composition produces a set of norms for behavior and attitudes through social interaction

(Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). In this way, the

composition can have beneficial or detrimental effects on the socialization of young

people. Growing up in an affluent neighborhood is likely to bestow certain psychological

and social benefits on all children, regardless of their own family background. According

to theories of collective socialization and contagion, affluent communities are better for

all children (Jencks and Mayer 1990; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, and Sealand

1993). With collective socialization, members of the community use both formal and

informal methods of social control to let residents, especially children, know what is and

is not acceptable. Contagion describes how behaviors, both good and bad, spread from

peer-to-peer (Brooks-Gunn 1995). Where individuals are employed and where they are

politically and socially engaged, young people "catch" these behaviors. Similarly, where

there are many who drop out of school and where many teenagers have children of their

own, these behaviors are also contagious.

William Julius Wilson's work describes how the processes of collective

socialization and contagion work, along with the structural inequalities of joblessness and

discrimination, to create an "urban underclass" where poverty, unemployment, and crime are perpetuated in each generation that grows up in that environment (1987; 1996). Legitimate sources of employment are increasingly located outside the neighborhood, and many poor, urban residents do not have transportation or child care to get to jobs. Young people lack role models engaged in society-sanctioned behaviors. They see many of their peers drop out of school, have babies, and begin to engage in illegal activities. Socialization into the community's culture involves learning to "follow one's inclinations as they have been developed by influence or learning from other members of the community that one belongs to or identifies with" (Wilson 1996, 66). The interactions with others in the neighborhood inhibit social control by creating an environment of social disorganization (Sampson 1997).

These theories suggest that adolescents growing up in affluent neighborhoods and communities are likely to have higher levels of knowledge and other democratic values. Findings of this nature are likely to surprise almost no one, and so, in addition to the economic composition, I also examine its interaction with community size. Much of the literature on the deleterious effects of poverty is located within urban politics, urban education and urban sociology. Because the data I employ include an entire range of community types, I can examine whether poverty has the same negative consequences in small towns and suburbs as it does in urban areas. Given the literature detailed above related to community size, it is plausible that poverty does not affect smaller towns in the same way that it affects urban areas. Smaller towns are similarly impoverished and set apart from mainstream society as cities, and yet, political participation and interest is generally at higher levels in small towns versus cities.

Racial Composition and Heterogeneity

Racial composition influences the development of political attitudes through the interaction of one's individual racial categorization and the racial composition of the environment. There are three main theories related to racial heterogeneity and political behavior, especially attitudes related to tolerance. They are the power-threat theory, the contact hypothesis and racial group identity theory. These theories often generate contradictory hypotheses, and were conceived, almost exclusively, to explain the attitudes and behaviors of whites and blacks. Even so, they offer a starting point at which to begin setting up expectations and testing hypotheses.

Power-threat theory holds that as the proportion of blacks in the local environment increases, white racial attitudes become more hostile, and whites turnout to vote at higher rates (Blalock 1965; Key 1949).[1] According to this hypothesis, whites are more hostile to integration (Wilcox and Roof 1978; Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Blalock 1965) and are more ideologically conservative (Giles and Hertz 1994; Glaser 1994) when blacks make up a greater proportion of the their community because they feel threats to their economic, social and political standing. Intolerance and violence is most apparent in places where whites have held longtime majority standing (Green, Strolovich and Wong 1998). The racial environment may have different effects on some democratic values than others. While an interracial community might foster turnout due to threat perception, it may depress tolerance.

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[1] Most of the literature on each of these theories has analyzed black/white relations, with little analysis of other racial minorities. I expect there will be some differences and some similarities among blacks, Latinos, and Asians with regard to these theories.

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Other scholars believe that interracial contact has the opposite effect – familiarity breeds acceptance, rather than contempt. The contact hypothesis contends that an individual's prejudices can be alleviated by new, positive information derived from contact with others from different racial groups (Allport 1954). Interracial contact is thought to reduce prejudice through various mechanisms. Contact introduces information contradicting group-based stereotypes through the exchange of more intimate information (Dixon 2001).

There is virtually no consensus, however, that this is indeed the case. Many scholars find empirical support for the contact hypothesis for both whites (Carsey 1995; Meer and Freedman 1966; Sigelman and Welch 1993) and blacks (Ellison and Powers 1994; Works 1961). Yet, literature on school desegregation indicates that mere contact does not automatically breed friendships and understanding among people of different races (Braddock, Dawkins, and Wilson 1995; Bullock 1978; Miller and Brewer 1984; Schofield 1989; Short 1993). The nature of the contact is important. Prejudice is lessened only in certain circumstances, such as when groups are forced to cooperate with one another, as in the "Robber's Cave" experiment (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood and Sherif 1961), or when contact is among people of equal status (Allport 1954; Dovidio, Gaertner and Validzic 1998; Jackman and Crane 1986).

Finally, the last theory is racial group identity theory. This theory is part of social identity theory, which is based on the idea that members of groups compare their in-group with out-groups, and that members of subordinate groups feel a need to compensate, in some way, for this identity (Tajfel 1978). There are several ways of accomplishing this, including everything from rejecting one's identity to forming strong

social bonds with other members of the in-group to counteract negative stereotypes and discrimination within society.

The strength of one's racial identity is believed to vary by the racial composition of one's community or neighborhood. It may be most salient and influential on behavior in places where blacks (and other ethnic minorities) are in areas of high black density (Bledsoe, Welch, Sigelman and Combs 1995). Evidence is mixed about the effectiveness of a strong racial identity in promoting political participation. Some find that a strong identity aids participation and tolerance among racial minorities (Bledsoe, Welch, Sigelman and Combs 1994; Gurin, Hatchett and Jackson 1989; Jackson 1984; Herring, Jankowski and Brown 1999). Others suggest that this identity leads individuals, especially adolescents, to rebel against the dominate white, middle-class culture and associate success, such as good grades and school participation with "acting white" (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ogbu 1991). Thus, it is unclear whether a homogeneous environment that fosters a strong racial or ethnic identity will promote democratic values among members of racial minorities. My study will speak to this question.

Given that the theories generate opposing hypotheses, it is difficult to develop an overall hypothesis about the effects of racial composition and heterogeneity on democratic values. Even so, there are good reasons to doubt the likelihood that racial heterogeneity and interracial contact, as practiced in this country at this time, is going to foster racial tolerance. Given that contact between different racial groups is rarely between equals, and that in many respects, America is becoming more segregated rather than less segregated (Massey and Denton 1993), I do not expect young people in the most

diverse setting to exhibit more tolerant attitudes than those in homogeneous environments.

I should note that the implications of my findings will be complicated and challenging, both from a normative standpoint and in terms of public policy. For example, assuming my hypothesis is correct and that some racial diversity is better than none or a lot, this poses a serious normative issue. Is it best to maintain stability and not "rock the boat" by keeping the "right" balance of racial heterogeneity? This harkens back, in many ways, to arguments against the integration of schools and neighborhoods. Furthermore, from a policy perspective, there may be no ethical way to construct communities with particular racial compositions. The political and logistic forces against such manipulation are enormous (for examples in education, see Stone 1998). I will address both the normative and policy implications of my findings in the final chapter, but I realize at the outset that there are no easy answers with regard to these questions.

Political Composition and Heterogeneity

The final set of contextual variables I discuss is political composition. I am most interested in the role of party dominance, or political heterogeneity, in the development of democratic values. Party strength, in this sense, is the extent to which a community is dominated by one party. The domination of one party within communities has been and is quite common within the United States. For many years, the South was "solidly" Democratic, where voters would identify and vote Democratic for every office, from local sheriff up to president. Although this has certainly changed, even today the map of

the U.S. can be thought of in terms of "red and blue America," where some states are strongly Republican, and others are strongly Democratic.

Party strongholds, by definition, have very weak party competition. Minor parties generally assume that it is a waste of scarce resources to sink time and money into an area that has always gone to their rival. Competitiveness fuels interest and discussion, and stimulates media coverage and campaign advertising. Voters, and potential voters, identifying with the minor party in environments on one-party dominance are, at most, disenfranchised, and at least, underrepresented by their party and their elected officials. These residents are less likely to participate because they know their candidates is unlikely to win. One-sided contexts not only affect participation, but they also influence levels of political efficacy and political discussion. Minorities are less likely to discuss politics and share their views than those in the majority (Noelle-Neumann 1984; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). Although noncompetitive districts dampen turnout and interest among all voters, because they see no reason to get involved, the effects are likely to be more destructive for those in the minority party. I expect to find, then, that adolescents identifying with a minor party in a community of one-sided contests will have less support for the democratic values I am studying.

What are Democratic Values?

I have chosen to focus on four key democratic values that I believe capture the essence of "good" citizenship and the attributes many hope children acquire by the time they enter adulthood. These are political knowledge, political efficacy, participation in school and civic activities, and tolerance for diversity. Before describing why I have

selected these particular outcomes, I should point out that although I will consistently refer to them collectively as "democratic values," I understand that political knowledge and participation in school activities are not "values" in the sense that psychologists and political scientists studying political behavior often conceive of them. A value is generally thought to be an abstract concept about what is desirable or undesirable and is believed by some to be a building block of human behavior (Rokeach 1973). In this case, I am truly only examining one value – tolerance. Political knowledge is more about skills that are necessary for participation; efficacy is more of a belief in one's ability; and participation is most certainly an activity, and not a value. The main reason for referring to them as democratic values is for simplicity. Yet, I did not select the term "value" haphazardly; instead, each of these attributes is something that is *valued* within democratic societies. For these reasons, I consistently refer to my dependent variables as democratic values.

Political knowledge is one of the best predictors of political participation among adults (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). High school students with more knowledge are also more likely to participate in school activities and to say they will vote in the future (Niemi and Junn 1998; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, and Schulz 2001). Political knowledge is an essential building block to all the other values. By political knowledge, my concern is with fundamental knowledge about political structures, historically significant events and the identities and roles of officeholders in the political system (Garramone and Atkin 1986).

However, knowledge is not everything. Individuals must believe that they have the capacity to engage in politics and that if they do so, their voice is meaningfully heard

at some level of government. It is imperative not only to teach young people the facts about their government, but also to impart a sense that participation is meaningful. Among the mechanisms of personal agency, "none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives" (Bandura 1993, 118). "Self efficacy" has been defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura 1997, 2). In social learning theory, perceptions of self-efficacy influence one's choice in activities, the perseverance and level of effort one has in pursuing an activity, and ultimately, the degree of success achieved. Political efficacy, like self-efficacy, is thought to be central to political participation – a necessary prerequisite for the exercise of duties as simple as voting and as complex as contacting government officials or volunteering for a campaign (Campbell, Gurin and Miller 1954; Abramson and Aldrich 1982). Internal political efficacy is the sense that one has the necessary resources and knowledge to effectively participate in politics. One could characterize it as one's sense of self-confidence about involvement in politics (Almond and Verba 1963).[2]

Another common variable among socialization researchers today is participation. Because I am looking at adolescents, it makes no sense to focus exclusively on voting, as they are ineligible. I examine students' intentions to vote. Although many students who

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[2] Internal efficacy is only one part of political efficacy. External political efficacy is the belief that your opinion matters and that government is responsive to your needs and wishes. It is not simply a reflection of what one thinks of incumbent office-holders at a given moment, but reflects a more enduring attitude toward the regime (Iyengar 1980). It is theoretically and empirically different from internal efficacy. An individual may have high internal political efficacy – he may believe in his ability to participate in politics – but, he might believe that government is unresponsive and that most politicians are corrupt, and thus have low external political efficacy (Bandura 1993). Because of the restrictions of the data, I only examine internal efficacy here.

say they intend to vote may never actually vote, intention is still important. Those who say they do not plan to vote are very unlikely to vote when they are eligible. I focus more on their activities in school, such as athletics, band, student government, and academic clubs, as well as activities in the community, such as church, boy scouts, and volunteering. Numerous scholars have found that young people who engage in school activities are more likely to participate in politics and civic activities as adults (Youniss, McLellan, and Yates 1997; Flanagan and Sherrod 1998; Astin, Sax and Avalos 1999; Beane, Turner, Jones and Lipka 1981; Hanks and Eckland 1978). School activities offer young people opportunities to learn how to work with others toward a common goal and often, to become involved in their communities by selling advertising for the school paper or by tutoring children at the local elementary school. Some activities, such as student government, give students practice in using the skills necessary for participation as adults, introducing them to basic political roles and processes. It is no surprise that such activities help adolescents "incorporate civic involvement into their [civic] identity" (Youniss, et al. 1997, 624).

Because I am interested in "democratic values" rather than simply "civic engagement," I also include tolerance. While one can be intolerant and still participate in politics, tolerance is still an important democratic value. Broader conceptions of citizenship include democratic deliberation in which citizens discuss the issues of the day with one another, even (especially) those who disagree or are from different groups (Barber 1984). In order to deliberate, tolerance for opposing viewpoints is necessary (Gutmann 1999). I will look at racial tolerance and tolerance for immigrants, as well as tolerance for dissenting opinions.

Finally, although I believe these values capture "good" citizenship, I examine them on a continuum. Rather than conceptualize "good" citizenship versus "bad citizenship" in categorical terms, I examine citizenship in terms of "better" or "worse." While there is understandable disagreement on the exact level of knowledge, or efficacy, necessary to be a "good" citizen, most scholars would agree that more knowledge is better than less, more efficacy is better than less efficacy, and similarly with tolerance and participation (Galston 2001).

School Size

One of the reasons to examine the influence of an educational policy on political socialization is because of the importance of schools in the lives of young people. Schools are important institutions within communities; they are one of the only institutions that everyone, at some point, must pass through. Young people spend the majority of their waking hours in school, or working at some school-related activity. In spite of Coleman's findings in the 1960s that parental socioeconomic status largely determines school achievement and success, most Americans are convinced that education is the key to climbing social and economic ladders. Indeed, education reform has been on the national political agenda, as well as the agendas of many states, for more than two decades. Many believe that at least one of the reasons parental background is such a strong precursor to educational success is because upper-income families have access to better schools, with more opportunities and better teachers. The achievement gap between low-income and affluent children is due, at least in part, to unequal educational opportunities.

I chose to examine the policy issue of reducing school size because of my interest in community effects on socialization. Public schools and the communities in which they are located are certainly related in size and composition. Public schools in urban areas are larger (see Table 1.1) and are more diverse (see Table 1.2) than schools in small towns. Although there is much more to the school experience than its size, school size is one aspect of organization and structure, and as many educational scholars point out, size influences aspects of school climate (Bryk and Driscoll 1988; Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993).

Smaller schools feel more like a community. The atmosphere in smaller schools is less formal, less institutionalized as it is often described in large urban and suburban schools. Teachers and students know one another, and parents often have more trust in their school authorities (Wasley, Fine, Gladden, Holland, King, Mosak, and Powerll 2000; Lee and Loeb 2000). Students feel better about themselves and their life chances in small schools (Rutter 1988; Fowler and Walberg 1991; Gregory 1992). They can receive individual attention, and teachers are better equipped to prevent students from falling through the cracks. Advocates of small schools insist that they are especially beneficial to students from low-income families and racial minorities (Friedkin and Necochea 1988; Johnson, Howley and Howley 2002; Howley 1995; Huang and Howley 1993).

The tide seems to have turned against big schools, and many agree that smaller schools are better. Why, then, are schools so big? For the first part of the 20th century, education policymakers and academics favored large schools on the grounds that they could produce economies of scale (Buzacott 1982; Guthrie 1979). Schools had to

Table 1.1: Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment, Number of Schools and Average Size by Type of Locale, 1998-1999

	Number of Students Enrolled (in thousands)	Number of Schools	Average School Size
Central City of Large MSA[1]	7423	11662	680
Central City of Midsize MSA[2]	6616	11911	567
Urban Fringe of Large MSA[3]	14692	22854	655
Urban Fringe of Midsize MSA[4]	4555	8267	566
Large Town[5]	626	1330	485
Small Town[6]	4747	11847	413
Rural Area Outside a MSA[7]	4323	16159	273
Rural Area Inside a MSA[8]	3707	7980	471
Total	46689	92012	521

[1] Central city of metropolitan statistical area (MSA) with population of 400,000 or more or a population density of 6000 or more persons per square mile
[2] Central city of a MSA but not designated as a large central city
[3] Place within the MSA of a large central city
[4] Place within the MSA of a midsize central city
[5] Place not within a MSA but with population of 25,000 or more and defined as urban
[6] Place not within a MSA with a population of at least 2,500 but less than 25,000
[7] Place with a population of less than 2,500 outside a MSA
[8] Place with a population of less than 2,500 inside a MSA

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data survey; and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

accommodate the growing numbers of students in the Baby Boom Generation, and rather than build new schools, the argument was that larger schools would better serve this population. Changes in the labor market also demanded a labor force that was more specialized than ever, and many believed that large schools could offer more specialized

Table 1.2: Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment, by Race/Ethnicity and Locale, Fall 1999

	White, non-Hispanic*	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian or Pacific Islander
Central City of Large MSA[1]	24.9	35.2	31.9	7.2
Central City of Midsize MSA[2]	52.6	24.3	17.5	3.6
Urban Fringe of Large MSA[3]	63.1	13.2	17.0	5.9
Place with a MSA[4]	75.3	11.2	10.1	2.0
Large Town[5]	65.3	15.0	11.7	2.0
Small Town[6]	73.7	13.5	8.3	0.8
Rural Area Outside a MSA[7]	79.2	9.5	4.4	1.3
Rural Area Inside a MSA[8]	83.4	7.3	6.3	1.7
Total in all public schools	60.6	16.9	16.5	4.1

*Numbers in cells are percentages.

[1] Central city of metropolitan statistical area (MSA) with population of 250,000 or more
[2] Central city of a MSA but not designated as a large central city
[3] Place within the MSA of a large central city
[4] Place within the MSA
[5] Place not within a MSA but with population of 25,000 or more and defined as urban
[6] Place not within a MSA with a population of at least 2,500 but less than 25,000
[7] Place not within a MSA and designated as rural
[8] Place within a MSA designated as rural

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data survey, 1999

courses and afford amenities like science laboratories, athletic teams and Advanced

Placement courses that would help this generation go to college (Conant 1959).

Education scholars argue that the rising size of public schools (see Figure 1.2) has

caused serious problems for schools and students. They contend that the climate in

smaller schools creates a positive learning and working environment for all students. Statistics show that small schools have fewer problems with discipline and truancy, lower drop-out rates and higher academic achievement (Pittman and Haughwout 1987; Burke 1987; Duke and Perry 1978; Gottfredson 1985; Gregory 1992; Stockard and Mayberry 1992). I examine whether students in smaller schools have higher levels of democratic values than students in larger schools. School climate has also been shown important for fostering civic values (Jennings, Ehman and Niemi 1974; Ehman 1980; Leming 1985), but no one has looked specifically at school size.

I first analyze school size without community controls, in order to try to replicate findings in educational scholarship on the benefits of smaller schools. I then examine whether the relationships between democratic values and size change as I begin to look at

Figure 1.2: Average Public School Size in the U.S., 1900-2000

Source: U.S. Department of Education
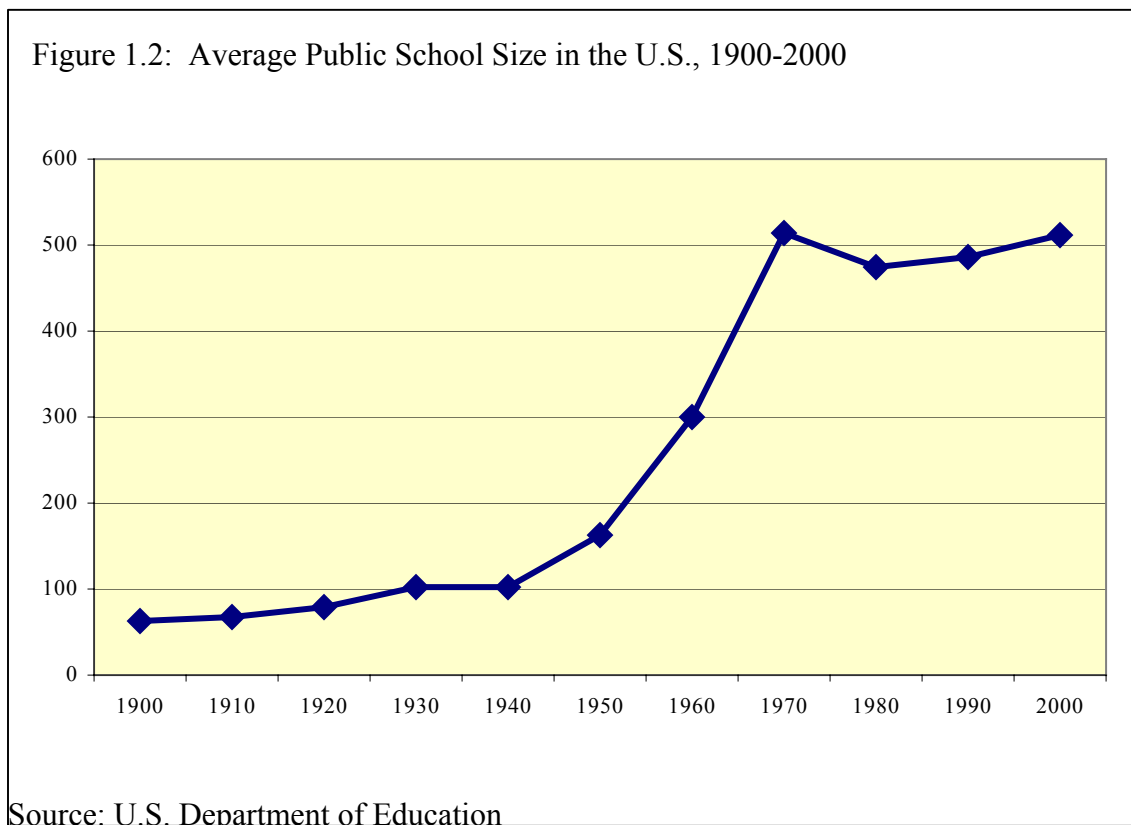
community-level variables. I anticipate that the benefits of smaller school size are more

modest once I have controlled for the communities in which the schools are located.

Given that small schools are more often located in small towns, the benefits of their small

size may be due, at least in part, to aspects of small towns – their size or homogeneity.

Figure 1.3 illustrates the proposed relationships between school size, community context,

and democratic values.

Outline of Dissertation

Chapter 2 describes the data that will be used in the dissertation. As mentioned

earlier, I use two different sources of survey data, the NHES and the MCVS. This

chapter also presents the sampling procedures and frequencies of relevant variables, as

well as the methods use to construct my dependent and independent variables.

Figure 1.3: Predicted Causal Relationships between School Size, Community Context and Democratic Values

Community Context	Individual-Level Predictors	Democratic Values
Comm Size and Composition	Race/Ethnicity Parent's SES Edu. Aspirations Grade	Knowledge Efficacy Participation Tolerance

School Size
Enrollment
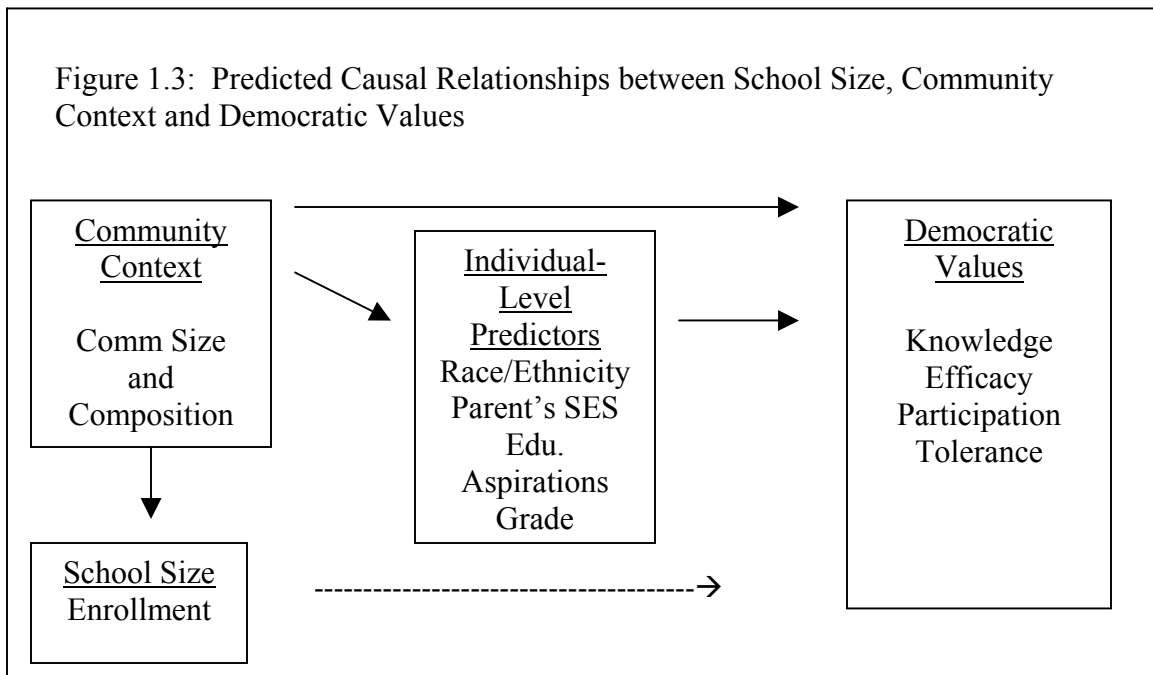
Chapter 3 examines school size and democratic values, without any community context variables. Then, each subsequent chapter examines a different aspect of the community context. In each chapter, I look at school size and environmental influences, in order to learn the role that school size plays independently of the community in which the school is located. In Chapter 4, I test the hypothesis that smaller towns and rural areas have higher levels of political knowledge, efficacy and participation, but lower levels of tolerance.

Chapters 5 and 6 look at aspects of community composition. Chapter 5 examines the socioeconomic composition of the community, and tests the hypothesis that affluent neighbors bestow benefits on all their residents. I also analyze the extent to which the effects of poverty vary across different types of communities. Chapter 6 looks at the hypothesis that children growing up in homogeneous communities may have higher levels of some democratic values, but lower levels of others. Specifically, racial homogeneity might promote political knowledge, participation and efficacy, but dampen tolerance for diversity. The last chapter summarizes the important findings and discusses the normative and policy implications of these findings.

Chapter 2

Data and Methods

In this chapter, I give information about the two sources of data I use throughout
the dissertation. I describe how the data were collected, and report the actual questions
that I use to test my hypotheses. I also present frequencies of the most important
variables in the analyses, and detail how I construct indexes from some of the questions
in the surveys. This chapter should serve as a reference to all proceeding chapters, as I
will not go through the construction of the variables, or their distributions, in subsequent
chapters.

National Household Education Survey

The National Household Education Survey (NHES) is a data collection system of
the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) that is designed to address a wide
range of education-related issues. The NHES is a system of telephone surveys of the
non-institutionalized civilian population in the United States, including all 50 states and
the District of Columbia. Households are selected by using random digit dialing (RDD)
methods, including special procedures to remove nonresidential and nonworking
telephone numbers from the sample. NHES surveys have been conducted in the springs
of 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2001, and 2003 on such educational issues as adult
education, school programs and activities, early childhood programs, school readiness,
and civic involvement. For obvious reasons, I will be using the civic involvement study;
the most recent civic involvement survey was conducted in the spring of 1999.

Interviews were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing. There are three possible surveys a household was requested to answer: Parent Interview, Youth Interview, and Adult Education Interview.[3] The Parent Interview included a variety of educational topics, each appropriate for certain age/grade groups of children. Parents were asked questions about such topics as early childhood program participation, family involvement in learning outside of school, school practices to involve and support families, and about their child's postsecondary education plans. They were also asked information about their child's demographic characteristics, household characteristics, and the child's health and disability status. The response rate for the Parent Interview is 66.7 percent.

The Youth Interview was conducted with young people in grades 6 through 12 whose parents had completed a Parent Interview. The NHES: 1999 Youth Interview focused on school, family environment, civic involvement, community service, and plans for postsecondary education. Interviews were completed on 7,913 youths in grades 6 through 12 (only one per household). The average administration time for the Parent Interview was 14 minutes, and for the Youth Interview, it was 12.5 minutes. Approximately 87 percent of youth whose parents completed their interview responded completely to the Youth Interview.[4] Because I am interested in students in public high schools, my analysis includes only those youth in grades 9-12 who stated they attend a

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[3] The Adult Education Interview focused on the participation of civilian adults (ages 16 years and older and not enrolled in 12th grade or below) in a wide range of educational activities, such as English as a second language instruction, adult basic skills and GED preparation classes, courses taken toward a college degree or vocational diploma. I do not use this part of the survey, since I am interested in traditional public high schools.
[4] This is a conditional response rate (conditional on the parents completing their interview). The unconditional, unweighted response rate for the Youth Interview is 57.9 percent.

public high school (n=3,010). Table 2.1 shows the characteristics of the sample across

many important indicators.

Table 2.1: Characteristics of the Sample in NHES

	Valid Percent
Grade	
Ninth	27.1
Tenth	25.1
Eleventh	24.0
Twelfth	23.7
Region	
Northeast	18.5
Midwest	22.1
South	35.3
West	24.1
Sex	
Male	49.7
Female	50.3
Race/Ethnicity	
White, non-Hispanic	62.7
Black, non-Hispanic	15.6
Latino	16.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.9
Native American	.8
Biracial	1.8
Foreign Born Status	
Native-born, in U.S.	93.5
Foreign born	6.5
Parental Income	
Less Than $15 K	11.7
$15,001-$25,000	13.0
$25,001-$35,000	14.4
$35,001-$40,000	7.4
$40,001-$50,000	11.9
$50,001-$75,000	20.8
$75,001 and up	20.7
Parental Education	
Less Than High School	9.2
High School	26.5
Vo/Tech or Some College	30.7
College Degree	15.4
Post-graduate	18.2

College Plans	
Planning to go to 4-yr college	56.9
Not Planning 4-yr college	43.1

Values in cells represent the percentages of students in public high schools in the NHES across each category. Values may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Dependent Variables

The Youth Interview contained a number of items related to the four dimensions of democratic values outlined in Chapter 1: political knowledge, political efficacy, civic and school participation, and tolerance for diversity. The questionnaire includes two sets of standard-knowledge test questions. Each set is composed of five questions that focus on political leaders, processes and constitutional issues. Half the students were asked one set of knowledge questions, and the other half received the other set of questions. This splits my sample for political knowledge. Because the questions are similar in nature, and the first set of questions yielded a few more total responses, I use this test as my dependent measure throughout the dissertation. These questions can be found in Table 2.2. I constructed a knowledge index by summing the number of correct answers out of five, and then rescaled the variables from 0-100 to ease the presentation of the results. The mean is 38.6 percent correct (n=1784).

There are two efficacy-related questions (see Table 2.2). Here again, I created an additive index by summing the questions. Respondents could answer simply "yes" or "no" for both questions, making three possible answers when the responses were summed (a scale of 0-3). The mean is 1.34 (n=3910).

Political participation is measured by individual item indicators from the survey. Students were asked, "During this school year, have you participated in any school activities such as sports teams, safety patrol, or school clubs?" Students were also asked

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Table 2.2: Question Wording for Dependent Variables in NHES

Political Knowledge Test
1. What job or political office is now held by Al Gore?
2. Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law in constitutional or not…is it the President, the Congress, or the Supreme Court?
3. Which party has the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington?
4. How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a presidential veto?
5. Which of the two major parties is more conservative at the national level?

Political Efficacy
1. People might say, "Politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on." Is this true for you?
2. Also, people might say, "My family doesn't have any say is what the federal government does." Is this true for your family?

Political Tolerance
1. If a person wanted to make a speech in your community against churches and religion, should he or she be allowed to speak?
2. Suppose a book that most people disapproved of was written, for example, saying it was all right to take illegal drugs. Should a book like that be kept out of a public library?

