

A CASE STUDY OF COLLEGE STUDENT
POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

by

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The purpose of this dissertation study is to explore and describe the development of political attitudes and behaviors in current undergraduate academic life. By undertaking this study, I sought to add to the understanding of student learning as it pertains to college student development through political involvement. I employed an embedded case study design comparing two groups of highly politically involved 18-24 year old college students at a large, public, urban university. Selective sampling resulted in the identification of two case study groups. One group (n=3) was highly politically involved in high school. The other group (n=3) became highly involved once in college. By selecting groups based upon high school political involvement, this study began to examine what experiences influence the development of this important college outcome. This study generates a conceptual model that combines Astin's (1970a) Theory of College Impact, Verba, Schlozman and

Brady's (1995) Civic Voluntarism Model, CIRCLE's (2003) Index of Civic and Political Engagement. This model proposes that if students have available resources and something engages their interest in politics, experiences such as work, academic experiences, co-curricular involvement, service participation and church participation may be avenues for the development of both civic skills and social connections that lead to political involvement. For students in this age range, concurrent processes of cognitive development and socio-cultural identity development may also contribute to the development of political involvement. Political involvement can take the form of electoral and campaign behaviors, political voice activities and attentiveness to current issues and political news. Differences between the two groups studied yielded few findings all of which occurred in pre-college factors. Although the small sample size and the limitation of the study to a single institutions suggest the need for more research to confirm these findings, this study affirms the strong influence that intentional college experiences may have in developing positive political attitudes and behaviors.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Political involvement as a part of the college education experience is not something new. Educating citizens for participation in the democracy was a founding principle in the development of universities in the United States. Political involvement, in the form of student activism, has been a part of the history of U. S. and European universities since at least the thirteenth century. In the United States, activism peaked in the 1960s with significant challenges to university governance and involvement in nationwide organizing around political issues. In the last three decades of the twentieth century rates and types of student political participation declined, even after the 1971 passage of the 26th amendment giving 18 to 20 year olds the right to vote (Lopez, Kirby. Sakoff & Herbst, 2005). In 2004 and 2008, however, youth voter turnout was again near the 1971 high (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement [CIRCLE], 2005, CIRCLE, 2008). It remains to be seen if this increase is reflective of dynamics of particular elections or evidence of the start of another upward trend.

Forms of political activism have also changed. Instead of marching protests in the street and non-violent “sit in’s,” many students volunteer their time in endeavors that can be construed as political activities. Positive outcomes in other areas of civic engagement, such as community service and service learning, have increased and have been demonstrated to impact young peoples’ understanding of both why and how they can

make a difference in their communities (Lipka, 2007). However, these initiatives have not consistently demonstrated promotion of young peoples' direct involvement in politics (Jones, 2002).

Education for Democracy

The history of public education in the United States is rooted in the education of citizens for participation in democratic institutions. First in Virginia, and then on a national level, Thomas Jefferson lobbied for elementary and higher public education for all citizens regardless of their ability to pay. He believed that education was the key to the successful implementation of democracy in America (Barbar, 2002; Barefoot, 2002; Randall, 1993; Rudolph, 1990). Jefferson envisioned a nation where interdependence between government and citizens prevailed. The government would educate the citizens and, in turn, the citizens would be educationally prepared to provide the government with a return on the investment. They would be able to participate effectively and rationally in government (Sehr, 1997). In a letter to Willam Charles Jarvis in 1820, Jefferson wrote,

I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion (Bartlett, 1992, p. 345).

Nearly one hundred and fifty years later, John Dewey wrote, in *Democracy and Education* (1916), one his many writings on the purpose of education, that positive participation in government applied to other forms of community association. According to Dewey, "democratic" is a way of associating that can exist in homes, neighborhoods, classrooms and anywhere that people come together in groups (Battistoni, 1997; Ehrlich,

1997; Hambrick, 1998; Sehr, 1997). Educating people to be active participants in governing agencies and in their communities and schools was an essential and pivotal role for a Deweyan and Jeffersonian philosophy of liberal education for all citizens.

Evolution of the Role of Universities

Educating citizens to participate in democratic systems has never been the only purpose of public education systems. Over time, more emphasis was placed on functional and job-related applications of education. Some colleges also embraced a more scientific than liberal education focus. The institution of the Morrill Act in 1860 to provide for agricultural education was a significant milestone in the history of higher education that influenced this direction towards a more utilitarian educational purpose and propelled both the development of institutions of higher learning and the enrollment of students from groups other than the most privileged (Barber, 2002; Rudolph, 1990). Over time, colleges and universities created structures around the many and sometimes competing roles of the institution. The differentiation between professional programs and liberal arts programs led to the implementation of a core curriculum at most institutions to ensure that some liberal education occurs regardless of major.

The philosophy of Jefferson and Dewey has endured and continues to impact the educational system in the United States. Benjamin Barber reminded educators in 1991 that a sense of liberty as a central life function is not something innate—it must be learned. Rather than having a small or tangential role in the mission of the school, commitment and skills for engaging in the civic life of the state must be a critical part of the educational curriculum of all schools. In higher education, many universities have

adopted mission statements that include a strong commitment to helping nurture a sense of civic responsibility and willingness to participate in civic life. Evidence of the breadth of this commitment can be found by examining the membership of a national organization of college and university presidents that has a mission of promoting colleges and universities as public agents that can positively impact their communities. These presidents represent institutions committed to teaching individual skills for civic engagement and social responsibility. This organization, Campus Compact, was founded in 1985 and now has over 1,100 member institutions working to promote their mission (Campus Compact, 2008).

These national trends reflect the reinvigoration of efforts to influence the development of more students with a commitment to the community. They exist alongside changing trends in the voting and political participation of young voters, shifting attitudes toward politics, and a growing culture of community service and service learning on campus.

Student Activism

In addition to formal structures that encourage civic learning, the college experience can also foster civic engagement outside of the classroom. In the 1960s, first the Civil Rights Movement, then the Vietnam War inspired college students from around the country to organize. A significant evolution in the activism of the sixties and seventies was the alignment of students and faculty in support of common issues (Lipset, 1993). However, this did not extend through all of the administrative structure of the university as protests, such as the ones at the University of California at Berkeley in

1964, that centered on the creation and enforcement of campus policies around political activity and ended in the resignation of the president. After the Berkeley protests, many other students used similar protests on other campuses to fight for changes (Boren, 2001).

Activism in the 1980's and 1990's was much lower key than in the 1960's and 1970's. Concern about careers, increased individualism, and the lack of issues that drew young people together in passionate opposition have been cited as some reasons for this decline. A significant development of this era which continues to operate on college campuses today was the emergence of the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG). These groups operate in state systems (NYPIRG in New York and OSPIRG in Oregon are examples) and promote involvement in politics to create change on issues important to young people such as the environment. Another significant period of time in college activism was student mobilization against apartheid in South Africa and the ensuing protests demanding divestment of institutional resources from South African companies (Altbach & Cohen, 1990, Rhoads, 1997). The 1990's were characterized by student involvement in identity politics (Rhoads, 1997, Rhoads, 1998). Examples include campus lobbying for cultural centers, protesting university activities perceived as unwelcoming for people of color, and gay, lesbian and bisexual people, and insisting on the creation of academic programs such as Ethnic Studies, and African American Studies (Rhoads, 1997; Rhoads, 1998).

Colleges and universities have a mission of civic engagement and a history of student activism in higher education. Through curricular and co-curricular experiences, college students have opportunities to impact both local and national issues. Just as

student political activism in the 1980s and 1990s began to take a different character from the 1960s and 1970s, the 2000s will surely emerge with its own particular identity of civic engagement and social activism.

College Student Political Involvement

Although voter turnout and overall political involvement has been on a steady decline over the past decades, there has been a recent increase in voting (CIRCLE, 2005; Lopez, Kirby & Sakoff, 2005), political engagement (Institute of Politics [IOP], 2005; Young, 2004), and participation in community problem solving (Gamson, 1997; Sirriani & Friedman, 1997). Additionally, students are reporting more positive attitudes about politics than in the past (Young, 2004).

According to CIRCLE's (Lopez, Kirby & Sakoff, 2005) report on voter turnout among 18-24 year old Americans, the youth vote was in steady decline until the 2004 election. In the 2004 presidential election, approximately 45% of the eligible voters in the 18-24 year old age bracket went to the polls (CIRCLE, 2005). This represents an increase from the 2000 and 1996 elections when turnout among young voters hovered around 36%. Early data from the 2008 election demonstrated a surge in youth voting with as many as 52% of eligible 18-29 year olds voting (CIRCLE, 2008). As a result, 18% of all voters in 2008 were under the age of 30. Although encouraging, the overall trend is downward. Since 1972, when 18-to-21-year-olds were granted suffrage, voter turnout in this age group has declined more quickly than that of the elderly and that of voters overall (Levine & Lopez, 2002). In comparison to the voting rates of young

people, 79% of people 65 of older voted in the 2004 presidential election (U.S. Census, 2005).

In a survey of 1000 college students about their attitudes towards politics (IOP, 2000; Spezio, 2002), students reportedly perceived several barriers to getting involved in political activities. They did not feel confident in their understanding of political issues, disliked the political process, and did not know how to get involved in politics. These students also reported the perception that politicians do not care about issues that are important to students. Other studies have cited students as feeling irrelevant in and cynical about political processes and frustrated by the lack of positive role models in politics (Cone, Cooper & Hollander, 2001). In a 2005 IOP survey, students reported their own political engagement behaviors at higher levels than in previous surveys. From their study, the authors suggest that there is, “a political awakening on campuses around the country and strong opinions about the issues that face the nation (p. 2).” Data collected from over 275,000 first year college students collected in the fall of 2004 and 2006 by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Korn, Santos & Korn, 2006; Saenz, Hurtado, Denson, Locks & Oseguera, 2004) affirms the findings of the Institute of Politics Study (2005). Their data shows an upward trend in positive responses to questions that asked students about their attitudes toward politics. In 2004, the data showed the highest positive response to these questions in a decade. This upward trend represented a reversing trend from data collected between 1994 and 2000 when the researchers were observing falling interest in political matters by entering

students (Young, 2004). The 2006 data reported even higher responses to questions that evaluated students' interest in politics, up 8.3 percentage points from the 2004 data.

One conjecture about why behaviors change has been that young people are learning a new way of citizenship (Gamson, 1997; Sirriani & Friedman, 1997). Civic action, in forms other than voting and participating on politics, is taking over. One of these is the trend in civic engagement in young people is the increase of student involvement in community service and willingness to be engaged in solving community problems. There is an upward trend in high school students getting involved in civic responses to community problems by initiating projects and fundraising to support issues that inspire them to action (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2003). There is also an increase in volunteerism among middle and high school students. The National Center for Educational Statistics (Fox, Connolly, & Snyder, 2005) reported that participation in volunteer service activities is on the rise for 6th through 12th graders. Although the majority of these volunteer experiences were school sponsored, increasing rates of service may still be a positive inclination towards volunteering and engaging in community activity in the future. However, it may be useful to talk directly with current college students to understand why they think these patterns may be changing.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the development of political attitudes and behaviors in current undergraduate academic life. This purpose reflects the importance of preparing students for participation in civic life by examining closely

one form of civic engagement that is influenced by college attendance. A secondary purpose of this study is to advance the theory of political involvement by college students.

