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VIRTUAL CIVICS
DIGITAL MEDIA IN THE CLASSROOM

By:

Shane Turnage

B.S. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 2006

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts – Political Science

Department of Political Science
In the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
August 2011

THESIS APPROVAL

VIRTUAL CIVICS
DIGITAL MEDIA IN THE CLASSROOM

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the field of Political Science

Approved by:

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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TITLE: VIRTUAL CIVICS - DIGITAL MEDIA IN THE CLASSROOM

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In an age where technology is advancing rapidly, young people are often the technology “natives” who understand and utilize its capabilities better than any other group in our society. Along with changing interaction models, youth are learning to “socialize” differently than any other generation has, absent face-to-face contact via digital interface. These types of connections are affecting America’s political and social landscape by changing the way youth are orientated into our culture. Many adults complain about the "distractions" of texting, Facebook, and computer games. Yet, these "distractions" might also be a means to engage young people in civic life. Current research shows the power of these technologies to encourage and foster civic activity outside the traditional venues of schools and civic associations. Technology is also being explored in the classroom for its impact on student interest and performance, both academically and civically. Thus, incorporation of technologies into the classroom may be part of the answer to the declining youth participation in our democracy. This study examines the relationship between in-class use of digital media and measures of civic and political engagement. It utilizes logistic regression to interpret data from an assessment given to the 2008 graduating class at Central City High School (pseudonym). Analysis of this data shows that digital media use in the classroom has a positive effect

on overall political knowledge, but leaves questions about its ability to affect students' civic capacity or civic commitment.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to Lindsay Sweet, who supported me in many ways throughout my graduate career. Without her love and support, none of it would have been possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In an age where technology is advancing rapidly, the youth become the technology "natives" who understand and utilize its capabilities better than any other group in our society. The rapid absorption and utilization of new technologies are reshaping the way in which our youth are learning to interact. Along with changing interaction models, the youth are learning to "socialize" differently than any other generation has, absent face-to-face contact via digital interface. These types of connections are affecting America's political and social landscape by changing the way youth are orientated into our culture.

The process of youth orientation is important to the democratic fabric of our nation. Youth turnout is the lowest of any other age group in our nation at the polls in Presidential elections, and turnout dips even further in midterm elections (Kirby and Ginsberg, 2009, p.1). Even with the highest recorded youth turnout in 2008, almost half of the youth of our nation are staying home on Election Day (Kirby and Ginsberg, 2009, p.1). One possible remedy for the apathy and disinterest of today's youth appears to be in the digital world, where current research is showing online and technological approaches to politics appeals to the 18-25 youth group (Levine and Lopez, 2004, p.2).

New digital opportunities are arising almost daily in our technological society. These opportunities are providing our youth with outlets in which to create personas, or "avatars," in which they act out under the guise of created personalities in online

communities. Such communities include Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGS) which provide alternate realities in which to communicate and socialize, and peer sites such as Facebook and My Space which provide social networking across vast distances, borders, and any geographic impediment. These new social avenues are being pioneered, created, and run by today's youth. While this may not be Putnam's idea of social capital, it is definitely allowing for the gathering of like-minded individuals who talk about ideas in areas of cyberspace that have replaced American's front porches (Putnam, 2000).

America's future citizens are utilizing the benefits of this technology on a daily basis. They are using computers inside and outside of the home, using cellular phones with ever expanding communication and information sharing technologies, and are even beginning to incorporate such technology into classrooms. In this technological, or "cyber" universe, youths are learning about social practices, social norms and values, and about social issues and governance. This types of activities, not fully understood, is becoming the learning ground for social and political activities of today's youth and tomorrow's citizens. The question becomes, how do we incorporate this technology into our educational system?

Research is beginning to show the benefits of technology being incorporated into the classroom. Using technology in the form of internet based computer use in research projects has been shown to increase scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) by the United States Department of Education (Taylor and

Duran, 2006, p.10). The University of Michigan-Dearborn, during the years participating in a U.S. Department of Education study on the use of technology in the classroom, received the highest number of awards from the Consortium for Outstanding Achievement in Teaching with Technology (COATT) (Taylor and Duran, 2006, p.16). Eight of these awards were given to teachers in the field of social studies (Taylor and Duran, 2006, p.16).

While there are wide disagreements on the efficacy of civic education in schools for fostering political engagement (Niemi and Junn, 1998), evidence is clear that schools play a crucial role in mending the "digital divide." Even as far back as 1998, up to 75% of students had access to a computer and the internet at school (Becker, 2000, p.44). In the classroom, the class gap disappears in technology access, as those teachers with low income students reported a higher rate of technology use by students than those teachers with higher income students (Becker, 2000, p.44). Mending of the digital divide in the classroom is important, as this gap will not be mended at home. In 2000, only 22% of students from families with incomes under $20,000 had access compared with 91% of students from families with incomes above $75,000 in 1998 (Becker, 2000, p.44).

Access figures have changed at home for the students in the last ten years. For students under seventeen the access rate has risen to 75% of households, however when broken down by race, the numbers become 79.2% for Whites, 60.0% for Blacks, and 57.4% for Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Also, the access outlook based upon educational attainment highlights the importance of digital education in the

classroom. For those who did not complete high school, the access rate is 38%, 63.1% for high school graduates, and 90.2% for college graduates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). It is through equal opportunity of digital media experience that youths will gain equal footing for further socialization inside today's changing society.

Video game play and participation in online communities has also been found to be an important equalizer in digital opportunities. Where previous research (Kahne and Middaugh, 2008, p.8) has shown that high school civic learning opportunities are unequally distributed to higher-income, higher-achieving, white students, Lenhart et al. (2008, p.46) have shown that income, race, and age are all unrelated to the amount of civic gaming experiences undergone. Regression analysis has also shown that no demographic measures have statistically significant effects on frequency of civic gaming experiences or their level of prevalence (Lenhart, et al., 2008, p.55).

With digital access rates possibly beginning to mirror the civic gap of today's youth, a mending of the digital divide is important. If the digital gap is not filled, it has the potential to further exacerbate the civic divide, making it increasingly difficult to attempt to bridge the gap in the future. Given the skewed availability of digital media usage opportunities for youths at home, it is important to find a venue in which opportunities can be equalized. The classroom provides an ideal environment in which students of any class, race or socioeconomic status can be afforded the technology, be instructed in its use, and use it for directed purposes.

Digital media usage has been shown to increase standardized test scores, but can it also be shown to increase measures of desired civic outcomes? Given the rapidly growing use of digital media, and its power to affect attitudes and behaviors, the question arises about whether it is the venue, the content, or how users use digital media technologies. The classroom provides the ideal environment for the structured instruction of digital media usage, as well as for building skills for future usage. This study examines the effects of classroom exposure to digital media usage in order to find that certain types of digital media usage lead to civic outcomes. Through examination of in class digital media usage and measures of desired civic outcomes by the 2008 graduating class of Central City High School, increased digital media usage will be shown to positively affect measures of students' overall political knowledge while questions remain on its ability to affect students' civic commitments and civic capacities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a vast amount of literature on youth civic engagement, and a field of literature is beginning to develop on digital media usage. Examination of the empirical literature on youth political and civic engagement and digital media usage will highlight the need for methods of increasing engagement while showing the power of digital media usage to foster these commitments. Also, a look at the promises digital media usage can provide to increases in measures of civic engagement will allow for discussion of their incorporation into our schools in order to provide these opportunities to all of today's youths.

America's youth (defined as 18-29 year olds) are participating less in their political lives less than any other section of society (Donovan et al, 2005, p.1). The 2008 Presidential election was the highest recorded youth turnout of this generation, and one of the highest ever recorded (Kirby and Ginsberg, 2009, p.1). An estimated 22 million youth turned out at the polls in 2008, two million more than made it in 2004 (Kirby and Ginsberg, 2009, p.2). This turnout marks the highest rate by America's youth since the voting age was lowered to 18 (Kirby and Ginsberg, 2009, p.2).