Participation in School Activities
1. During this school year, do you participate in any school activities, such as sports teams, safety patrol, or school clubs?

Participation in Out of School Activities
2. During this school year, do you participate in any activity outside of school, such as music lessons, scouting, church or temple youth group, or organized sports teams?

whether, during the school year, they participate "in any activity outside of school, such as music lessons, scouting, church or temple youth group, or organized sports team like soccer?" They responded either "yes" or "no" to each question. Sixty-nine percent of students participate in a school-related activity (n=3906), and sixty-four percent stated they participate in some type of out of school activity (n=390).

Finally, tolerance for diversity in the NHES is measured by examining two questions related to political tolerance. Again, each individual question has two possible responses, giving the additive index three possible answers (a scale of 0-3). The mean is 1.44 (n=3910).

Independent Variables

The main independent variables in the analyses are school size and the dimensions of community context I use in Chapters 4-6. Because each chapter examines a different set of contextual variables, I save the discussion of these variables for the specific chapters in which they are analyzed. School size is simply measured by the number of students enrolled in the child's school. Howley (1994) contends that instead of examining school enrollment, researchers should look at enrollment per grade. A school with 1000 students that has twelve grades is much different from one has only 11th and 12th grades. I calculated this, and ran many of my analyses. The results did not change, and so I simply use enrollment in school.

Although enrollment within school would not seem to be a complicated variable, it turned out to be incredibly complicated because of the way the NHES collected this information. Since the survey was not conducted with school size effects in mind, researchers simply asked the parents the size of their child's school. Parents were only given four categories, with one of them being "under 1000." Half the parents responded that their child attends a school within this category. First of all, the categorical nature of this very important variable posed a real problem because of a lack of variability. Secondly, I was skeptical that parents have a good understanding of the size of their

child's school. It does not seem to be a common question, like whether their child attends a public school or a private school.

Since school size is such an important part of my analysis, I decided to largely ignore the parents' responses to this question, and entered a continuous variable by hand, along with several other school-related variables (free/reduced lunch proportion, racial composition, charter/magnet school, and whether the school receives Title I funds). I constructed this variable by matching the zip codes for each respondent with the public high school within its borders.[5] The data were obtained from the Department of Education website, which allows for individuals to search for all of the public schools within the U.S. In most cases, this process was straightforward, but other cases were more complicated. First, not all zip codes have public high schools. When this was the case, the DOE data allowed me to search with a 50-mile radius of the zip code. I chose the high school closest to the zip code. Second, some zip codes contain multiple public high schools. In this case, I took the average of all the schools within the zip code. Although there is likely to be some error in this method of coding (i.e., there may be cases where a respondent does not attend the school in his/her zip code), it is simply the best approximation of school size one can obtain. A continuous measure is generally preferable to a categorical one for multivariate analyses.

Another important variable is school climate. Advocates of small schools argue that school size matters because smaller schools provide better educational climates. They are more open, and feel more like a community. The NHES includes two questions that directly ask about the openness of the school's climate. Students were asked if they

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[5] Most of the schools are traditional high schools with grades 9-12. Others contain students in junior high (grades 6-8) and some contain all grades (K-12).

agreed that students and teachers respected one another and if they agreed that students were listened to in school decisions. Both variables had 4 categories, which I recoded to move from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" so that higher values indicate a more open school climate. I created an index by summing the variables. The index has a scale from 2 to 8. The distribution can be found in Table 2.3.

In addition to these main independent variables, I include indicators of civic education, as well as traditional individual controls. The NHES includes two questions related to civic courses. It does not ask students the number of civics courses they have taken, or specifically which ones they may have taken. Instead, the survey asked students, "Last year, did you have any courses that required you to pay attention to government, politics, or national issues?" Students simply responded "yes" or "no." I use this question to measure the influence of civics coursework, although admittedly, a course may require students to pay attention to politics without specifically being a civics course. In addition, students were asked, "As a result of these courses (at school), would you say your interest in things like politics and national issues increased?" Students gave one of three possible answers, which I recoded from "not much at all" to "a good deal." This measures students' attitudes toward their civics coursework. Niemi and Junn (1998) show that when students enjoy their courses, they are more knowledgeable and more interested in learning about government and politics (see also Gimpel, Lay and Schuknecht 2003). Again, distributions are in Table 2.3.

I also control for students' media use, specifically how often they watch television news or listen to national news on the radio. Students could respond that they "hardly ever," "at least once a month," "at least once a week," and "almost every day" watched or

Table 2.3: Frequencies of Independent Variables in NHES

	Valid Percent
School Size	
Under 600	18.7
601-900	12.6
901-1500	25.5
1501-2000	19.8
Over 2000	23.4
School Climate	
Not Open/Closed	3.7
Somewhat closed	21.6
Middle	49.9
Somewhat open	21.3
Open	3.5
Civics Coursework	
No	43.2
Yes	56.8
Civics Increased Interest in Politics	
Not at all	32.1
Some	47.6
A great deal	20.2
Watch News	
Hardly ever	14.4
Once/month	10.2
Once/week	33.9
Almost daily	41.5
Discuss politics with parents	
Hardly ever	35.1
Once/month	24.4
Once/week	33.3
Almost daily	7.2

Values in cells represent the proportion of students in public high schools in NHES.
Values may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

listened to national news. In addition to consumption of news, many scholars have found

that discussing the news with parents is also an important method for young people to

form their opinions about politics (Richardson 2003; Torney-Purta and Amadeo 2003).

In the NHES, students were asked, "Thinking about the current school year, how often do

you usually talk about politics or national issues with (your parents or other adult in the household)?" Again, they responded from "hardly ever" to "almost every day" and their frequencies can be seen in Table 2.3. The individual controls are grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, parental income, parental education status, and whether students plan to go to a four-year college. These frequencies are located in Table 2.1.

Metro Civic Values Study

The Metro Civic Values Study (MCVS) began with aim of representing a variety of geographic contexts in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area (Gimpel 1999-2000). The sample was selected using multistage cluster sampling techniques. In the first stage, 14 clusters, in the form of school districts, were selected within the greater Baltimore-Washington area (including the entire state of Maryland) that represented urban, suburban, and rural contexts of varying levels of homogeneity on relevant population characteristics, such as race, socioeconomic status, political partisanship and political participation.

At the next stage, researchers selected schools out of the 14 clusters by random draw. They selected a few more schools in the districts with larger populations, because of their greater heterogeneity across the relevant dimensions. Each district had a minimum of one school selected. Once the school sites were selected, the students were then selected. Ideally, students would have been selected randomly, however given the necessity of cooperation of school authorities, a less than perfectly random selection was obtained. School authorities would not allow researchers to disrupt regular school activities by randomly taking students out of their classes to complete a survey. Instead,

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researchers were required to add something to the social studies curriculum and to survey students within their social studies classes.[6]

Fortunately, social studies is a sufficiently ubiquitous part of the high school curriculum that the resulting sample is representative of the school population across several dimensions: race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and grade level (See Table 2.4). Although no specific data can be matched on the schools' populations with regard to achievement level, researchers were diligent in making sure that they surveyed classes of various achievement levels. At least half of the students at each school were in the "standard" academic track, and only 1-2 classes per school were A.P. or in the honors track. About 70-200 students were surveyed at each school (depending on school size), yielding a total sample size of 3,062. Surveys were conducted in person, by a member of a small 3-4-person research team in the springs of 1999 and 2000.

Table 2.4: Population and Sample Characteristics in MCVS, by Race/Ethnicity

School	Category	White Non-Hisp.	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other/ Biracial*
School 1	Sample	94	1	0	0	5
	Population	94	4	0	2	0
School 2	Sample	28	60	2	2	8
	Population	22	78	1	1	0
School 3	Sample	55	21	5	6	13
	Population	32	28	25	15	0
School 4	Sample	79	20	0	0	1
	Population	59	38	2	1	0
School 5	Sample	77	8	2	9	4
	Population	74	20	1	4	1

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[6] Researchers gave a short presentation about survey research, and led a discussion related to the items on the surveys.

School	Category	White Non-Hisp.	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other/ Biracial*
School 6	Sample	64	5	7	21	3
	Population	67	6	4	22	1
School 7	Sample	1	95	0	0	4
	Population	1	98	0	1	0
School 8	Sample	84	6	4	1	5
	Population	92	5	1	2	0
School 9	Sample	1	89	2	2	6
	Population	1	92	2	2	3
School 10	Sample	67	22	4	2	5
	Population	71	20	4	4	1
School 11	Sample	95	0	2	2	1
	Population	99	0	0	1	0
School 12	Sample	65	22	1	2	10
	Population	63	31	2	4	0
School 13	Sample	76	5	3	3	13
	Population	75	21	3	1	0
School 14	Sample	27	35	18	10	10
	Population	40	22	26	12	0
School 15	Sample	28	17	31	7	17
	Population	17	30	50	3	0
School 16	Sample	19	50	5	11	16
	Population	20	60	10	10	0
School 17	Sample	98	1	0	1	0
	Population	98	1	1	1	0
School 18	Sample	93	3	2	2	0
	Population	87	11	1	1	0
School 19	Sample	5	74	11	5	5
	Population	10	70	12	8	0
School 20	Sample	4	73	4	7	12
	Population	6	80	5	9	0
School 21	Sample	45	21	4	25	5
	Population	36	35	7	22	0

School	Category	White Non-Hisp.	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other/ Biracial*
School 22	Sample	92	1	0	0	7
	Population	89	8	1	1	1
School 23	Sample	40	37	3	11	9
	Population	34	50	6	10	0
School 24	Sample	76	9	2	6	8
	Population	92	4	1	3	0
School 25	Sample	33	31	9	18	9
	Population	24	37	18	21	0
School 26	Sample	13	36	28	13	10
	Population	16	26	46	12	0
School 27	Sample	33	13	34	10	10
	Population	39	15	32	14	0
School 28	Sample	56	4	4	28	8
	Population	61	4	5	30	0
School 29	Sample	54	13	21	5	7
	Population	66	7	19	9	0

Note: Cell entries are percentages.   Figures may not total 100 percent due to rounding.
* "Other" category for the sample population includes mainly those students who classified themselves as biracial. This category is listed as 0 for most school population statistics because these school districts do not classify their students as biracial or multiracial. The vast majority of bi-racial students were African-American-Caucasian ancestry and these students are usually classified as black by school officials.

Dependent Variables

The MCVS allow me to test all of my dependent variables of interest except for civic and school activities. To measure political participation, I use a question about whether the students would vote in the next presidential election if they were eligible. This is a simple dichotomous variable, and about 70 percent of students indicated they would vote in the next election.

The political knowledge test in the MCVS is similar to the one in the NHES. There are seven questions that address specific leaders and constitutional issues. I summed these variables to construct a knowledge index, and rescaled the index from 0-100. The questions are listed in Table 2.5. The mean is about 70 percent correct (n=2879).

Table 2.5: Question Wording for Dependent Measures in MCVS

Political Knowledge[a]
1. How many Senators are elected from each state?
2. Who is elected to preside in the House of Representatives?
3. Where can you find the Bill of Rights?
4. Presidential elections are held every ____ years.
5. What is the system called in which power is divided between the states and the federal government?
6. Who is the current Vice President?
7. Who is the current Chief Justice of the Supreme Court?

Political Efficacy
1. Other people understand government better than me.
2. I have a good understanding of the issues facing our nation.
3. I'm as well informed as others.
4. Government is too complicated for people like me to understand.

Racial Intolerance
1. Immigrants should learn to speak English ASAP.
2. It is better for different race/ethnicities to live apart.
3. Asian immigration will contribute new ideas and customs to this community.
4. There would be fewer problems in this country if there were fewer immigrants.
5. Hispanic immigration will contribute new ideas and customs to this community.
6. This town would be a better place if more immigrants moved in.

[a] Students were given a multiple choice of four possible answers.

The other dependent measures, political efficacy and racial intolerance, were constructed using principal components, a type of factor analysis. The wording of the questions that make up the factor scores is in Table 2.4. The means are 49.7 (n=3016)

and 46.1 (n=3002), respectively, and each was scaled from 0-100. Factor analysis is often used in connection with opinion surveys when complex attitudes cannot be adequately measured by single questions. The goal of factor analysis is to take a matrix of correlations among related variables and explain them in terms of a single or small number of underlying factors (Kline 1994). A factor is a dimension, or construct, which is a condensed statement of the relationships among a set of variables. Principal components is a type of factor analysis used to "extract" these factors. The first factor, called the component, always explains the most variance in a correlation matrix of survey items. If more than one factor is extracted, the factors are ordered from highest to lowest in terms of the amount of variance they explain.

Principal components is simply another way to reduce several related variables into one measure. When several items are found to be indicative of a single underlying factor, the principal components procedure produces a "factor score" derived from the weighted combination of the individual surveys items that are highly associated with that factor. The eigenvalue tells how much variance the factor score explains, and in general, values less than 1 are not used because they explain such a small proportion of the total variance of the construct. The main advantage over an additive index is that this technique provides the variation explained by the new factor. When items to be combined are not correlated highly (over .5), it is often best to use factor analysis rather than an additive index. Indeed, only one of the variables that I combine for political efficacy and racial intolerance is correlated higher than .5. Tables 2.6 – 2.7 give the results from the principal components analysis for political efficacy and racial intolerance.

Independent Variables

School size is again measured by the number of students enrolled at a school.

There is a continuous measure of this, but the categories are presented in Table 2.8. In

the MCVS, there are many larger schools and very few small schools. Small school

advocates would probably not think of 800 as a "small school," but it is one of the

smallest in these data. This is primarily because the sample was pulled from a region

where the schools are located in major metropolitan areas, where schools are typically

larger.

Table 2.6: Factor Analysis for Political Efficacy in MCVS

	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Component 1	2.05	51.20	51.20
Component 2	0.86	21.42	100.00

Component Matrix	Component 1
Variable	
Other people understand better	0.73
I have a good understanding	-0.70
I'm as well informed as others	-0.72
Government is too complicated	0.72

Correlation Matrix				
	Other people	I have a good	I'm informed	Government
Other people understand better	1.00	-0.28	-0.32	0.47
I have a good understanding	-0.28	1.00	0.44	-0.29
I'm as well informed as others	-0.32	0.44	1.00	-0.30
Government is too complicated	0.47	-0.29	-0.30	1.00

Table 2.7: Factor Analysis for Racial/Ethnic Intolerance in MCVS

	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Component 1	2.50	41.70	41.70
Component 2	1.02	17.00	58.70
Component 3	0.91	15.18	73.88
Component 4	0.65	10.77	84.65
Component 5	0.52	8.72	93.36
Component 6	0.40	6.64	100.00

Component Matrix	Component 1	Component 2
Variable		
Asian immigration contributes	0.72	0.45
Hispanic immigration contributes	0.77	0.36
Better place if more immigrants	0.73	0.01
Fewer problems if less immigrants	-0.72	0.31
Better for race/ethnic to live apart	-0.43	0.29
Immigrants speak English ASAP	-0.38	0.71

Correlation Matrix	Asian	Hispanic	Better place	Fewer problem	Live apart	Speak English
Asian immigration contributes	1.00	0.60	0.39	-0.32	-0.15	-0.10
Hispanic immigration contributes	0.60	1.00	0.44	-0.37	-0.21	-0.14
Better place if more immigrants	0.39	0.44	1.00	0.44	-0.19	-0.21
Fewer problems if less immigrants	-0.32	-0.37	-0.44	1.00	0.30	0.29
Better for race/ethnic to live apart	-0.15	-0.21	-0.19	0.30	1.00	0.08
Immigrants speak English ASAP	-0.10	-0.14	-0.21	0.29	0.08	1.00

School climate is measured by one question on the survey that asked students, "Do you receive the grades you deserve?" Respondents chose from 4 categories that ranged from "never" to "always." This question is designed to measure the students' perceptions of the fairness of school authorities. It does not specifically examine the

Table 2.8: Frequencies of Independent Variables in MCVS

	Valid Percent
School Size	
0-800	12.4
801-1200	14.9
1201-1600	27.6
1601-2000	28.9
2000+	16.3
School Fairness	
Always Deserve Grades	17.9
Usually Deserve Grades	58.9
Sometimes Deserve Grades	20.3
Never Deserve Grades	3.0
Number of Civics Courses	
None	5.5
Less than ½ year	2.6
½ year	11.4
½ year – 1 year	13.1
1 year	31.7
Over 1 year	35.7
Attitudes towards Civics	
Like Studying Government	84.8
Do Not Like Studying Government	15.2
Watch TV News	
0 Days per Week	9.8
1-2 Days	26.3
3-4 Days	26.5
5-6 Days	17.3
7 Days per Week	20.2
Discuss Politics with Family/Friends	
0 Days per Week	36.3
1-2 Days	34.6
3-4 Days	18.8
5-6 Days	6.2
7 Days per Week	4.1
Plans for College	
Planning to go to College	81.8
Not Planning to go to College	18.2

Values in cells represent the proportion of students in schools in MCVS. Values may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

openness of the school climate, as does the NHES, but looks at another aspect of school climate.

The MCVS includes many of the same individual-level information about the students as the NHES (Table 2.7). The MCVS asked students the number of civics courses they had taken, from less than a half-year to more than one year (0-5). The survey also includes a question about the students' attitudes toward their civics courses. Students were asked, "Do you like your civics courses?" They responded on a scale of 0-4, from "not at all" to "quite a bit." I use a dummy variable in multivariate analyses, where 1 = "does not like studying government" and 0 = "likes government." The main reason for this is that we cannot assume that the distance between each category is exactly one point above the previous category.

I also control for students' levels of television news viewing. They were asked, "How many days per week, on average, do you watch the news on television at home?" and gave responses from 0-7 days per week. The MCVS also asks students about the levels of political discussion with parents and peers. They responded that they talked about politics with their parents and friends from 0-7 days per week. The distributions are found in Table 2.8.

Chapter 3

Are Smaller Schools Better Able to Foster Democratic Values?

"The real benefit of a small school is that you can change everything…The whole idea is to engage kids in new and effective ways." – Ann Cook, co-principal of Urban Academy in New York City[7]

The quote above was taken from a recent front-page article in *The Washington Post*. Ms. Cook, like other advocates of small schools, argues that the main reason for the improvements her students have seen at Urban Academy is that it is a small school, with only 120 students. The article discusses the many studies that confirm that smaller schools have substantially lower dropout rates, fewer disciplinary problems, and higher levels of achievement than larger schools. Advocates claim, "What makes a school work is vision and a sense of community…" (Dobbs 2003, A8).

This chapter reviews the literature on school size, and investigates whether smaller schools are better able to foster democratic values than larger schools. Although scholars have examined many different educational outcomes, they have not looked at political socialization. Are students in smaller schools more politically knowledgeable, efficacious, participatory and tolerant? Given that academic achievement and self-efficacy are higher in smaller schools, there is good reason to expect that smaller schools might also benefit the political development of young people.

If this is the case, are smaller schools in the United States better because of an open or democratic school climate? For the most part, small school advocates argue that size is so important because it the chief structural phenomenon of organizations, and that

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[7] Dobbs, Michael. "Big Schools Reborn in Small World" *The Washington Post*, A1. November 28, 2003.

it creates certain types of environments. Large schools must be run as bureaucracies, with defined hierarchies and "chains of command." Smaller schools, however, are often seen as "communities" rather than organizations, and are places where all involved, from administrators down to students, are given greater discretion and trust. This environment is thought by many to be the chief ingredient in small schools' success.

School Size and Educational Outcomes

Between 1930 and 2001, the number of public elementary and secondary schools fell dramatically, from 247,000 to 92,000. At the same time, however, enrollment almost doubled, from 25 million to 47 million students (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). This substantial jump in the average size of public schools has changed the face of education in the United States. The age of one-room schoolhouses where a single teacher instructs children of all ages and aptitudes is long gone. Now, millions of children attend high schools that closely resemble small colleges in their architecture, course offerings, and activities.

Until the 1970s, most of the literature on school size insisted that larger schools were better. These arguments developed out of some major trends in the early to mid-twentieth century. First, according to simple microeconomics, larger schools could produce economies of scale, and would therefore save money while providing a better education for more people. By consolidating small schools into larger schools, schools could reduce redundancy and increase efficiency, much like Ford's factories and other industry in the early 20th century (Buzacott 1982; Guthrie 1979; Michelson 1972).

Figure 3.1: Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1900-2000
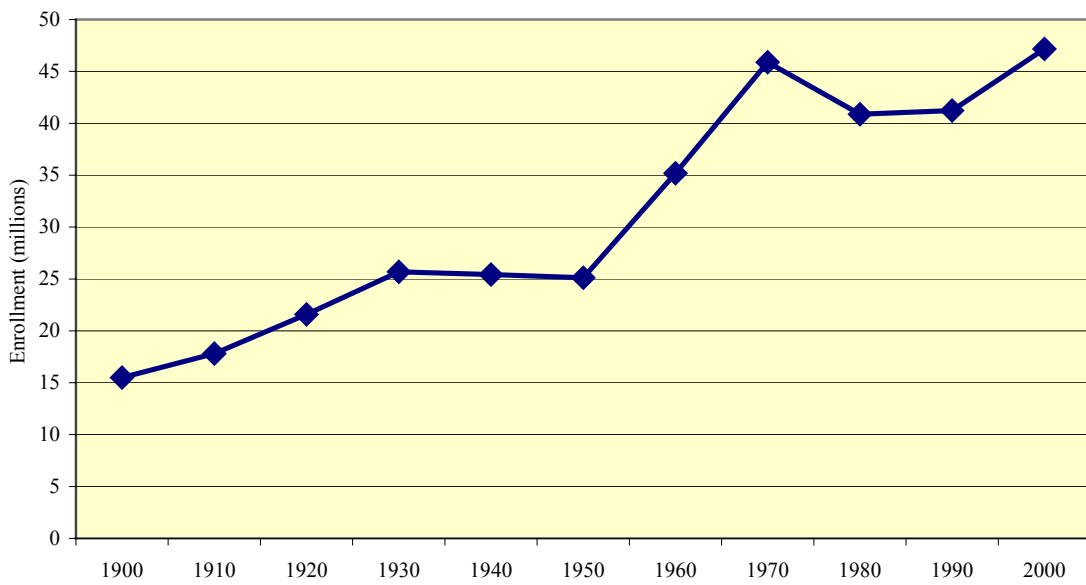
Source: U.S. Department of Education

Figure 3.2: Number of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1900-2000
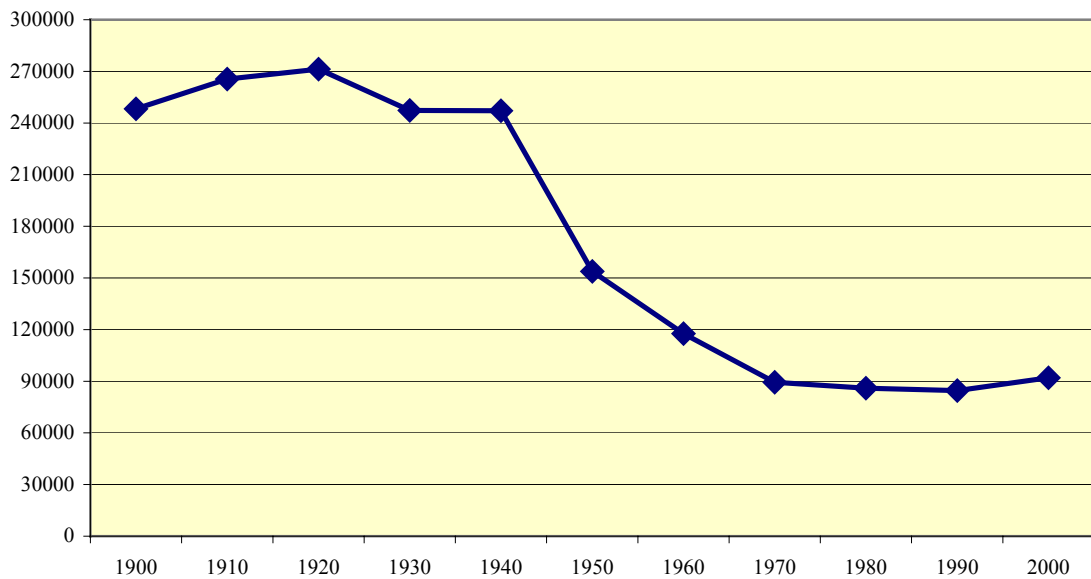
Source: U.S. Department of Education

In the mid-1900s, other trends fueled the move toward consolidation. On the one hand, the Baby Boomers increased school enrollments, and on the other, the economy changed, making a college education a must-have. Many scholars argued that smaller schools simply could not provide adequate resources that students needed in order to obtain either a decent job or admission into a good college. James Conant, former president of Harvard, is the most-cited proponent of this view (1959). He argued that rural schools needed to consolidate so that children from small towns could have the same opportunities as those in the cities and suburbs. He believed that smallness invited the tyranny of rural communities' willingness to overlook those who could succeed in college and become professionals (Hampel 2002).[8] Larger schools would benefit those at both margins. College-bound students could take college-prep courses, while struggling students would have remedial reading and math that would allow them special instruction that would be impossible in a small school with few teachers (Monk 1987).

Starting in the late 1970s, however, the tide began to turn against large, mega-schools. Many scholars have begun to believe that an increase in course offerings is not necessarily a good thing. Increased offerings are generally confined to specialized courses, and usually result in a decline in "core" offerings (Monk 1987). Generally only a small minority of students – usually the more academically talented – in larger schools avail themselves of specialized class offerings (McGuire 1989; Monk 1992; Haller, Monk, Spotted Bear, and Moss 1990). Disadvantaged students are the ones who suffer most in these circumstances, thereby exacerbating inequalities inherent in the school

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[8] Interestingly, Conant argued that schools should have at least 100 students per grade, for a total of 400 students in an average high school. This would hardly be classified as a "large" school by today's standards. Whether he would approve of today's mega-schools is unclear.

population. In fact, smaller schools are found to be most beneficial for those students from low-income families and racial minorities (Fowler and Walberg 1991; Johnson, Howley and Howley 2002; Howley 1995; Huang and Howley 1993; Friedkin and Necochea 1988).

Powell, Farrar and Cohen contend that a wider selection of courses does not benefit even those who avail themselves of the opportunities (1985). They argue that few high school students are capable of making good decisions about their education when they are offered a vast array of courses. The choices they make are based on the knowledge they have at very young ages about what they will need to fulfill their occupational and educational goals. Scholars in human development point out that there is often a large mismatch between what a child says he wants to do, and what he thinks he needs to do to get there (Schneider and Stevenson 2000). They simply do not have the skills or maturity to understand the intermediate steps necessary to obtain their goals. What they may lack in variety, small schools make up for, then, in academic coherence (Rogers 1992).

Small school advocates are quick to point out that, contrary to the economy of scale argument, larger schools are also not necessarily more cost effective. They claim that factors such as teacher satisfaction and turnover, graduation rates, truancy and disciplinary measures, and student achievement are large parts of total expenditures and per-pupil costs. It costs money, time and energy when schools must expend their scarce resources to maintain order, constantly train new teachers, keep children in school, or worry about test scores. Small schools, on the other hand, have fewer problems with discipline and truancy, lower dropout rates, and higher levels of achievement (Pittman

and Haughwout 1987; Burke 1987; Duke and Perry 1978; Gottfredson 1985; Gregory 1992; Stockard and Mayberry 1992).

Finally, small school advocates are adamant that students in larger schools do not achieve at higher rates than those in smaller institutions. In her review, Cotton (1996) points out that about half the literature on student achievement finds no difference between large and small schools (see Huang and Howley 1993; McGuire 1989; Howley 1996; Smith and DeYoung 1988; Walberg 1992). The other half finds small schools to be superior (see Klonsky and Klonsky 1999; Wasley et al. 2000; Lee and Loeb 2000). Lee and Smith find a curvilinear relationship between student achievement and size of high school, suggesting that the best schools lie somewhere between tiny and enormous (1997). There is, however, no literature showing large schools to be superior to small schools.

School Climate and School Size

The main reason smaller schools are more beneficial is that school size defines, along with other factors, "elements of any school's academic and social organization," and "these organizational elements in turn influence outcomes" (Lee 2000, 327). The organization, or climate, of a school creates a particular environment in which teachers, students and administrators interact. In large schools, this environment tends to be more hierarchical and structured; in small schools, the climate is more fluid and feels more like a "community" than a bureaucracy.

Many educational scholars point out that in the rush to provide space for students and to save money, schools neglected the negative side of increasing size and

specialization. In his seminal work on bureaucracies, Max Weber contends that while specialization often increases efficiency, it also depersonalizes and formalizes relationships between individuals (1947). Bureaucracies centralize control, create formal hierarchies, and specialize functions. The transmission of information is often more complex, going from higher departments to lower ones through a "chain of command." This increases the space between individuals and the source of the information, creating a more formal communication system and diminishing individual accountability.

Educational scholars believe this depersonalization has come to define the climate or culture in many large schools. Teachers often have so many students that it is nearly impossible even to learn all their names, much less to know personal problems that might inhibit their ability to learn. "Problem students" are seen, often out of necessity, in long lines outside the dean or principal's office, and there is not much time to truly begin to understand why a student is fighting, skipping, or cheating. Punishment is handed out based on rules established by a school board, with very little discretion given to teachers and administrators to do what they feel is best.

Schools with open climates are those in which the structure of decisionmaking allows for teacher and administrative discretion (Hepburn 1982; Hoge 1988; Wood 1988), and where possible, student input. Size influences many aspects of school climate. Because of the sheer numbers of employees and students, large schools must run as a bureaucracy in order to keep track of everyone. In small schools, teachers interact more often with fewer students, and thus, they know their students better. This knowledge facilitates interest, concern and care about students' success and achievement. Teachers may have the same students in consecutive years, and since there are fewer total

teachers, they have opportunities to discuss particular students with one another. In one small school of 300 students, young people stated, "A lot of teachers are our friends. Some of them…develop real relationships with us. We can go to them when we need help" (Rogers 1992). Where teachers have hundreds of students to keep track of, it is more difficult to develop "real relationships" with students.

Students benefit greatly from a more open school climate. They feel invested in their education, and understand that someone will hold them accountable. The community atmosphere in smaller schools help students to be more positive toward school in general and toward particular school subjects (Gregory 1992; Smith and DeYoung 1988; Walberg 1992; Fowler 1995). In addition, students' attitudes about themselves – their self-concepts – are better when they attend small schools than larger schools (Rutter 1988; Stockard and Mayberry 1992). Small schools strengthen interpersonal relationships, and students report a greater sense of belonging and lower levels of alienation (Fowler and Walberg 1991; Gregory 1992; Rutter 1988; Klonsky and Klonsky 1999). In large schools, subcultures and cliques more easily form, threatening a "focused mission" that is often associated with small schools' effectiveness (Duke and Trautvetter 2001, 2).

School climate is also an important predictor for attitudes like political trust and efficacy (Jennings, Ehman and Niemi 1974; Ehman 1980; Leming 1985) as well as political knowledge and skills (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Niemi and Junn 1998). When school authorities are perceived as fair, for example, young people have more political trust (Jennings et al. 1974, 224). Additionally, when students can make minor decisions about school and classroom operations that affect them, they are often

more tolerant and more supportive of democratic processes in general (Boyer 1990; Eveslage 1993).

Open classroom climates, like open school climates, are those in which students feel they can discuss controversial social and political issues freely and where their opinions are solicited and respected. A "classroom norm" develops, in which teachers lead discussions and provide a safe environment for students to learn to express themselves (Torney-Purta 1983). In these climates, students develop trust in their teachers and fellow students, which often generalizes to other authorities, including political authorities (Leming 1985). Classrooms that are open in this sense are positively related to political knowledge, effective interpersonal skills, a commitment to democratic values, and a sense of obligation to participate in democratic processes (Angell 1991; Torney-Purta and Richardson 2002; Ehman 1980; Torney, Oppenheim and Farnen 1975).