Research Questions

1. How do politically active students who had limited political involvement before attending college describe the impact of the college experience on their political involvement?
2. How do politically active students who were highly politically active before attending college describe the impact of the college experience on their political involvement?
3. What are the similarities and differences in students' reported experiences of political involvement in college between students whose political involvement was limited and those who were highly active?
4. How do the student responses in this study contribute to the understanding of student learning as it pertains to college student development through political involvement?

In Chapter II, I review the conceptual framework used for this study and related research studies and findings. Chapter III is an outline of the planned methodology and what happened as I conducted the study. In Chapter IV, I report data from my study and compare my findings back to prior research findings and theory. In Chapter V, I return to my purpose statement and research questions, outline the limitations of this study, and make recommendations for changes in practice and for future research studies.

Definitions

Understanding college student political involvement is convoluted by the lack of universal definitions of what it means to be political and terms that reflect political activity are often used to different kinds of involvement or engagement. Merriam-Webster's dictionary (1987) defines "political" in five ways: things relating to government, things relating to political parties, individuals engrossed in politics, units of government and charges against a political system (political criminals). Broadly, however, politics can occur in all types of institutions, all sizes of communities and all aspects of interactions within a group. Views on the nature of politics and the attributes of political activity can also be influenced by a wide variety of lenses. Some of these include ethics, economics, social contracts, power and geography. As the definitions of political activity are so broad, the following definitions will be used for this study.

Political participation is used in this study to refer to direct political participation activities such as voting, campaigning and communicating with elected officials. The definition is inclusive of both individual political acts and involvement in political organizations.

Political engagement is used to refer to attentiveness to and application of cognitive energy toward political issues. Political awareness activities might include things such as reading a newspaper, researching a candidate or talking with others about politics.

Political involvement is used to refer to both political participation and political engagement. This definition was derived from Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1984) that defines involvement as, "the investment of physical and psychological energy." Both political participation (physical energy) and political engagement (psychological energy) are possible outcomes of the college experience.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this section, I review relevant theory and research on what pre-college attributes and college experiences have already been studied to analyze how educational practice can produce the outcome of positive college student political involvement. Although research exists from a variety of perspectives, both directly and indirectly related to political involvement practices, it is not extensive. Altbach and Cohen (1990) have suggested that there is a lack of research on student activism due to political and social activism having been viewed as disruptive behavior in the past. Political involvement, particularly in the form of protest, has been seen as an oppositional behavior not to be encouraged (Ball, 1964). Additionally, Chambers and Phelps (1993) raised the concern that studying students' political activities may be perceived as a partisan activity rather than a neutral research activity and could have hampered these studies in the past. They followed that, "student activism is a form of leadership and development" (p. 19) and it warrants additional study. They proposed that activism is a form of involvement that can positively contribute to student development. Activism is merely one form of political participation. When combined with voting and other forms of involvement, the potential impact on student development, they argued, could be significant.

Further, studying any outcome in the university context requires consideration of the possibility that the outcome is related to an aspect of young adulthood regardless of whether or not a person attends college. Research on the net effect of attending college shows at least a moderate effect on civic outcomes such as humanitarianism, social conscience, political orientation and activity, and moral reasoning (Pascarella, 1997; Pascarella, Ethington & Smart, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Terenzini, 1993). The differences on outcomes such as voting, volunteerism and sense of civic efficacy between 18-21 year old non-college attendees and people of the same age in college, has been shown to be significant (Lopez, 2003) and supports the potential positive impact of college attendance on positive political involvement practices.

With the two caveats of potential political disruption by students and the lack of a full body of research on the topic noted, I side with Jefferson, Dewey and Lopez in assuming in this study that understanding student political involvement practices can lead to a better understanding by college educators about how colleges may influence positive political and democratic practices on the part of students.

Conceptual Framework

Two bodies of knowledge provided the theoretical grounding for this study. First, college student developmental theory offered a variety of types of theories that are used to understand college student behavior. College impact theory is a useful and appropriate lens for the study of college student political involvement. Theory related to understanding civic engagement, particularly as it relates to understanding political activity through the lens of the Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba, Scholzman & Brady,

1995) and the Index of Political and Civic Engagement (Keeter, Andolina, Zukin & Jenkins, 2003) will provide focus, integrating political science theory into the conceptual framework of this study. These theories, when combined, lead to a model developed here that describes the relationship between student development theory, college impact theory and political involvement, and frames this study.

Student Development Theory and College Impact

As a body of knowledge, student development is essentially the process by which students become more complex or develop increased capabilities (Rodgers, 1990; Sanford, 1966). Student development theory is used by student affair practitioners and other educators as a research basis to explain student behavior or interpret their thinking and develop appropriate educational interventions (Strange & King, 1990). As a body of research knowledge, student development theory often focuses on late adolescent and adult development, what changes are occurring when a student is on campus, what influences their development, what aspects of college promote and what aspects hinder growth and what outcomes should be achieved through a college experience (Knefelkamp, Widick & Parker, 1978).

Types of Student Development Theory. Bowers (2006) identified one of the oldest student development theory typologies as having five groups: psychosocial theories; cognitive developmental theories; maturity models; typology models; and person-environment interaction models (Knefelkamp, et al., 1978) that were then narrowed down to four by Rodgers (1989). These are: psychosocial theories focused on personal and interpersonal growth; cognitive structural theories centered on intellectual

and moral development; and person-environment theory that examines how individuals impact and are impacted by environments. Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998) include only psychosocial, cognitive-structural and typology in their comprehensive overview of student development theory acknowledging that person environment theory as also important for understanding what influences student development.

Person-Environment Interaction Model. An early model of student development theory emerged from Lewin's (1936) formula for studying psychological development. His model describes behavior as the interaction of the individual and the environment. From this model, student development theory examining individual development such as psychosocial theory, cognitive styles and cognitive structural theories provided greater understanding of individuals. Meanwhile, human aggregate, physical features, organizations structures and perceptual interpretations informed understanding the environment. Lewin then examined the interactions between the two. This included reviewing structures that provide challenge, support and dissonance (Strange & King, 1990).

Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998) identified four key developmental frameworks that emerged from the person environment interaction perspective that as significant in studying student development theory. These are Sanford's (1966) model of challenge and support, Schlossberg's (1989) theory of mattering and marginality, Rendon's (1994) validation model and Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement. Sanford suggested that student development will only occur when a student is ready for change, challenged to change and supported in his or her growth. Therefore the impact

of an educational intervention is based mostly in how well the balance between challenge and support is provided. Schlossberg proposed that mattering is the prerequisite to involvement and engagement that leads to learning and development. Rendon's work resulted in the conclusion that validation is directly related to the quality of the academic and interpersonal experienced by an individual student.

The final theory of person-environment interaction reviewed by Evans, et al. (1998) focused on involvement on campus as a factor in studying any aspect of college student development (Astin, 1984; Astin, 1999; Kuh, 1995; Kuh, Schuh & Whitt, 1991). Astin (1999) cites one of the appeals to his theory is that it provides an easy to understand way of pulling together most of the empirical research related to understanding the impact of environments on student development. His theory of student involvement, developed out of studying influences on student retention, forwarded the concept that the learning and personal growth that occurs in college are directly related to the amount of energy the student puts into the college experience and the quality of those experiences. He was very specifically referring to involvement in the whole academic experience, both academic and co-curricular. By 1999, over 200,000 students had participated in Astin's study of student outcomes. These studies found that living on campus, participating in extracurricular activities, interacting with faculty, and involvement in student government all accentuated the achievement of multiple college outcomes (1999). He concluded that the effectiveness of educational practice can be evaluated by the degree to which the practice promotes student involvement.

The college experience is made up of many experiences that weave together to create the growth and development in student learning and outcomes. In the spring of 2004, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), the two major associations for student affairs professionals, came together to present a comprehensive and up to date overview of student learning. Building on documents that have guided the student affairs profession for the last 80 years since the *Student Personnel Point of View* (American Council on Education, 1937), including *The Student Learning Imperative* (ACPA, 1996) and *Principles for Good Practice in Student Affairs* (ACPA & NASPA, 1997), they produced a guiding document for research and practice in higher education that redefines student development as a learning process.

In the definition of learning they offered, they challenged the field of student development by insisting that student development and academic learning are wholly integrated processes that have, too often, been relegated into either student affairs or academic affairs in the university. They offered a definition of learning that reflected, “Seeing students as their component parts (body, mind, spirit), rather than an integrated whole, supported the emergence of fragmented college systems and structures—academic affairs to cultivate the intellect and student affairs to tend to the body, emotions and spirit (Keeling, et.al., 2004, p. 5).” Separations in program development such as academic and co-curricular; moral, identity and cognitive development; and general education requirements demonstrate categorical thinking on campus. These categories may not be

conducive to student learning in an environment that is increasingly complex and where knowledge changes rapidly.

As an alternative, the authors proposed that educational systems be organized around learning outcomes and that the understanding of experiences can be mapped through the holistic examination of inter-related experiences. Elements of the model included the student experience, consisting of the social, academic, and institutional context; and characteristics of each individual such as identity development, emotional development, behavioral elements and meaning making processes; and the almost infinite number of possible combinations of interactions between all of these elements that make up an individual's college learning experience. It is quickly apparent that this model builds from both the student development perspectives that drew from Lewin's person-environment interaction theory and further develops these concepts into a framework that is organized around learning outcomes as the product of the educational process.

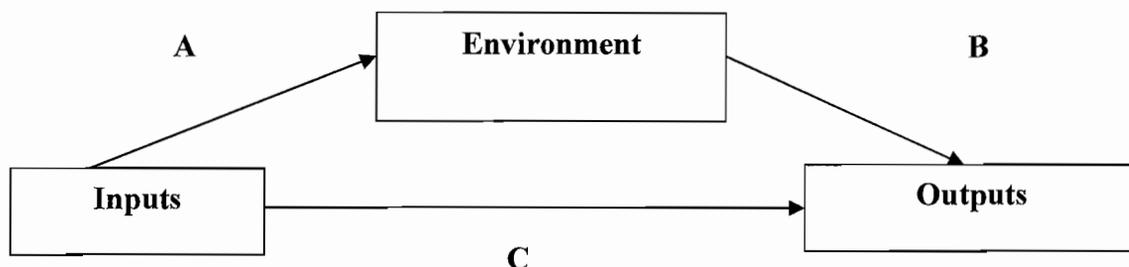
College Impact Model. Conceptually, the Learning Reconsidered Model reflects the complexity of student learning and student development in college. It has, however, a preponderance of "two-headed arrows" to encompass the inter-related nature of all aspects of student development that led Astin to create a simpler explanatory model that was grounded in empirical methodology. Additionally, to view any outcome considering all of the possible interactions between variables would be an overwhelming research approach that is unrealistic for a dissertation project. As stated by Bowers (2006) as a rationale for the use of Astin's model in her research in lieu of alternatives, "it is impossible to identify all the individual characteristics of a student and the environmental

variables are certainly not completely knowable” (p. 28). Given the breadth of definitions of political attributes and activities that are possible to study, this issue is particularly important to address. Astin’s Theory of College Impact is a straightforward model that allows for the use of broad sources with strong empirical evidence to support it as a valid construct for studying educational outcomes.