Empirical Studies of Youth Civic and Political Engagement

America's youth have also been seen to be disengaged and significantly less interested in their government than their adult counterparts. At the time of increasing

internet usage by the American populace, Delli Carpini (2000, p.341-342) found that young adults were significantly less trusting of fellow citizens, less interested in politics or public affairs (19% 18-29, 51% 50+), less likely to feel a sense of identity, pride, or obligation associated with American citizenship (20% of 18-29 were proud to be an American compared to 50% of those 50+), less knowledgeable about the substance or process of politics (ability to name two senators (1 in 10 for ages 18-29, 1 in 5 for ages 30-45, 1 in 3 for ages 45+), less likely to read or watch the news (daily read / watch 36% for ages 18-29, 67% for ages 50+), less likely to register to vote (28% of 18-24 year olds, 60% for ages 30+), less likely to participate in politics beyond voting, less likely to participate in community organizations designed to address public problems through collective action or the policy process, and less likely to connect individual efforts to help solve problems with more traditional, collective forms of civic engagement. However, Delli Caripini (2000, p.346) notes how in 2000, 70% of 18-25 year olds saw the internet as a useful source of political and issue information (compared to 48% of their 25+ peers), giving more credence to the internet than TV, newspapers, radio, magazines, personal conversations, and direct mail (Project Vote Smart, 1999).

Delli Carpini (2000) sees the main problem in youth participation as a societal trend of neglect and disinterest toward the young voter by political institutions, candidates, and organizations, and if reversed, the current decline in youth participation could be slowed or even stopped:

> Most of the institutions of public life either ignore young adults and the issues that matter to them or are ill equipped to attract young adults and provide them with meaningful opportunities to participate. Parties and candidates see little reason to devote their resources to reaching out to young Americans given that this age cohort is less likely to vote than older Americans. Government officials are unlikely to listen to young Americans, knowing there is little risk that they will be punished for their neglect at the polls. The news media is aimed at an older and increasingly shrinking audience. Traditional civic organizations and interest groups are dominated by issues, governing structures, policy solutions, and/or civic styles that are anathema to younger Americans in a faster-paced, entrepreneurial, mass mediated, and global environment (p.344).

The most recent data shows 2010 Midterm Election turnout by youths at 24% (Circle, 2010, p.1). This marks a 1.6% decrease in turnout between the 2006 and 2010 midterm elections, it mirrors overall adult turnout results, indicating insignificant change in turnout trends (Circle, 2010, p.1). The total youth vote was 10.8 million, up from 2006, and a million more than 2002 (Circle, 2010, p.3). This figure, however, is dependent on education, with college educated citizens being twice as likely to vote as those without college experience, indicating the need for civic training in earlier years in high school classrooms.

2008 marked a milestone in youth turnout, but when the data is compared with years past, the data is not so appealing. No matter which method used for turnout calculation, the numbers are dismal (see Appendix II). Only 49% of youths turned out in the 2004 Presidential election, and only 40% in 2000 (Kirby and Ginsberg, 2009, p.2). Midterm election results reflect even lower turnout rates, with the youth vote declining 6 percentage points below Presidential election rates from the years 1978 through 2002 (Donovan et al, 2005, p.1). In 2002, the national youth turnout was only 19%, compared with 50% for those over the age of 25 (Donovan et al, 2005, p.2). In a state level analysis, the median youth turnout was an average of 31 percentage points below those 25 and over, with the largest state gap being in Maine, where the gap was 42 percentage points (Donovan et al, 2005, p.2). Going back further yields even more negativity in youth voting trends. Given all reasonable methods of measuring youth turnout, participation declined from 1972 to 2000 (except for a 1994 spike) and rose sharply again in 2004 (Circle, 2005, p.2). Comparisons with voters prior to 1972 cannot be done, as those 18-21 were not allowed to vote until 1972.

` Political Campaigns are seeing the internet as a powerful tool in attracting youths to their candidates and causes, recognizing that young people are "especially prominent" in online campaigns (Levine and Lopez, 2004, p.1). A 2004 Pew Center for the People and the Press survey found that for young people, the internet is gaining importance as their source of political news (Levine and Lopez, 2004, p.1). 20% of America's youth are regularly using the internet for their news consumption at rising

rates, and at declining rates in traditional venues such as TV, newspapers, and magazines (Levine and Lopez, 2004, p.1).

Another study by Bennet and Xenos (2005, p.5) show the focus on the youth market by political campaigners on the internet beginning in 2002. Bennet and Xenos (2005, p.2) identified a youth engagement web sphere consisting of youth oriented political websites which has grown from 22 sites in 2002 to 35 in 2004 which concentrate on offering political commentary and information in a youth-targeted format. While the youth sites in 2002 used high tech features such as multimedia content, blogs, interactive polls and site logins, they were much less focused on the political content, with only 8 out of 22 sites in the study containing discussions of political issues, and only 25% contained information directly related to the 2002 election (84% did have links to such information) (Bennet and Xenos, 2005, p.5). However, in 2004, there was a marked increase of overall sites, and a marked increase of technological aspects targeting youths proficient in the internet technology. Some of these features included signups for e-mails (which alert of new content), news/press release pages highlighting issues and concerns of young voters, and photos, used to help identify young voters with the producers of the site (Bennet and Xenos, 2005, p.9). Political parties were also tapping into the internet age youth, with 27% of their web content aimed at youth voters, noting they are the internet's most savvy users (Bennet and Xenos, 2005, p.10). While the campaigners and parties are turning to providing electoral information services to the internet's most savvy users, an identified proficiency gap in utilization of the internet exists between those who attend college

and those who do not, indicating an educational success bias to the utilization of technology for political consumption. (Levine and Lopez, 2004, p.2).

Since the educational gap in the youth demographic is the cause of their level of technological political awareness and proficiency, it is important to afford those for whom public education is terminal their technological education inside the public school classroom. When examining the statistics displaying the number of youths affected, 29% had only a high school diploma, and 9% had less education than that (Lopez, et al, 2005, p.1). The civic consequences of the educational gap surpass technological prowess and advance into the realm of civic participation. There is a two percent gap in participation in the 2004 Presidential election between college attending and not attending, and a 13 percentage point gap in participation in the 2002 midterm elections (Lopez, et al, 2005, p.2). College attending youth are also 10% more likely to view voting as a responsibility or duty than their counterparts, and are significantly more likely to feel they can make a difference in their communities (Lopez et al, 2005, p.4-5).

The Civic Promise of Digital Media

The Internet is creating possibilities never before thought of as strengthening social cohesion and creating new forms of social capital. Mossberger et al. (2008) see a new form of citizenship being created in cyberspace. This new "digital citizenship" is generically defined as the ability to participate in society online (Mossberger et al., 2008). New "digital citizens" are using the internet, and using it effectively, multiple times a day (Mossberger et al., 2008).

These new citizens are not defined within borders as citizens of a state or country, but are instead citizens of a geographically and spatially independent forum called cyberspace in which individuals remain unmarked by any racial, creed, ethnic, nationalistic, or other social and political labels or limitations. Bennett (p.10, 2008) notes this transcendence above divisions in his statement, "applications of digital media do seem to bridge, and at times, transcend conventional boundaries between different kinds of political organizations such as parties, interest groups, and social movements." This is a realm of complete social inclusion, one where anyone can be anyone they wish, regardless of any prior social stigmatization or labels. This idea of inclusiveness is best described by Mossberger et al., when they state:

> "Information technology, we argue, has assumed a secure place today in the civilized life and prevailing standards of U.S. society. In much the way education has promoted democracy and economic growth, the Internet has the potential to benefit society as a whole, and facilitative the membership and participation of individuals within society. We contend that digital citizenship encourages what has elsewhere been called social inclusion."