Thus, in summary, smaller schools facilitate open school climates, which have been found to positively influence democratic values, among other educational outcomes. Yet, neither political scientists studying socialization nor educational scholars who study school size has examined the effects of school size on democratic values. If the relationships between size, climate and values is as many suggest, then we should see a significant link between school size and democratic values, such that smaller schools should be associated with higher levels of political knowledge, efficacy, tolerance and participation.[9]

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[9] Another logical reason for expecting a link between school size and civic values is because the outcomes are likely related. Political knowledge is related to overall academic achievement. Political efficacy is a sub-category of general self-efficacy (Bandura 1997), such that students with high overall efficacy are also more likely to have high political efficacy.

What Is a Small School?

In multivariate analyses, I examine a continuous measure of school size, and thus speak in terms of "smaller" and "larger." For bivariate analyses, it was necessary to develop a logical system of categorization. This proved to be no easy task, because even though many educational researchers agree that smaller is better, they disagree as to how small is small enough. Deborah Meier argues that the optimal size is between 300 and 600 students (1995). Fowler (1992) and Howley (1994) argue that schools must have at least 400 students in order to have an adequate curriculum, and Lee and Smith (1995) contend that high school students learn best when enrollment is between 600 and 900.[10]

In initial analyses of school size and various outcomes, I found support for Lee and Smith's range as the most optimal, and therefore, when I use the NHES, I categorize the smallest schools as those with fewer than 600 students.[11] The MCVS do not have enough schools that fit these criteria to make it a worthwhile categorization scheme, so I use a slightly different system, with the smallest schools as those with fewer than 800 students. For this chapter, the NHES results are likely the stronger of the two, given the paucity of very small schools in the MCVS. I use these data to point out the similarity of the results across two very different data collections.

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[10] Howley also argues that instead of examining school enrollment, researchers should look at enrollment per grade, as a school with 1000 students that is K-12 is much different from one that is 11th-12th grades only. I calculated this, and ran many of my analyses. The results did not change.

[11] These results are not reported in tables. Using quintiles of the school size variable, I find that students in schools between 629-1092 are a) more positive about their school climate and b) have the highest levels of political knowledge. In order to make my results consistent with others studying school climate, I chose not to use quintiles, but use the same categories that Lee and Smith use.

Results

Because many education scholars contend that school climate and school size are closely related, I first analyze bivariate results between school size and school climate. Table 3.1 shows results from a cross-tabulation of school climate and school size in the NHES (for variable descriptions, see chapter 2). The two are not significantly related. Students in smaller schools are not statistically more likely to say their schools have open climates than those in larger schools.[12]

Table 3.1: Openness of School Climate across School Size in NHES

| | **Enrollment in School** | | | | | |
	Under 600	600-900	901-1500	1501-2000	Over 2000	Total
Closed	23	14	40	32	36	145
	3.2%	2.9%	4.0%	4.1%	3.9%	3.7%
Somewhat Closed	144	100	214	169	219	846
	19.7%	20.4%	21.5%	21.8%	23.9%	21.6%
Medium	395	249	491	382	431	1948
	54.1%	50.7%	49.3%	49.3%	47.1%	49.8%
Somewhat open	138	105	215	171	203	832
	18.9%	21.4%	21.6%	22.1%	22.2%	21.3%
Open	30	23	36	21	27	137
	4.1%	4.7%	3.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.5%
Total	730	491	996	775	916	

Values in cells represent the number of students. Percentages should be across columns (i.e., 3.2% of students in schools with fewer than 600 students believe their school's climate is closed).
Pearson Chi-Square = 17.902 (p< .33) (Two-tailed test)

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[12] A t-test reveals the mean response for the openness of school climate is .05 points lower for students in schools with over 2000 students compared to those in schools of less than 600 (p<.01). There are no differences between the smallest schools and schools of other sizes.

Similarly, Table 3.2 shows a cross-tab from the MCVS, where the relationship between school size and the students' perceptions of fairness is stronger, but still marginal (p<.10). Students in smaller schools are slightly more likely to say they "always" receive the grades they deserve; 21.1% in schools with fewer than 800 students compared to 17.8% in schools with over 2000 students. Yet, students in the largest schools, of over 2000 students, are slightly more likely to say they "usually" get the grades they deserve, and are much less likely to say they "never" receive fair grades than those in the smaller schools.

Table 3.2: Student Perception of the Fairness of Authorities across School Size in MCVS

	Enrollment in School					
	Under 800	801-1200	1201-1600	1601-2000	Over 2000	Total
Always	87	85	145	134	88	539
	21.1%	19.3%	17.4%	15.3%	17.8%	17.9%
Usually	214	251	478	532	302	1777
	56.9%	56.9%	57.3%	60.8%	61.3%	58.9%
Sometimes	61	90	185	183	94	613
	16.2%	21.4%	22.2%	20.9%	19.1%	21.3%
Never	14	15	26	26	9	90
	3.7%	3.4%	3.0%	3.0%	1.8%	3.0%
Total	376	441	834	90	493	

Values in cells represent the number of students. Percentages should be read down columns (i.e., 21.1% of students in schools with fewer than 800 students believe their school authorities are "always" fair).
Pearson Chi-Square = 19.831 (p<.10) (Two-tailed test)

Small school advocates claim that smaller schools have more open, positive climates where students believe they are respected and treated fairly. These analyses, with two very different sets of data, indicate that school climate and school size are not

closely related. Majorities, or near-majorities, of students in both sources rated their

schools' climates as "medium" (in NHES) or that they are "usually" treated fairly (in

MCVS).

Before turning to multivariate analyses, I present a simple bivariate analysis of

school size with two of my dependent measures: political knowledge and participation in

school activities. Table 3.3 shows that political knowledge is not significantly related to

school size ($p < .65$). I ran the same tests for political efficacy and tolerance, and found

the same non-significant relationship. At least directly, school size does not have an

effect on these outcomes.

Table 3.3: Political Knowledge across School Size in NHES

| | School Size | | | | | |
	0-600	601-900	601-1500	1501-2000	Over 2000	Total
0 Correct	54	35	72	58	74	293
	15.7%	15.6%	15.5%	16.7%	18.5%	16.4%
1 Correct	92	65	111	95	108	471
	26.7%	28.9%	23.9%	27.4%	26.9%	26.4%
2 Correct	75	46	83	65	72	341
	21.7%	20.4%	17.8%	18.7%	18.0%	19.1%
3 Correct	52	35	93	55	68	303
	15.1%	15.6%	20.0%	15.9%	17.0%	17.0%
4 Correct	47	32	68	40	42	229
	13.6%	14.2%	15.6%	11.5%	10.5%	12.8%
5 Correct	25	12	38	34	37	146
	7.2%	5.3%	8.2%	9.8%	9.2%	8.2%
Total	345	225	465	347	401	1783

Values in cells represent the number of students. Percentages should be read down
columns, such that 15.7% of students in schools with fewer than 600 students answered 0
questions correctly.
Pearson Chi-Square: 17.350 ($p < .65$)

However, in the next table I present a cross-tab for size and participation in school activities. Students in schools with enrollments over 1500 are significantly less likely to participate in school activities than those in smaller schools. This may be cause for cautious optimism, but it is also important to note that the smallest schools are not much different from medium-sized schools. Approximately three-quarters of students in the smallest schools up to those with enrollments of 1500 say they participate in school activities.

Table 3.4: Participation in School Activities across School Size in NHES

| | School Size | | | | | |
	0-599	600-900	601-1500	1501-2000	Over 2000	Total
No	199	133	284	271	306	1194
	27.3%	27.1%	28.7%	35.0%	33.4%	30.6%
Yes	529	358	709	504	610	2710
	72.7%	72.9%	71.3%	65.0%	66.6%	69.4%
Total	728	491	994	775	916	3904

Values in cells represent the number of students. Percentages should be read down columns, such that 27.3% of students in schools with fewer than 600 students said that they do not participate in any school activity.
Pearson Chi-Square: 18.610 (p<.001)

Multivariate Analyses in NHES

To conduct multivariate analyses, I use regular OLS regression techniques to examine political knowledge, efficacy and tolerance in the NHES; I use logistic regression to analyze participation because these are dichotomous variables (see chapter 2). Again, the results in this chapter are designed to examine school size absent any community characteristics. Table 3.5 shows the results for each of my dependent measures, absent any other indicators other than school size. Most noticeably, school

Table 3.5: Bivariate Regressions for School Size and Dependent Measures in NHES

	Dependent Variables				
	Political Knowledge[1]	Political Efficacy[1]	Political Tolerance[1]	School Activities[2]	Out of School Activities[2]
School Enrollment	-.001* (.001)	.0001 (.0005)	.0002 (.0004)	-.0001**** (.00004)	-.00003 (.00004)
Constant	36.318**** (1.145)	44.341**** (.761)	47.631**** (.601)	1.019**** (.067)	.623**** (.064)
	N=1782 R^2=.002	N=3907 R^2=.00002	N=3907 R^2=.0001	N=3904 Psd.R^2=.003	N=3908 Psd.R^2=.0001

[1] Values in cells are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients and their standard errors are underneath.
[2] Values in cells are unstandardized Logistic regression coefficients and their standard errors are underneath.
*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001

size is only a significant predictor for political knowledge (p<.10) and school activities (p<.001). These results are as expected: students in smaller schools are slightly more knowledgeable and much more likely to participate in school activities than those in larger schools. Students in the largest school are 15 percent less likely to participate in school activities than students in the smallest school.[13] Thus, even without adding control variables to the analysis, we see no relationship between school size and efficacy, tolerance or out-of-school activities. For this reason, I simplify the results and only present the full models for political knowledge and school participation.

Once I control for civic education, political discussion, and background characteristics, school size is no longer significant for political knowledge, but remains marginally significant for participation in school activities (Table 3.6). The strongest predictor of political knowledge is whether a student is black; black students score almost 12 points

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[13] This is based on the probabilities of the occurrence lowest and highest values of school size, based on the logistic regression.

lower than other students on the political knowledge test. Similarly, Latino students and those who do not plan to go on to college score seven points lower on the test than Anglo students and the college-bound. Girls score about five points lower than boys, and knowledge increases by about three points with each grade level.

Civic education positively influences political knowledge. The NHES does not include questions about the number of civics courses an individual has taken, but instead asks whether his/her courses require "attention to government." The survey also included a question about whether students agree that their class "increased interest in government." Interestingly, whether courses require attention to government does not seem to matter much. On the other hand, when students say that their classes increase their interest in government, they are significantly more knowledgeable. In fact, students whose interests were piqued in class scored 5 points higher on the knowledge test than those who were not interested in government.

The more meaningful results regarding participation are found in Table 3.7. These are the probabilities of the minimum and maximum values for each variable from the logistic regression model. As you can see, school size is just as significant as political discussion with others and parental income. Students in the largest schools are 11% less likely to participate in school activities compared to those in smaller schools; and, students whose parents are the wealthiest are 11% more likely to participate in activities than those whose parents are the poorest. Many argue that parental background is the most important predictor of any educational outcome, but these results suggest that reducing the average school size, at least for participation in school activities, may be as

Table 3.6: Full Regression Models for School Size and Political Knowledge and School Participation

	Political Knowledge[1]	School Participation[2]
	Coefficients (Standard Errors)	Coefficients (Standard Errors)
Student Enrollment	-.001 (.001)	-.0001* (.00006)
School Climate	-.717 (.758)	.035 (.059)
Courses Required Attention to Gov't	4.130* (1.614)	.015 (.119)
Class Increased Interest in Gov't	4.720*** (.987)	.289*** (.077)
Frequency of Watching TV News	1.991** (.751)	.024 (.054)
No College Plans	-7.766*** (1.406)	-.564*** (.104)
Discuss News with Family and Friends	2.463** (.756)	.220*** (.058)
Parental Education Level	4.637*** (.645)	.089 (.050)
Parental Income	.484 (.278)	.058** (.021)
Grade Level	3.520*** (.604)	.039 (.046)
Black	-11.822*** (1.820)	.148 (.140)
Girls	-5.644*** (1.350)	.262* (.103)
Latino	-7.123** (2.761)	-.397* (.201)
Constant	-27.822** (8.029)	-.959 (.604)
	N=1068 R^2=.28	N=2288 Pseudo R^2=.06

[1] Values in cells are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients and their standard errors are underneath.
[2] Values in cells are unstandardized Logistic regression coefficients and their standards errors are underneath.
*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001

Table 3.7: Probabilities from Logistic Regression for School Participation

School Participation

Student Enrollment	Diff	-.11
School Climate	Diff	+.03
Courses Required Attention to Gov't	Diff	+.00
Class Increased Interest in Gov't	Diff	+.09
Frequency of Watching TV News	Diff	+.01
No College Plans	Diff	-.10
Discuss News with Others	Diff	+.11
Parental Education Level	Diff	+.06
Parental Income	Diff	+.11
Grade Level	Diff	+.02
Black	Diff	+.02
Girls	Diff	+.04
Latino	Diff	-.07

Values in cells are the percentage differences from the minimum values to the
maximum values of each variable, based on the logistic regression models presented in
Table 3.6.

important as parental income. From a policy perspective, it is much simpler to reduce

school size than it is to adjust parental incomes.

Discussion

I set out to do three things in this chapter. The first was to test whether smaller

schools were better able to foster democratic values than larger schools, and the second

was to examine the link between school climate and size. I discovered mixed results on

the benefits of school size, and very little support that smaller schools have more open

climates. For the most part, school size does not matter. Even though students are said to achieve at higher rates in smaller schools, using the NHES, they were not more politically knowledgeable. Similarly, although students are said to have higher self-efficacy in smaller schools, they do not have higher political efficacy.

The only real advantage smaller schools have over larger ones in that students are more likely to participate in school activities. Many are unlikely to be surprised that participation is greater in smaller schools than larger schools. In one of the pioneering studies on school size, Barker and Gump examined whether more students participate in school activities in larger schools, given their supposed benefits of increased types of activities (1964). Theoretically, in a large school, there should be more opportunities, providing more outlets to interest more students. Yet, Barker and Gump discovered that a twenty-fold increase in school population leads to only a five-fold increase in opportunities for participation. Large schools may have more offerings, but they do not translate into more students becoming involved. In small schools, every student is needed to fill spaces on athletic teams and clubs; thus, even marginal students will be encouraged to participate. Students in small schools are more likely to hold important positions in extra-curricular activities and will derive greater satisfaction out of those activities (Cotton 1996; Pittman and Haughwout 1987; Lindsay 1982).

If smaller schools are such better places for general achievement and self-efficacy, then why would they not do a better job of fostering political knowledge and political efficacy? It is possible that all the scholarship on school size that finds higher achievement and efficacy is mistaken, although this is unlikely. It could be that political knowledge is not related to general achievement – that there is a different skill set

students must have in order to score highly on a political knowledge that is not necessary on general tests. And, political efficacy may be different from personal feelings of worth and confidence. Yet, this is illogical, as we know that political efficacy is a sub-category of general efficacy (Bandura 1997).

We could blame the data, and claim that the measures of political knowledge and efficacy are not valid. Yet, here again, these are quite similar to measures in many other data that scholars have used for decades. In the end, we seem to be left with the conclusion that school size does not influence political socialization. Yet, this is unsatisfactory, as it forces us to ignore all the logical arguments about the benefits of smaller size.

Instead, the most likely explanation is that size is relative, and that the benefits of smaller schools depend on something else. An emerging line of evidence suggests that the benefits of smaller size vary by the school's composition (Friedkin and Necochea 1988; Bickel and Howley 2000; Howley and Bickel 1999; Johnson, Howley and Howley 2002). Not only do poorer students benefit from smaller schools, but all students in an impoverished community benefit from a smaller school. Students growing up in an affluent suburb may fare better in larger schools, where they can avail themselves of specialized opportunities, and where their parents and teachers are able to provide adequate guidance. In smaller towns or urban areas, where parents and teachers are less educated and have fewer experiences and cannot provide this guidance, students benefit from smaller schools, with more coherence and fewer specialized opportunities. Urban and rural communities are also likely to suffer from many of the same structural

difficulties that make smaller schools easier to navigate (i.e. children with behavioral and learning disabilities, difficulty in attracting the best teachers, inadequate resources, etc.).

In the coming chapters, I examine various aspects of communities and analyze whether smaller schools are more effective in urban areas versus suburbs, or in impoverished communities versus very affluent ones, or in racially homogenous versus racially diverse communities. In so doing, I have two main interests. First, I aim to examine whether the effects of school size on these democratic values vary across different types of communities. I am also very interested in the community-effects themselves. In other words, are students in small towns better politically socialized than those in the suburbs or in urban areas, despite their poverty and isolation? The next chapter examines urban/rural/suburban differences and similarities and seeks to answer this, and other questions.

Chapter 4

Are Smaller Towns Better Places to Instill Democratic Values?

Although there were good theoretical reasons to believe that smaller schools would provide a better atmosphere for the development of democratic values, in the last chapter, I found this not to be the case, except for participation in school activities. In the aggregate, students in smaller schools were no more knowledgeable, efficacious or tolerant than those in larger schools. Why would the literature indicate that smaller schools do such a good job on most other educational outcomes, but not create environments that are more conducive to democratic values?

This conundrum may not be as worrisome, or as surprising, as we might initially think. It may be the case that although school size does not seem to affect civic values in general, instead school size matters more in some environments than others. It is probably unrealistic to think that there is a "one best size" for schools, and that the effects of school size would be the same regardless of other aspects of context. Although much of the literature on school size insists that smaller is better across the board, other scholars argue that the effects of size on traditional education outcomes vary, and that what may be an ideal size in one environment is too small, or too large in another. Lee and Smith (1997) find that the influence of school size varies according to the composition of schools, with stronger effects in low-SES schools and those with high concentrations of minority students. In a study of Arkansas schools, Johnson, Howley and Howley (2002) find that poverty plays a more significant role in student achievement

in larger schools than in smaller ones, and that impoverished students benefit greatly

from small schools (see also Friedkin and Necochea 1988).

Although these scholars study school composition, public schools are a part of

their local communities, and thus, the size and composition of the community are likely

to have similar effects as school composition. Smaller schools are, for example, of

greater benefit to students in poorer communities, versus those in affluent ones. Thus, to

the extent that some types of communities are better able to foster civic values than

others, we should expect that school size will have varying effects on these values in

different environments. This chapter begins this type of analysis, and examines the

effects of school size across communities of different sizes. Are smaller schools more

important in the development of democratic values in urban areas, as opposed to small

towns or suburbs?

Community size has long been a concern for democratic theorists and social

scientists. In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam shows that social capital, which he defines as

"features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate

coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam 1995, 65), is highest in many

of the states consisting of small towns and rural areas (except the South), and lowest in

states with major urban centers. Many scholars before Putnam pointed out the same

relationship between civic participation and city size (Toennies 1887; Wirth 1938; Dahl

1967; Dahl and Tufte 1973). Interaction between individuals, which provides

information that helps people make decisions and form opinions, is of a different

character in small towns as opposed to communities of larger sizes. In this chapter, I

discuss how these theories, all based on adult attitudes and behavior, also explain the

political socialization of young people. I discuss how communities of different sizes differ, and why smaller communities are better places to socialize young people into politics and democracy.

The Variability of School Size

Although much of the research on school size examines it generally, as I did in chapter 3, there are some scholars who contend that while schools should not become too big, smaller schools are more important for certain types of students, or in certain types of environments than in others. Most of this scholarship looks at the interaction of school size and poverty, generally in the form of individual student SES or a measure of poverty within a school (usually measured by the proportion of children on free or reduced lunch). An early study of this kind was based on data from California schools (Friedkin and Necochea 1988), but Howley and his colleagues have conducted studies in many other states. They have consistently found that the relationship between school size and achievement is negative in some places, positive in others, and in some places very weak, and others, very strong (see Bickel and Howley 2000; Howley and Bickel 1999; Huang and Howley 1993; Johnson, Howley and Howley 2002).

Their basic argument is that first, school size is determined at the state level, and thus, to the extent that each state is unique (or at least that types of states are different from others), school size will vary across states. What is considered a small school in rural Vermont is not the same thing that is considered small in New York City; similarly, rural Montana is very different from rural Vermont. Second, the composition of the student body varies within states, so that some schools are very affluent, others quite

poor. Given all the characteristics that go along with affluence, such as access to resources, good teachers, educated parents, etc., the effect of school size is likely to vary within states, according to the SES of the students. Howley's research finds that small schools disrupt the strong relationship between SES and achievement, such that students in poorer schools achieve at much higher levels when the schools are small than when they are large. In other words, school size matters much more in disadvantaged communities than in affluent ones.

Educational scholars are generally more concerned with schools than they are with communities. Even so, the composition of public schools is derived from the composition of the communities in which they are located. Affluent schools are found in affluent communities; poor schools result from poor communities. As such, just as the effects of school size vary by the SES of the school, they would also differ according to the composition of the community. I address racial and economic community composition in the next chapters, but I begin in this chapter by examining community size. Size is, after all, the most general attribute of a community. And, in many cases, community size is closely related to racial, economic and political composition.

Given smaller school size is more important in poor schools than affluent ones, I would expect to find that larger communities would also benefit more from small school size than smaller communities would. Urban areas, especially central cities, are quite poor and have higher than average school sizes. Also, even though many suburbs are almost as large as cities, they are more affluent, and thus, would benefit less from small schools. Students in suburbs are more likely to have well-educated parents, good teachers, and adequate resources that give them the ability to take advantage of

opportunities that large schools offer. Finally, I would not expect smaller towns to benefit greatly from small schools mainly because most small towns already have small schools. Even after years of rural school consolidation, the average school size in Montana or Iowa is much lower than in most other places.

Community Size and Political Behavior

Community size is only one of many characteristics of communities. I begin by examining community size because it is the most general attribute of a community, and is largely devoid of content. Later chapters examine various aspects of the composition of communities, but I start by looking simply at community size before adding other layers to the analysis. Another reason for beginning with city size is because many political theorists and social scientists have discussed the important role that it plays in a democracy. Early democratic theorists discussed the city-state of Athens, and how its size affected civic participation, accountability, and representation. Robert Dahl later wrote that there is an optimal city size, and other social scientists have long proclaimed that urban life has deleterious effects on behavior.

The city-state was small enough to "insure extensive opportunities for direct participation by all free (male) citizens in the management of the community…" (Dahl 1967, 954). Dahl wrote that once a "unit" becomes too large, true democratic participation becomes unwieldy and impossible. Democratic deliberation in the form of face-to-face interaction with other citizens, such as that in ancient Greece, is only possible on a small scale. Assuming more democracy is better than less, smaller states are optimal because individuals can only directly participate when the size is manageable.

In addition to participation, small states (or communities) also facilitate other democratic values. In smaller communities, information may be more easily accessible, and somewhat less complex. Most importantly, however, individuals in smaller communities can have a real impact on decisions. They are more likely to perceive their voice makes a difference, and that their participation or interest is worthwhile because, just as in small schools, everyone is necessary in smaller communities. It is more difficult to "shirk" or to go unnoticed, and individuals keep others accountable.

Sociologists have also long proclaimed that smaller is better, and that urban life has negative consequences for social (and political) behavior. As the size of a community increases, civic participation falls, and efficacy declines, because people become less "attached" to their communities (Dahl and Tufte 1973). The more closely individuals are attached to their communities, the more likely they are to feel a sense of belonging and to feel as though they have a stake in the community. Community attachment is thought of as the ties individuals have to their local environments, both physically and psychologically. According to many scholars, these ties can be measured by objective criteria, such as length of residence in a community, home ownership, marital status, and whether individuals have children in the local schools (Putnam 1966; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Sampson 1988). Individuals that have these characteristics are more likely to participate because they have financial, as well as emotional ties to their community (Campbell and Lee 1992).

In addition to objective factors, others contend that life in the city depresses community attachment because of its heterogeneity and population density. Cities are defined by their heterogeneity, while smaller towns are similarly defined by their

homogeneity across several dimensions – racial, religious, social, economic, and political. Toennies labeled these as differences between "gemeinschaft" and "gesellschaft," or "community" versus "society" (1887). He, and later Simmel (1922) and Wirth (1938), contended that because of the high population density and heterogeneity in cities, people become alienated from one another, social relationships are strained, and participation in social and political activities is depressed. In smaller communities, individuals are surrounded by others who are like them, and people are more likely to keep track of one another.

There are, of course, more types of activities in cities than there are in small towns. One could argue that because of this, participation is spread around, so that simply because one isn't participating in politics, she may be active in the arts community, or through aid work. Fischer speaks of this phenomenon as "subcultures," and that urban areas offer a groups to which one can belong (Fischer 1975, 1995). Even so, more opportunities do not generally translate into greater overall participation, and just as in large high schools, those who participate in one activity are more likely to participate in others; while, those who do not participate are unlikely to be drawn in by new opportunities.

The bottom line is that social and political attitudes and behavior are based, at least partly, on social interaction. Social interaction is qualitatively different across places. Interactions provide important information that is used in making choices and forming political attitudes (See Mutz 2002; Beck, Dalton, Greene and Huckfeldt 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Carsey 1995; Huckfeldt 1983, 1986; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954). In small towns, "human relationships are intimate, enduring and

based on a clear understanding of where each person stands in society" (Bell and Newby 1972, 23). People know one another, and often, they know whose child, sibling or friend one might be. In cities, individuals are more likely to run into complete strangers, and because they cannot place them within a personal context, they designate people more formally, by race or ethnicity, for example. The perceived familiarity with one another in smaller towns fosters trust and altruism (Coleman 1988; Elder and Conger 2000). It affords individuals a degree of accountability that they do not have in cities where they can often be anonymous.

These differences in the environment have implications for the types of interactions that take place, which influence the information individuals obtain in order to make decisions and form opinions. Where individuals infrequently encounter strangers, for example, they may learn only to trust those they know well, thereby skewing the content of the information they receive. Because they are unlikely to obtain information from a variety of sources, with differing viewpoints, their own opinions are based on limited information. Similarly, in communities that have very few immigrants, or African-Americans, for example, residents are unable to obtain first-hand information from individuals within these groups. They must acquire information solely from television or other media, which may be biased. The compositional biases that exist within every community, large or small, indirectly influence attitudes and behaviors.

Social interaction is also the principle mechanism behind political socialization. Attitudes and behaviors are not formed once we reach adulthood, but instead, are developed over time, as we come of age politically. The type and frequencies of social interaction not only affect adult attitudes and behaviors, but also children and youth.

When young people do not have opportunities to encounter others who have different life experiences or challenges, they too must base their opinions on limited information. Children growing up in poor, urban neighborhoods have vastly different socialization experiences than those in either wealthy suburbs or impoverished rural areas. The immediate social, political and economic context provides constraints on the types of information and experiences adolescents are privy to as they develop their political attitudes.

Based on the scholarship on the benefits of smaller towns for adult civic participation, efficacy and knowledge, we should expect smaller communities to be better places in which to socialize young people into democratic values. Children often learn by modeling the behaviors they see around them, so if adults in smaller towns are more knowledgeable, more efficacious and more participatory, so should their children be. And, if children are surrounded by adults and peers who do not pay attention to politics, who believe that their voice is not heard and does not matter, and who never get to the polls or the community center, they are highly unlikely to venture into these behaviors on their own.

If, indeed, smaller towns are better places for political development, then school size may not add much to the socialization experience. Schools in small towns are already small, and, children probably learn their civic values at home, or in the community. By contrast, school size may play an important role in urban areas, where I expect democratic values to be at lower levels. Children in central cities are less likely to have knowledgeable and participatory parents and neighbors, and thus, schools are likely to be one of the only institutions that can foster these values here. Smaller schools, where

fewer students are likely to go unnoticed, may counteract many of the forces acting against good democratic citizenship in the central city.

What Is a Small Town?

Before turning to the results of my analysis, I must say a few words about definitions. Although we all probably have a picture in our heads of a "small town" or a "central city," it is likely to differ depending on our experience in these places. If one has never spent much time in a small town, he may imagine them all to be like Mayberry, USA on the *Andy Griffith Show*. Similarly, someone who has not spent time in cities may see them all as pictured on the news, during the L.A. riots of 1992, for instance. More precision is required.

What makes a community a small town or a suburb? There is no clear-cut definition for communities; it is not the case that at a particular cut-off, a community is automatically a suburb, or a "small town." The Census does designate metropolitan statistical areas (MSA), but this is not very helpful, as 93% of Americans live in a MSA. Many would argue that any designation should be based on perceptions of the people who live there. Does it "feel" like a small town? Would people describe to others that they live in a suburb of a major city, or would they classify their community as a town? These distinctions are murky, at best, and are based purely on individual experiences and perceptions. While one might claim they live in a small town of 30,000, those in communities of 2,500 would describe this as a city. The best classification system would ideally be based on some combination of perception and objectivity.

For my purposes, the data prohibit me from using any sense of the respondent's perception of his/her community. Since the data were collected for very different purposes, the questions were not asked. I am left with three options. First, I could use Census categorization for the MSAs in the data, and then create a classification system for those communities that are not found in a MSA. The biggest problem with this method is that because so many communities are considered MSAs, there would be limited variability in order to conduct analyses.

I could also base community classification on population. Towns with fewer people are smaller than those with more people, and no one would quarrel that a community of 3,000 would never be considered urban; likewise, one of 2 million could never be a small town. My problem with this is that while it certainly differentiates between the poles – the central cities from the rural areas – it does not sufficiently differentiate between suburbs and small towns that are not located within a metropolitan statistical area.

For example, Greenbelt, Maryland, has a population of about 21,000 and Paducah, Kentucky has about 28,000 residents. If I were to use population as my measure of community size, Paducah would look to be a slightly bigger town than Greenbelt, and arguably in a literal sense, it is. However, population fails to recognize that Greenbelt is a suburb in the Washington/Baltimore area, while the nearest major city to Paducah is at least 120 miles away, making it very different in character than Greenbelt.

A better method of capturing this distinction is by using population density as the continuous measure of community size. Paducah has a density level of about 375 people

per square mile, while Greenbelt's is almost 10 times this level, at 3,350 people per square mile. This indicates that although the two towns are similar in population, they are quite different places in which to grow up. Paducah is a contained community, where the majority of residents lives in single-family homes and does their working, shopping, schooling, and worshipping in town. Although Greenbelt was established as a small, cohesive community in the 1930s, today it contains one of the largest apartment complexes in the nation and its residents commute to Washington and Baltimore to work. Thus, in multivariate analyses, I use population density as a measure of community size.

For bivariate analyses, I simply use quartiles based on population density. There are problems with this categorization as well: we know that 25 percent of the population does not live in small towns. And, many suburbs of large cities are just as dense as the cities they surround. However, this method does give us a clear sense of the effect of living in close surroundings with those around you, of having thousands of people in a building versus communities where the nearest neighbor is a mile away. Arguably, those living in highly dense communities have a more urban socialization experience, while those in less dense communities have an experience closer to that of a rural area or small town. Rather than repeating the phases "least dense quartile," and "second least dense quartile," throughout the dissertation, I refer to these categories "small towns," "large towns," "suburbs," and "central cities," respectively. However, I realize there is some overlap between these categories, especially in the middle categories.

Table 4.1 shows how the types of communities differ across several common indicators. Each category is compared to small towns in order to examine their differences and similarities. The characteristics are not particularly surprising. Small

towns have very little diversity; the vast majority of people own their own homes (76

percent); and, the people have much more space, as population density is quite low.

Table 4.1: Differences of Means on Town Characteristics in NHES

	Small Towns[a]	Large Towns	Suburbs	Central Cities
Population Density	61.16	410.24	2127.74	11498.68
Mean Income	$35,441	$45,238	$51,218	$41,393
Percent College Degree	15	23	29	22
Percent Black	10	11*	17	22
Percent Latino	8	10*	13	28
Percent Foreign Born	3	6	11	23
Percent Unemployed	6	6	5	8
Percent Homeowners	76	72	68	52
Percent Female-headed Households w/ children	9	10	11	15
Enrollment in Schools	739	1373	1706	1939
N=	974	969	976	974

Numbers in cells represent the mean level within each category. Figures are rounded.
Differences of means were calculated by comparing small towns against each other
category.
[a] Categories are derived using quartiles of population density.
* Indicates an insignificant difference of mean. All other values are significantly
different from those in rural/small towns (p<.001).

