

Political Knowledge and Dimensions of Political Engagement

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ABSTRACT

A variety of factors coalesce in civics instruction to promote political engagement. This study examines the extent to which political knowledge, classroom environment, and pedagogic approaches influence participatory dispositions among high school students. We address the research questions: What is the connection between political knowledge and different forms of political engagement? And, are particular instructional approaches associated with greater knowledge gain and propensity to participate in politics? We employ an original study of high school students in schools across the state of Indiana to investigate these questions empirically. We find that students gain political knowledge as a result of taking a civics class. We affirm that people who have a base of political knowledge are more inclined to engage in political and civic activities than those who do not. We establish a positive relationship between knowledge and contacting, voting, campaign engagement, community engagement, digital engagement, and activism. There are differences in the strength of the correspondence between knowledge and engagement based on the knowledge domain. Knowledge of the U.S. Constitution has the strongest relationship to political engagement followed by knowledge of government institutions. Students whose civics class was taught in an open environment and whose instruction included active learning approaches are the most inclined to engage in politics. The study's strongest finding is that an open classroom climate is conducive to developing participatory inclinations among high school students.

Empirical research has established a relationship between the acquisition of political knowledge and participation in political and civic life (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Galston, 2004; Delli Carpini 2005; CIRCLE, 2013). A strong association exists between increased knowledge and higher levels of education (Galston, 2001; Verba, Schlozman, and Burns, 2005; Hillygus, 2005; Jennings and Stoker, 2008). Civic education, in particular, can convey core knowledge of democratic principles, the structure and function of government, and political processes as well as current issues and events (Owen, Soule, and Chalif, 2011). Traditional classroom instruction, which is largely lecture and textbook reading based, is associated with the acquisition of factual knowledge. Yet, making the connection between knowledge and participation may require an open classroom atmosphere and instructional methods that more actively engage students. Studies examining the influence of active civics pedagogies, especially service learning, in relation to individuals' propensity to gain knowledge and take part in politics have yielded mixed results. Further, little research has examined the relationship between political knowledge and engagement across types of political participation. It may be the case that the strength of the association of basic political knowledge acquired through high school civics instruction and voting, campaign engagement, community involvement, and other activities may vary.

This study examines the connection between civics instruction, political knowledge, and political engagement. Specifically, it addresses the questions: What is the connection between political knowledge and different forms of political engagement? And, are particular instructional approaches associated with greater knowledge gain and propensity to participate in politics?

Civic Education and Political Knowledge

Political knowledge encompasses a vast amount of information pertinent to government and political life. Delli Carpini and Keeter define political knowledge as “the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long-term memory” (1996: 10-11). Decades of research confirms that the public has a relatively low stock of political knowledge, and that knowledge levels have remained fairly stable over time (Bennett, 1996; Neuman, 1986; Smith, 1989; Delli Carpini 2005; Galston and Lopez, 2006; Friedman and Friedman, 2013). About half of the public is somewhat knowledgeable about the basic institutions and procedures of government, although knowledge of the Constitution and Bill of Rights is less robust (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Pew Research Center, 2011). In sum, the average American citizen is poorly informed, but not uninformed (Delli Carpini 2005).

Knowledge forms the foundation for citizens’ effective engagement in political life (e.g., Niemi and Junn, 1998; Galston, 2001; Milner, 2010; Campbell, 2006). A strong knowledge base facilitates individuals’ development of political attitudes that are predicated on more than just emotion, and fosters comprehension of how their own interests fit into a complex political system. An appreciation of the principles embodied in the Constitution undergirds American citizenship. Each generation requires education in democratic principles, ideas and practice, especially in an increasingly diverse America. People possessing greater civic knowledge tend to be supportive of democratic values, such as liberty, equality, and political tolerance (Finkel and Ernst, 2005; Galston, 2004; Brody, 1994; Youniss, 2011). Further, studies suggest that political knowledge is directly related to participation (Galston, 2004). People who possess knowledge of democratic government and processes tend to be more politically efficacious. They have the confidence and ability to stake a position in the marketplace of political ideas as well as to actively engage in governmental and civic affairs (Galston, 2004; Delli Carpini and

Keeter, 1996; McDevitt and Chaffee, 2002; Meirick and Wackman, 2004; Campaign for Civic Mission of Schools, 2011).

Individuals who are very informed about one aspect of politics tend to be knowledgeable in other areas (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). Informed citizens are better able to respond to changes in their political environment as they assimilate new knowledge (Althaus, 2003; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). The effects of political campaigns, for instance, appear to be modified by citizens' political knowledge, as those who are less informed are more persuadable (Claassen, 2011). Simulations of hypothetical electorates find that the primary effect of increasing political knowledge is higher voter turnout levels along with solidifying preexisting vote tendencies (Dow, 2011).

Youth Political Engagement

Young people lack many of the resources that promote political participation, including knowledge, cognitive skills, money, time, abilities, and social contacts. It is well-established that they participate less in formal politics (Cook, Page, Moskowitz, 2104; Schlozman, Brady, and Verba, 1996). Voter turnout among youth aged 18-29 surged to a high point of 51% during Obama's first election in 2008, but receded to 45% in 2012. In contrast, nearly 70% of registered voters over 30 voted in presidential elections between 1978 and 2012. Young voter turnout is even more depressed in midterm elections. Only 21.5% of 18-29 year olds voted in the 2014 midterm contests, which is typical of turnout in recent off-year elections (CIRCLE, 2015). Youth aged 18-25 were only one-third as likely as older cohorts aged 46-65 to have engaged in two or more electoral activities in the preceding four years (Marcus, 2002). Consequentially, they are less likely to be contacted by their representatives or political parties, further reducing potential electoral participation. Additionally, as the U.S. becomes increasingly

diverse, youth receive mixed or fewer messages about the importance of civic duty, which is a driver of voter turnout (Campbell, 2006).

Research suggests that different civic education strategies appear to target particular aspects of citizenship (Kahne, 2007; Claes, Hooghe and Stolle, 2009; Crow and Lee, 2013). Youth under 18 have more opportunities to engage in, and indeed appear to gravitate toward, what Dalton, Bennett and others have termed “participatory citizenship” (Dalton, 2009; Bennett, Wells, and Rank, 2009). In Dalton’s model, participatory citizenship lends itself to actively taking part in the organization and administration of collective action to improve social and community problems through community work, boycotting, even protest (2009). Kahne, Crow, and Lee (2013) distinguish between “big P” politics, as characterized by voting, working on campaigns, and debates about institutions, versus “little p” politics, which focus on lifestyle politics, community work, self-expression, and actualization. Service learning projects were found to foster more “little p” types of engagement. Open discussion of societal issues promoted engagement with political issues and elections, including fostering interest in politics, interest in diverse perspectives, and increasing youths’ intention to vote. Combining both forms of instruction promoted both big P and little p participation. Service learning projects, following current events, discussing community problems, and responses within an open classroom environment effectively fostered commitment to civic participation overall (Kahne et al., 2013). Community service, as opposed to traditional cognitive methods of classroom instruction, was identified by Claes, et al. (2009) as having the most consistent positive effect on future political participation of youth. We will explore what type of civic education provides youth with the necessary political knowledge capital and cognitive experiences to engage in a range of traditional forms of political action.