The new digital citizens are creating social networks, gathering places, and debate forums without geographic location, and utilizing them to create online communities. These communities are governed by network administrators and other peers, giving them traits similar to many real social communities. Political protests are

even occurring in these digital communities, and are similar to those in physical societies.

For example, in *Second Life*, an MMORPG (which 1 in 5 teens participate in), the virtual citizens of the community once stacked tea crates around the Washington Monument to protest a "tax hike" in the form of increased community dues (Bennett, p.11, 2008, Lenhart et al., 2008, p.19). In *World of Warcraft*, another MMORPG, members revolted over vaguely defined class issues. This revolt concluded with members being "banned" under rules established by the owners of the gaming community (Bennett, p.11, 2008). A large number of today's youth are involved in such virtual worlds, with 87 percent of those between the ages of 12 to 17 participating online (up 24 percent in the past four years) (Rheingold ,p.97, 2008), frequently on a daily basis, in many "real world" activities that now take place simultaneously online (Raynes-Goldie and Walker, p.161, 2008). While these communities are shown to create conditions of society and communal behavior, does this behavior translate to users' geographically grounded societies and political lives?

Video game play has also been shown to strengthen real world offline relationships as well online ones (Lenhart et al., 2008, p.iii). For teens, gaming is a social activity, with only 24% of overall game players reporting playing games alone and the other 76% plays with others, strengthening social relationships (Lenhart et al., 2008, p.iii). Of those who play with others, 65% play with people in the same room and 27% with people they connect with through the internet (Lenhart et al., 2008, p.iii). Of those

who play online, 47% play with people they know offline, 27% with people they first met online, and 23% with family known offline and people they met online (Lenhart et al., 2008, p.iii). This participation in digital online communities for gaming purposes can be seen as creating and strengthening offline relationships with those met online or those related to the gamer or previously offline friends. Online communities are not only replacing the playground and arcades where teens met and played in times past, but are enlarging the base of the possible friendships and relationships one can possibly make, enlarging the pool of like-minded individuals exponentially with ease.

Empirical Studies on the Effects of Digital Media on Engagement

Video game play, such as the MMORPG's which mimic real life socialization, are being found to foster civic participation. A 2008 study by Dr. Joseph Kahne, and a 2008 longitudinal study by Lenhart et al. have shown video game players are 15% more likely to utilize the internet for consumption of political information, 19% more likely to raise money for charity, 12% more likely to be committed to civic participation, 20% more likely to say they are interested in politics, 11% more likely to stay informed about current events, and 7% more likely to have attempted to persuade a peer to vote (Kahne, et al, 2008, p.3). Use of discussion boards on gaming websites has also shown to increase civic measures by those who use them and play video games, compared to those who just play video games. Those who do both are 13% more committed to civic participation, 7% more likely to raise money for charity, 9% more likely to stay informed about current events, 9% more interested in politics, 16% more likely to have attempted

to persuade someone how to vote in an election, and 10% more likely to have protested in the last 12 months than their counterparts who just play games (Kahne, et al, 2008, p.4). These gaming environments have been found to create "participatory cultures" with "relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement" (Kahne, et al, 2008, p.8).

Bers (p.141, 2008) broadly views the internet's geographically free borders as creating virtual communities which "enable youth to engage in civic and volunteering activities across local communities and national frontiers, to learn about political life, and to experience the challenges of democratic participation." Sclove (p.37, 2004) sees the benefits of this new technology and the Internet as having the power to "educate and empower individuals, expand wealth, and reinvigorate democracy." Dean, et al., (2006, p.xv) sees the effect of technology creating a society of individuals "who are empowered to point-and-click, sign petitions, engage as virtual citizens, and register their opinions on millions of blogs, online forums, listservs, and newsgroups, using a variety of devices."

Balka and Peterson (p.139, 2004) see the Internet leading to better informed citizens and greater participation in civil society. They also see the Internet as enhancing users' abilities to participate in and function effectively in civic society, making the internet "a keystone of citizenship in the twenty-first century" (Balka and Peterson, p.139, 2004). Mossberger et al. (2008) see the potential of the Internet and its online activities as providing opportunities for information, discussion, and

mobilization of interest, but see a larger, more consequential change through facilitating civic engagement. This, they state, will result in altering citizen orientation and attitude toward political and societal norms/activities, and motivation of individuals to participate in their social and political lives in greater amounts over the long term (Mossberger, et al., 2008).

Other scholars see specific benefits from digital media usage, such as the positive links between internet usage and voter turnout, citizen initiated contact with government, and magnified civic engagement (McDonald, 2008). McDonald (2008) also sees measures of informed participation correlated with Internet usage. These include an "increased political sophistication, heightened interest in politics, and a greater propensity to discuss politics" (McDonald, 2008). McDonald's study also examines whether or not these youth get their news online. He finds that those who do express a greater interest in politics, talk more frequently about political events, and are overall more politically sophisticated (McDonald, 2008).

Mossberger et al. (2008) also see a positive measure of desired civic outcomes from digital media usage, especially for those who utilize the internet for procurement and consumption of election news. Utilizing data from the 2000 election, they find that this activity increases the potential to vote 16 to 26 percent, while e-mail contact increases the probability 21 to 39 percent, and online political chat room discussions increase the probability between 21 to 39 percent (Mossberger, et. al, 2008). They also

find the overall probability to vote increases 39 percent in 2000, and 30 percent in 2004, from participation in online political activities (Mossberger, et. al., 2008).

Shah et al. (2005, p.544) also give support for digital media usage and increased civic engagement through an empirical analyses utilizing three models: a cross-sectional model, a fixed-effects model, and an autoregressive model. In all three models, considerable support for interconnectedness between digital informational media use spurring civic engagement was found. Shah et al. (2005, p.551) also find that "online information seeking and interactive civic messaging – uses of the web as a resource and a forum – both strongly influence civic engagement, often more so than do traditional print and broadcast media and face-to-face communication."

These findings are recent, as users and providers of sites for political engagement and education are becoming proficient at utilizing the newly evolving technologies. Bimber (2001, p.53) looked at the period 1996-1999, testing for a relationship between political engagement and survey data about internet use, and found little relationship except in the increased ability to raise money. However, his analysis is problematic in the selection of variables and the population selection for study. The 1996 NES is used as it contains questions about uses of traditional media and the use of the internet specifically for obtaining campaign information, while his model only includes citizens with internet access (only 55% of the U.S. had internet access in 2000 (Carpini, 2000, p.346)) (Bimber, 2001, p.60). His analysis focuses on the 1996 campaign, a time when internet campaign information wasn't widespread or the

technology understood well, with little access in some parts of the nation. His selection bias in his sample of only access holders biases his analysis to users of the internet for campaign information to a high socio-economic status group of mainly white citizens, as access was limited and expensive to the time. While Bimber (2001) attempts to discern the impact of digital media on civic engagement, he may have been too early in the game, or simply misunderstood the parameters of such.

At the same time period of Bimber (2001), Western (2000, p.217) was seeing the potential of digital media and its impact on our political involvement, calling it E-Democracy which purports two distinct trends. The first of these trends is the rapid emergence of interactive communications technologies combining voice, data, audio, graphics, and video, and be able to simultaneously transmit the data globally (Western, 2000, p.217). While this has happened, her concern of the consequences of such is given in her prediction of the emergence of the second trend: a frustration with representative government and a move toward direct democracy (Western, 2000, p.217). While this may seem incredulous, she gives evidence of California's move to electronically qualify ballot initiatives and other states following suit up to the national level as foreboding warnings of the digitization of democratic practices(Western, 2000, p.226).