Those in small towns also make less money than those in other communities, with those

in the suburbs making the most per year. Even though many would think the cities would

have lowest incomes, the average income is higher in urban areas because the range is

much larger than in small towns. The range between the poorest and the wealthiest

median income in small towns is almost $66,000; this range in the central cities is about

$105,000. Poverty is, thus, more widespread in rural areas, whereas there are some very

wealthy people in cities.

I point out these results because these are the types of characteristics that form biases within a community, which in turn, influence the socialization process. Adolescents coming of age in a rural community have almost no contact with immigrants, and comparatively little contact with blacks or Latinos.[14] Their parents are much less likely to have graduated from college. And, children in rural areas are more likely to live in single-family homes that are owned by their families than in any other community. Why would these factors influence socialization? Young people must rely solely on second-hand information about people who are different from them. They may not be as encouraged to go to college as those in other communities. Given the smaller range of incomes, they are likely to have more in common with their neighbors. The high rates of home ownership indicate that these children and their families are closely attached to their community. They have likely lived in one place much longer than those in cities. All together, these characteristics form a safer, more secure place in which to grow up.

The high level of population density in large cities and suburbs indicates a much different experience than in rural areas and small towns. Residents of cities are literally living on top of one another, with over 11,000 people per square mile. Only 52 percent of residents own their homes, and unemployment is substantially higher here than in any other community, with 8 percent of residents out of work, compared to 5-6 percent elsewhere. Given the sheer numbers of residents in large cities, this means that there are millions of people renting a home or apartment, and out of work. Because these numbers are averages, unemployment is much higher in some communities within a city than in

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[14] This is beginning to change in some rural areas as immigrants move to many Midwestern states for jobs in factories.

others.[15] Similarly, on average, over 16 percent of families in large cities are headed by females, meaning that in some communities, this percentage is much higher. The children growing up in these cities experience an almost entirely different existence than those in small towns. This is bound to have significant influences on all their attitudes, including democratic values.

Finally, those in many suburbs are wealthier and more highly educated than others. Granted, there are several different types of suburbs – white, middle class, affluent gated communities, predominantly black, and relatively poor suburbs, to name a few. So, while suburbs are generally thought of as white, middle- and upper-class, this is somewhat of a misnomer. Yet, on average, residents of suburban areas generally have higher incomes and education levels than their urban counterparts. Children in many suburbs grow up with some diversity, and with more resources than those in any other community. Unemployment is lower here than anywhere else. Schools are large, but given the incomes and education levels of many parents here, children are likely able to mine their way through the system with guidance.

Results

Educational researchers have found that the effect of school size varies according to the composition of the school, especially the average SES of the school. I have argued that the community size (and composition, in subsequent chapters) plays the same role. The effect of school size will vary by the type, or size, of the community, and smaller schools are going to be more beneficial in urban areas than in smaller communities.

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[15] Remember, a community is defined as a zip code here. So, there are several communities within one central city, especially for the large central cities.

Given that rural school consolidation has reduced the number of small schools, one might argue that community size and school size have little in common today. However, Table 4.2 shows a very strong relationship between school size and community size. Sixty-five percent of the smallest schools are found in small towns. Similarly, almost a majority of the largest schools are found in central cities, with another third of them in suburbs.

Table 4.2: Average School Size across Types of Communities in NHES

Type of Town	Student Enrollment in School					
	0-600	601-900	901-1500	1501-2000	Over 2000	Total
Small Towns[a]	482	222	186	55	29	974
	66.3%	45.4%	18.8%	17.1%	3.2%	
Large Towns	87	152	341	244	145	969
	12.0%	31.1%	34.4%	31.6%	15.8%	
Suburbs	64	58	278	262	314	976
	8.8%	11.9%	28.1%	34.0%	34.3%	
Central Cities	94	57	186	210	427	974
	12.9%	11.7%	18.8%	27.2%	46.7%	
Total	727	489	991	771	915	3893

Values in cells represent the number of schools. Percentages are column percentages, or the percent of the schools of a particular size in a particular type of town (i.e., 65.0% of schools with fewer than 628 students are in small towns).
Pearson Chi Square = 1428.00 (p<.00001)
[a] Categories are derived using population density quartiles.

I first examine the general effects of community size and school size on democratic values. Table 4.3 shows these results, and again, in the aggregate, we see that school size is not significantly related to democratic values, except for participation in

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school activities. From the smallest to the largest schools, there is a 12 percent drop in

the likelihood that a student will participate in school activities.

Table 4.3: Simple Regressions for Community Size, School Size, and Dependent Measures

| | Dependent Variables | | | | |
	Political Knowledge[1]	Political Efficacy[1]	Political Tolerance[1]	School Activities[2]	Out of School Activities[2]
Population Density	-.0003**** (.0001)	.0000002 (.00005)	-.00008** (.00004)	-.00001*** (.000004)	-.00001** (.000004)
School Enrollment	-.001 (.001)	.0002 (.0005)	.0004 (.0004)	-.0001*** (.00004)	-.00001 (.00004)
Constant	36.769**** (1.139)	44.347**** (.761)	47.685**** (.601)	1.029 (.067)	.630**** (.064)
	N=1782 R^2=.002	N=3907 R^2=.00002	N=3907 R^2=.0001	N=3898 Psd.R^2=.005	N=3902 Psd.R^2=.001

[1] Values in cells are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients and their standard errors are underneath.
[2] Values in cells are unstandardized Logistic regression coefficients and their standard errors are underneath.
*$p<.10$ **$p<.05$ ***$p<.01$ ****$p<.001$

Even though there is a close relationship between school size and community

size, and school size does not influence democratic values, community size does help

explain each of the democratic values except political efficacy. Thus, even though

smaller schools are found in smaller communities, and school size does not matter, there

is something about living in a smaller town that benefits democratic values. The biggest

differences are between small towns and central cities, especially for tolerance – a 10,000

person per square mile increase leads to a three point drop in knowledge and a 100,000

increase in density leads to an eight point drop in political tolerance. Given the range of

density in the sample, this means that from the smallest town, Tonopah, Nevada (with .5

persons per square mile) to the biggest city neighborhood, New York, New York (with

98,000 persons per square mile), knowledge declines by 30 points and tolerance declines

by 8 points. Similarly, participation in school activities drops by 32 percent, and outside

activities drop by 24 percent, in the largest community. In general, without controlling

for individual characteristics, the socialization experience in the city seems to foster in

children fewer political skills and information they will need in order to be able to

participate effectively in politics.

Next, I include typical controls for civics coursework, interest in politics,

educational aspirations, and parental SES (Table 4.4). Given that neither community

size, nor school size were significant for political efficacy, I did not run a full model.

First, the model for political tolerance does not explain these attitudes at all. Only one

variable is marginally significant, and very little of the overall variance is explains.

Because tolerance is predicted by factors outside this model, it is a much different

construct than my other dependent measures.

Community size remains significant for political knowledge and participation in

school activities. Students in smaller towns are more knowledgeable and participatory

than those in large cities, even controlling for all of these individual indicators. In fact, as

shown in Table 4.5, school participation drops by 19 percent from the smallest town to

the largest urban neighborhood. All of the most important indicators for political

knowledge and participation among adolescents are included here – parental income,

civics instruction, and a student's education aspirations.[16] An alternative hypothesis may

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[16] I ran correlations between several of my independent variables, in order to examine
multicollinearity, as well as to look at the relationships between civics coursework and
classes that increased interest in government, and political discussion with parents and

Table 4.4: Full Regression Models for Community Size, School Size, and Dependent Measures in NHES

	Dependent Variables			
	Political Knowledge[1]	**Political Tolerance[1]**	**School Activities[2]**	**Out of School Activities[2]**
Population Density	-.0002**	-.0001	-.000009*	-.000003
	(.0001)	(.00005)	(.000005)	(.000005)
School Enrollment	-.001	.0001	-.0001**	-.00009*
	(.001)	(.0005)	(.00005)	(.00005)
Courses Required Attention to Gov't	2.944*	1.069	.080	-.130
	(1.559)	(.909)	(.110)	(.105)
Class Increased Interest in Gov't	4.705****	-.089	.248***	.169*
	(.959)	(.573)	(.072)	(.065)
Frequency of Watching TV News	2.053**	.648	.019	.108*
	(.717)	(.412)	(.049)	(.046)
Discuss News with Family and Friend	2.737****	.063	.249****	.180****
	(.730)	(.432)	(.054)	(.049)
No College Plans	-6.287****	-1.509*	-.664****	-.471****
	(1.359)	(.796)	(.096)	(.090)
Parental Education Level	4.732****	.433	.103**	.166****
	(.613)	(.362)	(.045)	(.042)
Parental Income	1.035****	.051	-.040**	.045***
	(.265)	(.156)	(.019)	(.017)
Grade	3.297****	.323	.027	-.062
	(.578)	(.341)	(.042)	(.039)
Constant	-39.357****	40.677****	-.333	.005
	(7.043)	(4.078)	(.501)	(.464)
	N=1200	N=2588	N=2587	N=2589
	R^2=.24	R^2=.006	Psd.R^2=.06	Psd.R^2=.05

[1] Values in cells are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients and their standard errors are underneath.
[2] Values in cells are unstandardized Logistic regression coefficients and their standard errors are underneath.
*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001

frequency of watching the news. The highest level of correlation was .32, between watching the news and discussing politics.

predict that any advantage students in small towns would have over those in the city would disappear when one controls for resources of the parents and schools.

Even controlling for community size, smaller schools are important indicators of participation in school activities. Given the close relationship between school size and community size, I had anticipated that the relationship between school size and participation would diminish or disappear once I entered community size into the model. Yet, these results show that smaller schools are important for school participation independent from the size of the town in which one lives. It is not the case, then, that small schools foster participation in school activities simply because students in smaller towns are more participatory.

Table 4.5: Probabilities from Logistic Regression for School Participation and Community Size in NHES

		School Participation
Population Density	Diff	-.19
Student Enrollment	Diff	-.12
Courses Required Attention to Gov't	Diff	+.01
Class Increased Interest in Gov't	Diff	+.08
Frequency of Watching TV News	Diff	+.01
Discuss News with Others	Diff	+.12
No College Plans	Diff	-.12
Parental Education Level	Diff	+.07
Parental Income	Diff	+.07
Grade Level	Diff	+.01

Values in cells are the percentage differences from the minimum values to the maximum values of each variable, based on the logistic regression models presented in Table 3.6.

An easier way of interpreting whether smaller schools are more effective in some communities than in others is to examine the same regressions across different community types. Table 4.6 presents these results for knowledge. Looking across the different town sizes, it is important to note both the similarities and the differences. First, while we see that school size does not matter for most towns, it is important in central cities. A 1000 person increase in enrollment in school corresponds with a three-point drop in knowledge in central cities. Thus, from the smallest school in cities with an enrollment of 40 students, to the largest, with 5000 students, knowledge declines by 15 points.

Parental education is extremely important across all community sizes, as are educational aspirations. In small towns and suburbs, those who do not plan to go to college are 8 and 7 points less knowledgeable than those who plan to go to college. Although the effect of civics coursework varies across communities, when students say their courses spark interest in government, they have much higher knowledge in all communities. The differences across communities are as interesting as the similarities. Political discussion makes a positive impact on knowledge in large towns and central cities, but does not matter in small towns or suburbs. In small towns, seniors are no more knowledgeable than freshmen; this is either a testament to the high levels of knowledge freshmen have, or possibly to the fact that students do not gain much as they progress.

Table 4.6: Predictors of Political Knowledge across Different Types of Communities in NHES

	Community Size/Type			
	Small Towns[a]	**Large Towns**	**Suburbs**	**Central Cities**
Student Enrollment	.001 (.003)	-.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)	-.003** (.001)
Courses Required Attention to Gov't	5.063* (3.002)	-5.483* (3.142)	6.813** (3.247)	3.536 (3.288)
Class Increased Interest in Gov't	4.663** (1.889)	3.322* (1.924)	5.594*** (1.906)	5.090** (1.978)
Frequency of Watching TV News	2.767* (1.503)	1.212 (1.486)	2.755** (1.382)	.967 (1.401)
Discuss News with Family and Friend	1.276 (1.516)	4.731*** (1.546)	2.217 (1.426)	3.258** (1.406)
No College Plans	-8.483*** (2.716)	-2.896 2.813)	-7.842*** (2.753)	-4.150 (2.689)
Parental Education Level	5.011**** (1.339)	4.619**** (1.219)	6.111**** (1.177)	2.632** (1.205)
Parental Income	1.370** (.551)	-.008 (.547)	1.719*** (.521)	1.146** (.501)
Grade Level	1.243 (1.180)	4.036*** (1.162)	2.676** (1.123)	5.081**** (1.220)
Constant	-23.064 (14.471)	-28.444** (14.373)	-54.167**** (14.098)	-51.271**** (14.175)
	N=275 R²=.25	N=292 R²=.22	N=329 R²=.30	N=300 R²=.23

Values in cells are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients and their standard errors are in parentheses underneath.
*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001
[a] Categories are derived using population density quartiles

Discussion

It is true that the benefits of smaller school size on democratic values vary by community size. Students in urban areas have higher levels of knowledge and are more likely to participate in school activities if they attend smaller schools. Schools in cities are of the highest average size compared to those in other communities. Children growing up in the city are generally attending extremely large schools, with well over 2000 students. Many of these children are also victims of high poverty. They are more likely to live in a single-parent home, and are raised among neighbors with lower levels of education and higher unemployment than are children in other communities. Smaller schools, to the extent that their advocates are right that they are better places for disadvantaged students, may diminish some of the negative effects of poverty on the teaching of democratic values in urban areas.

Furthermore, we might not expect smaller schools to make much difference in suburbs or in small towns. Suburban children, to a much larger extent, have parents that can guide them through what Powell et al. refer to as the "shopping mall high school" (1985). School size initially began to increase, in part, because education policymakers believed they were necessary in order to offer college-bound students greater opportunities. In large suburban schools, this is just what they do; students here can take advantage of the numerous opportunities for specialized courses and A.P. classes that can help them gain admittance into college. Suburban schools have more resources and they attract better teachers, giving students advantages over their counterparts in urban schools, which suffer from a tremendous lack of adequate resources and have much difficulty attracting and maintaining good teachers. Overall, children growing up in

suburbia are better off in large schools, and reducing school size here might actually give them a worse education.

In small towns, smaller schools add only modest benefit because they are simply redundant. Although school consolidation has increased their average size, small towns still maintain many traditional, small neighborhood schools. Since the average school is already quite small, it is unlikely that reducing their size would influence democratic values. In fact, in small towns, school size is not significantly related to my democratic values. Interestingly, the schools here suffer from many of the same problems as those in urban areas: it is often difficult to attract teachers to rural areas, they do not have ample resources, and parents are not highly educated and do not make enough money to offer their kids additional educational opportunities. Indeed, if schools in small towns were as large as they are in urban areas, school size might have the same effects.

Or perhaps they would not. After all, the other results indicate that growing up in smaller towns increases political knowledge and participation in school activities. Independent of school size, it is better to be raised in a smaller town than a larger community. This is unlikely to be due solely to differences in the income and education of the residents, as average income and education is actually lower in small towns than in urban areas. There seems to be something more happening in small towns that helps foster these democratic values.

This "something more" is difficult to pinpoint exactly with these data. However, the literature on the role of social interactions in political attitudes and behaviors indicates that one of the main differences is the interaction among the members of communities. Residents of small towns have more familiarity with one another, which

fosters trust and a greater sense of "attachment" to their community. These ties form the basis of a common socialization of young people into the norms and values of the community, which include political knowledge and participation. These results help pinpoint where to focus resources: there is no need to break up large schools in suburbs, and, the consolidation of rural schools should be discontinued in places where it is still ongoing. Instead, we should focus on feasible ways of reducing school size in cities. At least as far as community size is concerned, targeting urban schools is the first step.

The results of this chapter also introduce the difficulty in drawing policy conclusions from this research. After all, we cannot turn back the clock 120 years and move everyone out of the city and back to the farm. We have too much of our economy wrapped up in cities and their suburbs. Furthermore, it is quite unlikely that we would have very many urban residents jumping at the chance to move to Smallville. Dahl once quipped that many of those who loudly extol the virtues of small-town life have never lived in one (1967). Many residents of rural areas and small towns are itching to leave, and although many later return to their roots, enough stay away to make a difference.

How can we use this information to help the socialization experience of those in larger communities? Is there a way to replicate the processes in small towns, or are their strengths within suburbs and cities that have the potential to foster civic values? These are the primary questions taken up in the last chapter, and I will wait until all the results are in before discussing this at this point.

In the next chapter I examine more closely the role that SES, both of the individual and the community, has on democratic values, and how SES interacts with school size. Some scholars have found that poor children, and children growing up in

poor communities, are much better off in smaller schools. Thus, while we should expect

affluent children, and those in wealthier communities, to have higher levels of

knowledge, etc., we may see strong benefits to smaller schools in poorer communities.

Chapter 5

Political Socialization in Poor Communities

The last chapter showed that children growing up in smaller towns had higher

levels of political knowledge and were more likely to participate in school activities than

those in large, urban communities. We also saw that smaller schools did provide benefits

to students living in central cities, but that reducing school size in small towns and

suburban communities will not give these students the same advantage, at least with

regard to their political development. Most of the literature on the variable effects of

school size examines the interaction of socioeconomic status (SES) and achievement.

These scholars argue that poorer students, and those living in poorer communities, gain

advantages in smaller schools. Ultimately, they conclude that smaller school size

disrupts the normally strong bond between SES and academic achievement.

In this chapter, I examine this contention with regard to democratic values: do

poorer students, and those growing up in poorer communities, have higher levels of

political knowledge, efficacy, tolerance and participation when they attend smaller

schools, than they do in larger schools? Just as in the last chapter, I am also interested in

the contextual effects on political socialization, as well as the effects of school size. I

investigate the links between the affluence, or poverty, of a community and democratic

values. We would not be surprised to find that affluent students, and those living in

wealthier communities, would have more knowledge and efficacy. Poverty is not simply

an urban phenomenon, and I anticipate that not all poor communities have similar effects,

and that poor small towns may not be as detrimental to civic values as are impoverished

central city neighborhoods.

School Size and Poverty

Although the literature is not extensive, there are some educational scholars who have found that smaller schools are of most benefit to disadvantaged students (Johnson, Howley and Howley 2002; Lee and Smith 1997; Howley 1995; Huang and Howley 1993; Fowler and Walberg 1991; Friedkin and Necochea 1988). I discussed these findings and their arguments in the last chapter, so I will not repeat them here. The basic theory is that disadvantaged students, typically defined as students with low-SES and/or racial minorities, are often trapped inside very large schools, where they are more likely to "slip through the cracks" because they do not have adequate support at home, nor can their teachers take as much of interest in them because the large numbers of children in school.

Smaller schools often allow teachers to get to know their students more personally, and are places where students are held accountable and encouraged. More individualized instruction is possible, and so struggling students can get the help they need. Teachers can spend more time with fewer students, and they learn their students' strengths and weaknesses, making it easier to tailor lessons so that students can learn. When this kind of individual attention is given to students, they want to learn, to stay in school, and to plan for their futures in college or in a job.

In fact, much of the movement behind reducing school size is focused in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods. Many of the case studies on the benefits of smaller schools are based on particular schools' or school districts' efforts to reduce school size in large urban communities (Meier 1995; Clinchy 2000; Raywid 1996; Toch 2003; Wasley, et al. 2000). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has invested $590 million

to support 1,600 small schools nationwide, most of which are high schools. The schools on which they focus are in "underserved communities," many of which are in low-income, urban areas. In 2003, the Gates Foundation donated more than $50 million to help start 67 small high schools in New York City, and $11 million to the second-largest district in California, San Diego City, to transform three large high schools into small "learning communities." Gates sited among his reasons that this "will help poor and minority students prepare for college and for jobs in today's economy" (Montagne 2003). These schools will serve primarily minority, low-income students and will focus on "personalization, high performance, and college-readiness" ("$51 Million Grant…" 2003).

Thus, even though the average size of high schools has increased all over the country over the last few decades, those who are involved in actual school restructuring have focused their efforts largely on schools in poor urban neighborhoods. Given what I found in the last chapter, this may also be the best strategy for the development of democratic values, especially political knowledge and participation. To the extent that smaller schools diminish the negative effects of poverty for academic achievement and dropout rates, they should do the same for democratic values. In this chapter, I add the economic composition of the community to my analysis of community size from the last chapter. There are have three main questions:

    1) Are poorer students better off in smaller schools?

    2) Are students living in poor communities advantaged by smaller school size?

    3) Does poverty have the same effects on democratic values across communities of different sizes?

The first two questions directly follow from the research on small schools. The third

question comes out of scholarship on urban sociology. This literature, which was jump-

started in the early 1990s after the publication of William Julius Wilson's *The Truly*

Disadvantaged (1987), has examined the effects of neighborhoods, especially poor

neighborhoods, on many aspects of child development. Researchers have not looked

specifically at political socialization, however. And, these scholars have focused almost

exclusively on urban poverty.

In this chapter, in addition to the influence of school size, I also address

differences in the effects of poverty within central cities and small towns on democratic

values. Small towns are often just as poor as many urban areas, but at the same time,

residents of small towns are more likely to be engaged in their communities than are

those living in the city. Thus, poverty may not, then, have the same deleterious effects in

all environments. If true, this would get closer to explaining the underlying mechanism

behind the effects of poverty in urban areas, as opposed to rural ones, as well as why

smaller schools are so much more beneficial in these communities.

Political Socialization in Poor (Urban) Communities

> Children from affluent schools know more, stay in school longer, and end up with
> better jobs than children from schools that enroll mostly poor children. Children
> who live in affluent neighborhoods also get into less trouble with the law and
> have fewer illegitimate children than children who live in poor neighborhoods
> (Jencks and Mayer 1990:111).

While some may argue that this quote merely points out that children with

affluent parents are better off regardless of where they live, others contend that

neighborhoods and communities influence socialization independently from parental

status (Conover and Searing, 2000; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan and Aber 1997; Jencks and Mayer 1990; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn and Klebanov 1994; Wilson 1987, 1996). First, the level of affluence, or poverty, within a community determines the amount of resources and the quality of services. Wealthier communities have more of and better quality in almost every objective indicator on neighborhood status: stronger tax base that affords good public services, better public safety, good public schools and private alternatives, professional services such as legal advice and health care, and, most importantly – access to employment. They have amenities that are rarely found in poor communities, such as community centers and extra-curricular activities for children. Poor communities – whether they are urban neighborhoods or small towns – struggle to find adequate health care, jobs, schools, safety and enough resources for basic services such as trash removal.

These indicators of a community's economic composition are not only important because they determine the resources of a community, but they also become part of the society's culture, thus shaping the context in which young people are socialized. Social interaction is the major mechanism translating the local environment into behavioral outcomes (Beck, Dalton, Greene and Huckfeldt 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mutz 2002). Individuals learn from those around them about their community's norms and values. Children and adolescents are especially sensitive to social interaction, as they are still developing their cognitive and affective sensibilities. The community context creates a particular culture, or bias, that is transmitted from generation to generation through interaction in the community (Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000).

These interactions convey information about normal and acceptable behavior.

Socialization into the community's culture involves learning to "follow one's inclinations as they have been developed by influence or learning from other members of the community that one belongs to or identifies with" (Wilson 1996, 66). Structural aspects of communities, such as unemployment and poverty, provide the context in which individuals interact, and thereby affect the socialization children receive into their community's values.

Unemployment, for instance, has effects on relationships, and relationships affect employment (Lin 2000). For example, the availability of work, and the type of work, influences families' and schools' support of career ambitions. Wilson points out that one of the most important functions of social interaction within a neighborhood is the informal job network. Teachers often help their students negotiate obstacles to employment, and friends alert one another to available jobs and contacts. In many poor communities, these relationships are strained or absent. There are several reasons: concerns over safety, which cause people not to associate with their neighbors as they once did; lack of available jobs in the community, and lack of transportation to jobs outside the community, which serve to exacerbate and concentrate joblessness within particular areas; poor school quality, and teachers that do not live in the community, and therefore cannot help students negotiate their lives there. Thus, even if children have aspirations that would pull them out of poverty, parents and teachers often communicate that more modest ambitions are more appropriate (O'Connor 2000). Although some of this behavior is arguably based on discriminatory attitudes of teachers toward the poor and racial minorities, much of it is more likely due to ignorance and lack of knowledge

about existing opportunities, due to the environment in which these people are living and/or working.

Similarly, Young (2000) describes the damaging effects of unemployment and underemployment among young, black men. First, these men have the desire to work, and to provide a good life for their families. However, their knowledge of the job market is often based on outdated information that they learned from others in their community or in their schools. They described to Young their search for jobs in manufacturing or in other skilled and semi-skilled jobs that did not require additional education beyond high school. These jobs are no longer available in most places, but these men do not realize that their trouble in finding this type of employment is not due solely to a personal failure. Many men got very discouraged, and some actually pass up certain opportunities not because they are "too lazy" to work, but because they are holding out for jobs that simply do not exist (Young 2000).

I point out these examples because they help illuminate the type of environment in which many poor children are currently being raised. It is not simply that the majority of their neighbors are out of work and that money is tight, but there is a substantial psychological toll on both individuals within the community, and the community itself, as a result of unemployment and other structural elements of communities. Similar examples can be given for the damaging effects of single parenthood (Hicks-Barlett 2000), lack of adequate housing, poor medical care, and crime (Barclay-McLaughlin 2000) that also make up the socialization experience for many young people in poor communities.

Affluent neighbors are thought to have positive influences on children from all backgrounds. It is not simply that affluent neighbors have more money, but that they are generally more highly educated, steadily employed and more participatory in civic life than adults in poor communities. They are believed to provide good role models for children, teaching them the value of work and education. Collective socialization theories suggest that adults within a community can bestow benefits or burdens on young people (Jencks and Mayer 1990). Wilson argues that one of the main problems with ghetto neighborhoods is that there is a dearth of good role models for children because so many adults are unemployed and have dropped out of school (1987).

Peer-to-peer interactions are also important. Theories based on the idea of contagion describe how behaviors, both good and bad, spread almost like a disease through peer interaction. They assume that if children grow up in communities where their peers steal cars, for example, they will more be likely to steal cars; and likewise, if their peers all go to college, they are more likely to go to college (Crane 1991; Schelling 1978; Granovetter 1978). Negative peer interaction is even more likely to lead to negative behaviors in communities where adults are not able to provide adequate social control for children (Sampson 2001).

According to Sampson, the feature that best describes many poor neighborhoods is social disorganization (1992; 2001). Social organization is "the ability of a community structure to realize the common values of its residents and maintain effective social controls" (Sampson 2001, 8). The characteristics of poor communities, and thus the social interaction within them do not facilitate the kind of environment where individuals can come together to achieve common goals. Social organization is similar in many

ways to the concept of social capital. Although the term has come to mean many things, originally, social capital referred to the capabilities lodged within a community (not an individual) that would facilitate individuals to pursue a collective good (Coleman 1990).

The recent scholarship on the negative effects of poverty on many social outcomes is almost entirely based on urban neighborhoods, stimulated by Wilson's work on the urban underclass. The urban focus is also largely practical – indeed, one look at a sampling of indicators of social and economic status confirm that life in certain parts of cities is abysmal. I believe that the exclusion of impoverished communities outside of urban areas is an important weakness of this research. It should come as no surprise to anyone that affluent children growing up in affluent or middle-class suburbs achieve at higher rates, go to college at higher rates, and go on to occupy higher status rolls within society than those living in impoverished urban neighborhoods that are characterized by high crime, low educational attainment, high unemployment, and general despair.

These findings have led policymakers to focus on eradicating poverty, and alleviating the myriad social and economic problems in the city. I do not disagree with attempts to make life better for those suffering from so many problems, yet, I believe that the exclusive focus on only two types of communities (poor and urban in contrast to wealthy suburbs) prevents a very interesting analysis that could actually bring policymakers closer to understanding underlying dynamics that contribute to poverty in the inner city. If there are impoverished communities that do not have the same negative social outcomes as in the inner city, we may be able to better understand why some policies have more success than others, and, there may be ways to replicate parts of what works in these other communities in the city. Indeed, I would simply expand Wilson's

original ideas to a different type of community: the rural community, or small town. I

believe an examination that includes small towns will actually strengthen many of the

arguments Wilson and others have made about the importance of networks.

Along with Wilson, Robert Sampson's theory of "social disorganization" and

Coleman's "social capital" posit that social interaction, or networks, is the key to

understanding the complexity of problems in inner cities. These theories, however, could

also be employed to explain the reason why those rural areas and small towns that suffer

from the same problems as urban neighborhoods do not always have the same outcomes.

In the next section, I discuss some of scholarship on rural poverty, and how social

networks differ in small towns, compared to urban areas. In essence, if poverty levels are

similar, why are the outcomes different?

Poverty and Small Towns

> "Neighborhoods characterized by an extensive set of obligations, expectations, and interlocking social networks connecting adults facilitate the informal social control and support of children…Neighborhoods are differentially characterized not only by network-related structures…but also by cultural expectations...The expectation that neighborhood residents can and will intervene on the behalf of children depends on…the shared values among her neighbors"(Sampson 2001, 9).

Children in urban America are not alone in their deprivation. Poverty levels are

actually higher in rural areas than in urban areas. In 1996, the percentage of children in

poverty was slightly higher in rural areas than urban areas (24% compared to 22%

respectively). In 2000, the average urban resident made over $12,000 more per year than

the average rural resident. These differences are due in part to the wider income

distributions in urban than rural areas. Poverty is likely to be more common and

widespread in rural areas, while it is found in pockets within cities. And, even though the average cost of living is lower in rural than urban areas (Nord 2000), rural residents often have higher costs for transportation and medical care (Rogers 1988).

Rural poverty is "geographically concentrated in the same way that urban poverty is confined by neighborhoods; and rural children in poverty face the same challenges as poor urban children – substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and educational failure" (Nadel and Sagawa 2002, 12). It is often assumed that urban communities are the only places that suffer from a lack of adequate institutions, such as good schools, community centers, and health clinics. However, these facilities are often as bad in rural communities, which also lack the money to hire and maintain the best teachers, to pay for new textbooks and equipment for school activities, and to attract medical practitioners and community leaders to these remote areas. In fact, although 40 percent of the nation's schools are in rural areas and small towns, and twenty-six percent of the nation's students are enrolled in these schools, only about twenty-three percent of federal education money is targeted to rural schools.

Rural areas suffer from many of the same problems that urban neighborhoods face: high levels of unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, geographic isolation, and intergenerational transmission of poverty. One major difference, of course, between rural and urban poverty is that, except in the Deep South, rural poverty is largely a white phenomenon.

Based on the levels of poverty in rural areas and small towns, we might expect similar social outcomes as in impoverished central city neighborhoods. In some cases, this would be right. Rural school children score much lower on standardized tests and are

more likely to drop out of school than those in the suburbs or urban areas (Roscigno and Crowley 2001). Single parenthood is on the rise in rural communities (Lichter and Eggebeen 1992). With the losses in the agricultural and industrial sectors that once typified the rural labor force, jobs in the low-paying service sector have been unable to replace the wages and benefits to which many were accustomed.