Astin’s Input-Experience-Output (I-E-O) model shown in Figure 1 provides a framework for studying college impact. His objective in creating it was to design a multivariate model that would guide those interested in determining causal relationships through a statistical model that would assist researchers in avoiding pitfalls of inference that can come from assuming that an achieved outcome is an effect of college, is not an effect of college or, in some cases, drawing incorrect conclusions from a combination of both. College impact research design can have a variety of common threats to validity. Assigning students randomly to programs or colleges and the difficulty of administering pre-tests are examples of the methodological problems that arise in college impact research. Even the use of pre- and post-test methodology to measure college impact can be problematic given the attrition of students who drop out of college and the danger of assuming that all change in college is due to the impact of the college experience (Astin, 1970). Most of the research on college impact, therefore, takes place in non-experimental settings and these variances are controlled for statistically (Pascarella, 2001). The I-E-O model “addresses the basic methodological problem with all non-experimental studies on the social sciences, namely the non-random assignment of people (inputs) to programs (environments)” (Astin & Sax, 1998, p. 252).

Input “refers to those personal qualities the student brings initially to the education program (including the student’s initial level of talent at the time of entry)” (Astin, 1993, p. 18). Inputs can include pre-test measurements, demographic information, behavior patterns, major, career choice, life goals and a myriad of other inputs (Astin, 1993). Environment “refers to the student’s actual experiences during the educational program” (Astin, 1993, p. 18). These factors can include peer relationships, curricula, facilities, co-curricular activities, among many others. The third element of the model, outputs, “refer to the ‘talents’ we are trying to develop in our educational program” (Astin, 1993, p. 18).

Figure 1. Astin’s I-E-O model (Astin, 1970a)



According to Astin (1970a), most college impact research is interested in studying “B,” how the environment impacts outputs. “A” refers to the fact that the environment is impacted by the students who are a part of it. “C” refers to the direct relationship between inputs and outputs. Astin warns that studying only parts of the model enhances

the risk of errors of inference and that all three aspects need to be addressed in the design of any study on college impact.

In thinking specifically about the Theory of College Impact and its use for understanding political involvement, there are some limitations. For example, is belonging to a college political organization an “outcome” that demonstrates political involvement or an “experience” that leads to political involvement? Additionally, in studying a process that could begin at anytime, are pre-college attributes the only relevant “inputs”? Additionally, defining outcomes in terms of talents may fall short of describing the breadth of possible engagement and involvement behaviors, such as voting, that are possible outcomes in evaluating college student political participation.

Theories of Civic Engagement and Political Involvement

In the research arena of studying civic engagement, there is much agreement that the development of knowledge, skills and character of engaged citizens is an educational process. In Galston’s (2001) words, “good citizens are made, not born” (p. 217). Definitions of civic engagement can include direct service, advocacy and education, community development, political involvement, socially responsible behavior, philanthropic giving, and participation in community associations (Wagner & Owen, 2006). Wagner and Owen developed a model that classified civic engagement views into three types: communitarian, participatory democracy, and associational life. Communitarian models emphasized shared values and morals that hold a community together. Examples of programs on college campuses that focus on this type of civic engagement include academic integrity programs and community standards programs in

residence halls. Participatory democracy models emphasize participation in the processes of government including voting, valuing diverse viewpoints, debating and being informed about current issues. Examples of classroom-based programs in colleges that utilize a participatory democracy approach include group project work, service learning assignments and experiential learning curriculums. A third framework, associational life, is based fundamentally on the ideas of Alexis deTocqueville and, more recently, in Robert Putnam's (1995, 2000) study on diminishing involvement in all kinds of community organizations as an indication of decreasing social capital and a resulting demise of trust and reciprocity in communities. This viewpoint suggests that classrooms and colleges as a whole are environments that can replicate larger democratic systems.

Each of these views has viable critiques. The communitarian model might not rise to the challenge of promoting equity within systems. The participatory democracy model is limited by the nature of debate and that valuing diverse viewpoints can be watered down to solutions that no one will disagree with rather than solutions that actually solve problems. A critique of the associational life perspective is that individual reasons for participation can vary immensely and it is an approach that exists in a vacuum without the influence of government or economic factors.

Wagner and Owen (2006) suggest a model of civic engagement that utilizes all three points of view, rather than just one. All of these perspectives, in some way, contribute to an understanding of college students' attitudes and behaviors around the broader topic of civic engagement. Ehrlich (1997), in an editorial reflecting on the state of democratic education reminded us of this by writing,

Civic engagement means believing that you *can* and *should* make a difference in enhancing your community and it means possessing the knowledge, skills and values necessary to help make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes (p.57).

He and others (Boyte & Hollander, 1999; Campus Compact, 2003; Checkoway, 2005; Chickering & Stamm, 2002; Cone, Cooper & Hollander, 2001; Gamson, 1997; Sirianni & Friedland, 1997; Terenzini, 1993) argue that these skills are taught not only through civics curriculums, but also through classroom pedagogy that focuses around problem solving, understanding the community, and collaborative learning environments. In terms of Astin's I-E-O model (1970a), these three perspectives on civic engagement provide several useful ways of understanding how environments and experiences lead to the development of college outcomes. Political involvement as an outcome is differentiated as related to but not the same as civic engagement. Political participation, engagement, and involvement are important skills related to civic engagement.

Civic Voluntarism Model. Using the framework laid out by Verba, et al. (1995), political participation is defined as action intended to influence actions of the government (p.138). Their landmark study is based upon empirical evidence of a sample of 15,000 people. Their Civic Voluntarism Model purports that resources (jobs, time, and money) are required for political involvement. However, because these activities are voluntary, there must also exist a disposition toward political engagement rather than some other type of volunteer activity, such as coaching youth sports. For individuals with adequate resources (jobs, time and money), interest in politics, sense of political efficacy, acquiring

information on how political systems work and party affiliation are engagement elements that can lead to participation.

Their study also examined involvement in non-political organizations that foster the development of civic skills that are often the source for an individual becoming aware of an opportunity for action or political involvement. In their study, they found that involvement in non-political organizations such as church, community service and even employment often led to political participation either directly or indirectly. This occurs both through the network of contacts that are made through these venues and the development of civic skills needed to contribute to a political activity. For example, a teacher may be motivated to lobby their legislature for a cause they have found, through their employment, to be critical to education in their community. The teacher's ability to communicate his or her opinions both in writing and orally might contribute to his sense of efficacy in this endeavor. Additionally, the teacher may find out about opportunities to get more involved in the issue from colleagues in the school, the teachers' union or through communication from the school leadership.

Index of Civic and Political Engagement. Analysis of the involvement of college students in political activities through the combined lenses of Astin's I-E-O model and the Civic Voluntarism model provided a useful framework for studying college student political involvement from a variety of perspectives and relationships. The measures of political involvement outlined in the Index of Civic and Political Engagement (Keeter, et al., 2003) provided a framework for evaluating the civic and political involvement of young people. The outcomes measured in this index are specifically designed to be

inclusive of activities that could be undertaken by high school students and young people who, potentially, have only had one or two opportunities to vote.

The Center for Information on Civic Learning and Education (CIRCLE) is a non-profit, non-partisan research organization that promotes research on the civic and political engagement of 15-25 year old Americans. This model was chosen for its particular ability to address the involvement of young people while the Civic Voluntarism Model researched the whole life span of potentially politically involved people. The Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba, et al., 1995) measured active political behavior such as contacting public officials and joining political organizations in their study and excluded activities such as reading the newspaper and watching the news to keep abreast of political activities and emphasize more interactive activities (p. 39). In contrast, CIRCLE studies focused on youth civic engagement used a broader interpretation of political involvement including both attention to political matters and political voice activities (e.g. protesting, boycotting, and contacting elected officials) as measures of youth political involvement.

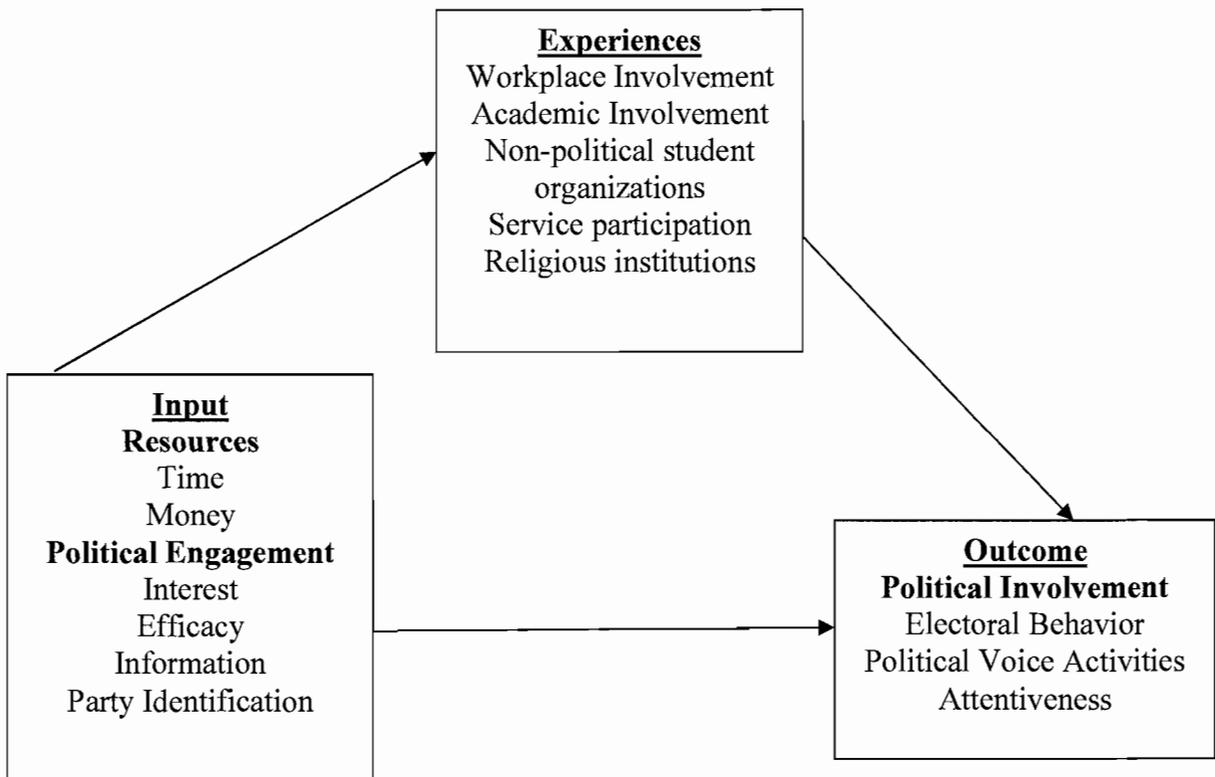
Their study using the Index of Civic and Political Engagement measures the political involvement and civic engagement of young people in four areas. These include quantifiable measures of civic activity such as community service, electoral behavior such as voting or working on a campaign, political voice activities such as calling an elected representative, and attentiveness behaviors such as reading the news. In order to focus this study on the identified research questions related specifically to political

involvement, the scale of civic activities that includes measures such as community service participation and helping others was not included in the model.

Integration of Student Development and Political Involvement Theories

Figure 2 combines Astin's I-E-O model with the Civic Voluntarism Model to delineate components of inputs and environment that affect political involvement. The Index of Political and Civic Engagement is utilized to further define the desired outcome of political involvement. In Astin's I-E-O model, the environment element can be viewed as both experiences and institutional characteristics. Because this study took place at only one institution, the model below focuses only on the college experience components, rather than on environmental differences between types of institutions.

Figure 2. Integration of Student Development and Political Involvement Theories



Inputs for Political Involvement

Time and Financial Resources

The Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba, et al., 1995) began with asserting that there are some preconditions to participation in political activities. Individuals must have enough income and free time to allow devotion of time to political activities. In addition to demonstrating the importance of being employed, they analyzed the free time and financial resources of those who do and do not participate in political activities. Although the time constraints on adults with children, full-time employment and the other obligations of adult life are different from those of college students, having time and enough financial resources to participate are factors that may differentiate politically involved students from their peers.