In order to answer to earlier calls of digital media experiences / internet use and desired civic outcomes, Jennings and Zietner (2003, p.311) performed a longitudinal study drawing on the 1982 and 1997 waves of a panel study that began with a national

sample of the high school class of 1965 and that generation's lineage successor. Controlling for socioeconomic factors and pre-internet levels of civic engagement, Jennings and Zietner (2001, p.319) found that internet use had statistically significant effects on indicators of civic engagement: media attentiveness, political involvement, volunteerism, and trust orientation. Regressing the post-internet on pre-internet measures controlling for internet use along with sex, education, and family income give statistically significant relationships between internet use and all indicators of civic engagement, two indicators of political involvement (interest in public affairs and external affairs),strong relationship between internet use and volunteerism / organizational involvement, and falling just short at 0.52 and 0.7 for political knowledge and community problem solving respectively, with no relationship with political trust (Jennings and Zeitner, 2001, p.323).

Governments have noticed the effectiveness of digital media experiences and desired civic outcomes in youth, and have initiated programs to encourage this activity. The Canadian government has seen the benefit of connectedness and its value for maintaining "social cohesion" and citizenship (Balka and Peterson, p.142, 2004). They have defined social cohesion as, "the capacity to live together in harmony with a sense of mutual commitment among citizens of different social or economic circumstances" (Balka and Peterson, p.142, 2004). This is due to their recognition of the internet and information age creating more complex decisions faced by its citizenry, and determining the fostering of citizen participation to be an important policy decision.

When American society sees the benefits of this type of behavior by its youth, where will the education, supervision, and direction take place? How will this technology be utilized to create a better society and citizen? Mossberger et al. (2008) has the answer: "The necessary building blocks for citizenship in the information age are quality public education combined with universal access to the prevailing communication and information medium, the internet."

The literature has identified the importance of mending the digital divide, and the place this is happening is in the schools system. The importance of technological activity has been shown to affect student participation and test scores. New technologies have been shown to affect civic participation positively in the form of video game playing and participation in online message boards and other sites. These benefits are further bestowed on youth attending college, making the introduction to certain technological practices important for those whom public education is terminal. This study seeks to show that digital media usage in the classroom for civic and political pursuits will encourage a higher frequency of participation in the civic measures of intention to vote, civic skills, and political knowledge by students.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN / METHODOLOGY

This project will test the relationship between digital media usage by students and their measured competence and prospective participation frequency in desired civic outcomes. While this assessment was previously given in California to a large group of students state wide, the data was never utilized to explore the relationship between digital media usage in the classroom and desired civic outcomes. This replication study seeks to do what the California assessment had not yet done, show the relationship between different methods of digital media usage on index variables representing desired civic outcomes of students. The hypothesis to be tested is as follows:

Ho: Null – No relationship exists between digital media usage and desired civic outcomes.

Ha: Increased digital media opportunities in the classroom will result in increased competence and projected frequencies of participation in desired civic outcomes by students.

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual: it is the individual respondents' answers on the assessment measures that will be analyzed. The measures which comprise the concept of desired civic outcomes (dependent variable) consist of two index variables which together represent measures of desired civic outcomes affected by digital media usage. The measures were tested for correlation between each other

and exhibited none. Therefore the measures were kept as three distinct measures, rather than combining into one dependent variable measure. These measures are based on answers to assessment questions which gauge the individuals' perceived competence in, or perceived frequency/likelihood of participating in that activity which represent a desired civic outcome. These measures, their concepts, and corresponding assessment questions/answer scales are described below and listed in.

Dependent Variables

The first dependent variable is designed to test the concept of the respondent's Civic Capacity. The corresponding questions are question numbers 34 – 37, and 46-51 in the assessment in Appendix I. The answer scale is the agreement scale also listed in Appendix I. For the civic skill concepts, the student was given a prompt to read, then a statement that they would either agree or disagree with. In this specific case, the prompt and statement were designed to assess the students ability to identify a school or community problem they wanted to take action on and assess on the agreement scale their perceived ability to create a plan to address the issue. The responses were then recoded into agree / disagree and combined to create an ordinal scale of agreement on overall measures of civic capacity. The measures of charitable and political activity also utilize this scale. The Cronbach's alpha score for the index variable is 0.89.

The second dependent variable, Civic Commitments, is the aggrandizement of the concepts of participatory citizenship, justice oriented citizenship, intent to vote,

justice orientation, general patriotism, critical patriotism, and uncritical patriotism. These concepts are represented by question numbers 1-3, 5, 7, 10, 12-20.While more questions represented this concept, response rates were not as high, causing them to be excluded from the sample. All of these questions utilized a five point agreement scale, which is displayed in the assessment. The responses were then recoded into agree / disagree and combined to create an ordinal scale of agreement on overall measures of civic commitment. The Cronbach's alpha score for the index variable is 0.66 indicating a strong relationship between the individual variables.

The third dependent variable is a seven question test of political knowledge. The first five questions test about basic democratic procedures and recognition of elected representatives. The next three questions test a student's ability to ascertain certain political knowledge from political advertisements. A sample political advertisement is provided and the student is asked about its content. These are question numbers 38-45 on the assessment.

Similar to the Constitutional Rights Foundation studies conducted by Kahne et al. (2006) and Kahne and Westheimer (2006), dependent variable measures represent commitments, not actual outcomes. While one can reasonably consider reported commitments to be civically and politically active to be related to actual behavior, studies have also shown this relationship to be true (Kahne et. al 2006, Kahne and Westheimer 2006). The literature shows that youth who report greater commitment to civic and political activities are more likely to be civically and politically active as adults

than those who reported less of a commitment (Oesterle, Johnson, and Mortimer 2004, Kahne, Chi, and Middaugh 2006).

Independent Variables

The measures which comprise concept of digital media usage (independent variable) consist of four separate components of digital media usage which best define the concept. These measures will be based on answers to assessment questions which best represent the measurement concept. The measures, their concepts, are discussed below, with corresponding assessment questions listed in Appendix I. These variables were kept as individual measures after looking at collinearity diagnostics in STATA, using variable inflation factors (VIF) of ten or above as a measure of problematic VIF's. The variance inflation factors of the variables have a mean value of 1.39, with the highest value being 1.51 and the lowest 1.06. All have tolerances less than 1.

The first concept of respondent digital media usage is In Class Digital Media Usage. This variable, question 73 on the assessment in Appendix I, asked the respondent about their frequency of required use of digital media (the internet) to get information about political or social issues. The answer key was a frequency distribution from never to several times a day, with small variations in time given between the extremes. This question was chosen to represent the focus the classroom placed on digital media usage for political information gathering, a concept which the literature supports as increasing desired civic outcomes by youths.

The second concept measured is that of In Class Digital Media Literacy. This was question 70 on the assessment in Appendix I and used the agreement scale used previously, and listed in Appendix I. This question measured the effectiveness or presence of in-class instruction in the ability to digest digital political information from the news, political advertisements, and speeches, and identify the questions or information left out. This concept is more analytic than the others, but represents an ability that a competent civic participant must possess in order to navigate the vast spectrum of political information digital media affords.

The third concept is Political Digital Media Usage, question 86 on the assessment in Appendix I and utilizes the aforementioned frequency scale also in Appendix I. This concept measures the frequency of the respondent's use of blogs and social networking sites to share or discuss perspectives on political issues. These activities are not necessarily in class activities, and represent inclusion or participation in digital communities described in the literature.

The fourth independent variable, Online Political Activity, is question 97 on the assessment listed in Appendix I and uses the aforementioned agreement scale also in Appendix I. This question measures the ability of internet usage to translate into knowledge of how to get involved in political or social issues. This concept is testing the ability of the internet to engage users in political awareness and possible avenues for political activity one may navigate.