Even so, many scholars continue to extol the virtues of small town civic life. In spite of their poverty and hardship, individuals in rural areas are more likely to vote and to engage in other civic activities than those in poor urban areas (Putnam 2000; Gimpel 1999; Monroe 1977; Verba and Nie 1972; Fischer 1975). Nardulli, Dalager, and Greco find that much of decline in voter turnout in the last 30 years can be explained by looking at the declining levels within the nation's largest 32 metropolitan areas (1996). Outside of these cities, turnout has remained steady. For example, Perry, Alabama is small (only 11,800 residents) and is one of the poorest places in America (with an average income of $20,000 in 2000), but in the 2000 election, nearly 70 percent of adults in Perry County voted, and in 1996, 67 percent turned out. According to a Perry County Commissioner, "Voting is part of our culture, and we continue to preach it" (*Arizona Daily Star* 2004).

Oliver argues that rural residents are more efficacious than those in suburbs and urban areas, and efficacy fosters participation (2001). Putnam's work on social capital indicates that residents of states like North Dakota, where there are few urban centers and many small towns, are especially participatory and efficacious (2000). Communities with a substantial stock of social capital are more stable and efficient, and are places where residents know and trust one another.

In the last chapter I reviewed the extensive literature on community size and democratic values. I will not review it again here, but I add that the fact that people are more engaged in and knowledgeable about public affairs in small towns is even more surprising given the scholarship on the depressing effects poverty has on most social outcomes, including political participation and knowledge. I discovered in the last chapter that children in small towns had higher levels of political knowledge and participation in school activities than those in larger communities, even controlling for SES. If small towns are similarly impoverished as central cities, what accounts for the differences in socialization outcomes?

As Sampson (1992; 2001) and Wilson (1996) argue, the key to understanding these differences is in the interactions within the communities. It is not simply about the presence or absence of social networks, but rather the content of the interaction within the networks, as well as the ability of these relationships to empower individuals. Thus, I do not believe that individuals in inner cities are socially inept, or that they do not have strong bonds with other people. Research suggests just the opposite, in fact (Danziger 2000). Neighbors in poor inner cities, as well as small towns, often rely on one another for childcare, financial support, as well as emotional support.

The difference between these networks and those in small towns, and thus why outcomes are somewhat more positive in small towns, is what Sampson refers to as "the believed capacity for collective action" (2001, 13). It is similar to Oliver's contention about the importance of efficacy (2001). People can come together for any number of reasons. If people do not believe they can effect change, or somehow obtain some of what they need, however, the relationships are less likely to support the sort of values and

behaviors that would allow the community to overcome its impoverished status and participate in the political system.

Thus, just as the benefits of school size vary across different communities, the negative effects of poverty may also vary according to the type of community in which one is poor. To the extent that negative social networks are detrimental to socialization in poor, urban neighborhoods, positive social networks may enhance socialization in poor, small towns. Adolescents in small communities are believed to have better role models than those in urban areas. Even though many rural residents have similarly low levels of education and income as those in poor urban neighborhoods, the presence of grandparents and other extensive social networks provide young people with close ties and guidance that are lacking in many urban communities.

Thus, once I examine the effects of poverty on democratic values, I then analyze differences among the urban poor and the poor in small towns. I expect that poverty in small towns will be at similar levels as in urban areas, but that the poor students will have higher levels of political knowledge, tolerance, efficacy and participation than those in impoverished central cities.

Results

The first question this chapter addresses is the contention that disadvantaged students are better off in smaller schools than larger ones. Many believe that poor students benefit from the personal attention they can receive in smaller schools, and thus, their achievement is higher and their attitudes are better. Table 5.1 shows that the poorest students in the sample are no more politically knowledgeable, efficacious, or tolerant in

the smallest schools (under 600 students) than the largest (over 2000 students). The poorest students are defined as those whose parents make less than $15,000 per year. The only advantage these students have in smaller schools is that they are significantly more likely to participate in school activities than in larger schools. Whereas 65 percent of poor students in small schools participate, only 48 percent of them participate in the largest schools. Given Lee and Smith's (1997) finding that schools with 600-900 students are optimal, I also examined comparisons of poor students' performance in these schools. I found no significant differences between poor students' democratic values in the smallest schools and those in slightly bigger schools. Poor students are not necessarily better off in smaller schools, at least for democratic values.

The second question to address is the idea that students in disadvantaged communities are better off in smaller schools. The first question looked at whether poor children – regardless of the affluence of their community – had higher levels of democratic values in smaller schools. Now, I examine whether all students in poor communities – regardless of their own families' levels of affluence – are better off in smaller schools. I find that students in the poorest communities (those in the lowest quartile of median income) are only more participatory in smaller schools, but that once again, school size has no effect on knowledge, efficacy or tolerance (Table 5.2). Interestingly, students in smaller schools within poor communities are not only more likely to join school activities, but also to get involved in activities outside their schools. Based on these results, I cannot conclude that reducing school size would have much of an effect on democratic values, construed broadly, even for disadvantaged students.

Table 5.1: Differences of Means for Poor Children in Smallest versus Largest Schools in NHES[a]

		N	Mean
Political Knowledge	Smallest Schools	45	21.11
	Largest Schools	42	22.22
Political Efficacy	Smallest Schools	95	1.14
	Largest Schools	101	1.21
Political Tolerance	Smallest Schools	95	1.44
	Largest Schools	101	1.35
Participation in School Activities	Smallest Schools	95	.65***
	Largest Schools	101	.48
Participation in Out-of-School Activities	Smallest Schools	95	.51
	Largest Schools	101	.45

Differences were calculated using independent samples t-tests.
[a] Poor Children are defined as those whose parents make less than $5,000-$15,000 per year.
***$p < .01$

Table 5.2: Differences of Means for Children in Poor Communities in Smallest versus Largest Schools in NHES[a]

		N	Mean
Political Knowledge	Smallest Schools	144	29.51
	Largest Schools	60	26.39
Political Efficacy	Smallest Schools	306	1.29
	Largest Schools	135	1.39
Political Tolerance	Smallest Schools	306	1.37
	Largest Schools	135	1.46
Participation in School Activities	Smallest Schools	306	.69*
	Largest Schools	135	.59
Participation in Out-of-School Activities	Smallest Schools	306	.60***
	Largest Schools	135	.54

Differences were calculated using independent samples t-tests.
[a] Poor communities are those within the lowest quartile of median income for the community, based on 2000 figures.
*$p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ ***$p < .01$

These findings are somewhat surprising, especially given my results in chapter 4 that smaller schools enhance the acquisition of political knowledge in urban areas. After all, many neighborhoods within central cities are the poorest communities within the U.S. How could smaller schools help students in urban communities, but have no significance in the poorest communities? Part of the reason, I believe, is that poor communities are not synonymous with urban neighborhoods. In fact, 40 percent of the poorest communities in these data are in small towns or rural areas, and only 28 percent of them are in central cities. Given the benefits of small schools in urban neighborhoods, it is likely that poverty does not have the same effects in small towns as it does in the city.

Table 5.3 outlines some of the differences between poor urban communities and poor small towns. Poverty in small towns takes a much different face than in urban areas. On average, poor small towns are slightly better off than poor central cities. Yet, the median income is still quite low in both communities. Small town poverty is largely a white, native phenomenon – they have very few immigrants and Latinos, and comparatively few African-Americans. Unemployment is more severe in urban areas, with 13 percent of eligible workers unable to find a job. However, with 8 percent of the workforce out of work, this is no small problem in small towns. Although over 10 percent of families with children in poor small towns are headed by females, fully one-quarter of families in impoverished urban neighborhoods are run by women. Sampson (2001) argues that one of the effects of widespread single parenthood is a persistent lack of social control of children. When adults are not present, children supervise themselves.

Table 5.3: Differences of Means between Poor Urban Communities and Poor Small Towns in NHES

	Poor Urban	Poor Small Towns
Mean Income	$25,376	$27,853
Percent College Degree	.119	.121
Percent Black	.38	.16
Percent Latino	.34	.12
Percent Foreign Born	.23	.04
Percent Unemployed	.13	.08
Percent Homeowners	.36	.73
Percent Female-headed Households w/ children	.25	.11
Enrollment in Schools	1754	652
N=	277	389

Differences were calculated using independent samples t-tests.
Numbers in cells represent the mean level within each category. Figures are rounded. Scales
* All differences are significant at p<.0001

The starkest difference between urban and small town poverty is the rate of homeownership. Three-quarters of families in poor small towns own their own homes, while only a third of those living in poor urban areas own theirs. Homeownership provides stability to families, and requires adults to be financially responsible. Using the National Longitudinal Study of Youth, researchers found that parents who own their home help boost their child's educational achievement and reduce behavioral problems (Haurin, Parcel and Haurin 2002). Homeownership also has a positive influence on the community. The financial investment gives people a shared interest in maintaining and supporting the neighborhood.

Finally, we see that schools are much larger, on average, in poor urban neighborhoods than in poor small towns. The average school size in an impoverished small town is only 652. This average is barely above the limit for a "small" school, meaning that several of the schools in these towns are quite small. In contrast, children in poor city neighborhoods are attending schools with thousands of students. It is not surprising, then, that urban children benefit more from a smaller schools than those in small towns.

The next step, then, is to examine whether the differences in impoverished small towns and urban neighborhoods are associated with different levels of democratic values. Table 5.4 shows these results. Both the differences and the similarities are worth noting. First, although the affluence (or poverty) of a community does not matter in small or large towns, there are significant gaps between those living in a wealthy suburb and a poor suburb, as well as those growing up in a wealthy neighborhood in a central city and those in a poor urban neighborhood. Students in the most affluent suburbs and urban communities are significantly more knowledgeable than those in the poorest suburbs and urban areas. Conversely, the affluence of small towns and large towns does not give adolescents significant advantages.

Economic composition does not seem to have much impact in any community for political efficacy or tolerance. Based on the results from the previous chapter and those here, I am beginning to conclude that efficacy and tolerance are not as dependent on the context of the school or the community as are knowledge and participation. I discuss these measures, and their problems, in the last chapter.

We can clearly see that just as participation depended upon school size and community size, it also fluctuates according to the economic composition of the community. Young people growing up in affluent communities are more likely to participate in school activities and out of school activities than those in poor communities, largely regardless of the size or type of community. Children in poor suburbs, however, are equally likely to join in out of school activities as those in affluent suburbs.

Table 5.4: Differences on Democratic Values Between the Poorest and Most Affluent Communities within Types of Communities

		Small Towns[a]	Large Towns	Suburbs	Central Cities
Political Knowledge	Poorest	29.27	33.80	27.01****	23.24**
	Most Affluent	46.43	40.32	45.08	37.97
Political Efficacy	Poorest	1.26	1.32**	1.30	1.30
	Most Affluent	1.30	1.45	1.42	1.39
Political Tolerance	Poorest	1.40	1.48	1.41	1.42
	Most Affluent	1.57	1.43	1.47	1.46
Participation in School Activities	Poorest	.71****	.71	.62****	.59****
	Most Affluent	.83	.69	.74	.70
Participation in Out of School Activities	Poorest	.60****	.60****	.63	.53****
	Most Affluent	.68	.69	.63	.67
	Poorest[1]	N=389 (168)	N=164 (72)	N=145 (58)	N=164 (142)
	Most Affluent	N=60 (28)	N=278 (136)	N=422 (193)	N=278 (97)

Numbers in cells represent the mean level within each category. Figures are rounded. Differences were calculated using independent samples t-tests.

Although I would like to compare the effects of school size in poor small towns and poor urban neighborhoods, as I continue to split the sample into smaller and smaller categories, the number of respondents diminishes. For example, while there are hundreds of respondents in the smallest schools in poor small towns, there are only five respondents in schools with more than 2000 students in the poorest small towns. Even bivariate analyses are difficult with such small numbers; and multivariate analyses would be impossible.

Metro Civic Values Study Results

The MCVS offers some advantages over the NHES for the multivariate analyses. Because it is a national random sample, only one or two respondents per community were sampled in the NHES. The MCVS, however, sampled 70-150 students per community, making the analysis of communities more precise. This is important because I am not simply looking at phenomena that occur at one level of analysis. Instead, I am interested in how individual characteristics of students – their levels of poverty, for instance – vary across different communities, as well as in schools of different sizes. In the past, researchers would simply create a series of interaction terms in a regular ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression model to account for these cross-level interactions. They would multiply, for example, the income of the student by the size of the school.

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Not only is this type of analysis difficult to interpret, but also OLS regression does not provide accurate estimates for data at multiple levels of analysis. Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) maintains the assumptions of linearity and normality that are in OLS regression, but deals with the special statistical challenges of data analysis when individual observations are clustered within schools, geographic jurisdictions, or distinct temporal periods, rather than independently distributed. The main difference between HLM and OLS is in the error terms; the HLM model provides a more conservative estimate of the standard errors of coefficients than OLS models.

An analysis using HLM, however, requires a substantial number of respondents per group. This is why I cannot do complex multivariate analyses with the NHES – there are only one or two respondents per community. I could aggregate the data to particular types of communities, but here again, HLM analyses require a minimum number of about 30 groups in order for accurate results (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). The MCVS solves these problems because the data were collected with this type of analysis in mind. I can examine poor children in urban neighborhoods versus those in small towns, as well as whether poor students are better off in smaller schools than larger ones.

Before turning to these results, however, it is helpful to get a better idea of the type of communities within the MCVS, and their average levels of poverty. Figure 5.1 shows a simple scatterplot with the average political knowledge scores crossed with a measure of poverty within the community (the percent making less than $15,000 per year). One should notice that the suburbs are more affluent than either the small towns or the urban areas. Additionally, although the students in the smaller towns are similarly poor to urban neighborhoods, they have much higher levels of knowledge than those in

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urban areas. Finally, there does seem to be a strong relationship between poverty and

knowledge – the slope of the line is largely flat.

Figure 5.1: Mean Political Knowledge Score and Community-Level Poverty Across 29 Communities in MCVS

$$y = -0.0637x + 70.67$$
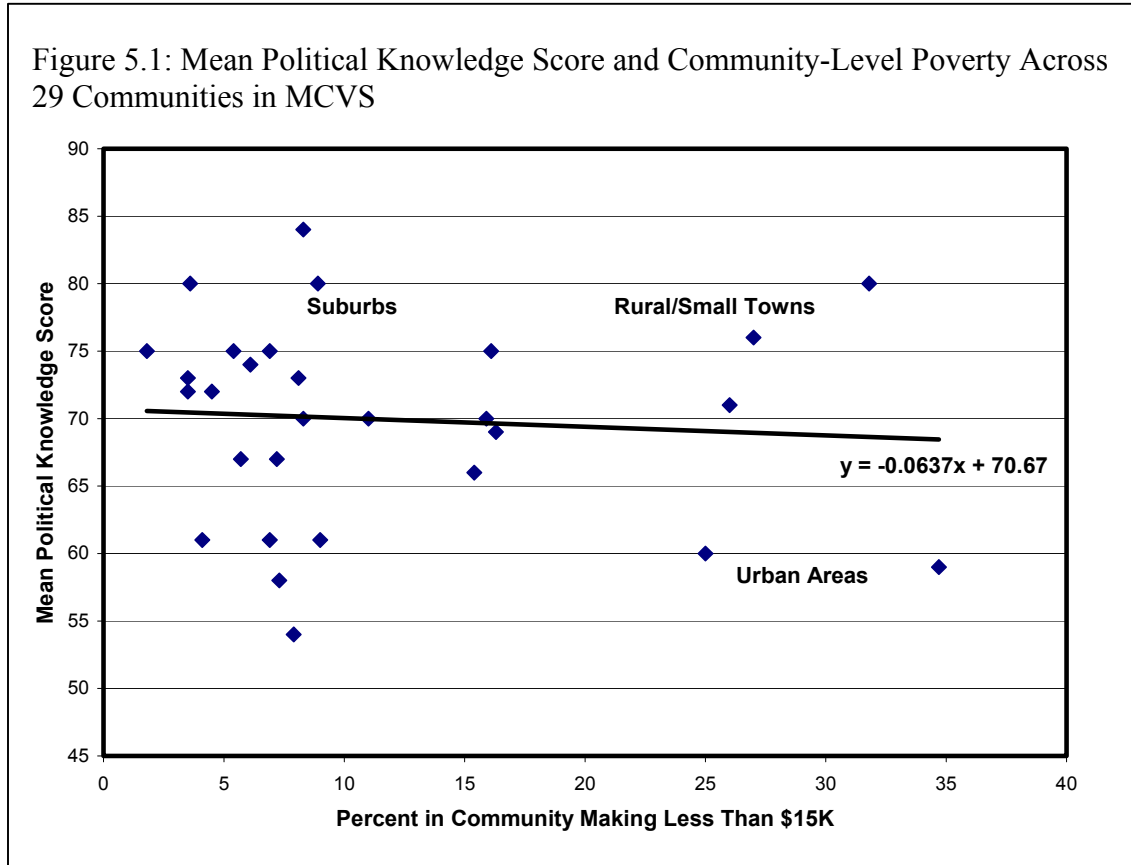
Interestingly, when you remove the small towns from the analysis, the slope

declines dramatically (from -.06 to -.40), and poverty appears to have a much stronger

effect on knowledge (Figure 5.2). The relationship more closely resembles what social

scientists would predict: poverty is correlated with negative social outcomes. This

underscores the importance of including small communities in any analysis of poverty,

and makes me wonder whether the other negative social outcomes attributed to poverty

would look quite different if small towns were included in the analyses.

Figure 5.2: Mean Political Knowledge Score and Community-Level Poverty Across Urban and Suburban Communities in MCVS
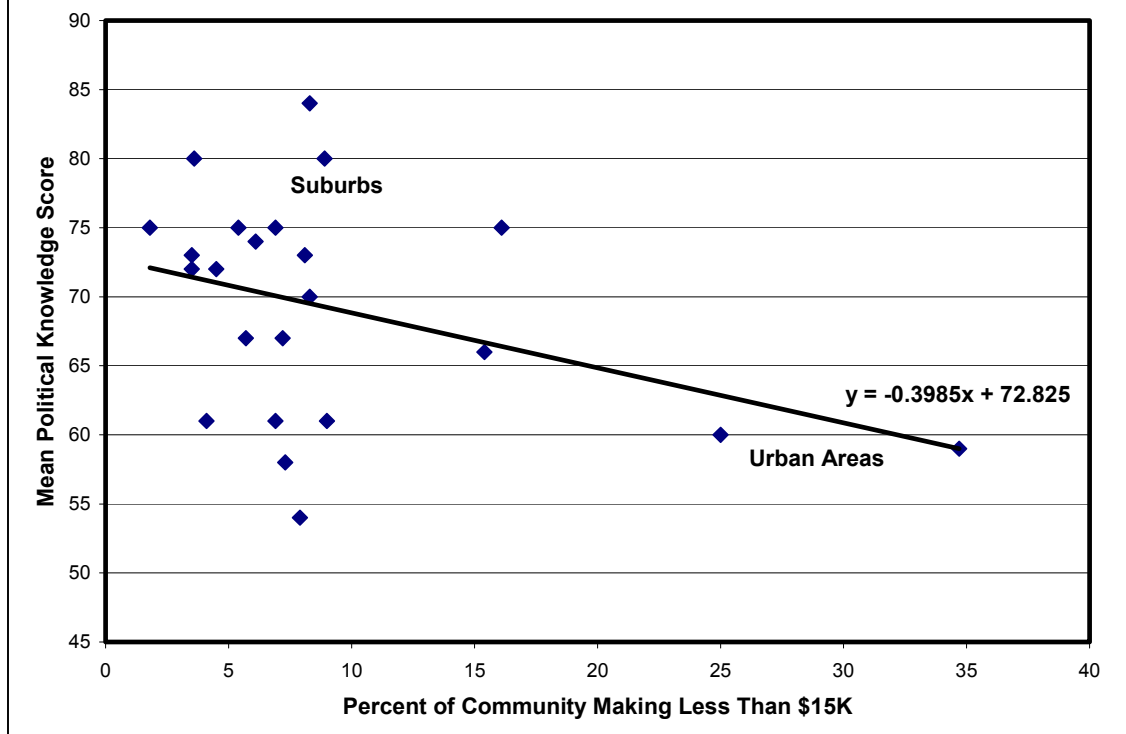
The HLM results, examining the cross-level interactions, are presented in Table 5.5. The MCVS does not have a comparable participation construct to the NHES, so I only look at the MCVS constructs for knowledge, efficacy and tolerance. Looking simply at the intercept, we see poorer students have lower levels of knowledge and efficacy. Moving down one row in the table, I find that poor students in urban neighborhoods also are less knowledgeable and efficacious. This likely does not come as a huge surprise. However, the next row examines poor students in impoverished communities, controlling for urbanization. These are largely the small towns in these data. The poor students in these communities are *more* knowledgeable and efficacious than poor students in affluent, non-urban communities (i.e. suburbs). Thus, poor students

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Table 5.5: Estimation of Fixed Effects for Poverty and Political Knowledge, Efficacy and Racial Intolerance in MCVS

	Political Knowledge	Political Efficacy	Racial Intolerance
	Gamma Coefficients (Standard Errors)	Gamma Coefficients (Standard Errors)	Gamma Coefficients (Standard Errors)
Intercept	17.459 (17.923)	35.088**** (5.031)	42.497**** (3.302)
Inverse Income (higher values=low-income)			
Intercept	-.463*** (.128)	-.257** (.098)	.118 (.115)
Density	-.00004*** (.00001)	-.00002** (.0002)	-.00001 (.000009)
% Less than $15K	.016*** (.005)	.007** (.003)	.010** (.004)
School Size	.00003 (.00005)	.00005 (.00004)	-.00005 (.00005)
Race (1=Black)			
Intercept	-14.656*** (4.066)	-2.153 (2.674)	-.490 (2.832)
Density	.00005 (.0002)	-.0002 (.0002)	.0008*** (.0002)
% Less than $15K	.005 (.090)	.197 (.104)	-.329** (.127)
School Size	.001 (.0009)	-.0008 (.001)	.0007 (.001)
Controls			
Civics Courses Taken	-.150 (.351)	.606*** (.205)	.376* (.214)
Female	-4.758*** (1.258)	-6.909**** (1.502)	-.582 (.556)
Grade Level	6.124*** (1.847)	2.077*** (.561)	.035 (.304)
No Plans to Attend College	-8.738*** (2.342)	-5.355**** (1.148)	.743 (.743)
Dislikes Civics Courses	-7.829**** (1.638)	-11.620**** (2.245)	1.202* (.673)

Percent Reduction in Error from FUM	**11 %**	**7 %**	**3 %**

NOTE: Regression coefficients were derived using HLM. Italicized variables are individual, level-1 variables. The level-2 variables are indented and placed underneath the level-1 variable for which it was controlled. *p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001

in urban neighborhoods have lower levels of knowledge and efficacy, but those in small towns have higher knowledge and efficacy.

Finally, we see that school size does not make any difference for poor students. Poor students are not better off in smaller schools. In a separate model, I controlled only for school size, to test whether the effects of school size were captured in the economic composition or size of the community. I found that even once I exclude the size and poverty of the community, poor students are still no better off in smaller schools than in larger ones. One might argue that this is because many of the largest schools in these data are in the suburbs. Yet, when you examine the results from the NHES (see Table 5.1) along with these results, it becomes clear that school size does not make much impact on democratic values, even for poor students.

Another important consideration is that the differences between small town poverty and urban poverty are non simply attributable to differences between the white poor (in small towns) and the black poor (in urban areas). My results show that African-American students have much lower levels of political knowledge than non-black students; they score almost 15 points lower on the test than their counterparts. This relationship is not contingent upon the community size and poverty, or school size. Black students are not worse off in urban areas; conversely, they are not better off in small towns. The important factor is that the effects of poverty remain significant even when I control for race.

Fortunately, the MCVS includes a construct to measure racial intolerance. Higher values on this variable indicate higher levels of intolerance. Thus, although poorer students are no more intolerant than affluent students, low-income students in poor small towns are significantly less tolerant than affluent students in small towns. So, while low-income youth coming of age in poor small towns are more knowledgeable and efficacious than are poor youth in larger communities, they are significantly less tolerant of individuals of other races and ethnicities. This is the main reason I included tolerance as an indicator of democratic values, and this inclusion raises questions about small towns as the best places to instill democratic values.

For many people, the main disadvantage to living in small towns is their reputation as stifling and unaccepting of any difference. It may be the case, then, that the same tight social networks that strengthen political efficacy and contribute to high levels of interest and knowledge also socialize young people into fearing what they do not know. It may be that growing up in a rural area or small town does make one fearful, and even angry, at any type of difference.

Interestingly, black students in small towns are actually much more tolerant than black students in urban areas. It is important to note that the construct measuring racial intolerance includes many questions about immigrants (see chapter 2). Blacks in inner city Baltimore may feel their future job prospects are threatened by the arrival of immigrants. Or, their intolerance may stem from attitudes they learn in their neighborhoods in response to the feelings of hopelessness and discrimination they experience. I delve deeper into these issues in the next chapter, where I examine how the racial composition of the community influences democratic values.

Before closing, I want to focus on the control variables. Although unsurprising, many of these findings are worth some consideration. Although adult women vote at higher rates than men, young girls are still less knowledgeable and efficacious than are boys. Educational aspirations are extremely important, and those who do not plan to go to college have lower levels of knowledge and efficacy than those who plan for college. Finally, each additional semester of social studies coursework adds very little to these democratic values – less than one point in efficacy. However, students' attitudes about their civics courses are very important. Students that dislike their government classes score almost 8 points lower on the knowledge test, are 12 percent less efficacious and 1 percent less tolerant than students who like these courses. Although it is difficult with these data to know why these students dislike their courses, it is very important that civics teachers consider that what they do in the classroom is very important in the development of democratic values.

Discussion

The results from this chapter have several important implications, which build upon what I have found in the last two chapters. First, the benefits of school size are simply not widespread. In fact, I was not able to find the size of the school to make any difference even for the group of students that are believed to benefit most from smaller schools: poor students. Low-income students, and those growing up in impoverished communities did not have higher levels of knowledge, efficacy, participation or tolerance in smaller schools. This held true both in Maryland (with larger-than-average schools in very wealthy suburbs) and in the United States as a whole.

Small school advocates do not simply claim that smaller schools will help academic achievement and discipline, but also that they help "prepare students for college, work, and *citizenship*" (Toch 2003, xi, *italics mine*). Many find evidence that students have higher levels of personal efficacy, and they experience a sense of belonging with other students and teachers that does not occur within a traditional comprehensive high school. Advocates claim that higher graduation rates, college completion, positive attitudes about school and self, taken together, give students the skills necessary to become good citizens. Granted, they do not look specifically at political participation or knowledge, but the implications of their arguments indicate that they would support this belief.

Other than the finding that small schools improve political knowledge in urban areas, I have not been able to find overwhelming support for reducing school size. I have one more group to analyze: racial and ethnic minorities. Small school advocates focus specifically on children of immigrants, Latinos, and African-Americans. Certainly, members of these groups are in some of the worst schools in the nation, so it is quite possible that they would benefit greatly from smaller schools. This may be especially true in certain environments – urban areas, for example. However, given the results so far, I am quite skeptical about a widespread policy that would restructure schools by making them smaller as a way to improve the political development of our students.

In addition to the implications for school size reduction, this chapter also provides further support for the benefits of small towns. Low-income children are not nearly as disadvantaged in small towns as they are in urban neighborhoods. Children whose parents make similar incomes have very different outcomes depending on whether they

are coming of age in a small town or in a city. Poverty does not have the same detrimental effects within small towns as it does in urban areas. Once again, I find support for this both within the state of Maryland, as well as the nation as a whole.

To some, this is not at all surprising. I showed that poverty in small towns is in many ways, not as severe as in urban neighborhoods. Urban areas have much higher unemployment, lower levels of home ownership, and much higher rates of female-headed households. Add to these indicators the differences in cost of living from cities to small towns, as well as the concentration of racial minorities, and many would argue that "poverty" does not mean the same thing at all across these two types of communities.

Even conceding that small town poverty is not as much a hardship as is urban poverty, one cannot ignore the fact that students in small towns had similar levels of political knowledge to those in affluent suburbs. Thus, the surprise may not come from comparing small town children to urban children, but that children from small towns in Maryland performed at equal levels, or at better levels, than students from suburbs. Adolescents growing up in very small, struggling communities on the Maryland border performed as well as students from Montgomery County, Maryland – one of the wealthiest suburbs in the U.S.

Although we might attribute the higher levels of democratic values to high parental incomes or education in the suburbs, these conditions are less prevalent in small towns. Small towns are able to compensate for their low levels of income and education through strong social networks that enhance the socialization experience and teach children the benefits of learning about politics and government, and of participating in community activities. Replicating the positive outcomes in urban areas is probably going

to require some combination of reducing poverty, and strengthening the networks that give individuals a belief that political knowledge and participation are worth time and effort.

Finally, it is important to point out that while growing up in small towns helps to strengthen knowledge, participation and efficacy, it has the opposite effect on racial and ethnic tolerance. Students in small towns are significantly more intolerant than those growing up in suburbs or in cities. This is a point that cannot be glossed over or ignored. If we care about socializing children into democratic values, broadly construed, this must include fostering the value of acceptance of people who are different, or have different backgrounds. To the extent that the strong social networks within small towns inculcate conformity and fear of the unknown or unfamiliar, they may not be worth replicating in other environments. In the final chapter, I address the balance of the different democratic values.

Chapter 6

Racial Composition and Democratic Values

In the last chapter I discovered that children who grow up in poverty have significantly higher levels of knowledge and efficacy if they live in small towns than in urban neighborhoods. In fact, growing up in a small town is actually more beneficial for poor students than growing up in a wealthy suburb. The results of the last chapter also showed that contrary to many arguments of education policy analysts, poor students are not advantaged by attending smaller schools.

This chapter examines another critical element of community context: racial and ethnic composition. For many years, social scientists have examined the effects of living in racially homogeneous environments versus racially heterogeneous ones on political attitudes, especially tolerance. These scholars have mostly examined how whites respond to the proportion of blacks living in their communities, or attending their schools. Two main theories seek to explain the tolerance (and intolerance) of whites in racially heterogeneous environments. One predicts that whites will respond with anger, violence, and intolerance (Blalock 1965; Giles and Hertz 1994; Green, Strolovich and Wong 1998). Another theory expects that whites will learn to accept their black neighbors (Allport 1954; Sigelman and Welch 1993; Slavin 1996).

Given the changing demographic make-up of the country, it makes little sense to analyze only black/white composition. How do individuals of various racial and ethnic backgrounds respond to living around others who are different from them? And, are democratic values, including tolerance, found at higher levels in racially diverse

environments as opposed to racially homogeneous ones? In other words, do white

students have higher levels of political knowledge, etc. in communities where they are

surrounded by other whites; do blacks perform better in predominantly black

communities, and are Latinos better off in heavily-Latino communities? Or, are all of

these values enhanced by growing up in a racially and ethnically diverse community?

This chapter addresses these questions.

Building from the previous chapters, I would expect that heterogeneity is not

likely to provide the best environment for some values, while it may be quite necessary

for the development of others. Specifically, to the extent that smaller towns are racially

homogeneous, and values such as political knowledge, efficacy and participation are

higher in smaller towns, racial homogeneity may be a good thing. However, the last

chapter also showed that poor individuals living in smaller towns are less racially tolerant

than others. This is likely due, in part, to the racial homogeneity in small towns and the

lack of exposure these young people have with people from different backgrounds. Thus,

some degree of racial heterogeneity is likely to be important for tolerance.

Before examining these theories, however, I continue my analysis of school size.

Just as education scholars argue in favor of smaller schools for poor students, they argue

that they can help members of racial minorities to overcome many of the problems they

encounter in large, urban schools. I examine this contention by looking at whether

African-Americans, Asians, and Latinos benefit more from smaller schools than white

students. I am skeptical, however, given that thus far, the results do not support much of

school size literature.

Racial Differences in Educational Outcomes

The average African-American or Latino student in primary or secondary school achieves at about the same level as white students in the lowest quartile of white achievement (Chubb and Loveless 2002). The achievement gap, as this phenomenon has become known, has been found to exist for many years. The gap is not simply about achievement on standardized tests, but is a problem on many important educational indicators, such as graduation rates and college attendance. It is blamed for the necessity of controversial affirmative action policies in higher education, and for the continued disparities between racial minorities and whites in occupational status and income as adults.