Digital forms of political engagement have become increasingly widespread. Young people who are digitally savvy are especially inclined to take part in politics via technology. Digital media have given rise to an expanded participatory politics (Kahne, Middaugh, and Allen, 2015; Thorson, 2015; Gainous and Wagner, 2014; Wells, 2015). Online communication and community lend themselves to the politics of the personal, and provide opportunities for expression, creativity, connection to community and contacting. Social networking sites have grown in number and complexity, and provide a new medium for real for real-time information sharing, interaction, and organizing. Youth can easily generate political content and widely disseminate it to networks of friends and the larger community (Owen, 2009). Internet access, online news reading, email mobilization and online political discussion have been positively related to voting (Dimitrova, et al., 2014). The effects of digital media use were weak for political learning, but some digital media forms, namely visiting party websites and using social media during a campaign increased participation offline (Dimitrova, et al., 2014; Mossberger, et al., 2008). Political topics that personally engage students have been found to be most effective (Kahne and Middaugh, 2008), and online participation may allow students to pursue their interests. Little is known about how political knowledge might enhance digital political participation, a relationship we explore in this study.

The Civics Classroom

Civic education can influence the acquisition of political knowledge both directly and indirectly. The classroom is a unique setting where young people can gain information, establish autonomy in their ideas, and develop confidence in their ability to be political actors (Ehman, 1980; Morgan and Streb, 2001). Civics classes can stimulate interest in political affairs, create a lasting sense of civic duty, and encourage an orientation toward political life that compels people

to be attentive to politics. Knowledge gained through civics instruction can serve as a foundation for seeking further information. An election campaign, public policy controversy, discussion of politics, media report, or other event may invigorate recall of relevant political facts that were learned in class. Thus, civic education may be responsible for positioning people to encounter and be receptive to information about the political world long after they leave the classroom.

Researchers across a variety of disciplines, including political science, communication, cognitive psychology, and public relations have identified three major antecedents of knowledge acquisition—ability, motivation, and opportunity (DelliCarpini and Keeter, 1996; Hallahan, 2000; Barabas, et al., 2014). The high school civics classroom is a site where ability, motivation, and opportunity are fostered. Ability refers to a person's cognitive skills and capacity for learning. Ability and motivation are traits intrinsic to the individual. People develop different levels of proficiency in retaining and processing information. Grade point average is a rough measure of a student's ability, but it does not reflect the entire spectrum of ability. Motivation represents people's desire to learn, and a willingness to engage with and process information. Students seeking to further their education may be more motivated than others to learn and retain information about politics and government. The IEA Civic Education Study of adolescents found that "expected years of further education" had the strongest effect on political knowledge of students in 24 countries, stronger than home literacy resources and open classroom climate (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Students' level of interest in political and civic life as well as their capacity for engagement varies on a multiplicity of factors, including those related to home and family life and their social networks. In school, motivation can be related to teachers' encouragement, class climate, and the instructor's pedagogic style. Opportunity takes into account the availability of information and the manner in which it is presented. It encompasses

factors that can be largely outside the control of the individual, such as the amount of exposure to a message, the number of arguments it contains, and the presence of distractions that can hinder comprehension (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Chaiken, 1987; MacInnis, et al., 1991; Hallahan, 2000). Under the right circumstances, high school civics classes have the potential to offer significant intentional exposure to political information within a structured environment that is conducive to learning.

The “universal solvent” properties of best civics instruction practices are beginning to be better understood. Campbell (2007, 2008) has demonstrated that maintenance of an open classroom climate, where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas, significantly improves elements of democratic capacity—knowledge, efficacy, and voting intent—a finding confirmed by Gainous and Martens (2012). An open classroom climate, combined with traditional teaching methods, has been found to have the highest impact on students’ acquisition of civic knowledge, efficacy, and propensity to vote (Martens and Gainous, 2013). Adolescents’ civic knowledge and appreciation of political conflict can improve in an open classroom environment, which also can partially compensate for disadvantages accruing to low socioeconomic status (Campbell, 2008). Motivated Israeli students from educated, affluent homes appeared able to influence less motivated, disadvantaged students’ aspirations toward more active citizenship in an open classroom climate (Ichilov, 2007).

Conversely, closed classroom environments may alienate students from politics. One early empirical study of classroom climate found that discussing controversial topics in closed classroom environment had an especially negative effect on young black students (Ehman, 1969). However, when political education is robust and provides experiences that sharpen political capabilities, it can promote individuals’ overall healthy development (Beaumont, 2011;

Voight and Toney-Purta, 2013). Student racial and socio-economic diversity in an open classroom climate have been found to increase political knowledge and intention to vote (Campbell, 2007, 2008; Ichilov 2007).

The relationship of an open classroom to other instructional methods typically employed in social studies classes remains obscure, as does the popularity of its use. Studies examining the influence of active civics pedagogies, especially service learning, in relation to individuals' propensity to gain knowledge and take part in politics, have yielded mixed results (Manning and Edwards, 2014). It is unclear whether adult participation models, which focus in part on the importance of knowledge, are applicable for youth political engagement. Finkel and Ernst (2005), for instance, found that active learning and teaching methods worked best to change cognition and attitudes rather than to foster political participation. Educators would clearly benefit from further empirical research about the relative effectiveness of various approaches to teaching civics (Martens and Gainous, 2013). We will examine the effects of open classroom climate as well as traditional and active pedagogies on five measures of political engagement: contacting, campaign engagement, prospective voting, community engagement, digital engagement, and activism.

Demographic Factors

Civics instruction in schools potentially offers all students the opportunity to gain core political knowledge and establish habits for acquiring political information over time. However, civics instruction across and within schools is uneven, and disparities in both access and quality may intersect with familiar socioeconomic cleavages. While public education has a core mission to teach students the fundamentals of democracy and forty states have a required a civics course, many youth do not participate in robust civic education (CIRCLE, 2013). The number of states

conducting regular civics assessments declined from 34 in 2001 to 21 in 2012-13. Overall time spent on civic education has been reduced in many schools (CIRCLE, 2013).