In addition to going to classes and studying, the United States Census Bureau in 2003 reported that almost 15 percent of full time college students also worked full time and 35 percent worked part time (as cited in Pereles, 2007). The American Council on Education reports even higher employment numbers, citing 77 percent of all college students having jobs, 26 percent of which are full time (as cited in Block, 2003). One reason that college students are increasingly taking on full and part time jobs is that wages have not kept pace with rising tuition requiring more time devoted to work in order to cover college expenses (Block, 2003).

Time. College offers a wide variety of opportunities for students to explore their leisure interests via social offerings on campus such as recreation, student organizations

and campus-based programs. It also offers many students the freedom to have much less structure in their lives than before college. As a result, free time can take many forms. The national Neilson ratings reported that college students average 24.3 hours of television watching a week (Aspan, 2006). Orłowski (2007) found that light television viewers exceeded their peers in likelihood to be involved in raising money for a charity and helping solve community problems. The 2002 Pew Internet and American Life Project found that college students spend an average of 20-30 hours a week on the computer (Jones, 2002b). Since 2002, these numbers could be even higher with 55 percent of teenagers reporting being on social networking sites (Lenhart, 2007) and 65 percent reporting participating in online gaming (Jones, 2003). Finally, another significant area that has been studied in relationship to college student leisure time is participation in activities related to alcohol and drug use as a component of young adult culture that is often excluded from research in leisure studies in favor of focusing on positive, or at least not illegal, leisure activities (Shinew & Parry, 2005). Although students have many competing demands upon their time, they also have many choices for where to invest their energy outside of the classroom.

Money. Although there was limited literature on the topic of college student discretionary spending or campaign giving, rising tuition and other costs suggest that many college students have limited financial resources. According to the College Board (2007), college costs (tuition, fees, room and board) have been rising steadily at a rate of about 4 percent more than inflation for the past decade for public four-year institutions. In the meantime, growth in available student aid has not kept pace with the increase in

tuition and student financial aid packages are including more loans and fewer grants (The College Board, 2007). High gas prices, particularly for institutions where students commute to campus and have limited public transportation options can also have a significant impact on college student discretionary spending (Sander, 2008).

Concerns about destructive spending were also found in the literature. In particular, the concern of predatory credit card practices and college student inexperience with managing credit (Chu, 2008) and student gambling arise. The 2007 National Annenberg Survey of Youth cited up to forty percent of college students gamble monthly and 10 percent gambling weekly (McClellan, 2008).

These studies showed many stressors on students' time and financial resources. Although these stressors exist, they also indicate that many college students do have both leisure time and some discretionary money. The fact that they have gathered enough financial resources to be in college at all suggests some degree of flexibility and choice in their lives. Of those who have the resources, some will choose to dedicate them toward political involvement.

Political Engagement

Verba, et al. (1995) argued that important factors for political involvement include those related to political engagement. Being interested in politics, believing that an individual can impact a political process (efficacy), understanding the political process and having a party identification are the political engagement factors they found that made a difference in why an individual would choose to expend their free time and money in political activities.

One of the key attributes studied in determining possible factors related to interest in politics is family influence. Parents are one element that influences several political engagement factors. They have an impact on a variety of civic behaviors including political participation. Hashway (1996) surveyed 800 21-25 year olds in a very diverse sample and found that the strongest indicator of civic behavior was parental achievement. Jarvis, Montoya and Mulvoy (2005) also found that political participation of young adults was influenced by parent activity in the community and through the discussion of politics at home. Lopez and Marcelo (2007) found that talking about politics at home increased young peoples' overall civic engagement, particularly increasing the rates at which they volunteered in the community. The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) (NASS, 1999) found that 40 percent of young voters in the 1998 election had parents who voted in every election. Forty-six percent of the 18-24 year olds in the survey indicated that they rarely or never spoke about politics at home.

Political Efficacy. Lee (2006) identified two types of political efficacy, internal and external. Internal efficacy, he writes, is the sense that one is qualified to participate in politics. External efficacy is the degree to which one believes that the political system is effective. Much of the current research on college students' political efficacy and engagement in solving community problems lands at the nexus of internal and external efficacy. In *Millenials Talk Politics* (Keisa et al., 2008), CIRCLE conducted focus groups on twelve college campuses and found that today's college students are more engaged than the previous generation and they actively participate in community service but they are ambivalent about politics. They dislike spin and negative campaigning while

preferring to engage in authentic dialogue. In what Longo (2004) called the scissor effect, today's students are more engaged in community service and less engaged in political activities. The students in these focus groups indicate a high degree of personal efficacy and a very low sense of external efficacy (Keisa, et al, 2008). This divergence is evident in the conclusions of several other studies (Baer, 1993; Long, 2002; Sax, 2000; Zaff, Moore, Papillo & Williams, 2003).

Information About Political Systems. Galston (2001) found significant data supporting civic knowledge as a driver for political participation, support for democratic values, and trust in political systems. Delli, Carpini and Keeter (1996) found that college students of today are roughly equal to high school graduates of the 1940's in measures of civic knowledge. They suggested this could be either due to curriculum changes in schools or that institutions that influence civic education outside of school have weakened over the same period of time. They also found that discussing politics with peers and family, reading newspapers and listening to the radio strengthened civic knowledge, while watching TV was negatively correlated with civic knowledge. Additional data from the National Center for Education Statistics (Lutkus & Weiss, 2006), found that 66 percent of twelfth graders have only proficient basic civics knowledge. For example, only 5 percent could identify three checks on presidential power. This data suggests that students are entering college with only elementary civic knowledge and understanding of how political systems work. Data from NASS (1999) suggests that this knowledge does not improve after high school. They found that only 25 percent of young voters could identify the Vice President and their governor and state

the length of term of a delegate in the House of Representatives. Galston (2001) suggests that without this political knowledge, it is difficult for people to understand politics and incorporate new information into their understanding.

Political Party Identification. Research on the development of political party identification traditionally suggested that political party identification was developed primarily through parent-child relationships. Subsequent research suggested that the parent-child relationship starts an individual on a path toward a certain party. Later, however, a focus on political issues emerged as the deciding factor for determining party affiliation (Franklin, 1984; Neimi & Jennings, 1991). As people entered their later twenties and thirties, their views begin to stabilize and the influence of parents seems to resurface, though not as directly as in late adolescence (Neimi & Jennings, 1984).

According to the results of 2006 exit poll data (Kirby & Marcelo, 2006), young people voted for Democratic candidates at higher rates than in any of the previous eight election cycles. Nearly 60 percent of young (18-24 year old) voters chose Democratic candidates. This reflected a shift to the left among young voters that breaks away from older Americans. In 2004, all voters were split almost evenly between the Democrat and Republican parties and other research in the same year indicated that students' political orientation had been shifting toward the center (HERI, 2004). In the 2006 HERI freshman survey (Pryor, et al., 2006) however, it was found that college students are less centrist in their political views than any year since the study began in 1971. Both the number of students identifying as "liberal" and the number identifying as "conservative" are at their highest point since 1975. The number of students identifying as "liberal"

remained greater. In accordance with the shift to the left among young voters found in the 2006 exit polls, the issues that young people were most concerned about also shifted to the left (Kirby & Marcelo, 2006). These were concern about the war in Iraq, the presidency of George W. Bush and, in some states, supporting raising the minimum wage. It appears from the research that there is a connection between awareness and opinions about issues and young voters' choice of political party.

The literature related to political engagement demonstrates that all of the areas identified in the Civic Voluntarism Models are possible predictors for political engagement and could be relevant for interpreting college student political involvement. Family discussions of politics can also help young people develop interest in politics. Efficacy, especially internal efficacy may also be a factor. External efficacy, however, may be low among today's college population and could be a mitigating factor in their political involvement. The same is true for civic knowledge and understanding of political systems. Evidence suggests that civic knowledge is on the decline and could negatively impact political involvement. Finally, the research suggested that young adults tend to focus their political stances around political issues that link them either to specific political parties or to distinct political ideologies.

Environmental Factors

Institutional Characteristics

The data on the impact of type of institution or curriculum on developing college outcomes related to civic engagement is mixed. Kuh (1993) surveyed 149 seniors at 12

colleges and universities. He found that the students who attended small private liberal arts colleges reported changes in altruism, among other factors. The type of institution attended was a stronger indicator than background characteristics. Astin (1996) also found that small private liberal arts colleges and Protestant and Catholic institutions impact student development of civic values more consistently than their larger, not religiously affiliated counterparts. Astin did not find a relationship between institutional size and selectivity in his review of the data related to civic outcomes. Sax (2000) found, after accounting for variables in experiences and pre-college characteristics, that the only significant institutional factor contributing to the development of civic values was the impact of having a peer group with a social activism perspective.

Experiences

The Civic Voluntarism Model linked a wide variety of experiences to the development of civic skills that lead to political involvement. The model focused on the types of experiences available through jobs, non-political and service organizations and religious activities. These activities, according to the model, were places where civic skills are developed and societal connections are made that help students who have the resources and inclination find and connect with opportunities for political activity.

College student life is uniquely different from adult life. Arnett (2000) referred to the age of 18-25 as “Emerging Adulthood” and defined this time as a period of great exploration. In this age range, young people are free from the structure of childhood and exploring a variety of possibilities for how they understand the world, job opportunities and relationships. Because the context for this study is college, the experiences that need

to be examined for a complete picture of what experiences might influence political involvement were different than those Verba, et al. (1995) explored in their research. In addition to jobs, church and non-political and service organizations, college students attend classes and engage in a wide variety of peer interactions that might help them in developing the civic skills and connections that lead to political involvement.

Work Experiences. Jarvis, et al. (2005) found that having a job while being a college student was a greater indicator of political engagement than just having a job or being a college student and not working. Working students reported more interest in politics, greater likeliness to read the newspaper, and more frequent conversations with their friends about politics. This supports the Civic Voluntarism Model's (Verba, et al., 1995) assertion that employment is an asset to both the development of civic skills and having access to information and networks that lead to political participation.

Academic Involvement. The research related to the development of civic skills in higher education was focused not on particular courses of study but rather on pedagogy. The studies were on the impact of service learning programs (Batchelder & Root, 1994; Einfield & Collins, 1998; Eyster & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996; Kelleher, 2002; Kraft, 1996; Markus, Howard & King, 1993; Parker-Gwin and Mabry, 1998; Simons & Cleary, 2006), the effectiveness of political science teaching methods (Beaumont, Colby, Ehrlich & Torney-Purta, 2006; Hunter and Brisbin, 2002; Murgo, 2001) and the results of interactions among students with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Hurtado, Engberg, Ponjuan & Landreman 2002; Vogelgesang, 2001).

Service Learning. Service learning programs are defined as experiential education programs that involve cycles of service and reflection, learning about community problems and working toward change in community and personal growth (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996). Most of the research found that service learning activities contributed to the development of a wide range of skills, including civic skills such as problem solving and working with others. Jones (2002a), however, cautioned educators embarking on a service learning journey with students to incorporate intentional placement, direct service, reflection and ways for students to connect on a personal level with the service project else risk “reinforcing negative stereotypes” (p. 10).