The achievement gap persists into the realm of political knowledge (Niemi and Junn 1998). Whites outscored Latinos on nearly every one of the 150 knowledge items on the NAEP test; whites outscored blacks on 144 of the 150. African-Americans were only more knowledgeable on items that dealt directly with racial matters, such as questions about the Montgomery bus boycott or Martin Luther King, Jr. Even controlling for various aspects of the home environment, school curriculum and individual achievement, African-American students and Latinos scored about 6 points and 9 points lower, respectively, than whites in political knowledge (Niemi and Junn 1998, 120).

In 1966, James Coleman's now-famous study documented vast differences in the achievement of whites and blacks. He attributed this gap mainly to family background. Over the years, several studies have confirmed the gap, and there have been many explanations for its existence. Liberals have tended to blame the gap on poverty, racial segregation and inadequate funding of schools; conservatives have traditionally explained

racial differences as a function of genetics, culture, or family structure, especially single parenthood (for a discussion of this debate, see Wilson 1987, chap 1).

Each of these explanations, however, is difficult to square with available evidence. For example, even though the number of affluent black families has risen since the 1960s, their children's test scores continue to lag behind those of white children (Jencks and Phillips 1998). Similarly, black students score only marginally better in integrated schools than they do in segregated schools. On the conservative arguments, there is no direct evidence showing that blacks are inherently less intelligent than whites (Nisbett 1998). And, cultural or familial structure explanations fall apart because the gap persists with affluent black children and black youth in traditional two-parent homes.

Scholars have begun to turn away from this liberal/conservative schism, believing that it has hampered theoretical discussions, as well as empirical analyses of the achievement gap. Instead, new theories examine psychological factors, such as family interactions and stereotyping. For example, racial differences in child rearing practices are related to differences in achievement (Phillips, Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, and Crane 1998). The scholarship of John Ogbu (1987; 1994; Gibson and Ogbu 1991), as well as Claude Steele (1997), suggests that the achievement of black students is often dependent upon their reactions to a perceived lack of opportunities and negative stereotypes about blacks. According to Ogbu, African Americans have "developed a folk theory of getting ahead that does not necessarily emphasize the strategy of academic pursuit" (1987, 154). Steele and Aronson (1995) claim that black students perform more poorly on standardized tests than others because they "face the threat of confirming or being judged by a negative stereotype" held about African Americans' intellectual

capacities. Negative stereotypes add an element of frustration and stress that is not felt

by individuals that do not suffer from such stereotypes. Each of these theories assumes

that individual behavior is, in part, a reaction to the situation or environment around

them. It is important to note that both of these theories are very controversial, and have

not gone uncontested (see Cook and Ludwig 1998).

Other theories have looked more carefully at the way different students react to

the same classroom and school experience, rather than focus exclusively on resource

differences between schools. For example, in a large-scale, random-assignment

experiment in Tennessee, smaller classes in grades K-3 helped reduce the black/white

achievement gap by about 15 percent (Krueger and Whitmore 2002). Ferguson finds, for

instance, that teachers lack faith in the potential of racial minorities, and these

perceptions negatively influence the achievement and aspirations of racial and ethnic

minorities (1998). Other curricular reforms that have shown some promise include

focusing on reading and other core material, annual testing and reporting disaggregated

data on the results of the tests, and creating schools with a specific "culture of

achievement" (Chubb and Loveless 2002).

Reducing school size is another such policy that involves different students

reactions in the same environment. Small school advocates contend that smaller schools

are especially beneficial to African-American and Latino students (Johnson, Howley and

Howley 2002; Lee and Smith 1997; Howley 1995; Huang and Howley 1993; Fowler and

Walberg 1991; Friedkin and Necochea 1988). For the same reasons as poorer students

are believed to be advantaged in smaller schools, black and Latino students are thought to

benefit from individualized attention from teachers, as well as the more coherent

curriculum that focuses on basic skills rather than electives. As cited in the last chapter, one of the main reasons Bill Gates has contributed so much on behalf of small schools is that he believes a reduction in school size would give opportunities to racial minorities to go to college and prepare for jobs in today's economy. Based on these assertions, we should assume not only that racial minorities will perform at lower rates than whites on political knowledge and other democratic values, but also that their achievement is higher in smaller schools than in large ones.

Social Identity and Racial Composition

The racial composition of a community influences political attitudes and values through an interaction of an individual's racial identification and the particular racial context in which ones lives. This racial identification is both a social identity, as well as a psychological feeling of belonging to a particular racial group. Much of the scholarship on racial identity stems from social psychology, and specifically, social identity theory. Social identity theory is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his or her knowledge of membership in a social group, together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel 1981, 255). The theory begins with the following assumptions. First, individuals are predisposed to categorize objects and people into units composed of similar others (in-groups) and dissimilar others (out-groups). Social categorization gives individuals a group membership, providing a basis for determining appropriate values and behaviors. Second, individuals seek to view themselves and their group in a positive way. In order for individuals to evaluate their group positively, they compare their group to out-groups (Festinger 1954).

This group-based comparison is arguably the most important aspect of the theory. Individuals belong to several groups at one time; however, some of these groups are more important in influencing attitudes and values than others. As groups compare themselves to one another, in most cases, there exists a "dominant" group and several subordinate groups. Group membership is often most important, and salient, for members of subordinate groups.

However, the salience of a particular identity depends greatly on the context of the situation. For example, males are generally considered the dominant group in gendered identities; thus, one would expect that this identity is not particularly salient for most men at any given time. Yet, when a man enters a situation where he is one of only a few men, his male identity suddenly becomes ever-present. Similarly, whites may not have a strong racial identity in most situations, but in contexts in which they are a minority, their racial identity may be quite strong. In cases "when members of high-power groups are threatened" by the presence or "the demands of other groups, …their in-group identification increases and they generally react defensively to protect their privileges" (Gurin, Peng, Lopez and Nagda 1999, 140).

Although some scholars of human development contend that all humans go through universal stages of cognitive and moral development (Piaget 1932; Kohlberg 1976), racial attitudes are generally believed to develop through an interplay of the environment and one's individual cognitive development. The patterns of socialization to which "children are exposed within their families…and in contact with other important institutions have enormous implications for the development of interethnic and interracial relations. Theories of socioemotional development suggest that the foundation for these

processes is established during the earliest interactions experienced with others…"
(Garcia Coll and Vazquez Garcia 1995, 116). Just as the economic composition of the
community influences democratic values through the interactions that take place in
particular communities, the racial composition affects these values through a combination
of social interactions, psychological attachments to one's in-group, and the racial context
in which one lives. The next two sections identify the main theories about how the racial
composition works in conjunction with racial identities and interactions to influence the
values of knowledge, efficacy, participation and tolerance.

Racial Composition and White Political Attitudes

Although there are several theories about the sources of white racial attitudes,
there are two major theories that deal directly with the effects of racial composition of a
community on white racial and political attitudes: power-threat theory and the contact
hypothesis. Both of these theories were developed at the time that U.S. society was
beginning to integrate its schools and public facilities. Thus, they were developed
looking mostly at white attitudes toward African-Americans. Even though the
demographic make-up of the country is quite different today than 50 years ago, and racial
attitudes are no longer simply attitudes about blacks, the basic tenets of these theories
should correspond to attitudes toward other racial or ethnic groups.

The power-threat theory holds that proximity to different racial and ethnic groups
produces hostile and prejudicial attitudes among whites (Blalock 1965; Key 1949;
Shanahan and Olzak 1999; Olzak 1992; Beggs, Villemez and Arnold 1997). This is
based on the idea that white racial identity becomes more salient in areas where they may

not have a majority position. As the proportion of blacks and other ethnic minorities in

the community increases, whites begin to feel threatened. According to this theory,

whites are more hostile to racial integration (Wilcox and Roof 1978; Fossett and Kiecolt

1989), vote at higher rates (Key 1949), engage in more racial violence (Corzine, Creech

and Corzine 1983), and are more ideologically conservative (Giles and Hertz 1994;

Glaser 1994) in response to the threat posed by racial and ethnic minorities to their social,

economic and political power. Green, Strolovich and Wong (1998) find that the highest

rates of racial violence occur in areas where whites have been a longtime majority, but

where racial minorities are beginning to move in. And, Sears, Citrin, Chelden and van

Laar (1999) show that this phenomenon is not only true for whites' attitudes about

blacks, but that whites are also defensive about protecting their privileges as diversity

increases through immigration.

According to this theory, whites in relatively homogeneous communities are

likely to exhibit greater tolerance than those living in more heterogeneous communities

where people of different backgrounds interact more regularly. Majority-white

communities are found both in suburbia and in small towns. For whites, growing up in

the suburbs or in small towns is not likely to introduce a plethora of people of different

races and ethnicities, and their racial identity may never become salient. We have also

seen that in these communities individuals are more politically knowledgeable and

participatory than are those in traditionally heterogeneous urban neighborhoods.

There is evidence that this phenomenon holds at the state level. Hero (1998)

discovers that whites in states with large minority populations, for example, are much

more likely to support policies that are detrimental to racial minorities than are whites in

predominantly white states (see also Tolbert and Hero 2001). Hill and Leighley (1999) find that racial diversity at the state level is associated with lower levels of voter mobilization, weaker mobilizing institutions and higher barriers to voter participation. The argument is that because of whites' racial attitudes, they erect these barriers to keep minorities from gaining too much power. Thus, we should expect that as the levels of diversity increase, whites respond to a perceived threat by becoming increasingly intolerant, and yet more politically interested and participatory.

Blalock argues that hostility is most intense among those that are in direct competition with racial minorities for power and resources – whites with low socioeconomic status (1965). Personal economic threat, then, may play an important role in racial and ethnic attitudes, indicating that poor whites and whites in small towns may feel more threatened by diversity than affluent whites and whites in the suburbs. Even though adolescents are probably not in direct competition with one another for jobs or housing, they may make prospective judgments about their chances in the job market when they come of age (MacKuen, Erikson and Stimson 1992). Low-income white youth may fear that when they enter the labor market, they will have to compete for work with racial minorities and immigrants. This may be especially true for young people with low educational aspirations, who do not plan to attend college after high school.

The second major theory about the influence of the local environment on racial attitudes is the contact hypothesis. Contrary to power-threat, the contact hypothesis claims that interracial and interethnic contact is beneficial for tolerance and other democratic values. This theory holds that an individual's prejudices can be alleviated by new, positive information derived from contact with individuals from a different racial or

ethnic group (Allport 1954; Carsey 1995; Voss 1996; Ellison and Powers 1994; Welch, Sigelman, Bledsoe and Combs 2001). Contact introduces information contradicting group-based stereotypes through the exchange of more intimate information. Contact with others also decreases intergroup ignorance, which is part of the foundation of prejudice and racial hostility. By breaking down stereotypes and giving new, more accurate information about others, contact heightens perceptions of intergroup similarity (Dixon 2001). There is some evidence suggesting that although analyses conducted at the state level are more supportive of power threat, those conducted at the neighborhood or precinct level are more supportive of the contact hypothesis (Liu 2001). It may be the case, then, that personal interactions in neighborhoods and communities are conducive to tolerance and participation, while whites may feel more threatened by racial minorities they cannot see and do not know.

The racial integration of schools provided an excellent test of this hypothesis, but the results were not entirely positive. Mere "contact" is often not enough to change racial prejudices (Braddock, Dawkins and Wilson 1995; Bullock 1978; Miller and Brewer 1984; Schofield 1989). Contact has a small impact on friendship with other groups even in settings designed to be congenial (Nesdale and Todd 1998). Smith (1981) discovered that whites were only supportive of racial integration when integration meant only a few blacks would enter the school, and thus, when their majority status was not threatened (see also Kinder and Mendelberg 1995; Bobo, Schuman and Steeh 1986).

Scholars have pointed out several conditions for contact to be positive, and without which, contact is likely to have little influence on racial attitudes. Early on, Allport suggested that the contact must be in settings that are institutionally sanctioned,

that groups must not be in competition with one another, and that groups should work together to achieve common goals (1954; see also Sherif et al. 1961). One of the most important criteria is that groups should be of equal status (Allport 1954; Dovidio, Gaertner and Validzic 1988; Jackman and Crane 1987; Sigelman and Welch 1993; Welch, Sigelman, Bledsoe and Combs 2001). When groups are not of equal status, the majority group will likely hold on to their prejudices and stereotypes in order to maintain their dominant position. When these conditions are not met, any positive affect toward an individual may not transfer to the group as a whole, but instead, the person will be regarded as an "exception to the rule" (Cook 1985; Jackman and Crane 1986). But, when Allport's conditions are met, "students are more likely to have friends outside their own racial groups than they would in traditional [segregated] classrooms" (Slavin 1996, 631).

To the extent that the preconditions are met, this theory predicts that young white adolescents living in communities that are somewhat heterogeneous will be more tolerant than their counterparts in homogeneous, predominantly white areas. Interracial and interethnic contact combats negative stereotypes about racial minorities, and facilitates friendship and trust. These theories generate contradictory hypotheses, and thus, this analysis is an interesting test of opposing ideas, and will have interesting implications for the benefits of integrated versus segregated communities.

Racial Minorities and Political Attitudes

Although much of the scholarship on power-threat and contact theories examines the attitudes of whites, the ideas translate into the attitudes of blacks and other racial minorities. At the base of these theories are the opposing ideas of individuals feeling

threatened by out-groups on the one hand, and individuals learning from and about out-groups, thereby facilitating positive attitudes toward them on the other hand. Cummings and Lambert (1997), for example, discover that blacks often feel threatened by Latinos and Asians when they live in close proximity to these groups. African American young people may believe they will compete with other racial minorities for jobs, political power, and other resources. There is no reason why power-threat should only apply to whites.

Similarly, interracial and interethnic contact should not only allow whites to confront their negative stereotypes about other groups, but should also give racial minorities an opportunity to counter stereotypes about whites and other racial groups. Ellison and Powers (1994) find that among African Americans, interracial friendships can be generalized to the out-group as a whole, especially if this interracial contact begins early in life. Similarly, Works (1961) finds that blacks living in an integrated housing project have less prejudice toward whites than those in a segregated housing project.

The key aspect of social identity theory is that members of groups compare their groups with out-groups. Identification with a subordinate group indicates that one's group does not compare well with the dominant group. To compensate for this, members of subordinate groups have several strategies, which have important effects on political attitudes, including the democratic values in this study. In general terms, when one's social identity does not measure up to other groups, he either will seek to change his group affiliation, or change the evaluation of the in-group so that one can see his group in a self-enhancing light (Tajfel 1978).

Specifically, scholars have pointed to several strategies that members of subordinate racial groups have used to compensate for their position. It is difficult, if not impossible in most cases, for one to change his racial group affiliation. Even so, Ogbu (1991) contends that some blacks have chosen to disaffiliate with the black community. Yet, most strategies involve changing the evaluations of one's in-group, or conversely, changing the positive evaluations of the out-group to more negative ones. One of the most common ways of accomplishing this is forming strong social and psychological bonds with others in the in-group. These bonds, referred to commonly as "group consciousness," are characterized by an "expressed…dissatisfaction with the group's current status, power, or material resources in relation to that of the out-group" and a belief that the "responsibility for a group's low status in society is attributable…to inequities in the social system" (Miller, Gurin, Gurin and Malanchuk 1981, 495).

Black consciousness, for example, is an awareness among blacks that they share a status as an unjustly deprived and oppressed group (Shingles 1981). A strong racial identity is an important source for deprived groups "as they try to redress group-based inequalities and mobilize for political influence with less money, less education, and fewer political positions than other groups have in the U.S." (Gurin, Peng, Lopez and Nagda 1999, 137; Verba and Nie 1972). Some find that a strong racial identity aids participation and tolerance among racial minorities (Bledsoe, Welch, Sigelman and Combs 1994; Gurin, Hatchett and Jackson 1989; Jackson 1984; Herring, Jankowski and Brown 1999). This identity gives many members of racial minority groups a sense of self-worth (Lewin 1948), and helps propel them into political participation and the collection of information.

Racial solidarity, or group consciousness, is often strongest for African Americans in areas of high black density, where the "saturation of intraracial contact" precipitates a "high degree of group awareness of cohesiveness" (Bledsoe, Welch, Sigelman and Combs 1995). It is also in these areas that blacks have traditionally held the most political power. In cities, for example, with a high concentration of black residents, black leaders have found their first forays into politics. This is not only the result of a black constituency, but the presence of black leaders also serves to strengthen racial solidarity and give blacks a sense of efficacy and empowerment (Bobo and Gilliam 1990).

A strong racial identity, however, may not always be beneficial to democratic values, such as political knowledge, efficacy, participation and tolerance. While group solidarity can manifest itself in ways that are consistent with mainstream values, such as enhancing knowledge and participation in politics, there are other strategies used by members of racial minorities to compensate for a perceived (or real) sense of subordination. Some African Americans develop a collective identity in opposition to mainstream culture, which is often seen as a white, middle-class culture. This is largely a response to the limited opportunities blacks confront in the U.S. Black schoolchildren may begin to define "academic learning as 'acting white,' and academic success as the prerogative of white Americans" (Fordham and Ogbu 1986, 177). This orientation "is not simply a cognitive adaptation to a limited set of opportunities; it is internalized as part of 'black identity'" (Ogbu 1989, 195; Oliver 1994).

Young people develop "survival strategies" that are not always congruent with the behaviors and attitudes that are required to do well in school. Some of these strategies

include "attending private schools, encapsulating oneself in peer group logic and activities, camouflaging one's efforts in school in acting as a jester or clown, and involving oneself in church activities which also promote school success" (Spradlin, Welsh and Hinson 2000, 19). In addition, Rotheram-Borus (1993) finds that young people with a strong ethnic identity engage in fewer cross-ethnic contacts and are more likely to perceive cross-ethnic conflict. The oppositional identity serves to protect racial identity, as well as provide members with integrity.

This is certainly a controversial position, and one in which many scholars of the black community disagree. Many cite evidence that black Americans have similar values as white Americans (Wilson 1996), and that "black culture" is not substantively different from white culture. Cook and Ludwig (1998) refute the ethnographic studies used commonly by Ogbu with the National Education Longitudinal Study. They find that, controlling for socioeconomic background, black schoolchildren expect to stay in school longer than whites, drop out at lower rates than white students, and are equally likely to attend school regularly as whites.

Cross (1995) contends that oppositional identity is merely one stage of the development of black identity, and that many African Americans eventually affirm a bicultural or multicultural identity (see also Tatum 1997). It is not necessary, according to many social psychologists, for a strong group identity to be associated with negative feelings toward out-groups. Group members generally try to create positive comparisons between their in-group and other groups, but they accomplish this more by assessing their in-group positively than by assessing the out-group negatively (Stephan and Stephan 1985, 615; Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier, Ward, and Banker 1999). Gurin, Hatchett and

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Jackson (1989) contend that African American identity is based on pro-black sentiments and group political consciousness, not anti-white sentiment. This form of African American identity is based on a sense of common fate, and is actually associated with greater knowledge and sympathy for the power disadvantages of other groups of color in America. They find that the exclusivist form of black identity is rare in the national black population. Because members of racial minority groups interact frequently with members of the dominant group, and they struggled with the ideas of conflict and harmony between groups, they are less likely to have negative attitudes toward whites (Gurin, et al. 1999).

Here too, the theories set up contradictory hypotheses. On the one hand, we might expect members of racial minorities, especially those living in close proximity to others in their group, to exhibit higher levels of knowledge, participation, tolerance and efficacy because of strong racial identity. On the other hand, however, there are good reasons to expect that racial minorities will reject these as "mainstream values" and instead, oppose them in order to protect a sense of dignity for their racial identity.

This chapter addresses several issues related to racial composition and democratic values. To clarify, the hypotheses that will be analyzed in this chapter are: 1) Members of racial minorities, especially blacks and Latinos, have lower levels of knowledge, efficacy, tolerance and participation than white adolescents; 2) Blacks and Latinos have higher levels of democratic values in smaller schools; 3) White adolescents have higher levels of knowledge, participation and efficacy, but lower levels of tolerance, in homogeneous (predominantly white) communities than in heterogeneous ones (power-threat theory); 4) Low-income whites have the lowest levels of tolerance than more

affluent youth; 5) White adolescents living in heterogeneous communities have higher levels of all democratic values than those in homogeneous communities (contact hypothesis); 6) Members of racial minorities living in co-ethnic communities will have higher levels of democratic values than those living in heterogeneous environments (group consciousness); 7) Members of racial minorities living in co-ethnic communities will have lower levels of democratic values than those living in heterogeneous environments (oppositional identity).

Results

The first task is to determine whether there are racial differences in the levels of democratic values. Indeed, African-American and Latino in the NHES students have lower levels of political knowledge and participation than white and Asian students (Table 6.1). There are no racial differences in political efficacy and tolerance, but this is most likely because these variables lack adequate variance. Interestingly, Asians are the most likely to participate in school activities, and there are no significant differences between white and black students' likelihood of participating. Latinos are about 13 percent less likely to participate than whites and blacks, and almost 20 percent less likely than Asians to get involved in school activities.

African-American and Latino students are less likely to be involved in activities outside of school than either Asians or whites. This is not surprising, given that many out of school activities are privately funded. Music lessons, dancing, sports leagues, and Girl and Boy Scouts must all be paid for by parents, and since many more African-American

parents and Latino parents have low incomes than white or Asian parents, these types of

activities are off-limits for their children. To the extent that participation in these

Table 6.1: Differences Between Whites, Blacks, Latinos and Asians on Democratic Values in NHES

		N	Mean
Political Knowledge	White	1088	40.29
	Black	285	24.33****
	Latino	295	22.60****
	Asian	62	38.98
Political Efficacy	White	2437	1.39
	Black	605	1.27
	Latino	651	1.24
	Asian	113	1.27
Political Tolerance	White	2437	1.45
	Black	605	1.45
	Latino	651	1.41
	Asian	113	1.39
Participation in School Activities	White	2437	.72
	Black	605	.71
	Latino	651	.58****
	Asian	113	.77***
Participation in Out-of-School Activities	White	2437	.69
	Black	605	.57****
	Latino	651	.52****
	Asian	113	.64**

Differences were calculated using independent sample t-tests. Each group was compared to whites.
**p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001

activities is beneficial to academic success, as well as the development of democratic

values, African-American and Latino adolescents are at a distinct disadvantage (Niemi

and Junn 1998; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, and Schulz 2001).

Next, I look at whether attending smaller schools is beneficial to racial minorities,

specifically Latinos and blacks. Scholars studying the effects of small schools argue that

blacks and Latinos are the most likely to attend the largest schools, to be in poverty-stricken homes and neighborhoods, and they benefit most from attending smaller schools where they can obtain individualized attention. However, I do not find that black students are any better off in the smallest schools (Table 6.2). They are equally knowledgeable, participatory, efficacious and tolerant in the largest schools as in the smallest schools. Once again, I also examined whether schools with enrollments of 600-900 students (the second-smallest category) had advantages (Lee and Smith 1997). Black students are more likely to participate in school activities in these schools (77 percent compared to 66 percent in the largest schools). There were no other differences between schools of this size and the largest schools, however.

Table 6.2: School Size Effects for Blacks and Latinos on Democratic Values in NHES

		N	Mean
Black Students			
Political Knowledge	Smallest Schools	30	22.22
	Largest Schools	52	25.00
Political Efficacy	Smallest Schools	86	1.29
	Largest Schools	110	1.29
Political Tolerance	Smallest Schools	86	1.37
	Largest Schools	110	1.52
Participation in School Activities	Smallest Schools	86	.69
	Largest Schools	110	.66
Participation in Out-of-School Activities	Smallest Schools	86	.58
	Largest Schools	110	.53
Latino Students			
Political Knowledge	Smallest Schools	45	22.22
	Largest Schools	109	21.41
Political Efficacy	Smallest Schools	83	1.19
	Largest Schools	283	1.27
Political Tolerance	Smallest Schools	83	1.34
	Largest Schools	283	1.41

Participation in School Activities	Smallest Schools	83	.65
	Largest Schools	283	.55****
Participation in Out-of-School Activities	Smallest Schools	83	.55
	Largest Schools	283	.52

Differences were calculated using independent sample t-tests.
****p<.001

Similarly, the only advantage the smallest schools have over the largest schools for Latino students is in their participation in school activities. Latino youth are 10 percent more likely to participate in smaller schools than in larger schools. They are not more knowledgeable or efficacious, however. These findings, and those from previous chapters, indicate that school size does not have much effect on the majority of democratic values I analyze here.

Now, I turn to an analysis of the racial composition, or racial context, in which young people grow up. First, I examine the effects of racial diversity on democratic values. Racial diversity is a measure of the racial and ethnic make-up of the community. A racially heterogeneous community is not simply one that is not all-white or all-black. Instead, it is one in which some proportion of different racial and ethnic groups is represented. Using the Sullivan (1973) index of diversity, I am able to analyze how growing up among many different peoples is different from growing up around individuals of mostly one race or ethnicity (see also Hero 1998).[17]

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[17] The formula for calculating the level of diversity is as follows: $1 - [$(Percent Latino population$)^2$ + (Percent Black population$)^2$ + (Percent White population$)^2$ + (Percent Asian population$)^2$ + (Percent Native American population$)^2]$. Although Hero does not include Native Americans in his diversity scale at the state level, there are several communities in these data that have high proportions of Native Americans. I excluded only one category – percent biracial. This proportion was generally no more than 1 percent of the population in any community.

Table 6.3 shows racial heterogeneity makes a significant difference in the levels

of knowledge and participation of young people. Once again, political efficacy and

tolerance prove to be complicated. In order to examine a difference of means, I divided

the racial diversity scale into quartiles. The lowest quartile is the most homogeneous, and

Table 6.3: Differences of Means between Racially Heterogeneous Communities and
Homogeneous Communities on Democratic Values in NHES

		N	Mean
Political Knowledge	Homogeneous	472	38.49****
	Heterogeneous	443	29.57
Political Efficacy	Homogeneous	976	1.32
	Heterogeneous	974	1.34
Political Tolerance	Homogeneous	976	1.44
	Heterogeneous	974	1.41
Participation in School Activities	Homogeneous	976	.72****
	Heterogeneous	974	.64
Participation in Out-of-School Activities	Homogeneous	976	.67****
	Heterogeneous	974	.60

Differences were calculated by using independent samples t-tests. Heterogeneity is based
on the racial diversity scale, and then divided into quartiles.
****p<.001

is generally made up of all-white communities, with a few mostly-black communities as

well. The highest quartile is the most heterogeneous community, and includes

neighborhoods and communities that have some proportion of each racial group. A

cross-tabulation indicates that racial diversity is highly related to community size; cities

are heterogeneous and small towns are homogeneous (table not reported).

Political knowledge, participation in school activities, and participation in

activities outside of school are much higher in racially homogeneous communities. Since

we have already discovered that these values are found at higher levels in small towns

than in urban areas, these results are not particularly surprising. Even so, the implications

of these findings are important. This year marks the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and not only are neighborhoods and communities increasingly segregated by race, but students are actually better off in segregated communities than in diverse ones. It is certainly the case that racial composition is bound up with community size and socioeconomic status, and these results do not control for these, but in general terms, students have higher political knowledge and participation rates when they live around individuals who are like them.

The next set of results shows this even more starkly. Looking only at white students, those living in areas of almost complete white homogeneity score about 3 points higher in knowledge and are 4 percent more likely to participate in school activities than are students in areas where whites are a minority (Table 6.4). Interestingly, white students are more efficacious in areas where they are a minority than in environments where everyone else is white. It may be that white students in areas of high black and Latino concentration are more efficacious because they are given more attention by teachers and others within the community. The relevant theory suggests just the opposite – that individuals would have higher efficacy in areas where they are a majority. Finally, I find no evidence that poor whites have higher levels of democratic values than affluent whites (table not reported).

These results provide some evidence that interracial contact may not be beneficial for these democratic values. Young people are more knowledgeable and participatory in less diverse environments than in communities characterized by high levels of racial diversity. This suggests that young people may indeed feel a sense of threat from other racial groups; this seems especially the case when examining white adolescents. Yet, the

perception of threat does not seem to be more common among low-income youth than others (see also Lay and Gimpel 2003). It is important to point out, however, that the preconditions of contact theory are not present here. It is rarely the case that racial groups have equal status positions within society, and that situations involve groups working together to achieve common goals. Thus, I would not rule out the possibility that under these circumstances, heterogeneity might prove more beneficial to these values. However, the serious question is whether these preconditions can ever be met within U.S. society as it exists today.

Although I would like to present analyses of blacks in predominantly black communities, and Latinos in Latino communities, it is not possible to present similar results for other racial groups because the numbers of survey respondents become prohibitively low. For example, there are only three black students in the sample who live in areas of the lowest black concentration. Indeed, of 3,910 cases in the data, only 177 students are whites living in areas of the highest non-white concentration. This is indicative of the high rates of segregation in the U.S., and also presents a problem for statistical analysis when there are so few cases to analyze.

Table 6.4: White Students in Predominantly White Communities and Democratic Values

		N	Mean
Political Knowledge	White Homogeneity	443	40.37*
	Heterogeneous	70	37.14
Political Efficacy	White Homogeneity	923	1.35**
	Heterogeneous	177	1.47
Political Tolerance	White Homogeneity	923	1.44
	Heterogeneous	177	1.43
Participation in School Activities	White Homogeneity	923	.73**
	Heterogeneous	177	.69
Participation in Out-of-School Activities	White Homogeneity	923	.68
		177	.68

Differences were calculated by using independent samples t-tests. White heterogeneity is the percentage of the white population divided into quartiles.
*p<.10 **p<.05

Therefore, I now turn to using the Metro Civic Values Study to analyze the effects of living in different racial contexts for students of different races and ethnicities. First, I calculate a measure of racial diversity, just like the one from the NHES. It is worth pointing out that these indexes indicate how closely the Maryland sample mirrors the national sample. The average level of diversity in the national sample is about .35, or a community with some heterogeneity, but a level that is still below parity between the races. In the MCVS, the average level of diversity is about .41.

Looking at the differences between the most heterogeneous and the most homogeneous communities in the MCVS, we see that those living in homogeneous communities are slightly more knowledgeable and intolerant than those in diverse communities (Table 6.5). Young people growing up in diverse environments are, however, much more likely to say they will vote. It is important to remember that in Maryland, most of the diverse communities are in wealthy Washington, D.C. suburbs. The homogeneous communities are small towns in rural Maryland, as well as those in the city of Baltimore. Thus, we would likely expect children from the suburbs to say they will vote more often than others, but we would also expect them to have higher levels of knowledge. The students in homogeneous small towns are bringing up the average level of knowledge – to an even higher level than in the suburbs.

Table 6.5: Differences between Racially Heterogeneous Communities and Homogeneous Communities on Democratic Values in MCVS

		N	Mean
Political Knowledge	Homogeneous	767	72.17*
	Heterogeneous	498	71.86
Political Efficacy	Homogeneous	765	49.14
	Heterogeneous	494	49.64
Racial/Ethnic Intolerance	Homogeneous	765	48.27*
	Heterogeneous	492	43.18
Will Vote in 2000	Homogeneous	777	.64****
	Heterogeneous	499	.70

Differences were calculated by using independent samples t-tests. Heterogeneity is based on the racial diversity scale, and then divided into quartiles.
*p<.10 ****p<.001

It is necessary to turn now to multivariate results, so that I control for the effects of socioeconomic status that may be confounding some of the bivariate findings. Table 6.6 shows racial diversity does not significantly affect the knowledge, efficacy and intolerance levels of whites or blacks. It does help nor hinder members of these racial groups to live in a heterogeneous or homogeneous environment. The effects of diversity are likely washed away by the controls for individual income, educational aspirations and grade level. Latinos, however, are less efficacious in diverse environments than in more homogeneous ones.