Disparities in quality civic education by school type aligns with research that demonstrates schools may function as a sorting agent, which can further stratify youth's political capabilities along race, immigrant, and socioeconomic status lines (Campbell 2014; Junn 2004; Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry, 1996). School's sorting models' effects appear to limited and strongest for electoral activity and, interestingly, for men (Campbell, 2009). When schools implement civics assessments that impact graduation, the greatest gains in civic knowledge are among Hispanic, especially Hispanic immigrant, and African American youth (Campbell, 2014). This may be due to the unequal distribution of political knowledge, whereby Americans who are younger, poor, minority, or female tend to know less (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Kenski 2000, Mondak and Anderson, 2004). Gender differences that show adolescent girls score lower on assessments of political knowledge are diminishing, though not across the board (Ichilov 2007; Torney-Purta, et al., 2001).

Hypotheses

We expect to find that students who have higher levels of political knowledge, who have experienced an open, tolerant, and receptive civics classroom environment, and whose civics instruction included active learning approaches will be inclined to engage in politics. Thus, we test the following hypotheses:

H₁: Political knowledge is positively related to political engagement.

H₂: An open classroom climate is positively related to higher levels of political knowledge.

H₃: An open classroom climate is positively related to higher levels of political engagement.

H₄: Active pedagogies are positively related to higher levels of political knowledge.

H₅: Active pedagogies are positively related to higher levels of political engagement.

Data

Survey data on students' political knowledge, civic dispositions, civic skills, political media use, civics classroom climate, and civics classroom pedagogies were collected for students in civics, social studies, and American government classes at multiple school sites across the state of Indiana in the fall semester of 2014. Schools with teachers who instruct classes using the *We the People* (WTP) curriculum were recruited to take part in the study. WTP is a long-standing curriculum intervention that has involved over 28 million students and 75,000 teachers in all fifty states since 1987. The program instructs students in the foundations and institutions of American government, and is distinctive for its emphasis on constitutional principles, the Bill of Rights, and Supreme Court cases. Students take part in simulated congressional hearings that engage them in a range of learning activities. Civics instructors who had not gone through the WTP professional development program constitute a comparison group. Twenty-one teachers from twelve high schools took part in the study. In three of the schools there is only one instructor who teaches all of the civic education classes. The WTP teachers taught other civics/social studies classes in addition to their WTP class with one exception. The schools vary in size, location (urban/suburban/rural), and type (neighborhood/selective enrollment/technical; public/private). The student samples per school range in size from 39 to 169, with a mean of 85 students.

Teachers completed a baseline survey in September 2014 prior to the administration of the student surveys. The comparison group teachers were matched to the extent possible with the WTP teachers based on their educational background and years of experience. The WTP and comparison group teachers in the study are highly comparable on these indicators. The average

number of years teaching civics—twenty—is identical for each group, and ranges from 5 to 36 for the WTP teachers and 7 to 34 for the comparison group teachers. 27% of the WTP teachers have bachelor's degrees and 73% have advanced degrees (master's/law degree). 33% of the comparison group teachers hold bachelor's degrees and 67% have master's degrees. All of the teachers in the study had participated in professional development of some type. The WTP teachers took part in five to seven day WTP summer institutes that conveyed the content knowledge and specialized skills required of instructors in the program. These teachers also had follow-up services, including one day seminars and engagement in a network of WTP instructors.

Teachers administered pretests to students online near the beginning (early September) and posttests at the end (late December) of the fall semester 2014 during class periods. There are no confounding factors in the study, as the WTP teachers had no contact with the comparison group students, and the tests were administered to all students during the same time period in each school. Close contact with teachers was maintained by the researchers throughout the study in an effort to minimize sample attrition. All teachers were provided with a stipend for participating in the study, and there was no teacher attrition. Students who were absent could make up the test on another day. Thirty-eight students dropped out of the study, for an overall attrition rate of 3.6%. There is no evidence of differential attrition for the comparison or intervention groups, or for particular schools.

Complete pretest/posttest data were collected on 1,015 students. 663 students were in classes taught by WTP teachers; 386 of these students were enrolled in the *We the People* program and 277 took a traditional civics class. 351 students took civics with nonWTP teachers. The vast majority of students (84%) took civics as a required class. 58% of students took *We the*

People as a required class and 42% took it as an elective. 399 (32%) of the students were enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) class. 51% of students were taking WTP as an AP class. There are no statistically significant differences in the gender composition of the students in the comparison and intervention groups. The majority of students in the sample are white. However, the comparison group has a greater percentage of black students than the WTP teacher groups, which have more Asian American/Pacific Islander students. All groups have approximately the same percentage of Latino students. 87% of the students in the sample were seniors in high school, and the rest were mostly juniors.

Measures

Political Knowledge

The knowledge survey items were constructed after consulting prior research, civics inventories, grade-appropriate civics tests, and state civic education rubrics. We intentionally avoided using any materials related to *We the People* when creating the questionnaire. We reviewed content areas with the participating teachers at an orientation meeting held in Indianapolis prior to administering the pretest to ensure that the questions covered material that would be presented in class. The teachers who administered the survey were informed of the broad categories to be covered but were not given specific test items. All knowledge items covered were in compliance with the Indiana state civics rubric. The survey includes both original questions and those that have been previously tested and have known reliability. The test included multiple choice and a small number open-ended questions.

We constructed an overall measure of political knowledge consisting of all 62 knowledge items on the posttest and separate indexes representing seven specific dimensions of knowledge:

- 1) U.S. constitutional principles;
- 2) the Bill of Rights;
- 3) U.S. government institutions;
- 4)

political parties and elections; 5) race and politics; 6) economic principles; and 7) foreign policy. Students received a point for each correct answer. Additive indexes were created for total knowledge and each knowledge dimension. There is a debate in the literature about the treatment of the “don’t know” responses to political knowledge questions (see Luskin and Bullock, 2011). We combined the “don’t know” response with those indicating an incorrect answer. Scores on the total knowledge index range from 0 to 60, as no student achieved a perfect score.

Students were surveyed about their understanding of principles, thinkers, and key events related to the U.S. Constitution. This dimension consists of fourteen items, and ranges from 0 to 13 as no student correctly answered all of the questions. Participants were asked about the nature of a constitutional form of government, classical Republicanism, and the federalist elements of American government. They read and interpreted quotations from John Locke about the rule of law, and from the Declaration of Independence outlining unalienable rights and protections against tyranny. The survey covered checks and balances, the judicial nominating process, and the Constitutional amendment process. Students also were asked questions about the debate at the 1787 Constitutional Convention, and the purpose of a bicameral legislature.