The analysis of the effect of the measures of the independent variables on the measures of the dependent variables will be performed using logistic regression, as the data is ordinal in nature. This method of interpreting the data will give log-odds regression coefficients as output to be analyzed. Three separate regressions will be performed with each dependent variable against all measures of the independent variables. It is also necessary to incorporate a control variable into the analysis, to see if other factors are influencing the relationship and possibly minimizing the importance of the independent variable measures, should statistical significance be found. This control variable concept will represent the amount of civic education a person gets at home. The question is 98 on the assessment in Appendix I, and utilizes the aforementioned agreement scale also in Appendix I. The question asks if the respondent talks with parents or other adults in the home environment about community issues or politics, a characteristic the literature has shown to cause affect measures of the dependent variables.

Some recoding of the values of measures was done to make some of the variables binary in nature. The data was re-coded according to agreement or frequency, depending on the answer scale utilized. Also, the questions of political knowledge were re-coded into values of a correct and incorrect response. The frequency scale was recoded to high and low frequencies, with the high being daily or several times a day, while infrequent use was never, few times a month, or weekly. The agreement scale was recoded into agree / disagree with the coupling of undecided as disagree. The individual measure values were added to create an ordinal scale of overall agreement

with the overall concept. A high number is representative of high measures of the concept, with low measures representing the alternative.

If statistical significance is found between any of the independent variable measures and the dependent variable measures, the null hypothesis will be rejected. However, if significance is found only in individual models, the null will still be rejected, but effects are specific to the individual dependent variable measure. If no statistical significance is found between the variables, then the null hypothesis must be accepted, indicating that no relationship exists between digital media usage and civic skills.

All of the measures of the independent variables and dependent variables were chosen as the literature supports the relationship implied by the hypothesis on these measures. All have been detailed in the literature review to have impact on, or be impacted by, these measures. The relationships should prove to be statistically significant if the study is to ascertain results supported by the literature.

CHAPTER 4

DATA COLLECTION AND ISSUES

The data used in the analyses in this project was collected in May 2008 at "Central City High School" (pseudonym) in Illinois. This data was collected through the school administered pedagogical assessment of their civics program. The assessment was given to students who had received instruction in two different civics classes: one class emphasized digital pedagogy and the other featured more standard teaching methods. This pedagogical assessment was designed to see if different pedagogies produced different civic outcomes, and to assess the civic outcomes of the program as a whole.

This assessment was modeled after Kahne's (2005) research study on civic education in California. The California assessment was utilized to produce a report on the practices of California teachers and their impact on producing the desired civic outcomes of their high school students. Of particular interest for this project was the inclusion of questions on digital media usage. However, in his initial report, Kahne (2005) did not analyze the relationship between digital media usage and the desired civic outcomes. Thus, this project provides the opportunity to explore these measures and their relationships. Kahne and Middaugh (2007) have since revisited the original assessment data to look at some of these relationships, which will be discussed in the final portion of the paper.

The pedagogical assessment of Central City High School was modified from the California assessment to fit the students of Illinois. This modification involved changing

the answers of some questions to include Illinois politicians instead of California politicians in tests of political knowledge.

The sample size (n) of this data set is 60, out of a population of 142, which represents the 2008 graduating class of Central City High School. While 68 students took the assessment, eight assessments removed due to incomplete response sheets, or an obvious misrepresentation of data (such as marking all "B"). Teachers administered this assessment in the final days of the school's civics curriculum to better understand the effectiveness of using the internet for the schools' civics program and its ability to affect graduates' civic knowledge, attitudes and commitments. The data set consists of 60 observations representing the total number of students who completed the assessment.

One problem with this data set and the testing for statistical significance is the small n of the study. With only 60 respondents, it will be difficult to attain any level of statistical significance of effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. However, finding statistical significance in such a small n study indicates the strength of the measure/model, and the strength of the hypothesis, if supported by the statistical tests of the data. Were the n larger, the results of the relationships between the variables might be clearer and more concrete. Some trends, however, are apparent from close examination of the regression results, even if statistical significance is not found. Had the assessment been administered to multiple schools in the same school district (with the same curriculum requirements and similar demographic levels), the results might be clearer and more concrete.

A second problem with this study is the lack of a control group. While the sample is randomly representative of two distinct teaching styles focusing on the same material, there is no way to give a true experimental treatment to one group over the other. The only way to differentiate between the groups is through the student self - selecting themselves into or out of the “treatment group” based on their answers to the amount of time spent on certain activities. However, just because an assignment for digital media usage was given, does not mean the student spent time on it, giving an unclear selection as to which group they belong in. Therefore, this data is not considered experimental in nature, as there is an absence of a clear control and treatment group. The data will have to be viewed instead as correlations between in-class activities and desired civic outcomes.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

Ordinal logistic regression was utilized as the statistical methodology, and the values of the coefficients to be discussed are in log odd units. For every one unit increase in the independent variable measure, the value of the log of the odds of getting a value of 1 for the dependent variable is given by the independent variable's coefficient value. These coefficient values are then tested for statistical significance through interpretation of the z-statistic.

Model tests performed and reported are the chi-squared test or likelihood ratio chi squared test, and the p-value. The chi-squared test will evaluate the null hypothesis that all coefficients in the model, except the constant, equal zero and the p-value reports the probability that the chi-squared value occurred by random chance. The model's percent reduction in error will also be reported.

Descriptive Statistics

Students are being instructed in and utilizing digital media technology, but at different rates. When asked about the required frequency of use of the internet for getting information about political or social issues, 51% are reporting high frequencies, while the other 49% are reporting some or no usage. They also reported differing rates of instruction in digital media usage for identification of information left out of political speeches, advertisements, or news reports, with only 45% reporting frequent use for these purposes. Utilization of the internet for finding avenues of social action or involvement mirror the prior statistics with 49% reporting frequent use for this type of

activity. Usage of blogs and social networking sites for discussion of current or political events (in and outside of class) has a higher frequency of usage, with 61% reporting frequent use. These findings suggest that there was a real difference in digital media use between the two classes.

Overall political knowledge of the graduating seniors is very low, giving concern to the pedagogical outcomes of the school's civics program. Only 51% of the students were able to identify Dick Cheney as the Vice President of the United States from a multiple-choice question. However, increased digital media usage increased the likelihood the student would answer "I don't know" (10%) versus simply getting the question wrong. Only 33% were able to correctly identify the Supreme Court as the body responsible for determining the constitutionality of a law, with 37% incorrectly identifying Congress as the responsible body. 32% were able to correctly identify the necessary majority (2/3) of the US Senate and House to override a Presidential veto. 39% were able to identify the party with the majority of seats in the House of Representatives; however another 31% incorrectly identified the opposite party, 9% selecting "other", and 21% selecting "I don't know."

Overall civic commitments of the students are also worrisome. Only 49% of the students agree with the statement that once 18 they will vote regularly, 27% undecided, and 24% already reporting they disagree they will vote. 63% do see the importance for concern with local, state, and national issues, however only 39% see it as a responsibility to be involved in these issues. Only 21% trust the government cares about what them and their family needs, and only 52% report loving their country.

Civic capacities of the students are also low. Only 44% feel they know enough to be considered an informed voter. When posed with the scenario of seeing a problem in their community 45% felt they would be able to create a plan to address the issue, 41% run or organize a meeting about the problem, and 41% feeling they were able to express their views on the issue in front of a group of people. The charitable activities of the students does provide some hope, as 88% report volunteering in their community with 29% of these students reporting frequent rates of volunteerism. 86% also report raising money for charity, with 24% reporting doing so on a frequent basis.

Political activity for the group of students provides the least amount of activity than any of the other participatory categories. Only 53% of the group reported working with a group to change a law or policy, with 22% reporting only doing so once. Similar numbers are reported for participation in a peaceful protest or march with 53% reporting ever having done so, with 25% reporting only having done so once. When asked about political activity in the school 59% report working to change a school policy or rule, with 22% reporting only having done so once.