Rather than look exclusively at diversity, I also look at the interactions of race within co-ethnic contexts, or rather, those environments where individuals are surrounded by others who are most like them. The results are quite intriguing (Table 6.7). First, although African-American students score almost 10 points lower in political knowledge than non-black students, *when they live in an area of high black concentration, their*

levels of knowledge increase by six points. The results are the same for Latino students, but are even more substantive. Latinos score about 7 points lower in knowledge than non-Latinos, but when they are surrounded by Latino neighbors, their knowledge scores increase by *33 points*. It is worth noting that because the model includes controls for income, educational aspirations, and attitudes about civics courses, the students in the analysis are likely the best students. These are students who enjoy their civics courses, and who plan to attend college. When members of racial minority groups live in neighborhoods and communities among others who are like them, they have significantly higher levels of knowledge.

The same is not true for whites living in predominantly white neighborhoods. There is no difference between these adolescents and whites living in communities that are not majority white. Similarly, whites living in heavily black or Latino communities are just as knowledgeable as those in relatively homogeneous ones (table not reported). Black youth living in heavily Latino communities, or in predominantly white environments, are also no different from blacks living in non-Latino or in non-white communities. However, Latinos growing up in predominantly black communities score17 points *lower* in knowledge, and Latinos in heavily white neighborhoods score about 15 points *higher* in knowledge (table not reported). In general, the knowledge levels of Latino youth are most susceptible to the racial composition of the environment. Latino youth are most advantaged in environments with a strong Latino presence; white neighbors also are beneficial, but not as much as are Latino neighbors; and, African-American neighborhoods are actually detrimental to their level of knowledge.

Table 6.6: Estimation of Fixed Effects for Racial Diversity and Political Knowledge, Efficacy and Racial Intolerance in MCVS

	Political Knowledge	Political Efficacy	Racial Intolerance
	Gamma Coefficients (Standard Errors)	Gamma Coefficients (Standard Errors)	Gamma Coefficients (Standard Errors)
Intercept	-9.887 (22.332)	33.885**** (3.488)	43.970**** (3.682)
Black			
Intercept	-6.517** (2.346)	-.293 (1.516)	3.688** (1.704)
Racial Diversity	-1.556 (3.082)	-2.395 (2.768)	-.552 (2.589)
Latino			
Intercept	-10.177 (6.836)	3.663 (2.595)	-13.120** (5.290)
Racial Diversity	14.948 (12.152)	-11.978** (4.531)	14.098 (8.608)
White			
Intercept	10.309**** (2.539)	.624 (1.355)	7.320**** (1.492)
Racial Diversity	1.002 (2.550)	2.492 (2.791)	-3.938 (2.848)
Controls			
Civics Courses Taken	-.038 (.292)	.453** (.194)	.320* (.175)
Parental Income	.274**** (.041)	0.113*** (0.031)	-.111*** (.039)
Grade Level	6.518*** (2.016)	1.185*** (.333)	.020 (.245)
No Plans to Attend College	-7.734*** (2.216)	-2.643**** (0.599)	1.314** (.502)
Dislikes Civics Courses	-8.548**** (1.865)	-8.168**** (1.199)	1.620*** (.523)
Percent Reduction in Error from FUM			

NOTE: Regression coefficients were derived using HLM. Italicized variables are

individual, level-1 variables. The level-2 variables are indented and placed underneath the level-1 variable for which it was controlled. *p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001

We might attribute this to the poor quality of schools in the predominantly African American communities. Urban schools, including those in Baltimore, Maryland, are notoriously underfunded and have serious problems with teacher turnover and parental interest. We would expect Latino students to have lower levels of knowledge in these environments. However, we would also expect African American students to have lower levels of knowledge here. If the issue is one of school resources, we should expect all students to suffer to some extent. Yet, black students have higher levels of knowledge in these environments than in any other.

Because a great deal of the scholarship on racial context contends with racial tolerance, the final set of analyses deal with this issue. Are young people more or less tolerant in co-ethnic environments? In other words, are whites more accepting in communities that are predominantly white, and are black youth more tolerant in neighborhoods that are heavily black? And, how do adolescents respond in environments where they are in a minority? If they are more tolerant in these environments, we might conclude that interracial and inter-ethnic contact is positive. If they are less tolerant, perhaps these young people feel threatened by individuals who are different from them.

Just as African-American and Latino youth had higher levels of knowledge in co-ethnic communities, their levels of tolerance also vary according to whether they live around others who are like them. Black adolescents are generally less tolerant than non-black youth, but when they live in predominantly black communities, they become even less tolerant (Table 6.8). It is important to remember two factors here: 1) the dependent

Table 6.7: Estimation of Fixed Effects for Co-Ethnic Communities and Political Knowledge in MCVS

	Political Knowledge
	Gamma Coefficients (Standard Errors)
Intercept	-8.771 (21.734)
Black	
Intercept	-9.897*** (2.630)
Percent Black in Community	6.329*** (1.694)
Latino	
Intercept	-7.247** (2.661)
Percent Latino in Community	33.524** (14.618)
White	
Intercept	12.267**** (2.222)
Percent White in Community	-2.666 (1.881)
Controls	
Civics Courses Taken	-.049 (.297)
Parental Income	.265**** (.040)
Grade Level	6.464*** (1.981)
No Plans to Attend College	-7.246*** (2.661)
Dislikes Civics Courses	-8.568**** (1.886)
Percent Reduction in Error from FUM	

NOTE: Regression coefficients were derived using HLM. Italicized variables are individual, level-1 variables. The level-2 variables are indented and placed underneath the level-1 variable for which it was controlled. *p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001

variable measures intolerance, so higher values indicate more intolerance and 2) the dependent variable is mostly a measure of tolerance of immigrants (see Chapter 2).

This certainly explains the attitudes of Latinos. In general, Latino youth are no more or less tolerant than anyone else, however, when they are living in predominantly Latino communities, the levels of tolerance skyrocket. Latinos living amongst other Latinos are 61 percent more likely to support immigrants and immigration than Latinos in other environments. Communities with large proportions of Latinos usually consist of many immigrants, and thus it makes sense that living in these areas would engender strong support for immigrants and immigration. What is surprising is that Latino youth outside of these communities do not overwhelmingly support immigrants.

Upon examination of other environments, Latinos are actually less tolerant toward immigrants in predominantly black communities (Table 6.9) and are no more or less tolerant in white communities. Latino youth are 16 percent more intolerant when they grow up within a heavily black neighborhood. These young people are not as likely to be first-generation immigrants as are those who live amongst other Latinos. Because their neighbors are mostly black, they may, in fact, more closely identify with African-Americans than with Latinos. Given the negative stereotypes many Americans have of immigrants, these young people may try to distance themselves from their Latino brethren. It is also possible that they perceive some threat to their prospective status by Latino immigrants, who may work for less money and take jobs and social services.

Table 6.8: Estimation of Fixed Effects for Co-Ethnic Communities and Racial Intolerance in MCVS

	Racial/Ethnic Intolerance
	Gamma Coefficients (Standard Errors)
Intercept	45.934****
	(3.554)
Black	
Intercept	1.460**
	(.669)
Percent Black in Community	4.047***
	(1.003)
Latino	
Intercept	-0.098
	(2.274)
Percent Latino in Community	-61.106***
	(16.025)
White	
Intercept	5.751****
	(1.266)
Percent White in Community	-1.044
	(1.770)
Controls	
Civics Courses Taken	0.319*
	(.185)
Parental Income	-0.109**
	(0.040)
Grade Level	-0.117
	(0.222)
No Plans to Attend College	1.494***
	(0.492)
Dislikes Civics Courses	1.408**
	(0.521)
Percent Reduction in Error from FUM	

NOTE: Regression coefficients were derived using HLM. Italicized variables are individual, level-1 variables. The level-2 variables are indented and placed underneath the level-1 variable for which it was controlled. *p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001

In terms of social identity, the racial and ethnic composition of the community has serious implications for Latino youths' identities. In heavily-Latino areas, they seem to strongly identify with and support one another, but in predominantly black areas, this support for other Latinos disappears. What about for African American youth? Black youth are more intolerant of immigrants in predominantly black communities, and their levels of tolerance are not affected by living in heavily Latino, or heavily white communities. These results do not suggest that blacks feel a greater sense of threat in environments where they live amongst Latinos. They indicate, rather, that black identity is more closely tied to the proportion of blacks in the community, and that as the proportion of blacks increases, African American youth become more knowledgeable, but also more intolerant. The higher levels of knowledge indicate a sense of group consciousness and an acceptance of mainstream values. Similarly, the lower levels of tolerance among blacks in black communities may also be indicative of a heightened awareness of one's racial identity. When one lives in an all-black or predominantly black environment, "there is no need to include in one's identity the functional skills and sensitivities that make one efficacious in interactions with nonblack peoples" (Cross 1995, 199). These results do not support the idea of black youth in predominantly black environments taking on an oppositional identity.

The levels of knowledge and tolerance of white adolescents do not vary depending on the racial composition of their environment. Whites are no more or less tolerant in predominantly white, black or Latino communities, suggesting that their attitudes are not related to perceptions of threat from members of racial minorities. Yet,

Table 6.9: Estimation of Fixed Effects for Black Communities and Racial Intolerance in MCVS

	Racial Intolerance
	Gamma Coefficients (Standard Errors)
Intercept	-45.187****
	(3.439)
Black	
Intercept	.841
	(.789)
Percent Black in Community	5.431***
	(1.048)
Latino	
Intercept	-11.950***
	(3.587)
Percent Black in Community	16.383**
	(7.100)
White	
Intercept	5.067****
	(1.095)
Percent Black in Community	.075
	(2.291)
Controls	
Civics Courses Taken	.294
	(.182)
Parental Income	-.105****
	(.040)
Grade Level	-.030
	(.230)
No Plans to Attend College	1.329**
	(.484)
Dislikes Civics Courses	1.600***
	(.530)
Percent Reduction in Error from FUM	

NOTE: Regression coefficients were derived using HLM. Italicized variables are individual, level-1 variables. The level-2 variables are indented and placed underneath the level-1 variable for which it was controlled. *p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001

contact with members of other races and ethnicities also does not change their attitudes for the better. It may be the case that racial identity is not particularly salient for whites, or simply, that their attitudes are not a function of the racial composition of the environment.

Discussion

The results of this chapter, along with the results from the other chapters, clearly indicate that school size is not significantly related to democratic values. Small school advocates claim that members of racial minorities benefit greatly from smaller schools, but I have found no evidence to suggest this. Black students and Latino students are no more knowledgeable, efficacious or tolerant in smaller schools. Latino students are slightly more likely to participate in school activities, but whether this finding, and the other meager support for smaller schools in other chapters, is enough to warrant a restructuring of schools across the U.S. is highly suspect. In the final chapter, I discuss the reduction of school size, its possible benefits, and its viability as a policy tool to improve educational quality.

The more interesting implications of the results in this chapter are with the racial composition of the environment. Admittedly, as a supporter of the liberal values of equality and justice, I sought out in this research to find evidence supporting integrated communities. As a matter of equality, it seems necessary that schools and communities not be segregated by race and ethnicity. As a believer that one cannot be "separate but equal," the implications of this chapter are a serious challenge to democratic values. Racial heterogeneity depresses political knowledge, tolerance and participation.

Bivariate results show that whites are more knowledgeable and participatory in predominantly white environments. Among whites, the racial composition ceases to influence these values only when we control for parental income, educational aspirations and attitudes about civics courses. Thus, for whites that are college-bound and have positive affect toward school, the racial composition does not matter.

I found significant gains in political knowledge among blacks and Latinos when they live in co-ethnic communities. Yet, when Latinos live in black communities, their knowledge levels decline. And, although Latinos living amongst other Latinos are more tolerant of immigrants, Latino and black adolescents living in predominantly black communities are significantly less tolerant. It is difficult to reconcile these competing values. On the one hand, political knowledge is higher when racial minorities live surrounded by others who are like them; on the other hand, when blacks live around other blacks, they are less tolerant. What is the remedy? In the case of knowledge, living in highly homogeneous communities might be a good thing, but for tolerance, it certainly is not.

Two issues are at stake – how can we balance the values of knowledge, efficacy and participation on one side, with tolerance on another? All are positive values that parents, educators, and community leaders hope that all children take on. Yet, in this chapter and the last chapter, I have found that economic and racial heterogeneity, while fostering tolerance, inhibit the other values. What are the consequences of promoting one of the values above the others? What happens, for example, if tolerance is given a privileged value position, at the expense of participation and knowledge? Or, vice versa?

In the final chapter, I attempt to come to terms with the normative conclusions of the results, taken as a whole, in the dissertation.

The second issue at stake here is the viability of policy proposals that seek to alter the racial composition of a community. Whether attempting to integrate or segregate a community, any policy proposal is controversial and risks intervening on personal liberty. Such strategies have met with limited success in the past – busing, integration of housing, and affirmative action policies in higher education. Is there a legitimate way of constructing communities with desirable racial compositions, whatever they may be? It may be especially troubling given some of my results indicate a move away from policies that seek to integrate communities. If political knowledge and participation are highly valued, integrating individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds may not give the results policymakers hope for. Yet, can the U.S. turn back the clock, and will citizens accept such policies, even if they provide benefits?

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Implications

This project has generated several research questions and hypotheses. The previous four chapters each dealt with one dimension of the project, but there were several issues addressed within each dimension. This final chapter will seek to consolidate the major findings from the entire project, and offer both normative and policy implications of the research. I discuss the consequences of the minimal effects of school size on democratic values, as well as the tension between tolerance on the one hand, and participation in school activities and political knowledge on the other. First, I address the limitations of this research. It is important when considering the broader implications of one's work to consider the strengths and weakness of the research design, and the data employed to examine research questions.

The next section of this chapter examines the findings related to school size, and their implications for education policy. Given that I found little support for significant benefits of smaller schools for democratic values, is a policy that requires large schools to downsize in some way a worthy policy goal? Are some schools more worthy of this policy direction than others? How would the activists within the small schools movement react to the findings that small schools really do not make much difference when it comes to these aspects of political socialization?

The next part summarizes the findings from chapters 4-6 related to community size and economic and racial composition. Does the local community context influence democratic values, and in what ways? And, what are the consequences for the

development of democratic values of growing up in a small town versus a central city? I found that some democratic values are at higher levels in smaller towns compared to other communities, and that poverty does not have the same negative effects within small towns as it does in more densely populated suburbs and central cities. Finally, young people growing up in racially heterogeneous communities are slightly more tolerant of other ethnic groups, but are slightly less political knowledgeable and participatory.

The third section of the chapter discusses the normative issues that arise from these findings. At this point, I consider the dependent variables. There is likely to be very little disagreement that each of the democratic values that I study is an attitude or behavior that is valued by citizens in a democratic nation. However, the order in which one places these values is likely to vary across individuals and communities, and this hierarchy is extremely important in terms of both philosophy and public policy. This is especially true when valued items are in opposition to or conflict with one another – if, as I have found, environments that foster political knowledge or participation are also those that allow intolerance to fester. How do we reconcile these competing values? Society is likely to be unwilling to sacrifice one of the values for another, and thus, some balance must be struck.

Then, I deal with the policy issues that arise based on these findings, and specifically what types of policies promote or detract from the goals of raising adolescents' levels of democratic values. If we know that racial heterogeneity, for example, promotes political knowledge but detracts from racial tolerance, what sorts of policies can be designed to address this dilemma? If small towns are better places to foster democratic values than are central cities and suburbs, what characteristics of small

towns can be replicated in these other environments? It certainly is not feasible, nor

desirable, to have everyone in the U.S. move to a small town, but it may be practical to

consider why these communities are better able to achieve these goals than others are and

what might be transferable to different types of environments.

In addition, I add political composition to my discussion here. Due to issues with

data collection, I was unable to include a separate chapter on the political environment.

However, it is too important an aspect of the local context to leave out completely. It has

very significant impacts on political socialization, and so I summarize findings from

previously published work, and discuss the implications along with the other dimensions

of context.

Finally, the last section of the chapter suggests an agenda for future research. At

the end of any project, there seem to always be as many, or more, questions remaining as

were answered. I will discuss the types of data that should be collected to adequately

conduct projects of this nature, the problems with the measures within the data in this

project, as well as research questions that should be addressed in future work.

Limitations of Research

I have alluded throughout the dissertation about problems with the NHES

constructs for political efficacy and political tolerance. The issue with political efficacy

is less that the questions are poorly constructed, and more that with only two questions

related to political efficacy, it is difficult to create an indicator with adequate variability

to be useful in multivariate analyses. The questions related to political tolerance,

however, are outdated and do not incorporate the type of questions experts on tolerance

research suggest. The questions ask about abstract tolerance for books in the library and speeches against religion. Here too, it is difficult to conduct multivariate analysis with such limited variability. But also, most citizens appear tolerant when asked about abstract principles or groups and issues about which they do not have strong opinions (McClosky 1964; McClosky and Zaller 1984; Sullivan and Transue 1999). Sullivan's research has shown that when researchers ask individuals about their least-liked group, they are more unwilling to allow this group the broad range of civil liberties and rights that appears when questions are asked in terms of abstract principles (Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982). Surveys that seek to examine political tolerance should incorporate this methodology.

The measurement of participation was less than ideal as well. Students were merely asked whether they had participated in school activities and out of school activities. There is no way to differentiate between those students who are involved in five activities versus those who may only join one group. In addition, we cannot examine the effects of different activities. What are the differing effects of participation in the band versus volunteering on the Key Club, or joining the Spanish Club? This information would help schools with limited resources know which activities are better at improving self-esteem, developing interpersonal skills, and improving levels of tolerance.

The out of school activities variable is even more complicated, and findings should be considered with this in mind. There is simply no way to determine the type of activity the student was thinking of when he or she responded. This could encompass church activities, Boy Scouts, piano lessons, or volunteering at a homeless shelter. Each of these activities is qualitatively different in nature, and we should expect each of them

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to have somewhat differing predictors and effects on various outcomes of interest. It is imperative, if we truly wish to understand the effects of non-school related activities, to know the number of activities in which students are involved, as well as the nature of the activity.

Inevitably, trade-offs must be made in any research design. At the end of the chapter, I discuss the main problems with complete reliance on large-n survey data on a project like this one. However, this design also had important strengths. I sought out to test expectations and hypotheses related to several bodies of research and drawing from theories across several disciplines. Although other approaches may offer more depth into particular cases or examples, this research establishes trends and tests specific relationships between important factors that had not previously been addressed by other scholars.

Small Schools as a Policy Option?

One of the main questions this project sought to address is the relevance of school size for political socialization, especially democratic values such as political knowledge, efficacy, participation and tolerance. I would conclude, based on the cumulative findings of each chapter, that school size does not make much difference for the outcomes studied here. Two positive benefits of smaller schools stand out: students are more likely to participate in school activities in smaller schools than in larger ones, and, children in urban areas benefit slightly from a reduced school size. These results deserve some explanation, as do the non-findings.

First, although larger schools offer more opportunities for school activities in absolute terms, this does not result in more students becoming involved (Barker and Gump 1964; Coladarci and Cobb 1996). Arguably, some students will get involved no matter what type of school, or how large the school is. Other students need some incentive, or some mobilization to join a team or a club. In larger schools, it is often the case that only those students in the former category participate in school activities. And, they generally participate in many activities, serving several leadership roles at once. Those in latter category are likely to be overlooked, and do not have the individualized attention of their teachers and administrators, and possibly their parents, to motivate them to join. In a small school, like the one portrayed in the motion picture *Hoosiers*, students like Jimmy Chitwood are asked to join the basketball team by his coach. In a larger school, Jimmy's talent may have been ignored because of the extra attention it required to get him interested in this activity. Teachers and coaches simply do not have the time it takes to get marginally interested students involved. In this respect, smaller schools are significantly better at fostering the value of participation in young people.

Participating in school activities provides opportunities for adolescents to learn new skills and meet new people, and students who participate in school activities have higher self-esteem, are more likely to take advanced courses, spend more time on homework, and have higher postsecondary educational aspirations and GPAs (Marsh 1992; Coladarci and Cobb 1996; Graham 1964). Extra-curricular activities also have beneficial effects on race relations in desegregated schools (Crain, Mahard, and Narot 1982). Those students with the least involvement in school activities have the highest levels of alcohol and drug use, delinquency, and depression (Downs and Rose 1991).

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Although curricular track and other individual background characteristics are related to school participation, many of the benefits of participation remain significant even controlling for these factors (Yarworth and Gauthier 1978). Participation in athletics is associated with higher self-esteem for both boys and girls (Holland and Andre 1987; Steitz and Owen 1992), but other types of activities have not been examined as closely to determine their effects. Niemi and Junn also find that students who are active in their school have higher levels of political knowledge and efficacy (1998). Finally, students that participate in school activities are more likely to become politically active as adults than are those who do not get involved in their schools (Astin, Sax and Avalos 1999; Fendrich and Lovoy 1988).

Because of their importance, school administrators and teachers should find ways to motivate more students to get involved in school activities. In small schools, the incentive may be there because without the participation of the few students that are available, activities simply would not be possible. It is nearly impossible to field a football team with fewer than 22 people, or to have a school band without brass or percussion sections. Larger schools should work harder, and institutionalize extra-curricular activities as an important part of education because each student is not a necessity as in a small school.

A step in the right direction would be including school activities as part of the curriculum, and setting aside a part of the school day for participation in these activities (Klesse 1994; Reynolds and Karr-Kidwell 1996). Schools should also provide the needed funds for uniforms and summer camps or practices, as well as transportation home from the after-school activity. Many students cannot stay after school because they

must work, or because they have no way to get home except the school bus, which generally only makes one route immediately following the close of the school day. Many of the costs associated with school activities are prohibitively expensive for lower-income students, such as purchasing a musical instrument or a uniform. If the school could either incur these costs itself, or provide payment plans for students for whom this poses a problem, this may go a long way toward getting traditional non-participants into action. Recruiting could also play a role in increasing involvement, as could prohibiting the same students from holding leadership positions in several different activities.

The second important finding related to school size is that students growing up in central cities are more knowledgeable and participatory when attending smaller schools than in larger ones. This is not surprising, given the findings related to student achievement from other scholars. Because many public schools in urban areas are so large, we should expect those in cities to benefit most from a reduced size. Similarly, large size actually benefits students in suburbs, because of their increased opportunities and because many of these students have the institutional support to take advantage of the opportunities. What is confounding about these results is that blacks, Latinos, and poor students do not experience advantages in smaller schools.

The prevailing wisdom presumes that because many of the students in urban schools are members of a racial minority and are poor, these schools should be targeted for policy change because of the detrimental effects of poverty. Yet, I was able to find very little support that students in these groups are any better off in a small school than a large one. Thus, the benefits of small urban schools, at least regarding democratic values, are likely not related to this aspect of their composition. Instead, smaller urban schools

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may have more resources, better teachers, more parental involvement, a better learning environment, or another one of the many related explanations that I did not consider because of the design of the study.

Finally, these non-findings are just as interesting as the significant findings. Admittedly, I was surprised by the results because having read most of the scholarship on smaller schools, I became convinced that reduced size would likely promote democratic values, just as they advance other educational outcomes. That poorer students are not advantaged could be explained by the inclusion of small town children, who are similarly poor as urban children, but have higher levels of knowledge, etc. Yet, the fact that black and Latino students are not advantaged in small schools goes against the prevailing wisdom of activists as well as empirical research by educational scholars.

Some small school activists may contend that I am not examining the type of schools they are advocating. One of the main arguments made by almost all small school advocates is that "small school" does not simply denote fewer students under one roof. The small schools movement is about changing education as much as changing the average size of schools. Raywid and Schmerler contend that if small schools are to work, "a virtually whole new set of policies must be written at the system level or a new flexibility quite foreign to bureaucracy must permeate all existing policy" (2003, 87). Thus, simply breaking larger schools into smaller units, without structuring them around a focused mission and with leaders who are committed to a new way of educating children, is not going to produce significantly improved outcomes. Traditional policies, such as a seniority system for teachers, demands for school accountability and federal

requirements for research-based school reform, and old bureaucratic rules and structures would have to change.

According to many educational scholars, small schools should be created under new guidelines and policies that place the school's mission and a "sense of community" at the center. Faculty and administrative hires should be based on the like-mindedness of the teacher, principal or superintendent with the mission of the school and his/her potential colleagues, rather than solely on experience and education. Many reforms made by one administrator have been quashed by his successor, and if smaller schools are to be successful, there must be continuity in policy from one leader to another. Policy should be codified and institutionalized, and not simply changed informally through waivers and "exceptions to the rule." Schools, teachers and students should be judged on levels of improvement, rather than a rigid level of achievement at which all students are expected to reach at the same time and in the same way. And, many argue that the assignment of students to particular schools should be based less on location and residence and more on the school's mission, curriculum, and climate (Raywid and Schmerler 2003).

Because I examine traditional public schools, and am not able to single out schools that were created to be small from those that are small because they pull from a smaller population of students, I may indeed be overlooking an important piece of this puzzle. The fact that I find no relationship between school climate and school size is likely to be looked at by many small school advocates as evidence that I am really not looking at "small schools" in the way they define them. If schools have not been created specifically to be "small schools," then the same culture or climate that is found in larger schools with similar structure and design prevails, and importantly, the advantages

documented by Deborah Meier and other activists should not be expected. Without having some way to compare traditional small schools with newly created and redesigned small schools, I cannot officially declare that school size does not matter for political socialization.

Yet, if "smaller schools" are not simply about the number of students in the school, then the movement to reduce the size of schools is really more concerned with restructuring the educational system than in simply reducing size. As becomes clear in their policy proposals (such as those in Raywid and Schmerler 2003), small school advocates wish to transform the way children are assigned to schools, the basis on which hiring decisions are made, and the way in which students are treated within school. These policies are much larger in scope than simply reducing school size. Based on my research, I disagree with the calls for system-wide reform. Instead, policies should be focused on urban schools. In many ways, advocates understand that these are the communities and schools most in need of reform. Most of the research and funding has gone into urban areas. Yet, many still claim that the educational system in the U.S. is fundamentally flawed.

Does Community Context Matter for Political Socialization?

School size was only one aspect of this project, and perhaps the more interesting results for political scientists are those in relation to community context. I sought out to examine whether the size and composition of the local environment had any direct influence on political socialization into democratic values. My hypotheses were that context would certainly matter, and that some communities would be better places to

foster democratic values than others. The results clearly indicate that community context does have a direct relationship with democratic values. Adolescents growing up in smaller towns have higher levels of political knowledge and participation than students in many suburban communities and urban areas. And yet, young people in small towns are less racially tolerant than those in other places.

The first chapter reviewed the literature on the importance of social context to explaining the values and attitudes of adults, and set up expectations for why and how the local environment would influence the socialization of young people into these particular democratic values. To many, it seems obvious that the local environment matters. One can look at a map of partisanship in the United States ("red America" versus "blue America") and see that place makes a difference. Even so, my study and its findings are important because much of the research on political socialization does not specifically examine how the environment may influence the process.

I also found economic and racial/ethnic composition to have important influences on democratic values. Although it is true that all things equal, it is easier to raise children to be good citizens in affluent communities than in impoverished ones, community-level poverty has variable effects across communities. The difference in political knowledge levels between the most affluent suburbs and the poorest, and the most affluent central city neighborhoods and the poorest is larger than the knowledge gap between the most affluent small towns and the poorest small towns. Thus, while it is still true that growing up in a richer small town is better (for knowledge) than coming of age in a poorer one, these differences between wealthy and poor in other areas are less important in small towns. In essence, poverty does not have the same detrimental impact on political

knowledge in smaller towns as it does in the suburbs and in central cities. This is partly

due to a lower cost of living and a more narrow income distribution in smaller towns.

Yet, many communities today are characterized by an increasingly narrow income

distribution. The best explanation is the existence of a strong network of support for

residents of poor small towns that does not exist in these other communities.

Even though small towns foster the values of knowledge and participation,

tolerance suffers in these homogeneous environments. Youth living in racially

heterogeneous communities are generally less knowledgeable and participatory, but are

more tolerant. Controlling for parental income, exposure to civics coursework, attitudes

about civics, and college plans, whites, blacks and Latinos living in co-ethnic

communities have higher scores on the knowledge test and are more likely to participate

in school activities, but are less racially sensitive.

I have offered several possible explanations for these findings. In many suburbs,

although certainly not all, children have support from home, as well as comparatively

good public schools, each of which would facilitate a higher level of achievement and

participation. Although young people from smaller towns come from less affluent homes

and attend schools with fewer resources, they have the support of communities that are

characterized by strong social networks. As we know, urban schools suffer from an

alarming lack of resources and low levels of achievement, and yet, African American and

Latino students who were college-bound and liked their civics courses performed better

in environments where their groups have a substantial presence. This is likely due to

some combination of a different set of expectations on the part of teachers and

administrators, a system that does not divide students into academic units solely by race,

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and the existence in students of a strong racial identity that facilitates political knowledge, interest and participation.

Each of these types of communities can often be characterized similarly in one important way: each is racially, ethnically and economically segregated. As many social scientists have documented, very few communities today are integrated across different racial and economic characteristics (Massey and Denton 1993). Small towns are notoriously homogeneous – relatively few non-whites live in these communities outside the South. Urban neighborhoods are similarly homogeneous, and many suburbs are characterized as either "all black" or "all white." I found that the higher the level of diversity in a community, the lower the levels of knowledge and participation.

The key question, then, in terms of policy is whether it is possible to create environments that facilitate political knowledge and participation without dampening tolerance, and in normative terms, how to balance these seemingly competing values. The first step is to recognize the social significance of the dilemma. Are the benefits to knowledge and participation from living in a racially homogeneous environment substantial, while intolerance only increases a small amount? If so, policies should seek to create or sustain relatively homogeneous environments where these values and behaviors can develop, as the benefit to participation and knowledge might outweigh the damage to tolerance. Or, is the level of intolerance consequential? If this is the case, then diversity may overrule the advantages to political knowledge and participation.

By looking at the results from chapter 6, we can see, for example, that African American students' levels of knowledge increase by about six points (on a 100-point scale) in predominantly-black environments; their levels of tolerance decline by about

four points. We might conclude, then, that it seems to be a wash, and that neither outcome is substantial enough to warrant changing policies; or, at the least, that policies seeking to enhance knowledge might not have a substantial negative influence on tolerance. Even so, it might be necessary to conduct a different type of research at this point.

Statistical analysis is excellent at pointing to trends and general directions, but to truly understand the interactive processes in neighborhoods and communities, it may be necessary to conduct hands-on research in the field. Policy solutions "based on inferences from observed behavior, as gathered in surveys and evaluations alone, will neglect dimensions that were not included in the data gathering" (Lin 2000, 2). Thus, the decision to focus exclusively on "community" as a geographic entity gives an idea of what is going on in particular communities, but to understand why these trends occur, it is necessary to include the beliefs and practices of the people within the community, which can only be inferred from these analyses. Although I cannot make definitive judgments about policy directions, I can offer some suggestions based on the inferences drawn from these findings. But first, I will discuss the normative issues of balancing competing values.

Normative Implications

If the results had shown that certain types of environments foster all the democratic values in the same way, the normative implications would be relatively straightforward. They would likely concern the conflict between individual liberty to choose where to live and the creation of environments that might be best for the political

socialization of children. However, my results show that some environments are better than others at fostering some democratic values – participation and political knowledge – while they are not generally the best places to cultivate tolerance for diversity. Rather than focus on issues of liberty and equality, then, I will instead emphasize the balance of these competing values.

Value pluralism allows for deep disagreement about the ordering of values, and that disagreements are likely to be somewhat intractable. The world according to value pluralists has "no single, univocal summum bonum that can be defined philosophically, let alone imposed politically" (Galston 2002, 30). Pluralism is not to be confused with relativism, as pluralism allows for a minimum conception of decency and morality, such that there are non-arbitrary distinctions between right and wrong. Yet, above this minimum level, there are multiple conceptions of good that cannot be "reduced to a common measure of value" (Galston 2002, 30). Value pluralists contend there is no single good or value that overrides all others in every circumstance.