Knowledge of the Bill of Rights is gauged by an additive index that ranges from 0 to 6. Students were asked questions about the document’s purpose, the First Amendment Establishment Clause, and the historical circumstances surrounding the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. Participants interpreted a quotation from correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and John Jay about freedom of the press. They were asked to identify the foundations of freedom of the press in the trial of John Peter Zenger. Finally, students read a

quotation from the majority opinion from the 1919 Supreme Court case of *Schenck v. The United States*, and interpreted how the decision affected freedom of speech during wartime.

Knowledge of the three branches of government is ascertained by a 15 item index. The measure consists of six items relating to the executive branch, six items pertaining to the legislative branch, and three questions about the judicial system. Participants answered questions about the constitutional authorities of the President, presidential succession, and the executive's role in foreign policy. They were asked about checks on presidential power as outlined in the War Powers Act and the legislative requirements to overturn a presidential veto. The study includes basic questions about the number of senators in the U.S Congress and the term of office of members of the House of Representatives. Respondents were surveyed about the House's representative role. They were asked to interpret the Supreme Court case of *Gibbons vs. Ogden* as it relates to Congress' constitutional right to regulate interstate commerce. Other items cover the fate of most bills introduced in the House of Representatives, and historical uses of the filibuster by southern Senators in the 1950s and 1960s. An open-ended item required students to fill in the number of Supreme Court Justices. They were asked about judicial review as set out in *Marbury v. Madison* and the implications of *United States v. Nixon*.

Students were tested on their understanding of the role of political parties and elections in the American system of government by thirteen survey items. The questions tapped the history of American parties, including Madison's perspective as articulated in Federalist 10 and parties' current role. Knowledge of elections covered state voter requirements, revising the Electoral College, the political parties' role in nominating presidential candidates, and the impact of third parties. Participants were asked to define political action committee (PAC) and to identify how PACs have contributed to weakening political parties. They interpreted the outcome of *Citizens*

United v. Federal Election Commission. The items also covered proportional representation in voting, Muckraker journalism of the early 20th century, and television's role in elections.

A five item additive index taps students' knowledge of race and politics. Respondents were asked which Supreme Court case ended segregation in schools. They were asked to define affirmative action and multiculturalism, and to identify Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s call for non-violent protests from his followers. They read a quotation about America as a melting pot from Israel Zangwill to gauge comprehension of the notion of assimilation.

The knowledge of economic principles index consists of five questions. Students were tested on their understanding of economic systems including free-enterprise, capitalism, and mixed economies. They answered questions about economic values inherent in the American political system and the responsibilities of the Federal Reserve.

The foreign policy dimension of knowledge is measured by five items. Respondents were questioned about the difference between international and domestic politics. They were asked to define "positive rights" from the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Rights. The survey tested their knowledge of the significant belligerents in the Cold War as well as the Truman Doctrine and Marshal Plan as U.S. attempts to control the spread of communism. Students also were asked to identify the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution by Congress as the legal basis for America's escalation of involvement in the Vietnam War.

Political Engagement

We examine six dimensions of political engagement: 1) contacting; 2) campaign engagement; 3) voting; 4) community engagement; 5) digital engagement; and 6) activism. Students were asked how likely they would be to engage in 24 activities using a five point scale where a low score corresponds to "not at all likely" and a high score to "extremely likely."

Contacting is an additive index that combines two items—the likelihood of contacting someone in government who represents your community and contacting a newspaper, radio, or TV talk show to express an opinion. The campaign engagement index is composed of five items gauging the likelihood of respondents wearing a campaign button, working on a candidate’s campaign, volunteering for a political party, trying to convince others to vote for or against a candidate, and working as a political canvasser. Voting is an index of students’ disposition to vote regularly in presidential and local elections. The community involvement index consists of three questions representing students’ inclination to volunteer, get involved in community issues, and work with a group to solve a problem. Digital media engagement reflects students’ inclination to use social media to express an opinion on an issue, share views with others, and engage in a political campaign. It also includes a question about students expressing their views about politics on a website, blog, or chat room. Finally, the activism index consists of six items: signing a petition, working to change unjust laws, participating in a boycott, refusing to buy clothes made in a sweatshop, participating in protest activities, and participating in events where young people express their political views. (Complete question wording, index ranges, and index reliabilities appear in the Appendix.)

Class Type

The questionnaire includes dichotomous items indicating whether or not a student had taken a *We the People* class or an AP course. We created a combined WTP/AP measure which has a value of one for students who took neither a WTP nor an AP class (48%), two for students who took either WTP or AP (31%), and three for those who took WTP for AP credit (21%).

The study also ascertained whether the student had taken civics as a required or an elective class.

Classroom Climate

Classroom climate indicates the amount of freedom students feel they have to express themselves during instructional periods. The measure gauges students' perception of the openness of their classroom to student input, voicing opinions, discussion about political ideas, teacher-student disagreements, and student-student disagreements. We constructed an index consisting of seven items scored in the direction of an open classroom. These items were adapted from prior works, especially the IEA Civic Education Study (see Torney-Purta, et al., 2001; Campbell, 2005). The classroom climate index ranges from 0 to 29.

Instructional Methods

The survey includes five items that account for the type instruction respondents experienced in their civics class. Students were asked to what extent their instruction was based on lecture, textbook, or current events-based learning. The study also includes questions about whether or not classroom and community-related activities were part of respondents' civic education. Classroom activities include simulated hearings, moot court, debates, and other forms of active classroom pedagogies. Community-related activities take into account actions that involve students beyond the classroom, such as contacting public officials, attending community meetings, and service learning. Each of these survey items is measured on a four point scale indicating if respondents' civics instruction never/rarely (1) or always (4) included the approach.

Grade Point Average

Studies have shown that grade point average (GPA) is positively associated with factual knowledge gain from traditional social studies classes (Botsch and Botsch, 2001; Champney and Edleman, 2010). In cases where students have earned AP credit, their GPA can be higher than

4.0. GPA in this study has been normalized, and is measured on a 4 point unweighted scale to achieve consistency across schools.

Demographics

Controls for students' gender and race are included in the analysis. Gender is coded 1 for female and 2 for male. Race categories consist of white, black/African American, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and multiracial.

Findings

Students in the Indiana study made statistically significant gains in knowledge as a result of taking a civics class (Owen, 2015a). At the conclusion of the study, students had moderate knowledge of government and politics, much like the wider American population (Delli Carpini, 2005). The distribution of scores on the overall knowledge index is approximately normal. No student earned a perfect score, as the highest score is 60. A small number of students got fewer than ten items correct. Students, on average, got slightly more than half (≈ 33) of the 62 knowledge items right at the conclusion of the study. As the standard deviation of 11.77 suggests, there is a good deal of variation in students' overall knowledge scores.