There were a variety of examples in the research of ways in which civic skills are developed through service learning. Parker-Gwin and Mabry (1998) found that participation in service learning activities with reflective components contributed to the development of critical thinking, analytic and problem solving skills. Markus, Howard and King (1993) found service learning in a political science course enhanced outcomes such as increased tolerance, expressed intention to serve, intention to make charitable contributions, and the development of an orientation that was less self involved and more concerned with others. Additionally, participants exceeded non-participants in other academic outcomes such as attending class, applying classroom learning to new situations and achieving higher. Batchelder and Root (1994) studied 226 students from small Midwestern liberal arts colleges and found that service learning participants made significant gains in multiple cognitive dimensions including identity processing,

understanding complex issues and developing pro-social reasoning. Kraft (1996) found that service learning also has a positive impact on the development of moral judgment.

In specifically researching political outcomes, however, Kelleher (2002) found that service learning did not have a significant impact. Service learning activity even had a negative impact on political activities such as communicating with elected leaders, activity in elections or acquiring political information. Einfield and Collins (1998), in a qualitative study of AmeriCorps program participants, found that some left with a strong sense of the need to engage in the political process while others felt compelled to seek avenues for change that avoided political activity. Simons and Cleary (2006) found that participation in a service learning program did lead to heightened political awareness, though they caution that site specific variables in the study could have influenced the findings. These studies of service learning program outcomes showed mixed conclusions regarding whether or not participation in these programs has a direct or positive outcome on a variety of specifically political participation activities (Galston, 2001; Mathews, 1996).

Political Science Classes. There was surprising little research specifically on the impact of any individual course of study on political involvement. This was true even for political science curriculum. Hunter and Brisbin (2002) suggested that this is because civic engagement is not a specific discipline within the field of political science and some curriculums discourage it by presenting the fields as being solely focused on the objective and analytical elements of political issues. One study of almost 300 students at four Florida colleges found that taking a political science course increased students' interest in

discussing politics although it did not lead to increased participation in political structures (Murgo, 2001).

In Hunter and Brisbin's (2002) study of political science faculty, they found that faculty civic and political involvement was a strong predictor of civic engagement as an outcome of political science courses. This study, in combination with both a lack of information on the effect of specific courses of study on political involvement and an unclear relationship between service learning and specifically political outcomes, suggested there may only be limited relationships between academic experiences and college student political involvement. Intentional classroom interventions designed specifically for developing political knowledge and skills, however, have been shown to be effective. In fact, students with lower pre-class knowledge and skills experienced even greater gains than those with higher pre-class scores in these types of classroom activities (Beaumont, et al., 2006).

Interactions Around Diversity. Outside of the service learning literature, a study was found that examined the development of a range of civic skills related to the ability to thrive in a diverse environment (Hurtado, et al., 2002). These skills included the ability to see the world from someone else's perspective, valuing social action and understanding of the importance of differing opinions and conflict in the democratic process. They found that female freshman reported more democratic values than their male counterparts. They also found that having opportunity to engage in diverse groups was a stronger indicator of these values than other demographic characteristics and that students who participated in student activities in high school were more prepared to deal

with conflict. Similarly, Vogelgesang (2001) found that a diverse student population doesn't impact the development of civic values in and of itself. Interactions that intentionally promote cross-racial interactions, including diversity workshops, ethnic studies courses, and ethnic student organizations provide both venues for understanding one's own culture and can contribute to the development of civic values.

Non-Political Student Organizations. There was strong overall evidence that participation in extracurricular activities in high school is an indicator of future political participation (Astin & Sax, 1998; Conway & Damico, 2001; Dailey, 1983; Glanville, J., 1999; Hanks, 1981; Hanks & Eckland, 1978; Hart, Donnelly, Youniss & Atkins, 2007; Jennings & Stoker, 2001; Kirlin, 2001; Laedwig & Thomas, 1982; McFarland & Thomas, 2006; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Smith, 1999; Yates & Youniss, 1998). These studies link participation in high school service learning programs, involvement in religious activities, tutoring other students, 4-H membership, YMCA involvement, student government, national honor societies, service organizations, political organizations, religious groups, music groups and speech, debate, and drama groups to success in building outcomes such as understanding politics and government, political participation, and having a positive self concept. Involvement in cultural organizations has also been found to have a positive outcome on civic skills (Hurtado, et al., 2002).

Kirlin (2003) in her literature review of adolescent extracurricular activities and adult political participation categorized extracurricular involvement in two categories, instrumental and expressive. Instrumental organizations have a purpose beyond gathering together around a common interest. They include activities such as student

government, newspaper, political clubs, debate, community organizations, and vocational clubs. Expressive activities include sports, band and orchestra, chorus, and hobby clubs. She found that only participation in the instrumental organizations was consistently related to adult political participation. Kirlin's review and other studies (McFarland & Thomas, 2006; Hart, et al., 2007) suggest that not all involvement is equal. Some academic clubs had a neutral or negative relationship with political involvement, for example.

As discussed in the literature on institutional characteristics, having a peer network that values social activism has been found to impact the development of civic outcomes (Astin, 1996b). Being involved in activist student groups has also been found to have an impact on the development of civic outcomes. Laird (2003) studied the relationship between 102 students involved in pro-choice and pro-life movements and their moral reasoning skills and sense of locus of control. One theme that emerged for both groups was that the more involved students reported a higher sense of both sociopolitical and interpersonal control.

Living on campus is another experience that has been found (Terenzini, 1993) to have positive association with the development of altruism, support for civil liberties and valuing racial integration. Again, the effect of the peer group, enhanced by the residential setting, seems to be a significant factor in student development and the development of the kinds of civic skills that Verba, et al., (1995) relate to political participation.

The literature supported the concept that some types of non-political student organization involvement may lead to political participation. Instrumental, activist and cultural organizations, along with living on campus, had evidence to support a positive relationship to a broad range of civic engagement outcomes. For the development of the subset of civic outcomes specific to political participation, the strongest evidence appeared to be around the impact of participation in instrumental student organizations.

Service Participation. Most of the research on volunteer activity pointed to community service as a significant experience that results in increases in the development of a wide range of civic, political and social outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students who participated in service activities contributed to outcomes such as increased personal commitment to communities, increased use of energy and time in helping others, development of personal leadership skills, increased social confidence, added skills in conflict resolution, and an increased sense of societal locus of control (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax & Avalos, 1999; Drane 2001; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Vogelgesang, 2001). In Hart et al.'s (2007) study, they found the relationship to hold true for both required and voluntary service activity. Campbell (2000) found consistent evidence to support an enduring strong relationship between community service and political activity.

Myers-Lipton (1998) compared three groups of students—those not involved in service, those involved in individual community service, and participants in a comprehensive service-learning program. The results of the study showed that civic responsibility, societal locus of control and civic behavior increased for students involved in community service. The outcomes were greater for students who participated in a

comprehensive service learning experience. Both groups exceeded non-participants in the development of a perception or sense of civic responsibility. As with the service learning literature, it wasn't clear whether or not community service is directly linked to specifically political participation. As discussed in the section of this review on political efficacy, there is research that supports that today's college students are participating in more community service but they are ambivalent about politics and see their community service work as not related to political issues (NASS, 1999; Longo, 2004, Keisa et al., 2008). As with the service learning literature, there was mixed evidence for evaluating the impact of community service on the specific civic outcome of political participation.

Involvement in Religious Institutions. Evidence that college attendance might be related to a decrease in religious activities had been consistent since the 1960's (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Several studies since the early 1990's suggest that this may no longer be the case (Hartley, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Uecker, Regnerus & Vaaler, 2007). Lee (2002), using data from The Freshman Survey and College Student Survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), analyzed over 4000 students at 76 institutions and found more students reported the same or increased religious commitment than decreased commitment. In 2005, HERI also published its findings from a study specifically on college student spirituality (Adler, 2007). They found that 80 percent of students were interested in spirituality. Spirituality may refer to a broad ranges of understandings, so they examined the data further to look at students' religious behavior and found that over half of today's college students go to church once a month and 80 percent had attended church at least once in the last year.

In the NASS (1999) research of the 1998 election data, they found that 43 percent of church-going young adults voted whereas only 25 percent of their non-church attending peers voted. While this suggests a relationship between church attendance and voting, other studies suggested this may not be the full picture or may only apply to the specific political participation outcome of voting. Andolina, Meents-DeCaigny and Nass (2006) conducted a study, grounded in Verba, et al.'s (1995) Civic Voluntarism Model to examine whether religious involvement was linked to political participation, service participation and community work. Although they found relationships between the value a student places on religion and their service participation and community work, they found no connection between religious attitudes and behaviors impact political participation. They conclude that further research will be required to examine why youth differ from adults in this particular element of civic engagement.

Summary

The literature related to the factors of high school and college that influence political involvement reflect a variety of conclusions and indicate the need for this study. Many studies evaluate a wide range of civic outcomes. Fewer specifically looked at political involvement outcomes—either political engagement or political participation. No research was found to link free time or financial resources specifically to political involvement outcomes.

Research studies have shown that college students become engaged in the political process through family influence, the development of a sense of personal

political efficacy and they use issues that they care about to identify with a political party. Experiences such as work, intentionally designed classroom curriculum linked to developing political involvement outcomes, participation in instrumental and activist student organizations and living on campus also have been shown to have a positive impact on political involvement.

Evidence was mixed or not found to support some aspects of the college experience as positively impacting political involvement. These included participation in expressive student organizations and religious involvement. Intentionally designed experiences in political science classrooms, service learning, community service and diversity programs or curriculums were not necessarily effective at developing political involvement outcomes. When political involvement was a specifically designed learning outcome, however, these programs had great potential to positively impact political involvement outcomes.

Overall, in the literature review, I found evidence to support elements of the model combining student development theory with the political involvement models. Research on resources, political engagement and other experiences were shown to have a wide variety of links to political involvement outcomes. However, gaps in our understanding were also demonstrated by this review of prior research findings. Lack of data on understanding the potential impacts of high school political involvement on student political involvement in college, in particular, brought me to conduct this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this study, I employed an embedded case study methodology. Berg (2001) defines case study research as appropriately having at least one of three purposes—exploratory (groundwork for future study), explanatory (identifying causal relationships) or descriptive (not motivated by hypothesis). Eisenhardt (1989) describes case study as appropriate methodology for generating and testing theory developed through tying together existing literature. The goal of this study was to increase understanding of the subject case. Given the prior lack of consensus in research studies, this was both an exploratory and descriptive case study, with intent to test the conceptual theory developed in Chapter II and explored through the review of existing literature.

The purpose of this study lent itself to a case study approach. *The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the development of political attitudes and behaviors in current undergraduate academic life.* The use of case study methodology is recommended when the goal of the study is to understand how or why something occurs (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). In case study research, data is collected and interpreted and used to generate themes that improve understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003; Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996).

The case itself was designed as a study of politically engaged college students at one institution. These students were studied through two units of analysis—those who

were also highly politically involved in high school and those who were not very politically involved in high school. The data collected in the case study will be used to increase the understanding of the model combining student development and political involvement theories presented in Chapter II.

Case Selection

In case study research, the unit of study is defined as the single thing that is going to be studied (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). In this case, the unit of study was politically engaged college 18-24 year old college students. The study was conducted at a large, urban, primarily non-residential state institution with a strong mission to serve both the local community and the state while enhancing excellence in research and remaining student centered. The selected unit of analysis reflects the commitment of the researcher to understanding the educational experience of students through political involvement.