In the study of mass political behavior, scholars have researched "value hierarchies," or how individuals order important societal values, such as liberty, justice, equality, and social order (Rokeach 1973). In a liberal society, most would not have a problem accepting that individuals can disagree about how important values should be ordered. The fact that I might place equality above liberty, or in the case here, political knowledge above tolerance, does not prohibit another individual from having a different ordering system, nor does it imply that my ordering is in any way more appropriate than another's. The value hierarchies are important because they often determine one's political preferences or ideology. Liberals (in the political sense) tend to favor equality

more than liberty, and conservatives tend to give liberty pride of place over equality or justice. These hierarchies influence one's policy preferences, as well as how one may vote. Yet, few would agree that this form of reasonable disagreement over important values is detrimental to democracy. In fact, many would contend, as do I, that this type of disagreement among individuals, to the extent that it remains civil, is at the heart of democracy.

The problem with value hierarchies is in their aggregation. People are comfortable with the idea that individuals can disagree, and will have different ideologies. Yet, when the different value hierarchies are aggregated to the community or societal level, some people want there to be one ordering system that is based on individuals' preferences. Because it is based on what the people in society prefer, this system should govern political decisions.

In the case of political knowledge, participation and tolerance, let us assume that political knowledge and participation were deemed to be more important than tolerance. Education policy (as one example) would emphasize those curricula and settings that are best at fostering knowledge and participation. Educators would focus on, for instance, giving students opportunities for participating in school activities, as well as practice at democratic participation, such as mock elections and decisions about classroom practices. Teacher training and promotion would be based on the extent to which they are able to improve students' levels of political knowledge on standardized tests such as the NAEP skills test. In contrast, if tolerance were seen as more important than political knowledge and participation, curricula would be specifically geared toward giving students opportunities to learn about other cultures, and to interact with individuals who are

different from them. Schools would shun programs that foster nationalism or patriotism, and instead teachers might be given incentives for creative programs designed around multicultural education.

It does not seem optimal to prescribe either one of these solutions. Those that would place tolerance before knowledge and participation will not be happy about the first alternative, and those that give knowledge and participation pride of place would be upset with any alternative that places other values before these. Value pluralism offers a solution for reconciling competing values that does not require the sacrifice of important values in all situations. This reconciliation between competing values is to examine the particular situation. This theory provides for a solution that reinforces the overall thesis of this dissertation: context matters.

Where in some cases tolerance should have pride of place over knowledge and participation, there will be other circumstances in which tolerance will cede importance to these other values. It is not difficult to imagine these situations; in fact, concrete experience often provides the most compelling arguments in favor of value pluralism. Let us suppose that a community has just discovered a group of teens has defaced a synagogue by spray-painting swastikas and other anti-Semitic language and symbols. This is an excellent opportunity for families, churches and schools to place tolerance ahead of other values, and to organize programs and provide forums for students to discuss this and other instances of intolerance and bigotry. Programs of this nature were common in many communities following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as community leaders and educators saw the opportunity as a way to teach residents and

young people about other cultures and ideologies, and to emphasize tolerance as an essential democratic value.

One could easily come up with scenarios in which political knowledge and participation are more important, however. At least every two years, in every community in the U.S., there is a national, general election. Including primaries and local elections, there may be many more opportunities for an emphasis on participation and knowledge. Schools, families and communities can utilize these opportunities to inform residents and young people about important political issues, candidates and political parties. Elections offer occasions for socialization unlike almost any other (Sears and Valentino 1997). They seem to be a perfect occasion for underscoring the importance of one's vote, and for helping students accept a partisan label that will serve to motivate their participation later in life.

It is important to note that in my study, the type of tolerance that I found to be significant was racial or ethnic tolerance. Although homogeneous communities were better at fostering knowledge and participation, racial tolerance was significantly lower in these types of environments. Racial intolerance is much different in form and consequence than political intolerance. Value pluralists would allow for opportunities when tolerance is subordinated to other values, but because pluralism is not the same as relativism, there are forms of intolerance that are unacceptable in all circumstances. Because tolerance is such an essential democratic value, we should specify exactly which forms of intolerance might, in some cases, be less important than other values.

There are attitudinal and behavior manifestations of intolerance. Disagreeing with the ideas Republicans espouse, and beating up Republicans are two very different

forms of intolerance. The former might be acceptable, to the extent that these attitudes inform individuals about their own ideologies and opinions, and motivate them to get involved in politics. The latter, however, is never, under any circumstances, acceptable. This would be one of those instances in which value pluralists would agree that some values (safety) are superior to others (liberty).

Thus, we can generally agree that behavioral manifestations of intolerance are prohibited. Within the attitudinal realm, the important distinction is between ideas and people. If one dislikes the ideas of socialists, for example, this is probably an acceptable form of intolerance. Yet, when he takes his dislike of socialist ideas a step farther, and begins to dislike or discriminate against socialists themselves, this is a problem. We can "hate the sin, not the sinner." This distinction is especially important in terms of racial, ethnic, and economic intolerance. There are likely to be very few legitimate ways in which one can disagree with the ideas of racial minorities and the poor, without employing negative stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes toward racial minorities and poor people. I contend, then, that intolerance as it applies to ideas is potentially acceptable, but other forms are not.

The type of intolerance that I found, racial intolerance, is likely to be unacceptable in any circumstance. In my estimation, the fact that homogeneity detracts from tolerance is largely due to individuals not having opportunities to meet and interact with individuals of other groups. People must rely solely on media accounts and stereotypes to infer about others. There is substantial evidence that the media contribute greatly to negative stereotypes, especially about blacks and immigrants (Gilens 2000; Mendelberg 2001; Entman and Rojecki 2001). That racial minorities are also more

tolerant in co-ethnic communities is most likely because in these environments, they perceive less discrimination and prejudice, and have stronger racial identities. The next section discusses the policy relevance of my findings, especially as related to racial intolerance.

Public Policy and Community Context

I first concentrate on policies that schools might consider in order to enhance the democratic values of knowledge, participation, efficacy and tolerance, and then address how state, local and federal authorities can devise policies that keep these values in mind. The key question, again, is how to enhance each of the values at the same time, or at a minimum, to improve some without detracting from others. Schools may need to play an increasingly important role in socializing young people into democratic values because many parents are playing a lessening role in this process (Braddock, Dawkins and Wilkins 1995), and because schools can help break the cycle of nonparticipation and cynicism that parents may pass along to their children.

First, in general terms, schools and teachers should recognize the important role they play in the development of political values. The current educational climate focuses heavily on accountability, standardized testing, teacher training and school choice. The current focus of federal and state education policy is on standardized testing, especially in reading and math. I suggest, along with the authors of *The Civic Mission of Schools*, that schools, as well as state and federal government entities, take civics or government classes as seriously as they do other subjects (Gibson and Levine 2003). No one disagrees that basic reading and math are essential skills necessary for the marketplace;

yet, learning about history and government are also basic necessities for becoming a fully engaged citizen. The consequences of not developing into a "good citizen" are serious: individuals do not participate, and are therefore not adequately represented, and the political system is skewed toward certain groups and away from others (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Until this goal is valued as highly as other educational aims, funding for civic education will continue to be rolled back, and it will become increasingly difficult to hire highly qualified social studies teachers and provide opportunities, such as field trips and work-study or service-learning arrangements, that facilitate learning in this subject area. The rest of the policy suggestions are contingent upon the importance of civic education becoming more than mere rhetoric in education policy discussions.

My findings suggest that the strategies to be used to increase democratic values should vary across different communities. Educators in small towns and other homogeneous communities, for example, should focus more on building racial and ethnic tolerance than on knowledge and participation. In more heterogeneous environments, teachers should instead emphasize strategies that improve political knowledge and motivate students to get involved in school activities.

In homogeneous environments, one of the most important issues to address in schools is the lack of interracial and interethnic contact, and the detriment this lack of exposure to difference has on young people. Combating intolerance must require adolescents growing up in homogeneous communities, whether they are small towns, suburbs or inner city neighborhoods, to confront individuals who are different from them. In this year of the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, it is troubling that

this issue has not yet been resolved. There are, of course, highly controversial policies, such as busing, affirmative action, and school choice that have been tried or are being tried. In lieu of, or perhaps in addition to such radical policy measures, less drastic measures can prove useful.

Schools in these communities can seek to hire teachers and administrators from various social classes, regional areas, and racial and ethnic backgrounds. Although schools have very little control over the composition of the community, and therefore the student population, they have a great deal of control over hiring decisions. For students for whom this would be their only contact with an individual in another group, this can provide an enormously positive experience that may be diffused to attitudes about others in the group. For those already in heterogeneous schools and communities, it is important to see "individuals from all racial/ethnic backgrounds…distributed throughout the status hierarchy" (Schofield 1995, 266). For students in minority groups, a black or Latino principal or teacher can provide an excellent role model; and for white students, this can balance prejudicial or stereotypical attitudes about racial minorities.

Extra-curricular activities can also play an important role in cross-ethnic, cross-class contact. My findings show that children in smaller schools are more likely to join in these activities. I also found that school size and community size are closely related. Thus, to the extent that children in smaller towns are more active in their school and community, educators can harness these experiences to improve racial and ethnic tolerance. The danger from extra-curricular activities to tolerance comes when teams or school groups are very homogeneous, and they come into contact with students in schools with different, yet similarly homogeneous, compositions. Thus, when the "poor school"

takes on the "rich school" in basketball, or when the "black school" competes against the "white school" in a band competition, this serves to heighten intergroup differences. In addition to competitions, nearby schools should seek strategies to bring student groups together under different circumstances. Statewide programs, such as Girls' State or Boys' State and statewide conventions can provide students with opportunities to meet other likeminded individuals from different places, and with different backgrounds. Furthermore, after-school activities include more than just school-related offerings. Church activities can also be a way to foster intergroup relations, especially when different churches and faiths hold meetings and activities together.

In diverse communities and schools, although teachers might focus more on knowledge building than tolerance, it is important not to sacrifice one value for another. Furthermore, a heterogeneous school population does not always, in fact rarely, indicates diversity within the school experience for students. Most secondary schools have at least two tracks – the college preparatory or honors track, and the vocational or average track. Some schools divide the tracks into three groups, a sort of "small, medium, and large" continuum, where the smartest students are at the top and the least capable at the bottom. In my opinion, there is nothing inherently wrong with either of these systems. Some people are more intellectually capable than others, and should be in classes that challenge them. Others struggle, especially with particular subjects, and should be in classes where they can be taught at a level at which they can keep up.

The problem arises because the distribution of students across these tracks is far from equal. Students from lower-class backgrounds, and who are members of a racial minority group, especially African Americans and Latinos, are much more likely to be

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placed in a lower track than are white, middle- or upper-class students (Oakes 1985; Alexander, Cook and McDill 1978). Thus, in many cases, a school may, on the surface, look very heterogeneous in its composition, but "resegregation" occurs through the tracking system, and affluent white students are unlikely ever to have a class with poor students, or those from other racial groups (Hochschild 1984). Although resegregation can occur naturally, as when students of the same race choose to eat together at lunch (Tatum 1997), or in friendship choices (Gerard and Miller 1975; Stephan 1978), its effects are worse when institutionally sanctioned.

According to social psychology, when individuals are divided into groups, regardless of the basis of the division, they favor in-group members and discriminate against out-groups (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Segregation through tracking exacerbates negative stereotypes and fosters prejudicial attitudes among those in the dominant group (Schofield 1989, 1995). For those in the subordinate groups, tracking systems reinforce these stereotypes and undermine achievement and motivation (Oakes 1992; Schofield 1979).

Even so, it may be necessary to track students in some way. Every effort should be made, however, that academic tracks not be determined by parental background characteristics or race and ethnicity. One of the big problems, however, is the achievement gap, which I discussed in chapter 6. As long as school achievement varies by race and socio-economic status, tracking will continue to be a problem because academic tracks will always be related to race and SES. It does not seem obvious, however, that tracking be a part of primary education. In high school, differences in coursework can be quite stark, and here, tracking makes more sense. To the extent that

any tracking system reinforces stereotypes and affects student motivation, the later a school system begins to track, the better. If students do not arrive to high school with lower levels of personal efficacy and motivation because they were labeled as "average" in the sixth grade, they might make substantial gains in high school.

In addition to restructuring tracking systems, schools in both diverse and homogeneous communities should strive to design programs that focus on cooperative learning. Slavin (1995) documents six different cooperative learning programs found in schools across the U.S. and finds that they have positive effects on student achievement and on reciprocated cross-ethnic friendship choices. These programs are institutionally sanctioned by school authorities, are designed around groups working together to achieve a shared goal or objective, and divide students into groups almost randomly (or, at a minimum, not by race or social class). They create groups that are cleaved on more than just race or class (Schofield 1995). Teachers should recognize the "importance of superordinate and authentic goals" and devise programs and curricula that create "a community of discourse characterized by cross-cutting identities" (Torney-Purta 1995, 363). Cooperative work can lead to close personal friendships with people that one might never have met had he or she not been assigned to a particular group (Miller and Harrington 1992). It is important to note that each of these criteria for their success – approval of authority, equal status contact, and a shared objective – are all conditions Allport (1954) placed on interracial contact if it is to lead to positive attitudes between members of different races, ethnicities, and social statuses.

Finally, the last set of recommendations related to education policy I would make concerns the training of teachers. It is important that teachers have some training in the

subjects they are assigned to teach. People may disagree as to what exactly this means (state certification, or major/minor in college), but most agree that it is not a good idea for teachers to be placed in classrooms in which they do not fit (Ringstaff and Sandholtz 2002). Second, it is essential that teachers be trained to deal with an increasingly diverse student population (Zeichner 1995). Demographic trends point to a future where white students will be minorities not only in particular communities, but in the nation as a whole. Teacher training must incorporate this reality, and teachers should be aware of varying cultures, languages and histories that different groups face in this country. Schools should place a premium on teachers with such training, thereby giving incentives to those in education programs to take part in them. Although a good start, it is not enough to provide incentives for teachers to move to undesirable areas, such as inner cities or rural areas, to teach. If they do not know how to cope with the circumstances of the communities in which they are assigned to teach, they cannot be effective.

One of the biggest problems with regard to teaching in today's diverse environments is the low level of expectations many teachers have of lower-income and minority students (Goodlad 1990; Reyes 2003). The low expectations come from a combination of outright prejudice against particular groups, good intentions and concern for students who must deal with poverty and social problems, and ignorance of other groups and cultures.

State and Local Initiatives and Political Socialization

One of the most difficult issues with regard to my original research questions, and ultimately, my findings, is the extent to which anything can be done about them. Are

there legitimate ways of constructing communities with particular racial, economic or political compositions? How can positive aspects of some communities be replicated in others without substantial governmental intervention that takes away individuals' rights to live and work wherever they want? Although arguably more difficult than the suggestions related to schools and teachers, I believe there are certain things localities can do to facilitate certain community compositions. I focus on civic capacity, housing strategies, and later, the process of deciding congressional district boundaries.

First, I must point out that any strategy that successfully reduces the negative effects of poverty and discrimination would help children in every way, including the development of democratic values. The least surprising results of my study are that poorer students and non-white students have lower levels of political knowledge, participation in school activities, efficacy and tolerance for diversity. To the extent that any policy or program can create a stronger labor market, a more diversified economy, build a robust safety net, and reduce negative stereotypes of the poor and racial minorities, they are likely to help raise the support of democratic values among all children, both directly and indirectly.

Yet, it is also important to recognize that the negative effects of poverty varied across different communities. In some cases, growing up in an impoverished small town provided benefits over and above some middle-class suburbs. Thus, eradicating poverty (to the extent that this is ever possible) is not likely to be enough to improve child development outcomes, including the development of democratic values. Good and successful programs are unlikely to flourish in distressed neighborhoods, whose "social fabric and institutional infrastructure are so weak and overwhelmed by social disorder

and decline" (Brown and Richman 1997, 166). Sampson describes communities with sparse acquaintanceship networks, unsupervised teenage friendship groups, a weak organizational base, and low levels of participation in community activities as socially "disorganized," and argues that these characteristics are fodder for a variety of negative social outcomes (2001). As the community continues to break down physically, financially and socially, residents have lower and lower levels of efficacy about their ability to change things. Families experience a breakdown of social ties, and the ability to garner consensus on issues erodes, perpetuating the cycle of nonparticipation and despair (Furstenberg and Hughes 1995).

The benefits of small towns over suburban and urban communities are likely found in the networks and relationships that are developed there. In small towns, residents know one another and they know whom to trust and whom to avoid. Relationships are developed over generations. These strong bonds form what may, in some communities, be described as the "village" in Hillary Clinton's famous book (1996).

How then, can suburban and urban communities develop these kinds of characteristics that help foster many positive outcomes, including democratic values? First, it is important to recognize that although feelings of alienation are part of the experience of living in a socially disorganized neighborhood, it is not the case that no social bonds are formed. Residents of poor, urban communities still communicate with one another, and must trust one another at some level if they are to survive. Neighbors and family members often rely on one another for childcare and financial assistance in times of crisis. Jones (1986) describes a "collective ethos" that binds people together

because of shared struggles and a lack of knowledge or information about alternative ways of living. This lifestyle is sometimes all people know, and the affective bonds they share with their neighbors often compete with financial needs, preventing them from leaving the community. Thus, it is rarely the case that social capital has to be built from scratch; something exists, and if harnessed and directed correctly, can provide a foundation for improving the circumstances in distressed neighborhoods.

Other potentially useful strategies for improving social capital in disorganized communities include increasing opportunities for positive social interactions through reinforcing shared values and norms, after-school and mentoring programs that bring adults into contact with children and adolescents, celebrations of a community's history and rituals, and recognizing community leaders. Providing opportunities for individuals to work in community-based organizations (CBOs) not only influence those who are working, but also affects their family and neighbors. CBOs can often help in the solutions of discrete problems, but also "reknit the web of social and institutional networks that support families" (Brown and Richman 1997, 172-173; see also Grogan and Proscio 2000). It does not require an official CBO, however. Most communities have some public forum in which certain groups within the neighborhood are likely to be overrepresented, and others are underrepresented. Giving opportunities to those who have been underrepresented on city councils and neighborhood initiatives can help improve levels of efficacy and cynicism.

Although I agree that these sorts of proposals can help, there are two important considerations. Both are more theoretical than practical issues, but have implications for the evaluation of such plans as listed above. The concept "social capital" has become

such a buzz-word that it has largely lost its meaning. The advantages of policies to improve social capital are obvious – theories based on social capital appeal to behavioralists who tend to believe that social outcomes are a product of individual behavior; they also appeal to structuralists who tend to argue that outcomes are the result of discriminatory or faulty institutions. How can one theory be appealing to both camps? The reason is that, as defined, it is nearly impossible to make causal conclusions because it is difficult to know where social capital begins. For example, a common claim is that individuals with a higher degree of social capital are more trusting of others. Yet, are they more trusting because they have higher social capital, or do they have higher social capital because they are more trusting? Similarly, do communities have cleaner, safer streets and better schools because of a high level of social capital, or did the safe community generate social capital because of its lack of social problems? It is nearly impossible to tell. Putnam's own research on Italy indicates that social problems and social capital go back centuries, and that a community's present status is linked to its past (1993). This suggests that it may be quite difficult to change a community's level of social capital. If programs are likely to fail in neighborhoods without strong, positive networks, and yet, these relationships are the aim of the policy, then what is likely to work? Policymakers must, at a minimum, recognize these difficulties when constructing policies.

The second consideration is that many assume that social capital is self-replenishing. As people begin to interact more with their neighbors and friends, their levels of trust will grow and they will become more interested in community activities. However, as Stone and his colleagues point out, interactions – especially those

surrounding a contentious political issue – do not always lead to greater trust and more

civility (2001). Instead, interactions may erode trust and dampen the spirits of

cooperation. As people work together, group and individual interests often collide, and

people lose trust in one another, as well as the process of working together.

Stone, Henig, Jones and Pierannuzi suggest that rather than social capital, the

important concept to understand why some communities are better able to mobilize

around particular policy issues is "civic capacity" (2001). Civic capacity is the "extent to

which different sectors of the community…act in concert around a matter of community-

wide import" (Stone 2001, 596). Depending on the issue at hand, these sectors might

include business leaders, elected officials, educators, non-profit organizations, religious

groups, and community-development organizations. "Capacity" involves both

mobilization of relevant groups and individuals and the ability to develop a shared plan of

action. Stone, et al. discuss how this capacity varies across different communities, and

the effects of the differing levels of capacity for cities in reforming urban schools in crisis

(2001).

In addition to these strategies, many communities across the nation are rethinking

public housing as a way to create communities with particular compositions. The old

way of thinking was to build massive public housing complexes where families could pay

reduced rents. This way, the poor were set-off from working-, middle-, and upper-class

Americans, whose property values were safe. It helped solve the housing crisis of the

post-war years because these multi-family dwellings could hold thousands of residents.

Public housing and other housing policies, such as FHA, also dealt with the tension and

struggle surrounding issues of racial integration in white neighborhoods by forcing non-whites and the poor into their own neighborhoods (Meyer 2000; Sugrue 1998).

However, by the 1960s, the neighborhoods with large public housing facilities were run-down, businesses had fled, crime had become a serious problem, residents were jobless, and the schools became wastelands for poor children with no way out. As years passed, the concentration of the poor, especially the black poor, became very high in these neighborhoods. In recent years, the tide has turned against segregating the poor into these type of units. In Chicago, one of the largest complexes in the nation – Cabrini Green – was razed; New Orleans also demolished the notorious St. Thomas projects; and Atlanta destroyed Techwood in preparation for the Olympic games. Replacing this housing is obviously a problem – thousands have been displaced. Policymakers believe that the long-term advantages outweigh the short-term disadvantages of displacement, and the trend is likely to continue in major urban centers.

The new theory is to mix neighborhoods by socioeconomic status, and to scatter the poor throughout a community, so that all (or many) neighborhoods include residents who are poor, middle-class, and wealthy. The advantages to the poor are obvious – safer, cleaner neighborhoods, better services and schools, adult role models for children, and peer groups that include children with higher educational and occupational aspirations. There are disadvantages, however, and ironically, they generally center on breaking up the networks and relationships that helped residents of these complexes. On the one hand, scholars claim that the networks are nonexistent or are negative in urban areas, and on the other, when policies break the networks apart, they cry foul.

Brown and Richman (1997) claim that it may be easier, instead, to rebuild poor neighborhoods than to disperse the residents into new neighborhoods. Wealthy neighborhoods are, without a doubt, likely to oppose these policies and fight against them. This may result in middle- and lower-class neighborhoods feeling the brunt of the impact, and these neighborhoods may see at least a temporary decline in property value, thereby hurting the middle class. This is never a popular political move for either Democrats or Republicans. Transportation may be another serious concern. Very few poor individuals own their own vehicle, and public transportation is lacking in most suburban neighborhoods. The poor may find it even more difficult to get to work than it was from their old neighborhood. In the end, however, the policies are largely too new to evaluate at this point.

Political Composition and Public Policy

Before closing this section of the chapter, I must present another aspect of context that has important influences on political socialization: political composition. By political composition I mean the rates of turnout and partisan make-up of a community. Turnout indicates a relatively participatory community as opposed to one in which few residents get out to vote. The partisan make-up indicates the level of political diversity or heterogeneity in an environment. Is the community dominated by Democrats or Republicans? Or, are election battles traditionally very close contests, where residents are almost split down the middle with regard to partisanship?

Political composition matters for political socialization through the type of information available and the incentives individuals have to participate and maintain an

interest in politics. There is a great deal to be learned during political campaigns (Sears

and Valentino 1997; Dalton, Beck and Huckfeldt 1998). A heated campaign during a

critical period of adolescence can jumpstart a child's interest in politics, as well as his or

her acceptance of a partisan label and particular political values and attitudes. Campaigns

are more active, and produce more information when they are between two (or more)

competitive candidates or parties. In these contests, the political parties run television

and radio ads, they put on political debates, and candidates give many speeches and

appearances in order to raise their profile. In environments, however, where the winner

of an electoral contest is a foregone conclusion before the election cycle begins, parties

have no incentive to spend finite resources, and voters have little incentive or opportunity

to learn about the candidates or to participate in the events. The political orientation of

the community, then, influences the supply and content of the political information

available to residents of the community, as well as the level of mobilization by political

parties (Gimpel, Lay and Schuknecht 2003).

In politically homogeneous areas, or those dominated by one political party,

almost all people are likely to be less interested and less likely to participate than in

diverse areas with competitive elections. Political diversity heightens political efficacy,

or the sense that one's vote counts (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Key 1949).

Individuals that identify with the minority party in communities with only one strong

party are even less likely to get involved, or to speak up. Noelle-Neumann refers to this

phenomenon as the "spiral of silence," where minorities (racial, political, or other)

choose to stay quiet, rather than share a dissenting opinion or voice when few others

agree with them (1984). Most individuals do not want to risk being ostracized, or made

to feel silly, and in environments where their views are unlikely to be represented or taken seriously, many will simply opt out.

The political environment, then, affects the development of political attitudes through the type and amount of information that is offered in the community, as well as adults' reactions to their place in the composition. Children whose parents are political minorities, who feel they have been shut out of the process and who no longer talk about or participate in politics are less likely to develop into engaged, interested and knowledgeable citizens than are children of parents in the majority, whose views are adequately represented by their elected officials and in discussions of important issues. These youth learn that their opinion is not as valid as the majority, and may never become engaged in politics. Also, the issues of importance are certainly likely to vary by community, and thus, knowledge about politics will differ according to the community in which one is raised. Residents, and therefore young people, in towns along the U.S. border are likely to very interested in, and hear a great deal of information about immigration. Young people growing up in Southern Indiana, however, are probably much more interested in basketball and farming – and many have never thought much about immigration (Gimpel, Lay and Schuknecht 2003).

Finally, in communities that are accustomed to competitive elections, adolescents are brought up surrounded by political conflict, and are inundated with information that can help create a generation of politically interested, knowledgeable and participatory young people. Those raised in politically homogeneous areas may never understand the value of conflict or see the other side's perspective on many issues. Indeed, in *Cultivating Democracy*, my co-authors and I found that Republican youth living in

heavily Democratic communities were less efficacious, less interested in discussion, and less knowledgeable as a result of being a political minority group (2003, 112-113; see also Gimpel and Lay 2004).

There is a relatively straightforward way to change the political composition of communities. Every ten years, after a Census, congressional district boundaries are re-drawn to account for population shifts within the states and the nation. Some states inevitably lose a district or more because of their relative population losses, while other states gain districts. The controversial aspect of redistricting, however, is not which states gain and lose; it is how the districts themselves are redrawn to the advantage of particular groups. In states where the state legislatures draw the district lines, the party in power generally draws the districts to advantage their incumbents and hurt the opposing party. For years, Democrats did just this, and now that Republicans are gaining power in many states, they are "righting the wrongs" of their opponents.

When boundaries are drawn to benefit one particular party over another, however, the results are the same: safe districts, with very little competition. Although this is exactly what parties say they want, the effects are ultimately devastating. Participation is lower in areas with less competition, as voters feel they have no incentive to get involved. Furthermore, the politics of the area are likely to become more polarized, as officials see little reason to moderate their views to appeal to a slim minority of individuals in the opposing party. Children are brought up in one-sided political communities, and rarely ever get the opportunity to hear the arguments of the other side. They are likely to have no appreciation for the positive role that legitimate conflict can and must play in politics.

Not all states conduct their redistricting plans in this way, however. States such as Iowa and Arizona have independent, either non-partisan or bi-partisan groups that decide where the new districts boundaries should be drawn. In Iowa, after the 2000 Census, an independent commission redrew the boundaries into five districts, based primarily on the compactness of the district. In 2002, four of the five districts were competitive electoral contests.

Other than fairly drawing district boundaries to create competitive elections, other political reforms might involve providing challengers to incumbents with free media time and strong party support that would counter some of the advantages of incumbency. Schools might also get students involved and interested in politics by allowing them credit for volunteering for a political campaign. Many schools are now requiring students to conduct several hours of "community service," which is often not clearly defined. Political activities, such as campaigns, could go toward these requirements. Schools might also bring candidates from different parties and for different offices in to debate or speak to the students. To the extent that schools and candidates can relate these activities to the types of issues that interest many students – such as support for public schools, or law and order – it would help students understand that politics is not simply an "adult" activity and that it has no relevance for their lives.

Agenda for Future Research

As is always the case in any project, there were several frustrations with the data available to me as well as additional questions that I formed as I completed the dissertation. The agenda for future research based on this project centers on three issues:

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research designs incorporating communities, urban ethnocentrism, and a closer examination of the process of political socialization.

More surveys, of both adults and children, should incorporate a community design, as did the MCVS. As the analyses became more complicated, it was increasingly difficult to conduct multivariate analyses using the NHES because the survey was designed as a random sample of students in the United States. The survey offered great advantages for generalization, but its greatest disadvantage, for my purposes, was that with only one or two students per zip code, I could only examine types of communities rather than actual communities. The MCVS was designed with community analysis in mind. I could examine, for instance, the differences between black adolescents growing up in heavily Latino communities versus black youth living in predominantly black communities, and still control for important indicators in multivariate analysis. The main disadvantage of the MCVS was that it included schools and communities in only one state. Even though several of the findings were confirmed using the NHES, it is difficult to generalize to the nation based on data collected in one state. Fortunately, other researchers are now using the same research design to examine communities in Arizona and Missouri.

In designing data collection around community analysis, it is essential that all types of communities are included – cities, poor suburbs, wealthy suburbs, small towns and rural areas. Over the last few decades, there has been an urban ethnocentrism in many of the social sciences. Because of the population shift toward urban areas, the concentration of the media in cities, and technology, America is often assumed to have a homogeneous culture. This culture is based on life in urban areas, which has been

presumed to permeate all parts of America (Williams 2001). Yet, most researchers that have spent time observing rural communities agree that a unique rural culture persists, one that includes a "density of acquaintanceship" (Freudenberg 1986), a greater degree of face-to-face interaction, a greater emphasis on self-reliance, and a tendency to distrust outsiders (Gagne 1992; Martinez-Brawley 1990; Websdale 1995).

This ethnocentrism has serious consequences for research and policy. As I demonstrated in chapter 5, when small towns are removed from my analysis of poverty's effects on political knowledge, the findings closely resemble hypotheses based on poverty in urban areas. One would conclude that poverty has detrimental effects on political knowledge. When smaller towns are included, however, there is little relationship between poverty and knowledge. Weisheit's research (1993) points out that urban ethnocentrism has largely ignored crime and delinquency in rural areas; so much so that Americans were shocked with the violence associated with school shootings in the late-1990s in small towns, such as Jonesboro, Arkansas and Paducah, Kentucky. The same theories of delinquency that are founded in urban areas may not be applicable to these sorts of places. Similarly, our theories of human development and the effect of neighborhoods and communities may not explain behavior in small towns and rural areas because many are based on an urban/suburban comparison. For the sake of our theories, as well as the policies that result from our research, it is imperative that we include all types of communities, rather than assume that urban culture pervades all types of environments.

Finally, my research, like much of the scholarship in political socialization, is correlational. I am unable, except through inference, to discuss the causes or exact

sources of intolerance in homogeneous areas, or why poverty does not have the same effects in small towns as it does in urban areas. For this, I believe research must move beyond the traditional large-n survey-based research. These surveys provide a valuable resource for hypothesis testing and the ability to generalize. However, they do not allow us to truly understand the underlying processes of political development. Our inferences may in fact be right, but without field research, in-depth case studies, or randomized experiments, it is difficult to know with certainty that, for example, it is the nature of social networks in small towns that drives these outcomes. My future agenda will involve combining these methods to understand how the networks of young people influence their socialization into democratic values.

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