Students are most knowledgeable about government institutions, answering an average of nine of the fifteen questions correctly. On average, students got three of the five questions about race and politics correct. The average scores on the constitutional principles and Bill of Rights indexes are near the midpoint of the scale. Students scored worst on the parties and elections, economic principles, and foreign policy items. The majority of students got less than half of the questions correct in these knowledge domains. The stand deviations indicate substantial variation in students' scores for each dimension of knowledge. (See Table 1.)

Table 1
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Knowledge Indexes

	Number of Items in Index	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall Knowledge	62	32.64	11.77
Constitutional Principles	14	6.59	2.83
Bill of Rights	6	3.39	1.58
Government Institutions	15	9.37	3.36
Political Parties and Elections	13	5.97	2.62
Race and Politics	5	2.97	1.41
Economic Principles	5	2.30	1.54
Foreign Policy	5	2.08	1.19

n=1015

Table 2 shows the average scores of students' expressed likelihood of taking part in the six types of engagement for the pretest and posttest. Students were significantly more inclined to contact officials, engage in campaigns, use digital media to participate in politics, and engage in political activism after taking a civics class. There was no significant change in the means of students' likelihood of voting or engaging in their community. Students came to their civics class with a fairly high propensity to vote and participate in their community, especially compared to other types of engagement. Thus, a ceiling effect is likely at work.

Table 2
Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores for Student Engagement Measures

	Pretest \bar{x}	Posttest \bar{x}	\bar{x} Difference	Significance
Contacting	4.12	4.85	.72	.00
Voting	6.98	7.04	.06	.35
Campaign Engagement	8.54	10.26	1.71	.00
Community Engagement	9.20	9.32	.12	.18
Digital Engagement	9.07	10.07	1.00	.00
Activism	12.18	13.49	1.32	.00

n=1015

The percentage of students stating that they would be “extremely likely” to engage in the activities associated with each engagement dimension increases from the pretest to the posttest. (See Table 3.) About half of the students reported that they would be “extremely likely” to vote

regularly in presidential elections and more than 35% would be “extremely likely to vote in local elections. Over 40% of students indicated that they would be “extremely likely” to volunteer to help the needy in both the pretest and posttest. Far fewer students stated that they would be “extremely likely” to get involved with community issues (24%) or work with others to solve a problem (21%). However, the percentages are higher than for any of the contacting, campaign engagement, digital engagement, and activism measures. The importance of voting and community service is emphasized to young people both in school and through other agents of socialization, including social and religious organizations (Campbell, 2006). Other types of engagement are given less prominence in civics classes.

Table 3
Future Engagement Measures
% Extremely Likely to Engage in Activity
Pretest and Posttest

Dimension	Measure	Pretest %	Posttest %
<i>Contacting</i>	Contact or visit someone in government who represents your community	5.2	9.3
	Contact newspaper, radio, TV talk show to express your opinion on an issue	4.3	8.7
<i>Voting</i>	Vote in presidential elections on a regular basis	52.8	49.0
	Vote in local elections on a regular basis	35.8	38.2
<i>Campaign Engagement</i>	Wear a campaign button to support a candidate	7.4	14.1
	Work on a candidate’s political campaign	4.6	8.9
	Volunteer for a political party	5.4	9.6
	Talk to people about voting for or against parties or candidates	7.6	14.2
	Work as a canvasser for a political or social group or candidate	3.1	7.1
<i>Community Engagement</i>	Do volunteer work to help needy people	44.7	42.6
	Get involved with issues like health and safety that affect your community	22.2	24.0
	Work with a group to solve a problem in the community where you live	16.8	21.0
<i>Digital Engagement</i>	Use digital media to express your opinion on an issue	14.9	21.4

	Use social media to engage in a political campaign	9.4	15.6
	Use social media to share your views with others	16.0	18.9
	Express your views about politics on a website, blog, or chatroom	9.1	14.2
<i>Activism</i>	Sign an email or written petition	15.6	18.4
	Work with others to change unjust laws	10.6	15.9
	Participate in a boycott against a company	7.6	11.2
	Refuse to buy clothes made in a sweatshop	10.4	13.2
	Participate in political activities such as protests, marches, or demonstrations	8.4	12.5
	Participate in event where young people express their political views	7.4	10.8

n=1015

Positive and statistically significant bivariate relationships exist between knowledge and students' likelihood of engaging in politics. (See Table 4.) Data from the posttest indicate high levels of knowledge correspond to a greater likelihood of participation for all six types of engagement. The strength of the association differs across knowledge and engagement domains. The Pearson's correlations between each of the knowledge measures and voting are the highest in the study. The strongest correlation exists for voting and overall knowledge (.483) followed by knowledge of political institutions (.451) and the Bill of Rights (.401). The size of the association with knowledge drops notably for the other forms of engagement, but remains statistically significant. The correlations with overall knowledge are strongest for community engagement (.277), activism (.274) and contacting (.241). The knowledge/engagement nexus is weakest for campaign engagement (.185) and digital engagement (.213). Among the specific knowledge domains, constitutional principles has the strongest association with all of the engagement measures except campaign engagement, where it is second to economic principles. The weakest correlations exist for foreign policy knowledge across all of the engagement domains.

Table 4
Correlations (Pearson's R) of Knowledge and Engagement Measures
(Posttest Data)

Knowledge Measures	Contacting	Voting	Campaign Engagement	Community Engagement	Digital Engagement	Activism
Overall	.241 ^a	.483 ^a	.185 ^a	.277 ^a	.213 ^a	.274 ^a
Constitution	.227 ^a	.401 ^a	.177 ^a	.254 ^a	.195 ^a	.262 ^a
Bill of Rights	.197 ^a	.374 ^a	.162 ^a	.212 ^a	.162 ^a	.243 ^a
Institutions	.209 ^a	.451 ^a	.145 ^a	.224 ^a	.186 ^a	.220 ^a
Parties	.206 ^a	.389 ^a	.162 ^a	.215 ^a	.182 ^a	.200 ^a
Race	.137 ^a	.363 ^a	.100 ^a	.213 ^a	.142 ^a	.191 ^a
Economics	.191 ^a	.357 ^a	.181 ^a	.240 ^a	.178 ^a	.236 ^a
Foreign Policy	.136 ^a	.297 ^a	.090 ^a	.171 ^a	.121 ^a	.174 ^a

n=1015 ^a p≤.01

The civics instructional environment makes a difference in students' inclination to engage. Table 5 depicts posttest correlations demonstrating that a classroom climate that is open, receptive to the expression of ideas and opinions, and respectful is strong and positively related to all of the engagement measures. The correlations are highest for voting (.483) and campaign engagement (.467). While the associations are still robust, they are lowest for community engagement (.426) and activism (.421).