It is these low measures for civic commitments, civic capacities, political activities, and political knowledge which bring into question the pedagogic practices and goals of Central City High School. If the goals of the civics program is to produce civically competent graduates, the program is not achieving a high level of success. However, it is difficult to make definite judgments on this data without a comparison with another school or a state-wide figures for the same measures. Of primary interest for the

teachers at this school is wither the inclusion of digital media practices in the curriculum will increase the effectiveness of their civics program.

Model 1: Effects of Digital Media Usage by Students on Desired Civic Outcome I – Civic Capacity

Looking at the model, only the control variable shows statistical significance, indicating the strength of at home activities predicting civic behavior. No dependent variable measures came close to significance, with Online Political Activity coming closest, with a negative relationship. Overall model statistics look more promising; however, the results do not support the proposed hypothesis.

Table 1. Effects of Digital Media Usage by Students on Measure of Desired Civic Outcome I – Civic Capacity
Source: 2008 Illinois Assessment of Civic Education

	Civic Capacity
In Class DM Usage	0.009 (0.05)
In Class DM Literacy	0.061 (0.30)
Political DM Usage	0.240 (1.11)
Online Political Activity	-0.258 (1.04)
Civics at Home	0.444 (2.31)*
Observations	60
LR chi2(5)	9.85
p-value	0.080

Regression coefficients reported as log-odds
Absolute value of z statistics in parentheses
* significant at .05; ** significant at .01

The model significance tests show statistical significance of the overall model. The chi-squared test gives us a value of 12.68, which represents little reduction of the

deviance through the addition of these parameters. The p-value, with a statistically significant value of .0162, allows for rejection of the null hypothesis in this model. The percent reduction in error the model gives is only 4%.

Model 2: Effects of Digital Media Usage by Students on Desired Civic Outcome II – Civic Commitment

Table 2. Effects of Digital Media Usage by Students On Desired Civic Outcome II – Civic Commitment
Source: 2008 Illinois Assessment of Civic Education

	Civic Commitments
In Class DM Usage	0.240 (1.11)
In Class DM Literacy	0.300 (1.35)
Political DM Usage	0.678 (1.01)
Online Political Activity	-0.258 (1.25)
Civics at Home	0.444 (2.31)*
Observations	60
LR chi2(5)	9.85
p-value	0.080

Regression coefficients reported as log-odds
Absolute value of z statistics in parentheses
* significant at .05; ** significant at .01

In this model, none of the independent variables show statistical significance. The control variable in this study carries the greatest weight in this model. Since the other variables in this model have a negative relationship with the dependent variable, this model does not explain variation in civic skills. With a log-odds value of .444, the greatest predictor of civic skills in this model is the discussion of politics at home. While these values are not statistically significant, the overall model warrants some discussion.

Overall, this model does not prove to be statistically significant, and does not allow for rejection of the null hypothesis. An chi-squared test value of 9.85 does not indicate a significant reduction of the deviance between 0 and 4th iterations and the p-value of .0.080 causes acceptance of the null hypothesis indicating no statistically significant relationship exists between digital media use and the production of a civically skilled student. The percent reduction in error for this model is only 3%,

Model 3: of Digital Media Usage by Students on Desired Civic Outcome III – Political Knowledge

Table 3. Effects of Digital Media Usage by Students On Desired Civic Outcome III – Political Knowledge
Source: 2008 Illinois Assessment of Civic Education

	Political Knowledge
In Class DM Usage	0.076 (0.37)
In Class DM Literacy	0.280 (1.35)
Political DM Usage	0.619 (2.87)**
Online Political Activity	-0.033 (0.15)
Civics at Home	0.170 (0.87)
Observations	60
LR chi2(5)	12.63
p-value	0.027*

Regression coefficients reported as log-odds
Absolute value of z statistics in parentheses
* significant at .05; ** significant at .01

In this model, the independent variable that shows statistical significance is the measure of digital media usage for political purposes. This variable represents the usage of social networking sites, blogs, online journals, and other digital media to discuss political issues. This indicates that participation in political discussion in cyberspace results in statistically significant increases in student's political knowledge.

The control variable, which was significant in previous models lacks significance here, indicating online environments as a larger provider of political education than the traditional venue of the home.

The goodness of fit measures of the model show statistical significance even though only one parameter is statistically significant. The chi-squared test gives a value of 12.63, which is a significant reduction of the deviance. The p-value of 0.027, also statistically significant, also allows for rejection of the null, and acceptance of the statistically significant relationship between digital media usage by students and their political knowledge. The percentage reduction in error for the model is 6%.

Overall Hypothesis Discussion

Given the statistical significance of model three, rejection of the null hypothesis is possible, allowing for acceptance of the statistically significant relationship of increased digital media opportunities in the classroom and increased competence and projected frequencies of participation in desired civic outcomes by students. This is possible even though models one and two were not found to be statistically significant, since it was determined that the null hypothesis could be rejected on the statistical significance of any of the three models. However, more specifically, digital media usage has been shown to positively affect students' overall political knowledge while leaving questions about its ability to affect civic commitments and civic capacities.

The only independent variable found to be statistically significant is the usage of social networking sites (such as Facebook and MySpace) and blogs to share political

information. This variable was found to be statistically significant at .05 in model three, and was also the only variable to be found statistically significant in any of the models. Interestingly, some other independent variables in all three models, exhibited a negative log-odds relationship with the dependent variables. This outcome was unexpected, as the hypothesis tested predicted a positive relationship between all independent and dependent variables in the models. Also interesting is the strength of the control variable. The control variable remained consistently strong and statistically significant in models one and two, and may have been found to be more of an influence had the number of observations been increased. This is consistent with most of the literature on civic engagement.

Comparison with Larger-N Study

Since this study, the authors of the California assessment originally used have gone back and utilized their data to test some of the same concepts this study sought to explore. For comparison with a larger N- data set (2,366), a look at their results will determine if Central City High School or the State of Illinois requirements meet the California standard. Kahne and Middaugh (2007, p.7) obtained statistically significant results in their regressions for using the internet for political material consumption and measures of civic commitment, civic skills, and political knowledge Kahne and Middaugh (2007, p.7) found even greater statistical significance between digital media usage in forms of communication, blogging, social networking, and media sharing and creation on all three measures, while this study found no statistical significance except the measure utilizing social networking sites to discuss political issues

Given the replication of the statistical analysis of the large-N and comparison with small-N data, expansion of this study's data set or beginning again with a larger N sample is warranted. Comparison of similar-N studies will allow for comparison of performance of different state students learning under differing state requirements for civic education standards while working in classrooms with differing levels of digital equipment and teacher training. Also, an updated data set with new students, who have ushered in a new host of handheld technologies capable of utilizing the internet to explore a whole new realm of inclusion would provide for the most accurate results of digital media exposure / usage and civic outcomes.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Given the statistical significance of model three and the rejection of the null hypothesis, the relationship between digital media use by students inside the classroom and the fostering of civic values is accepted. Specifically, the relationship between utilization of social networking sites for political discussion on overall political knowledge is important. These findings are supported by the literature, and the results of this study confirm the importance of digital opportunities inside our classrooms for the overall democratic health of today's youth.

Even more importantly is what the implications of the significance of social networking sites in this small n study have. While participation in this type of digital citizenship has unknown consequences, increased political knowledge can only be seen as a positive result. While parents and teachers are learning how to utilize these sites themselves, the students are utilizing this technology at a much higher rate. This participation may be able to be encouraged, opening the door to other forms of education.