Case Institution

A relatively young university, the study institution was founded in 1957 as a regional institution and became an independent university in 1968, enrolling 5,500 students (Mochring, 2007). In fall of 2007 (Office of Institutional Analysis Planning [IAP], 2007), just under 22,000 undergraduates and just over 6,000 graduate and professional students were enrolled in the 239 degree programs offered. Of these students, 35 percent were identified as ethnic minorities, 56 percent were women and 77 percent were state residents. The average age of undergraduate students was 24 years

old. The university is classified as a comprehensive research university and is situated in a city that just reached 2 million residents (Brean, H., 2007).

The institution has recently become more selective. Since 2005, the minimum high school grade point average in an established set of core courses has increased from 2.5 to 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. Fifty percent of incoming freshmen are in the top half of their graduating high school class and 44 percent receive some form of financial aid (College Portrait, 2007). The most popular majors for students are business, liberal arts, education and hotel administration (IAP, 2007)

This institution has a civic engagement component as part of the goals of the university (Harter, 2002). Research has been conducted on students at this university (Dugan, 2002) that showed room for improvement in this area among students at the university where this study is being conducted, despite this evidence of institutional commitment.

Some factors related specifically to the state in which they study takes place may play a unique role in this study, particularly as it relates to the areas of religious participation and community service. The state in which this study was conducted ranks 51st among 50 states and the District of Columbia in rates of volunteering (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007). The state also ranks 47th in rates of church attendance with only about 27 percent of residents reporting attending church weekly. States in the South and Midwest that have weekly church attendance rates above fifty percent may have very different findings in those aspects of

non-political participation experiences that may lead to political involvement (Newport, 2006).

Case Identification

Yin (2003) recommends the use of single case studies when the case is unique or extreme. Studying politically active college students fits this parameter. A study involving multiple examples of the same thing in a situation where sampling or clustering can be used to identify sub-units, is an embedded case study design (Yin, 2003, p.43). This design allowed for more detailed analysis of the data. In accordance with the stated unit of study, a purposeful sampling strategy was utilized to identify appropriate individuals for the study and to determine two groups within the case—those with high levels and those with low levels of pre-college political involvement. Using these two comparative groups illuminates what specific aspects of the college experience encourage and prepare students for political involvement.

In order to better understand the development of politically involved college students, students were offered the opportunity, through an e-mail invitation, to participate in the study by completing a two-part online survey. The first part was used to report their current political involvement using the Electoral Behavior, Political Voice and Attentiveness scales from the Index of Civic and Political Engagement (Keeter, et. al., 2003) adapted for administration as a web survey. The second part asked them to think back to their high school political involvement and evaluate them using the Political Voice and Attentiveness Scales. The Electoral Behaviors scale was not used to assess

high school involvement for the simple reason that high school students are not eligible to vote. The survey is included in Appendix A.

The survey was administered to 502 students identified through having employment in or holding a student leadership position supporting campus life. One hundred and five students responded and completed the survey. Of those, 16 were deemed ineligible for the survey due to not meeting either the age range or the eligibility to vote in the United States criteria. Twelve more surveys were incomplete. These surveys were deleted from all data analysis. The resulting data set had 77 subjects (15% return rate). While this is a low return rate, it was sufficient to identify students qualified to participate in the interviews. The intent of this study was not to identify a representative group of the whole population of students, but to identify students who fit one of two particular sub-groups.

From these survey results, two groups of students were identified for follow up interviews. One group included students with the highest scores on both the pre-college and current college experience scores. The second group had the highest scores on the current college experience questions that matched the lowest pre-college scores.

I identified the top scoring seven students for interviews through a process of quantitative analysis of the survey data. Due to variance in the number of answers possible for each question, the scale was coded with 1 as the top score for each question. Only these seven students had current involvement scores of 2 or less. A data matching process was employed to identify the most politically involved students who were also highly involved in high school resulted in four matches with current involvement scores

less than 2.0. Three respondents with college political involvement scores of less than 2.5 and more than a 3.0 change between high school and college were selected as representative of low pre-college involvement coupled with high college involvement.

The research questions established in Chapter I required that the selected interview subjects representing high and low before college participation be different. I established this through analysis of descriptive statistics and verified their difference through t-test analysis. I also established that the subjects were unique in their political involvement compared to their peers.

Test of Uniqueness of Sample

One of the reasons I identified for considering a case study design was the need to ensure that subjects had achieved the desired political involvement outcomes. Therefore, it was important to ensure that selected subjects had high political involvement in college. This lens was used to quantitatively determine whether or not the selected sample was truly unique from the peer group.

Differences Between Interviewees and Survey Participants

In order to determine if this group was indeed markedly unique from their peers, I analyzed data from the survey to determine if they were significantly different from the 70 students not selected for participation in the interviews. The seven selected interviewees were all registered to vote and had all voted in every election for which they had been eligible. In contrast, 85 % of the rest of the sample were registered to vote and only 31% had always voted. The aggregate scores across all questions were also

significantly higher for the selected interviewees compared to the rest of the survey respondents ($p < .001$). Some of the most pronounced differences between the selected subjects and their peers were in the areas of working for or contributing money to a candidate's political party or other organization that supports candidates; taking part in a protest, march or demonstration; signing an e-mail petition; and regularly reading news magazines or watching the news on television.

Differences Between High and Low Pre-College Political Engagement Groups

In comparing the differences in responses for the selected interviewees who reported high involvement in both high school and college ($n=4$) and those who had more than a 3 point change between high school and college ($n=3$) I found significant differences between the average score of their responses to the high school questions in the survey ($p < .05$). The analysis of the survey data affirmed that the political involvement of the high and low pre-college individuals was significantly different.

Interviews

Of the seven invited interviewees, six accepted the invitation to participate. Three were women, three were men and three were members of a minority group resulting in representation from three different minority groups. One was a freshman, one was a graduating senior and the other four were juniors. Three were political science majors, two were business majors (international business and marketing) and one was a civil engineering major. One of the individuals seeking a business degree was also pursuing a minor in political science.

Interviews were scheduled over the course of three weeks at the end of a spring semester and into the beginning of summer term. In 2008, this time frame was during the concluding weeks of the very competitive Democratic primary that ended with a close competition between Senators Barak Obama and Hilary Clinton. John McCain had already secured the number of delegates required by the Republican Party to be assured the nomination. In interpreting the interview information, it is also important to note that the state in which this study was conducted is a caucus state for the Democratic Party.

The interview was designed to last no more than one hour. It was structured as a standardized open-ended interview (Patton, 2002) in which the overall interview is structured and planned, with each interview occurring from the same script, but where differing prompts may be used to elicit additional information if needed. The interview involved a combination of questions seeking information and description of political involvement and other experiences that might have led to political involvement or served as pathways to involvement. Several questions asked interviewees to draw connections between their experiences, the development of civic skills, and their political involvement. Additional questions explored why they believed their peers were not involved and requested voluntary disclosure of political party affiliation. Using the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter II, each question targeted input, experience, output, or the connections between these elements. See Appendix B for interview questions.

Interviews were recorded and the data was stored on a compact disk. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and subsequently coded for emergent

themes. Students who participated in the interviews were compensated \$25 in campus cash for their time.

Issues of Credibility, Dependability, and Transferability

Credibility

Several of Merriam's (2003) strategies for increasing credibility were followed. These checks and balances provided some protection from drawing false conclusions from the collected data and were designed to improve the overall believability of the findings. First, I used objective quantitative measures, as described above, to identify the subjects as highly politically engaged in comparison to a large number of peers. This strengthens the credibility that the sample is truly representative of the exemplars within the community.

The use of multiple examples of the case being studied can improve credibility by providing variety within the sample. When a diverse sample begins to have redundancy within the generated themes, enough participants have been selected (Patton, 2002). This study was designed with the hope that four to six participants in each group would be enough to reach redundancy. Patton also recommends that as information is collected, the number of participants in the study may be increased if the need emerges. In this study, many common themes emerged through the interviewing of six participants and the conclusion was made not to invite additional participants to interview. Additionally, using the data matching model, working further down the list of highly engaged students would have had the possible cost of losing the small margin of significant difference

between the high and low pre-college engagement groups. Although recommendations for future research include expanding the study to generate further insights into the research questions, there was redundancy in several theme areas.

The data analysis stage of this study refers to the literature as a basis for increasing validity. Eisenhardt (1989) recommends that this be done throughout the data analysis process in order to increase validity. She especially recommends referring to existing literature when using a small sample size.

Upon completion of the study, I sent the data analysis chapter to all of the interviewees. At this time, I gave them the opportunity to read the results and report back whether or not they felt the results accurately represented their interview. Three of the interview subjects replied with general feedback that the data analysis reflected their experience and that they found it interesting. All three also indicated that they had no difficulty identifying themselves in the data. A limitation of this study is that, rather than conducting member checks throughout the study, member checking was limited to one opportunity to review the findings after all interviews, initial data sorting complete and documentation of findings underway. Additional steps could have been taken to engage the interviewees in the data analysis process, employing additional member checks throughout the process.

Some strategies for improving internal validity recommended by Merriam were not utilized because they were inappropriate for this study (collaborative modes of research, long term observation), due to temporal limitations (deadline) and in conflict with dissertation expectations (independent work).

Dependability

The strategies for creating a dependable study are much the same as those for creating an internally valid study. As with most qualitative research, the ability of the researcher to assert that the same methodology would produce the same results is limited. Rather, the qualitative researcher is hoping that if another researcher reviewed the same data, that individual would come to the same conclusions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Data for this study was carefully organized and maintained. This is a critical tool in generating dependable data.

Each subject was given a color code for the purpose of sorting data. In addition to maintaining records of each individual's case information, data was entered into a spreadsheet for coding into themes from which the documentation of research findings occurred. First, I organized the data according to the model in chapter two, combining student development (Astin, 1970), the Civic Voluntarism Model and (Verba, et al., 1995) and the Index of Civic and Political Engagement (Keeter, et al., 2003). Data was sorted into input, experience and output categories and into categories related to the relationships between these elements. For example, there was a category for experiences that related to political involvement. Then, data were organized into themes within these categories. After the more detailed themed analysis, data that did not fit with any other data was analyzed again and some themes were combined to provide further insights and strengthen findings. For example, I combined factors related to ethnic identity, sexual identity and gender identity were combined to create a more inclusive category related to socio-cultural identity. Additionally, at this point, I sorted the data that reflected

relationships between categories into the input, experience or output categories. This strengthened these themes and provided additional insight into the content of the emerging themes. One threat to dependability, however, was that I was the sole reviewer of the data.

Transferability

The ability to generalize the data to contexts beyond those actually involved in the study is limited in most qualitative research and is particularly limited in this exploratory and descriptive study. To address the ability to generalize from the individual students whose experience defines the case, to any broader educational context, the themes that emerge from the data will be analyzed in the context of “typicality.” Typicality is defined by Merriam (2003) as how common it may be for the individual case as a member of a class. In the following chapter, I provide examples to expand the readers’ frame of reference for evaluating the utility of the information for their specific area of interest. However, at no time was it my intent to attempt to generalize to a larger population. Instead, my intent was to explore the use of the conceptual framework and to establish a base for potential larger future research projects.

Ethics

Implementing an ethical study requires attention to matters of human interaction in order to ensure only minimal impact on the subjects. Possible risks of the study included only boredom and unease in answering questions. Possible benefits included both the opportunity to contribute to beneficial research and the opportunity to gain more

self-awareness through the interview process. Care was taken to ensure the privacy of participants through careful storage and management of data.

Several steps were taken to provide for the least discomfort and inconvenience for survey invitees and participants and to maximize the security of the survey data. The survey was not anonymous as it was used to identify students to invite for further participation. Students who participated in the survey were asked to provide their name, phone number and electronic mail address at the end of the survey. None of the questions on the survey were required. Personally identifying information was destroyed as soon as the interview participants were identified and had agreed to participate.