The correlations between the instructional methods and political engagement measures are substantially weaker than for classroom climate. (See Table 5.) Current events-based approaches correspond to students' greater inclination toward all six types of engagement. Incorporating activities in the classroom also is positively correlated with each of the engagement measures, although the association with voting is weak. Classes that are heavily lecture-based are the least effective in conveying dispositions toward political engagement. Students whose classes included community activities were the most inclined toward contacting (.237). Current events and class activities also had statistically significant positive relationships with contacting officials. The type of instructional method is the least consequential for voting,

where current events-based instruction has the highest association with students' professed likelihood of casting a ballot (.116). There also are weak, significant relationships with lecture and class activities. The strongest correlation (.242) exists for community activities and campaign engagement. Statistically significant relationships exist for campaign engagement with textbook, current events, and class activities, but not for lecture. Surprisingly, the relationship between the likelihood of a student engaging in the community and community-based classroom activities is weak, as are lecture and textbook-heavy approaches. Current events has the highest correlation with community engagement followed by class activities. There are statistically significant positive relationships between digital engagement and current events and community activities. Textbook and class activities also are significantly correlated with digital engagement, but the relationships are weaker. Community activities and class activities are the strongest correlates of activism followed by current events and textbook learning.

Table 5
Correlations (Pearson's R) of Classroom and Engagement Measures
(Posttest Data)

Classroom Measures	Contacting	Voting	Campaign Engagement	Community Engagement	Digital Engagement	Activism
Class Climate	.444 ^a	.483 ^a	.467 ^a	.426 ^a	.449 ^a	.421 ^a
Lecture	-.012	.095 ^a	-.026	.081 ^a	.017	.002
Textbook	-.073 ^b	.042	.142 ^a	.076 ^b	.100 ^a	.096 ^a
Current Events	.143 ^a	.116 ^a	.179 ^a	.168 ^a	.162 ^a	.119 ^a
Class	.134 ^a	.078 ^b	.140 ^a	.104 ^a	.112 ^a	.132 ^a
Community	.237 ^a	.018	.242 ^a	.081 ^a	.159 ^a	.191 ^a

n=1015 ^a p≤.01 ^b p≤.05

The type of civics class a student takes is related to their intention to engage in politics. As Table 6 indicates, students who take a *We the People* or an AP class are inclined to contact officials, vote, engage in campaigns, take part in their communities, engage using digital media,

and engage in activism. Taking a civics class as an elective is significantly correlated with all six types of engagement as well. The correlations between the WTP/AP combined variable and the six engagement measures are the highest among the class type measures. Students who enroll in WTP and AP classes are slightly more inclined toward political engagement prior to taking civics than their counterparts. This disposition to engage develops further as a result of civics instruction (Owen, 2015b).

Table 6
Correlations (Pearson's R) of Class Type and Engagement Measures
(Posttest Data)

Class Type Measures	Contacting	Voting	Campaign Engagement	Community Engagement	Digital Engagement	Activism
We the People	.239 ^a	.229 ^a	.241 ^a	.178 ^a	.218 ^a	.211 ^a
AP	.217 ^a	.184 ^a	.219 ^a	.165 ^a	.208 ^a	.181 ^a
Required Class	.241 ^a	.221 ^a	.235 ^a	.197 ^a	.180 ^a	.206 ^a
WTP/AP	.285 ^a	.231 ^a	.278 ^a	.216 ^a	.252 ^a	.246 ^a

n=1015 ^a p≤.01

Grade point average is positively correlated with each of the engagement measures. (See Table 7.) The relationship is strongest for voting (.327) followed by community engagement (.226). The strength of the correlation is similar for contacting (.157), digital engagement (.155), and activism (.156). While statistically significant, the relationship between GPA and engagement is not as strong as for other factors, such as knowledge, class climate, and class type.

Table7
Correlations (Pearson's R) of Grade Point Average and Engagement Measures
(Posttest Data)

Student Measures	Contacting	Voting	Campaign Engagement	Community Engagement	Digital Engagement	Activism
GPA	.157 ^a	.327 ^a	.102 ^a	.226 ^a	.155 ^a	.156 ^a

n=1015 ^a p≤.01 ^b p≤.05

Finally, we examine the bivariate relationship between demographic variables and the engagement measures. Gender is statistically correlated with only two dimensions of engagement. Female students are more likely to participate in community affairs than their male counterparts (-.156). Males are slightly more inclined toward contacting than females (.096). The only statistically significant correlations for race are for whites (.123), blacks (-.104), and Latinos (-.071) and voting.

Table8
Correlations (Pearson's R) of Gender and Race and Engagement Measures
(Posttest Data)

Student Measures	Contacting	Voting	Campaign Engagement	Community Engagement	Digital Engagement	Activism
Gender	.096 ^a	-.012	.052	-.156 ^a	-.022	.020
White	.032	.123 ^a	-.018	.045	.018	-.020
Black	-.017	-.104 ^a	.025	-.053	-.033	-.028
Latino	-.033	-.071 ^b	-.031	-.006	-.042	-.018
Asian	.023	-.006	.044	.054	.054	.061
Multiracial	.010	-.009	.009	-.002	.019	.025

n=1015 ^a p≤.01 ^b p≤.05

We ran an OLS regression analysis to examine the effects of knowledge and classroom factors on the six engagement measures. The independent variables in the model are gender, GPA, overall knowledge, class climate, current events, class activities, and community activities, and the WTP/AP combined measure. There is weak to moderate multicollinearity between the

climate, current events, class activities, and community activities. We have entered these variables as a block. (See Table 9.)

The regression analysis supports the hypothesis that political knowledge is positively related to engagement. Knowledge has a positive statistically significant relationship to all of the engagement measures in the multivariate analysis. The relationship is stronger for voting (beta=.337) than for the other types of engagement. In fact, knowledge explains the highest percentage of the variance in the voting equation ($R^2=.152$). Following voting, the strongest relationships were between knowledge and activism (beta=.170), community engagement (beta=.127), and contacting (beta=.120).