This study has shown the importance of digital media opportunities inside classrooms for today's youth in order to affect their overall political knowledge, while leaving questions about its ability to affect their overall civic commitments and civic capacities. While this study's population consisted of only one class from one high school, statistical analysis has shown the importance of digital media exposure in a study with a small number of observations. Exploration into these concepts can only

benefit today's youth and our educational system, as the literature suggests many more relationships which may exist between digital media usage and desired civic outcomes. Research into these topics can yield valuable information about new technologies emerging in modern society, the ability of our youth to harness this power, and allow it to be used it for political and social good. Equalization of the digital playing field can only yield positive results, and this equalization will take place in classrooms across the nation, through utilization of new technologies, made available to all students and schools. While technology may not be recreating the social capital of Putnam's front porch America, it has the potential to create a new, digital form of social capital.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Illinois Assessment of Civic Education

Instructions:

This test is designed to assess the your knowledge and attitudes about civics. The primary purpose is to improve the civics classes at Central City High School. This test will NOT be graded so do NOT put your name on the scantron answer sheet. You should try to answer each question to the best of your ability.

For questions 1- 21 use the following answer scale:

A- Strongly Disagree, B-Slightly Disagree, C-Undecided, D-Slightly Agree, E-Strongly Agree

1) Being concerned with national, state, and local issues is an important responsibility for everybody.
2) Everyone should be involved in working with community organizations and local government on issues that affect the community.
3) I think it is important to get involved in improving my community.
4) Being actively involved in state and local issues is my responsibility
5) I think it's important to challenge inequalities in society.
6) I think it's important to think critically about laws and government.
7) I think it's important to protest when something in society needs changing.
8) I am interested in political issues.
9) I always try to learn about current social and political issues.
10) Once I am 18, I will vote regularly.
11) I think that people in government care about what people like me and my family need.
12) In America, everyone should be treated equally.
13) Those who are well off in this country should help those who are less fortunate.

14) Basic services such as health care and legal assistance should be available to everyone.

15) It is not right for people to go hungry in our country.

16) I support U.S. policies because they are the policies of my country.

17) It is un-American to criticize this country.

18) I think it is good when people discuss their country's problems.

19) It is good for the country that people speak up when they oppose U.S. policies.

20) I have great love for the U.S.

21) To be truly patriotic, one has to be involved in the civic and political life of the community.

22) How would you describe yourself politically?

A- Very Conservative
B- Somewhat Conservative
C- Middle of the Road
D- Somewhat Liberal
E- Very Liberal

For questions 23- 33 use the following answer scale:

A- Strongly Disagree, B-Slightly Disagree, C-Undecided, D-Slightly Agree, E-Strongly Agree

23) I believe people like me can make a difference in the community.

24) There are issues in my community or in the broader society that I care about.

25) I feel connected to others who are working to improve society.

26) I know about other people who care about the same social issues as I do.

27) I think it's important that the government ensures that all students have access to a high quality education.

28) I think it's important that the government provides basic health care for everyone.

29) I think it's important that the government provides a descent standard of living for old people.

30) I can learn a lot from people with different backgrounds and experiences that are different from mine.

31) I think it's important to hear others' ideas even if I find their ideas very different from mine.

32) I enjoy working in groups or on projects with people with backgrounds and experiences that are different from mine.

33) I think I know enough to be an informed voter.

For questions 34-37, use the following prompt:

Suppose you found out about a problem in your school or community that you wanted to do something about. Please mark how much you agree or disagree with the statements below using the following answer scale:

A- Strongly Disagree, B-Slightly Disagree, C-Undecided, D-Slightly Agree, E-Strongly Agree

34) I would be able to create a plan to address the issue

35) I would be able to organize and run a meeting

36) I would be able to find and examine research related to the issue.

37) I would be able to express my views in front of a group of people.

For questions 38-45, fill in the correct answer to the questions:

38) What job or office is held by Dick Cheney?

A-Secretary of State

B-Vice President

C-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

D-House Majority Leader

E-I don't know

39) Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not?

A-President

B-Congress

C-Supreme Court

D-I don't know

40) How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a presidential veto?

A-51%

B-2/3

C-3/4

D-3/5

E-I don't know

41) Right now, which political party has the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington?

A-Democrats

B-Republicans

C-Other

D-I don't know

42) What are the U.S. Senators representing Illinois? **PLEASE MARK UP TO 2 ANSWERS**.

A-Rod Blagojevich

B-Patrick Quinn

C-Richard Durbin

D-Barack Obama

E-I don't know

For questions 43-45, use the following prompt:

"We the citizens have had enough! A vote for the Silver Party means a vote for higher taxes. It means an end of economic growth and a waste of our nation's resources. Vote instead for economic growth and free enterprise. Vote for more money left in everyone's wallet! Let's not waste another 4 years! VOTE FOR THE GOLD PARTY!"

43) This is a political advertisement which has been issued by…

A-the Silver Party

B-a party or group running against the Silver Party

C-a group which tried to be sure elections are fair

D-the Silver Party and Gold Party together

44) The authors of this advertisement think that higher taxes are…

A-a good thing,

B-necessary in a free market economy

C-necessary for economic growth

D- a bad thing

45) The party or group that has issued this advertisement is likely to also be in favor of…

A-reducing government control of the economy

B-lowering the voting age

C-capital punishment

D-more frequent elections.

Questions 46-51 ask about activities you may have been involved with outside of school. Please mark the answer that shows how frequently you've been in each activity.

A-Never, B-Once, C-A Few Times a Year, D-Once a Month, E-More than Once a Month

46) I have volunteered in my community (for example: by tutoring, mentoring, doing environmental work, working with elderly. etc.)

47) I have done something to help raise money for a charitable cause (for example: participate in run/walk/ride, bake sale, etc.)

48) I have worked with a group to try to change a policy or law in my community, state, or nation.

49) I have taken part in a peaceful protest, march, or demonstration.

50) I have worked to change a school policy or school rule.

51) I have participated in a poetry slam, youth forum, musical performance, or other event where young people expressed their political views.

Questions 52-80 ask you about you what you have learned and done in civics class this year. Please use the following answer scale:

A-Never, B-Sometimes, C-Often, D-Very Often

PROMPT - In my civics class…

52) We learned a lot of information about the structure of the government and how it works (for example: how a bill becomes a law, the 3 branches of government, age minimum for President, etc.)

53) Our teacher emphasized how important it is to be informed about political issues and to act on issues we think are important.

54) We discussed issues that matter to me.

55) Our teacher emphasized the benefits of our constitution and system of government.

56) We learned about problems in our society and what causes them.

57) We shared our perspectives on current events.

58) We learned information about or researched current issues in the community or broader society.

59) I worked on a community service project.

60) I analyzed issues related to my community.

61) I participated in school clubs or organizations (like drama club, student government, ethnic / cultural club, school newspaper/annual).

62) I participated in political or legal role plays (for example: mock elections, campaigns, trials, press conferences, lobbying events, or budget meetings).

63) We discussed political and social topics where students expressed different opinions.

64) Teachers encouraged students to make up their own minds about political and social topics.

65) We talked about patriotism and what it means.

66) I had the opportunity to plan a meeting.

67) We learned about people and groups who work to make society better.

68) We met people who work to make society better.

69) We learned how to find sources that give different perspectives on a topic or issue.

70) We learned how to identify relevant questions, facts, or pieces of information that are left out of news reports, political speeches, or political advertisements.

71) We talked about the values or points of view that are represented in media stories or advertisements.

72) We learned how to assess the trustworthiness of information we find on the web.

73) We were required to use the internet to get information about political or social issues.

74) We were required to use the internet to find different points of view about political or social issues.

75) We were given an assignment where we had to create something to put on the web.

76) We talked about racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.

77) I learned about my racial / ethnic / religious group's contributions to American society.

78) I learned about the experiences and perspectives of other groups.

79) I've learned about different racial / ethnic / political groups and their contribution to American society.

80) We talked about issues or problems in our school related to racism, sexism, or other forms of discrimination.