Once interview participants were selected and their interviews were scheduled, several introductory questions set the tone for the interviews emphasizing providing interviewees with clear information on their rights as human subjects and on the motivations of the researcher. I thanked each interviewee and explained that the interview would be an hour long, would be recorded and that they may choose to skip any questions they deemed uncomfortable or may stop the interview at any time. Additionally, the interview introduction included several components related to being clear about potential conflict of interest of the researcher in the study. First, the interviewees were told that the interviewer was both a staff member at the host institution and a doctoral student at the University of Oregon. Second, I informed them that I am a mandatory reporter for violations of the host institution's Student Conduct Code and that the questions do not directly relate to student conduct issues, but that they should be

aware of this as they answer questions. Finally, I obtained written consent for both the interview and audio recording.

I took steps in the storage of the electronic data associated with the study to protect the privacy of subjects. The survey data was held in a secure server through the company Surveymonkey.com and results were stored on an individual desktop and backed up on a compact disk. An individual login password was required to access the online data. The research report, interview transcripts and data management documents were saved to a password protected university network system during the study and copied to compact disks, kept in a secure location, upon the completion of the study. The network administrator then deleted all back up copies from the network server. Data was coded to protect the identity of participants. The codes for the data were saved separately from the data.

In compliance with the regulations for dissertation research, this study was submitted for review and approved by the Institutional Review Board to ensure the protection of human subjects. It was submitted and approved by both the host institution and by the University of Oregon where the dissertation research was being supervised.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Entering into the interview process, the model combining Astin's (1970) Theory of College Impact with Verba, et al.'s (1995) Civic Voluntarism Model outlined a projection that resources (time, money and civic skills) and engagement (interest, efficacy, information, and party identification) are critical elements that lead to voluntary political participation. I found connections between the content of the student interviews and most of the elements of the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter II. Links between community service experiences and religious involvement were lacking.

Because these interviews allowed the participants to describe their involvement in political and other activities broadly, the possibility existed that not all model inputs, experiences and political involvement aspects would emerge and that additional content might arise. This proved accurate. Two themes emerged from the data analysis that was not predicted by the model: the strength of experiences that integrated cognitive development or socio-cultural identity development with political engagement and participation.

Inputs for Political Involvement

Following the combined model of student development and political involvement theories presented in Chapter II, I explored how resources such as time and money and

political engagement factors such as interest in politics, sense of efficacy, information about political processes, and party identification impacted the interviewee's political involvement. The interviews found that these students had time to devote to political engagement and participation. Money, however, particularly as it related to campaign giving did not emerge in any of the interviews. Affirming much of the conceptual framework around political engagement aspects, the information provided from the student interviews revealed that political interest derived from family role models and high school government classes were important elements of pre-college political engagement. These students also reported a strong sense of political efficacy, knowledge of political systems and party identification.

Resources

Time. Verba, et al. (1995) found that the availability of free time was a resource that allowed people to participate in political activities. Exceeding the national data regarding the percentage of students who work (Pereles, 2007; Block, 2003), all of the interview subjects reported balancing an on or off campus job with academic and co-curricular commitments. One participant shared that he had the additional responsibilities of home ownership. Two shared the perception that lack of time, specifically due to balancing school with work and other involvement commitments on campus, may keep their peers from being interested, knowledgeable and involved in politics. In reviewing their own on- and off-campus commitments during the interview, most commented on feeling as though they have little free time. For two students, however, this was a direct result of the extent of their political activities. They both

commented on the efficiencies created by having jobs with campaigns or political organizations that allowed them to do both. Although Verba, et al. would not have included these paid positions as “voluntary” in their model, they are included as examples here because both of these women participated in voluntary activities that led to paid positions working with volunteers. Additionally, these work experiences were all part-time and, as such, the students could choose from any number of (potentially even higher paid) opportunities. It was clear that the students were selecting these opportunities at least largely in part for the political component rather than solely for the financial compensation associated with the position.

Money. One area that did not emerge in the interviews as a theme for individual experiences was money. The fact that these students all held, or recently held, as few as one, and as many as three jobs at any one time, made this an interesting finding. It is possible that students were working to increase their disposable income or, in light of increasing cost of tuition, fees, room and board (The College Board, 2007), they were working to cover the expenses of college. Either way, none mentioned any money related aspects to their political involvement. One student commented that he believed that the need to work kept some other students from participating in both political and non-political campus activities.

Political Engagement

Interest. As discussed before, this is one area where differences emerged between the high and low pre-college groups. Specifically, the direct influence of a high school government teacher was the strongest interest factor for two of the three low pre-college

involvement subjects. Although one of the low pre-college engagement subjects cited having a parent in a public service job as influencing her political involvement, the only two subjects to cite specifically pre-college family (parent, grandparent) influence on direct political involvement emerged from the high pre-college involvement subjects.

High School Government Class. Three of the six interviewees spoke at great length to the importance to them of a high school government class. All three took their class as seniors and as an Advanced Placement (AP) course. One worked on a campaign as an assignment and, from there, secured an internship in his local city hall. Two were specifically influenced by the power of an effective teacher, their passion for the content of the course, and their ability to make the class think more deeply about current issues. In both courses, the dialogue and course discussion were named as important learning tools. Mark recollected, for example:

I think that my government class in high school was the best class I've ever had before or since. Unfortunately, I think the pinnacle of my educational experience ended with that class. I'm going to consider it a jumping off point. That's the class that really got me interested in the constitution itself. I want to go to law school and my ultimate goal is to be a federal district judge because I'm really interested in the constitution...Honestly, the study of the constitution is really what drove me into political science...As cheesy and young idealist as it sounds, I'm out to make a difference. I think having knowledge of politics and policy and the way that our system works will be beneficial when I go to law school and will help me be an effective policy maker.

Susan's description of the importance of one teacher highlights a theme that was strong in both accounts of effective teaching. She emphasized not only the content but also talked

about how the teacher helped the students to develop their critical thinking skills and their growing sense of self and personal identity.

I grew up in a family that didn't talk about politics so that really wasn't where it came from. It was actually my senior year in high school, my government teacher. He was very liberal. I grew up in a conservative home, so I would always debate him and always take the opposite side from him. He challenged me by asking where I was getting my opinions from and I told him my mom was a Republican, so I'm a Republican. He just challenged me once I got out of high school to really look at both parties and see where I really stand on issues.

Both of these students went on to major in political science and are planning for careers in public service.

Although not specifically addressed in the literature review, two articles suggest the possibility that this is representative of a larger trend. Niemi and Junn (1998) reviewed data from the National Center for Education Statistics' national civic education report card and found that taking a 12th grade civics class could be a significant factor in developing civic knowledge. The survey, however, is given only to 4th, 8th and 12th grade students and could, therefore, be biased by students taking the test concurrently with a civics course (Torney-Purta, 1999). Torney-Purta (2002) also found that discussion and dialogue in a course can be related to students' planning to vote, supporting Mark's motivation through a great teacher using discussion and dialogue as his primary teaching method.

Family Role Models. The literature on youth political engagement describes family influence as an influencing factor. Three interviews had examples of pre-college family role models. In these examples, each expressed a different form of influence. For Denise, having parent in law enforcement influenced her choose a career path that will

lead to a career in public service. William referred to his parents and grandparents as essential in developing a sense of obligation to be informed about current events. The strongest theme in this area came from Evelyn who accredited her interest to being from a family of “strong independent women.” She shared memories of political discussions at holiday meals and of being taken to see prominent politicians speak in her hometown. William also attributed his political interest to his parents and grandparents talking with him about the news and why it is important. These events and activities supported the development of the individuals’ sense of political identity and stressed the importance of the role of the individual in the collective society.

Efficacy. The subjects who had the greatest involvement in high school also clearly expressed a sense of political efficacy. Two of their peers from the group that was less involved in high school shared concurring perspectives that add to the strength of this theme. Although the literature suggests a divide between community activism through service versus politics (Longo, 2004), given the methodological construct of this study, it is not surprising that these students felt a high degree of both internal and external efficacy (Lee, 2006). Not only did they believe they were capable contributors (internal efficacy) but they also believed that the political system can be effective (external efficacy).

An example of internal efficacy is found in Evelyn’s description of her catalyst experiencing for intensively researching primary candidates and then choosing to get involved in a campaign with this story:

I was sitting around one day flipping through the channels and came across CNN one day and thought, I am really not happy with my

administration as an American and it's my duty. I look at voting as such a privilege and know it's not one that everyone has. I had just watched this documentary on the right to vote for women. People worked so hard for this opportunity and we just take advantage of it. I was kind of disappointed in myself that for 18 years I just let it go. I bought books, I took notes, and I was kind of nerdy about it. It was important to me and I took time out of my schedule to really do it. As a young person, I think it's good for my friends to see me doing it because it encourages them to do the same thing. With such an important election coming up, it is important for us—this is our generation. This is what my children are going to be going through. I'm determined to do what I can as an individual to promote what I believe in.

Other words and phrases such as “role model” and “obligation,” “it starts with you,” and “the student voice is the strongest” emerged during the interviews. These suggest that these students believe their voice matters in the current political system.

Four of the students, however, also expressed frustration with their peers who demonstrated to them apathy and laziness. Their faith in the political system suggests that they believe they differ from their peers in external efficacy. They shared that they have heard many of their peers lament that their vote doesn't matter, or that their elected officials do not really want to hear their opinion through a letter or a phone call. In turn, they believe that they are good role models for their peers. They shared experiences of being involved with their peers in order to help them understand the political process. They reported that they argued that it is important to carefully choose what candidate you support and hold candidates accountable. Finally, they said that they worked with others to show that, when individuals unite around a purpose or a candidate, they can make a difference. They said they believed that they matter and can make a difference—now and in the future.

These students also shared a concern that many of their peers perceive themselves as disenfranchised by the system. Steve shared that his perception of why his fellow students are not involved is that they don't think their vote counts. Steve believes that the lack of involvement is because candidates don't focus on issues that are of greatest interest to a younger demographic. He was not alone in this observation. Five of the six interviewees shared some version of either apathy or disenfranchisement as reasons others did not participate in politics, even at the most basic level of voting.

Information. In addition to four students having a major or minor in political science and three relating gaining an understanding of basic political processes through high school government classes, all of the students demonstrated comfort and understanding of political processes. Mark spoke about the importance of being able to understand the foundation of the political system to his career path. He said, "I think having a knowledge of politics and policy and the way that our system works will be beneficial when I go to law school and will help me be an effective policy maker." Denise described political knowledge as critical for understanding the needs of underserved minority populations. Serving these populations is her motivation for a career as a lawyer. Steve, though not a political science major, found that involvement in student government since middle school enhanced his understanding of politics, because it is a "microcosm" of national politics. College student government, in particular, mirrors national government by having aspects of all three branches of government.

When asked about why these students believe that other students do not get involved, lack of information was also a piece of the answer in the point of view of four

of the interviewees, including all three of the four students with a major or minor in political science. Susan shared a story about talking to other students about calling all of her congressmen about an issue she was passionate about. She described explaining to them that they wouldn't actually talk to the congressman, it would probably be an intern or a staff person and then walked them through their first calls until they learned how easy it was. William described his observation of other students as, "They don't understand really is how politics works, they don't understand what the different political fields and systems are, and what the levels are. You have someone teach it to them. Maybe they could have learned that in government [class]." Evelyn also lamented the lack of civic education she had prior to coming to college and that she observes with her peers:

When I was in high school, a small private school, it was an elective, but nobody ever took it. It was like debate—if their parents made them take it then they took it but other than that, it was like who cares. I look back and wish I would have taken it. I yelled at my mom, "Why didn't you make me take it?" It should be something that we are educated in. Its something that I firmly believe is just as core to my being as knowing how to speak English, add and multiply.