The hypothesis that an open classroom climate is conducive to instilling participatory inclinations is strongly supported. Students whose civic education involved active classroom pedagogies are more disposed to participate in politics, but the relationship is less robust than for classroom climate. The classroom climate and instructional methods variables explain more of the variance in contacting, campaign engagement, community engagement, digital engagement, and activism than any of the other independent variables. Classroom climate is the strongest predictor of political engagement in each equation. Students whose civics class encouraged discussion of ideas and opinion expression were more disposed to engage politically than those whose classes were less open. The coefficients were highest for classroom climate and campaign engagement (beta=.403) and digital engagement (beta=.396). Of the three instructional methods included in the regression analysis, community activities has the most influence on political engagement. The relationship is statistically significant for contacting (beta=.212), campaign engagement (beta=.184), activism (beta=.164), and digital engagement (beta=.098). The bivariate relationships between current events and classroom activities and the

engagement measures do not hold up in the multivariate equation as these variables are correlated with the class climate measure.

Class type is positively related to contacting (beta=.140), campaign engagement (beta=.120), digital engagement (beta=.091), and activism (beta=.087). Students who took *We the People* for AP credit are the most inclined to engage. The teachers in these classes fostered an open classroom environment and employed active approaches to learning. There is no relationship between class types and voting or community engagement.

As was the case in the bivariate analysis, females are more likely to engage in community affairs (beta=-.162) and males are more inclined to contact public officials (beta=.072). There are no other significant gender differences in the equations. In the regression analysis, GPA is positively related to voting (beta=.083) and community engagement (beta=.059), but not to any of the other types of engagement.¹

Table 9
OLS Regression Analysis of Political Engagement on
Gender, GPA, Class Climate, Instructional Methods and Class Type
(beta coefficients)

	Contacting	Voting	Campaign Engagement	Community Engagement	Digital Engagement	Activism
Gender	.072 ^a	-.047	.031	-.162 ^a	-.036	-.016
R ²	.026 ^a	.001	.001	.027 ^a	.002	.000
GPA	-.010	.083 ^a	-.034	.059 ^a	.012	-.026
R ²	.007	.119 ^a	.011 ^a	.044 ^a	.023 ^a	.024 ^a
Knowledge	.120 ^a	.337 ^a	.055 ^a	.127 ^a	.063 ^a	.170 ^a
R ²	.040 ^a	.152 ^a	.025 ^a	.048 ^a	.032 ^a	.059 ^a
Climate	.347 ^a	.357 ^a	.403 ^a	.339 ^a	.396 ^a	.341 ^a
Events	-.075 ^b	-.027	-.038	.044	-.004	-.071 ^a
Class	-.035	.001	-.049	-.010	-.043	.013
Community	.212 ^a	.004	.184 ^a	.010	.098 ^a	.164 ^a
R ²	.179 ^a	.105 ^a	.208 ^a	.116 ^a	.170 ^a	.148 ^a

WTP/AP	.140 ^a	.008	.120 ^a	.039	.091 ^a	.087 ^a
R ²	.016 ^a	.000	.012 ^a	.001	.008 ^a	.006 ^a
Total R ²	.261 ^a	.371 ^a	.250 ^a	.236 ^a	.234 ^a	.230 ^a

n=1015 ^ap≤.01 ^bp≤.05

Conclusion

Civic education contributes to young people’s acquisition of participatory inclinations in myriad ways. It provides students with a foundation of political knowledge that allows them to develop the confidence to engage in politics. Students can gain experience articulating what they know about politics and expressing their opinions. They can acquire skills, such as contacting public officials through traditional and digital means. They can become active members of their communities, and come to understand the broader policy implications of their service. Thus, a variety of factors coalesce in civics instruction to promote an active citizenry.

Our study supports the contention that people who have a base of political knowledge are more inclined to engage in political and civic activities than those who do not. We find that students gain political knowledge as a result of taking a civics class. We establish a positive relationship between knowledge and engagement for all six dimensions of political participation we examine. There are differences in the strength of the correspondence between knowledge and engagement based on the knowledge domain. Knowledge of the U.S. constitution has the strongest relationship to political engagement followed by knowledge of government institutions, parties and elections, economic principles, and the Bill of Rights. The weakest associations exist for knowledge of race and politics and foreign policy.

As hypothesized, students whose civics class was taught in an open environment and whose instruction included active learning approaches are the most inclined to engage in politics.

Our study's strongest finding is that an open classroom climate is conducive to developing participatory inclinations. The bivariate correlations between open class climate and all six forms of engagement and the relationships remain robust in the multivariate analysis. Among the pedagogic approaches, incorporating community-based activities into the civics experience has the greatest influence on participation, especially contacting, campaign engagement, digital engagement, and activism. Interestingly, including community activities as part of a civics class is not significantly related to voting and community engagement.

The influence of civic education is not uniform across all types of engagement. Our findings for voting, in particular, are distinct. Voting is a primary focus of political socialization and civics instruction, often to the exclusion of other forms of engagement. There was not much change in students' inclination to vote when they come of age between the pretest and the posttest as students were already more predisposed to vote than to participate in other ways. Further, the pattern of relationships of the independent variables to voting is different than for the other engagement dimensions. The relationships of knowledge and GPA to voting are much stronger than for the other forms of participation. While class climate is a strong and significant predictor of voting, the specific instructional approaches have limited influence.

Our findings confirm that an open classroom is conducive to producing positive orientations toward civic engagement. However, educators are challenged in an era of political polarization to promote a safe environment where students can exchange, debate, and disagree on divisive political issues confronting their communities. Scholars urge educators not to shy away from how 'political sausage' is made, and to provide an open climate where students can discuss, air their opinions, and debate the unsettled political issues confronting society (Campbell 2008; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 1996; Hess, 2009).

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APPENDIX

Question Wording and Index Reliabilities

Political Engagement Measures

Contacting Cronbach's $\alpha=.880$

--2 items

--range 1-9

Contact or visit someone in government who represents your community

Contact a newspaper, radio, or TV talk show to express your opinion on an issue

Campaign Engagement Cronbach's $\alpha=.907$

--5 items

--range 1-21

Wear a campaign button to support a candidate

Work on a candidate's political campaign

Volunteer for a political party

Try to talk to people and explain why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates during an election

Work as a canvasser for a political or social group or candidate

Voting Cronbach's $\alpha=.903$

--2 items

--range 1-9

Vote in presidential elections on a regular basis

Vote in local elections on a regular basis

Community Engagement Cronbach's $\alpha=.860$

--3 items

--range 1-13

Do volunteer work to help needy people

Get involved with issues like health and safety that affect your community

Work with a group to solve a problem in the community where you live

Digital Engagement Cronbach's $\alpha=.905$

--4 items

--range 1-17

Use digital media to express your opinion on an issue

Use social media to engage in a political campaign

Use social media to share your views with others

Express your views about politics on a website, blog, or chatroom

Activism

Cronbach's $\alpha=.878$

--6 items

--range 1-25

Sign an email or written petition

Work with others to change unjust laws

Participate in a boycott against a company

Refuse to buy clothes made in a sweatshop

Participate in political activities such as protests, marches, or demonstrations

Participate in a poetry slam, youth forum, live music performance, or other event where young people express their political views

Political Knowledge Measures

Total Knowledge

Cronbach's $\alpha=.857$

--62 knowledge items (aggregate of items below)

--range 0-60

Constitutional Principles

Cronbach's $\alpha=.673$

--14 items

--range 0-13

John Locke states: "Absolute arbitrary power, or governing without settled laws, can neither of them be consistent with the ends of society and government." Which of the following statements is most consistent with the Locke quotation above?