Questions 81-92 ask you about your experiences using technology and the internet, both in and outside of school. Use the following answer scale:

A-Never, B-A few times a month, C-Once a Week, D-Daily, E-Several times a day

On average how often do you…

81) Use e-mail, text messaging, or instant messenger to communicate with friends and family?

82) Use blogs, diary, or social networking sites (like MySpace) to socialize with people (friends, family, or people you've met online)?

83) Use blogs, online journals, social networking sites (like MySpace), wikis, web communities, and auction sites to share or create media (such as TV/video clips, music, artwork, poetry)?

84) Use the internet to get information?

85) Use e-mail to communicate with others who are working on a political or social issue?

86) Use blogs or social networking sites (like MySpace) to share or discuss perspectives on political or social issues?

87) Use the internet to get information about political or social issues?

88) Play games on your computer, console, or handheld device (such as Playstation, X-Box, Wii, PSP, etc).

89) If yes, how often do you play these games with other people?

90) Play simulation games (like The Sims, Civilization, etc)?

91) Play Grand Theft Auto, Driver, or The Getaway?

92) Play World of Warcraft, City of Heroes, or other massively multi-player online role-playing games (MMORPGS)?

Questions 93-98 ask you about your experiences using technology and the internet, both in and outside of school. Use the following answer scale:

A- Strongly Disagree, B-Slightly Disagree, C-Undecided, D-Slightly Agree, E-Strongly Agree

93) I've had online conversations with people who have different values or political views than I do.

94) I feel I've gotten new perspectives on political and social issues because of my online activities.

95) I feel like I've been able to connect with people who care about the same things as I do through the internet.

96) I feel like I've been able to connect with people who share my views about better ways to create a better world through the internet.

97) Through the internet, I learned about ways I could get involved in political or social issues.

98) I talked about community issues and / or politics with my parents or other adults at home.

Questions 99-102 ask about your experiences with politics at home and background information. For questions 99-100 use the following answer scale:

A- Strongly Disagree, B-Slightly Disagree, C-Undecided, D-Slightly Agree, E-Strongly Agree

99) I talked about community issues and / or politics with my parents or other adults at home.

100) My Parents / Guardians were active in the community.

101) About how many books would you say are in your home? DO NOT COUNT newspapers, magazines, or books from school.

a-0-10

b-11-50

c-51-100

d-101-200

e-200+

102) What is your Gender?

A-Male

B-Female

APPENDIX II

DISCUSSION OF VOTER TURNOUT CALCULATION METHODOLOGIES

Generating youth turnout figures is inherently problematic and full of methodological disagreement by those who create turnout measures (Circle 2005, McDonald and Popkin, 2001). One measure used to determine turnout is assessment of the youth electoral involvement (Circle, 2005, p.2). Calculating a measure of youth electoral involvement is done by taking the total number of votes cast and dividing it by the number of youths age-eligible in the voting population (Circle, 2005, p.2). The second method is to look at exit poll data providing the share of all voters represented by youths (Circle, 2005, p.2). Third, examination of the raw number of votes cast by youths provides a good measure (Circle, 2005, p.3). Youth turnout calculations are difficult as no there exists no official count of voters that records their ages, as the Federal Election Commission (FEC), which keeps stats on the number of ballots cast does not record voters' ages (Circle, 2005, p.3). Instead assessment data is relied on to create turnout estimates, and differing methodologies of assessment data make their results differ. Also, assessment data relies on self-reporting which also complicates the measure.

One prominent survey, the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), while rigorous, and large N (over 100,000 in 2004), isn't released until months after an election, and turnout rates are already being published through other estimates. The CPS does have a consistent methodology for data collection, and therefore provides a

data source for longitudinal analysis (Circle, 2005, p.5). Exit poll data is utilized along with vote counts from Secretaries of State and the Census Bureau's estimate of the youth population to calculate turnout, but problems such as sample size and changing methodologies cause accuracy of the measurement to be in question(Circle, 2005, p.5-6). However, exit polls provide a timely measure, survey people who actually voted (reducing false or mistaken reports of participation), and provide information about the political attitudes and preferences of voters (Circle, 2005, p.6). Valuable information about youth preferences on the preferred candidate, political identification, and issue based voting come from exit polls (Circle, 2005, p.6).

A second problem in calculating turnout comes with counting the eligible population (Circle, 2005, p.6). Estimating the size of the entire electorate or the portion defined as youths is pivotal in determination of the turnout rate, as the eligible population is a key statistic in this figure. There are two distinct methodologies for determining the eligible population, the Voting Age Population (VAP) and the Voting Eligible Population (VEP) (Circle, 2005, p.6). The VAP, which comes from the Census Bureau's estimate of the 18 and up population, is representative of all U.S. residents age 18 and over (Circle, 2005, p.6). This measure is problematic as it includes those ineligible to vote and non-citizens as non-voters (Circle, 2005, p.6, McDonald and Popkin, 2001, p.963). However, Teixeira (1992, p.6) argues that "at the most basic level, the VAP is the eligible electorate," as each person in the country could be allowed to vote should the already eligible decide to allow them (McDonald and Popkin, 2001, p.964). Teixeira (2001) continues by stating, "Although it is little known, citizenship is

not a constitutional requirement for voting in the United States…both the time it takes to become a citizen (national) and the actual suffrage to citizens (states) are matters of legislation" (McDonald and Popkin, 2001, p.964). Teixeira (1992, p.6) notes problems with attempting to systematically remove ineligible voters as it would be a "difficult and imprecise process" (McDonald and Popkin, 2001, p.964). Other scholars, such as Gans (1997, p.46) concludes usage of the VAP is best as it is provides a consistent measure for comparability across scholarly research, a necessity in comparability studies (McDonald and Popkin, 20001, p.964). Overall, McDonald and Popkin criticize the VAP for "including ineligible voters and excluding eligible voters" noting that it includes "noncitizens, disenfranchised felons, mental incompetents, and people who do not meet residency requirements" while excluding "military personnel and civilians living outside the United States" (McDonald and Popkin, 2001, p.965).

McDonald and Popkin's 2001 finding of invalidity of previous turnout figures on behalf of the VAP measure prompted them to create their own measure, the Voting Eligible Population (VEP). The VEP uses a variety of government statistics to adjust the VAP for a more accurate picture of turnout. They use the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the full Census of Population to remove all noncitizens (McDonald and Popkin, 2001, p.965). Also removed from the VAP are criminally based ineligible persons identified from the Department of Justice statistics on current incarceration figures (McDonald and Popkin, 2001, p.965). Added into the VEP is the number of military and civilian personnel living overseas using statistics from the Bureau of the Census, Office of Personnel Management, United States Consular Service, and the Department of

Defense (McDonald and Popkin, 2006, p.965). Not adjusted for in the VEP are those ineligible due to state residency requirements (due to the complicated process of determining how state residency requirements affect ineligibility) and the number of mental incompetents (due to lack of a reliable source). However, these numbers are estimated to represent only one tenth of 1% of the total VAP. Recently, the Census Bureau has begun to report on turnout using the citizen VEP (Circle, 2005, p.6).

McDonald and Popkin (2006, p.968) blame the usage of the VAP as creating and perpetuating the myth of the vanishing voter. They say through using the VEP instead a different picture of the youth vote can be seen, which includes not a decline in participation, but a pattern of unidentifiable trends in turnout since 1972 (McDonald and Popkin, 2001, p.968). Some increases can be seen regionally (in the south), but overall McDonald and Popkin (2001, p.968) report consistent youth turnout since their numbers increased through enfranchisement by the 26th Amendment. Whether using declining turnout rates utilizing the VAP or commit to undistinguishable trends with the VEP, one thing all methods can agree on is the turnout is overall very low, and methods of increasing electoral turnout need to be explored

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