Which of the following did critics of the Articles of Confederation consider the document's greatest flaw?

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; . . ." This quotation is evidence that some of the basic ideas in the Declaration of Independence were...

A constitutional government ALWAYS includes

Which characteristic serves as a long-term protection against tyranny and is a foundation of liberty in the United States?

The proposal at the Constitutional Convention that membership in the House of Representatives would be based on proportional representation and that Senate membership would be based on equal representation is called

At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, a bicameral legislature was proposed as a solution to the disagreement over...

The Constitution requires that the President's nominations to the Supreme Court be approved by the Senate. This is an example of...

What is the last step in amending the U.S. Constitution?

In the United States, what occurs when state and national laws are in conflict?

Federalism: A way of organizing a nation so that two or more levels of government have authority over the same land and people. Which fact about American government reflects the above definition of federalism?

The federal system encourages the growth of organized interest groups by

Which of the following is characteristic of classical republicanism?

Bill of Rights

Cronbach's $\alpha=.572$

--6 items

--range 0-6

The primary purpose of the Bill of Rights was to...

The establishment clause in the First Amendment says that...

Thomas Jefferson wrote the following to John Jay in a letter in 1786: "... our liberty, which cannot be guarded but by freedom of the press ..." Why should freedom of the press be guarded?

The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States ... are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Under what historical circumstances was the Fourteenth Amendment passed?

In the Supreme Court case of *Schenck v. The United States* (1919), Schenck was prosecuted for having violated the Espionage Act of 1917 by publishing and distributing leaflets that opposed the military draft and United States entry into the First World. The court ruled in favor of the United States. Below is an excerpt from the majority opinion. "We admit that in ... ordinary times the defendants ... would have been within their constitutional rights. But the character of every act depends upon the circumstances in which it is done. The most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic. ...

The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the evils that Congress has a right to prevent."The decision reflects the tension between...

The case of John Peter Zenger demonstrates...

Government Institutions

Cronbach's $\alpha=.757$

--15 items

--range 0-15

What is one responsibility that modern Presidents have that is NOT described in the U.S. Constitution?

Which of the following is a power of the President?

After the Vice President, who is next in line for the U.S. presidency?

The War Powers Act was an attempt by Congress to check the power of the President because

To override a presidential veto, how much of a majority is required in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives?

In the area of United States foreign policy, Congress shares power with the

The authors of the United States Constitution believed that the voice of the people should be heard frequently. Which part of the Government was instituted to respond most directly to the will of the people?

How many Senators are in the U.S. Congress?

How long is the term for members of the House of Representatives?

What happens to most of the bills introduced in the House of Representatives?

Filibusters were used by United States Senators from the South in the 1950s and 1960s to...

The major point in the Supreme Court case of *Gibbons v. Ogden*

How many justices serve on the U.S. Supreme Court?

In *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), the Supreme Court established judicial review which is

What lessons did future U.S. leaders learn from the 1974 U.S. Supreme Court case *United States v. Nixon*?

Political Parties and Elections Cronbach's $\alpha=.638$

--13 items

--range 0-13

Which of the following statements represents James Madison's views about political parties as expressed in Federalist 10

In order to register to vote, some states require that citizens...

To revise the Electoral College system for selecting the President, changes must be made to...

United States citizens choose the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates by...

Which of the following statements is NOT true about American presidential elections?

The major role of political parties in the United States is to...

Traditionally third parties have had the greatest impact on American politics by...

A political action committee (PAC) is...

In the case of *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a split 5-4 decision that...

Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of a system of proportional representation in voting?

Investigative journalists of the early 20th century who exposed social and political corruption were known as...

Which of the following is a direct result of television's role in elections?

Reduced power of political parties is a result of...

Race and Politics Cronbach's $\alpha=.442$

--5 items

--range 0-5

Which U.S. Supreme Court case ordered an end to segregated schools "with all deliberate speed"?

In *The Melting Pot* (1908), Israel Zangwill states, "America is . . . the great Melting Pot! Here you stand, good folk, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won't be long like that, brothers . . . Into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American."

Which of the following phenomena does the passage celebrate?

What is the term associated with an appreciation of the unique cultural heritage of ethnic and racial groups?

When necessary to achieve justice, Martin Luther King, Jr., urged his followers to

Affirmative action refers to efforts enforced by government to

Economic Principles Cronbach's $\alpha=.587$

--5 items

--range 0-5

Which statement identifies a characteristic of a free-enterprise economic system?

Which of the following beliefs and values are NOT associated with American political culture

Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of a capitalistic economic system?

In a mixed economy...

The Federal Reserve System was created by Congress in 1913 to maintain sound banking conditions. Which of the following is true about the Federal Reserve System?

Foreign Policy/ Globalization Issues Cronbach's $\alpha=.432$

--5 items

--range 0-5

What is one important difference between international politics and domestic politics?

The concept of "positive rights" in United Nations' Universal Declaration of Rights requires that...

The legal basis for the escalation of United States involvement in the Vietnam War was the

The term "Cold War" refers to the...

The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan represented attempts by the United States to deal with the

Pedagogy Measures

Classroom Climate Cronbach's $\alpha=.902$

--7 items

--range 1-29

Students have a voice in what happens

Students can disagree with the teacher if they are respectful

Students can disagree with each other if they are respectful

Students are encouraged to express opinions

I talk to my classmates about politics

I am interested in my classmates' opinions about politics

My classmates encourage me to express my opinions about politics even if they are different from their views

NOTES

Author's Note: Diana Owen acknowledges the excellent research assistance of Georgetown University graduate students G. Isaac W. Riddle and Jilanne K. Doom.

¹GPA is collinear with overall knowledge. However, after running the OLS regression equations with GPA included and knowledge removed, statistically significant relationships exist only for voting and community engagement as is the case when knowledge is included in the model.