Evelyn and William's observations are consistent with the literature noting a general decline since the 1940's in civic education knowledge and understanding of how political systems work (Delli, et al., 1996, Galston, 2001).

Party Identification. All of the interviewees expressed affiliation with the Democratic Party or voiced a liberal political perspective. One student described himself as a libertarian while having many liberal beliefs. Though they shared having strong party or ideological convictions, three of the interviewees expressed the importance of

“doing the research” to ensure that the candidate you choose to support shares your views and is the best candidate for the job. Steve shared, “I’m not one of those people who is going to support the Democrat at all times...It’s not just because they’re a Democrat that I’ll vote for them.” He went on to express disdain for people who choose their vote solely down party lines, without doing research, and making an informed decision.

While strongly promoting the research required for casting an informed vote, Susan nevertheless concluded, “Personally, I think independents just can’t make a choice. Stand for something, pick one and make a choice.” Evelyn shared a different perspective on what it means to be an independent. “I registered as a Democrat at the caucus, but I’m an Independent. I try not to be so blinded by political party. If a Republican has core values that are like mine, it’s rare, but if there is one that is in sync with mine, I don’t want to not vote for them because they’re a Republican.”

I interpret these stances to reflect a balance between having strong beliefs and being open to new information. They also reflect emphasis on the issues that are important to the individual, rather than fully developed, life-long commitment to a single party. The interviews were consistent with the findings of Niemi and Jennings (1991) and Franklin (1984) who both found that parents influence party identification until early adulthood or late adolescence when individuals begin to evaluate party affiliation based on what issues are important to them. Franklin (1984) and Franklin and Jackson (1983) found policy preferences continue to be the strongest factor in party affiliation over people’s lifetimes. However, as people age, their willingness to change parties lags at least a term or more behind policy preference shifts as they build more experience and

understanding of their chosen party and as they settle into patterns that are comfortable for them.

Experiences

In the model and research presented in Chapter II, five types of experiences were related to the development of political involvement outcomes for college students. In addition to these findings, two themes emerged that were not captured by the initial conceptual framework. Processes of socio-cultural identity and cognitive development influenced the development of political involvement. Both of these themes are related to aspects of human development.

The experiences that I presented in the integrated model of student development and political involvement theories included workplace involvement, academic involvement, non-political student organization membership, service activity, and participation in religious institutions. Campus based leadership development programs were also identified as experiences related to political participation. As outlined in the presentation of the model, it is through participation in non-political activities such as these that students learn about opportunities for involvement and gain the skills necessary to be effective in these activities. Involvement in non-political student organizations was the only category for which there emerged information linking social relationships created during these experiences led to political involvement. How these experiences led to the development of civic skills, however, was a strong theme for workplace, academic

and non-political student organization involvement. Meanwhile, service activity and religious participation was not linked by the students to any civic skill development.

Human Development

Cognitive Development. A new area that was emerged during the interviews was the impact of classroom experiences and debates on students' epistemological development. How information is evaluated and how beliefs are developed was a content area that emerged in anywhere from one to five stories from four different interviewees. Three of these interviewees were from the low pre-college group and all four of the students studying political science contributed to this theme through their interview stories. These students cited examples of specific experiences that suggested a move from dualistic (Perry, 1970) or absolute knowing (Magolda, 1994) to more complex ways of knowing that include the ability to recognize validity in multiple competing viewpoints, emerging away from viewing an instructor as the sole authority on a subject, developing the ability to take and explain a position, and gaining the ability to evaluate sources of information.

One particular example of this that came up in several interviews was the importance of evaluating political information based upon one's own values and taking stands that might be different from the political views of their parents. Evelyn's story provided an example of this process:

So, what happened was that we were at the dinner table at Christmas dinner and she [grandmother] brought up something about politics. I'm really trying to encourage my family to not shy away from it. It's healthy to talk about politics; debate is wonderful. I'm really trying to encourage it and make light of it. Everyone takes it so seriously. You know, religion and politics, nobody talks about it. I'm trying to change that. It's OK if

we have different points of view, it doesn't matter. I think she knew I was voting for Obama, but didn't know why. So to have her hear me say this is why I'm voting for him, this is important to me and this is how he feels about it and that's why I'm voting for him. To have her sit back and say, "I still don't agree with you but I accept the fact." And that's all I'm asking for. Just as they're entitled to their opinions, I'm entitled to mine. And, I respect the fact that someone is making a commitment to say this is why I'm voting for somebody. I think my whole family was pretty impressed that I could sit here and speak fairly eloquently about why I'm supporting him. I'm not just voting for him because I think he's cool and wasn't just jumping on the bandwagon like everybody else is.

Her story demonstrated several of the cognitive development processes that have emerged through her collective collegiate and political identity development processes.

In contrast to these experiences, when discussing the reasons they think that their peers do not get involved in politics, several interviewees expressed that the inability of their peers to formulate, substantiate and articulate their perspectives or opinions is a significant detriment to political involvement. Mark described this through this story:

There was a girl [in my national security policy class] who wore a shirt to every single class, "No Blood for Oil". She looked like she was hurting for a shower for a long time. But she wore her stupid shirt to every single class. I said to her, "Explain to me what your shirt means." She said, "Well, you know, no blood for oil." I responded, "I can read but what does it mean?" and she couldn't provide me with an explanation and that was just another nail in the coffin to my association with people my age. There are just so few people that even in the political science major that are really clear about what they believe in.

Mark described dialogue and the ability to exchange opinions as one of the most influential learning tools in his classes. It was clear in several of his stories that the ability to evaluate and substantiate positions is very important to Mark in both his own identity and how he relates with others around the exchange of knowledge. Susan also expressed that the ability to know what's going on in the world, interpret information

from varying media venues and engage in educated conversations about politics generated a sense of pride. This story also substantiates Torney-Purta's (2002) findings that dialogue and discussion in a classroom setting is an indicator of future voting behavior.

Just as the exchange of knowledge and the ability to engage in argument were important to Mark, so was the ability to evaluate information obtained from professors, peers and the media. The importance of this ability was expressed by all but one of his peers. While Mark got his news from National Public Radio and the British Broadcasting Corporation, Denise utilized *The Economist* and Evelyn purchased the books published by each candidate to read before determining who she would support in the current presidential campaign. Mark and Evelyn also utilized the internet to get information on candidates and political issues.

Several shared examples of the importance of accessing primary source documents rather than relying on what they perceived as biased media presentations of information. For example, Susan shared a story that highlights her awareness of the influence of the media.

People don't do their research and they rely on...what they hear on TV. Sound bytes are the worst. That killed me, the Howard Dean sound byte. I have a friend that was actually there and didn't even notice when he did it. It was a great rally, then we got home and the only thing on TV was the two-second 'YeeeHaaaw.' It kills me how the media could twist a great rally, great speech into a sound byte that ended a presidential campaign.

This concern was shared by Mark who, in lamenting the lack of engagement he perceives with other young people, pled for them to, "Turn off your stupid American Idol and read a newspaper. I don't want to recommend CNN.com anymore, but go on BBC and read

about what's going on in the world. It's not all pleasant, but you need to know."

William also believed that media only portrays the negative side of what politicians are "after" and that it is a "popularity game." He went on to say that it is important to understand how politics really works and where to get good information.

Socio-Cultural Identity Development. Another significant theme in the interviews was the identification of marginalizing experiences as an important part of why three of the individuals either got involved or stayed involved in political activities. For the two whose identity issues were the impetus for their involvement in politics, they were seeking a supportive community that could provide a platform for advocacy. For each of them, they hold career aspirations that relate to continuing to advocate for equality through the practice of law. Denise described the impact of a work experience at a community center in a low-income part of the city as the reason she was committed to serving "underserved minority communities". She recalled:

When I went there I was still young. I did a lot of growing up and was able to see a lot of things. It was really bad because a lot of people in that area do die from gang violence. While I was there I got close to a lot of people. And in those 3 years, 8 people died. They were all my age and younger. My ex-boyfriend's little brother died to gang violence while we were together. It was this constant of horrific events happening. It's like a whole different world. That's what really sparked my interest.

Atkinson, Morten and Sue (1998) describe five stages of minority identity development. The first stage is conformity, where individuals strive to be more like the dominant culture and put down their own culture. In stage two, dissonance, the individual becomes more aware of racism and begins to be more aware of the gap between their perception of the minority group to which they belong and the perception

of the dominant group. As a result the individual moves between stances of self-appreciation and self-deprecation. In the third stage, the individual is focused on overlooked value of their culture and begins to struggle with the conflict of how to then make sense of the experiences of other minority groups. In this stage they often hold a strong negative view of the dominant culture. In the fourth and fifth stages, the individual moves toward making judgments based upon individuals and appreciation of all groups of people.

This struggle between understanding the experiences of individuals as both minority groups and dominant groups was evident in these interviews. Each of the students who spoke about their cultural, sexual or gender identity as an aspect of their political involvement identified some aspects of understanding their experience through both the lenses of their minority group status and the places in their identity from which they experience privilege. For example, the white, gay male understood the minority experience through his experience as a gay male. However, he could also empathize with the experience of other cultures and the privileges afforded him as both white and male. He shared stories of how he came to understand the experiences of women and non-white cultures in America that demonstrate his movement toward understanding both his own identity and others' experiences. For example, he said, "I realize how much easier my life has been because I'm white and a male than that of other people. I don't see how people can think it is inherently fair for people to succeed based on the color of their skin and their gender."

Denise also shared a story that demonstrated her increasing awareness of the impact of her ethnicity on her experiences and how this experience shaped her understanding of cultural identity.

I had always been passionate because being a minority myself, but having a mother who is white—you know blond hair, blue eyes. Nobody ever puts us together. And then my father wasn't around a lot so I was always with my mother and because of that it was like I never treated any different. Then, when I went to a different element, a different side of [the city], it was like, "no, you're a minority." It was more so apparent and oppressive from the authority figures in that area. As far as the police and everything I felt really oppressed in that area. I've never been pulled over so many times in my life as I have been over there. I was so sad to see because I know how I would get pulled over there and how they would talk to me versus being pulled over in my area where they would treat me with respect and like I was educated. It was almost like when I was over there, I was a product of the environment even though nobody knows who I was. OK, because you're on the west side. They just assume you're uneducated and don't know anything. That disheartened me. From that point on I really think that people need to step up and be the voice of people that don't have that, don't know how to achieve that or anything. From then on I've been really, really passionate about minority rights and uplifting those people up like every other citizen.

All three of these interviewees also expressed a strong appreciation and awareness of the implication of culture on this particular Democratic Party candidate nomination process. In this nomination process, there were several white males, a white female, a Hispanic male, and an African American male competing for the nomination eventually secured by Barak Obama. Denise described the nomination process as "historic." Evelyn discussed experiencing pressure from family, friends, and even strangers, to support the white, female candidate because of her "identity compatibility."

I can't argue with someone who says they won't vote for [Obama] because he's a minority. I can't do that. That's a belief. That's a personal opinion. That's rooted really deep down. So, until I can debate with somebody on another facet [of his qualifications], I can really get

[stubborn] that way. I've also seen a lot of "why are you voting for Obama, why aren't you voting for Hilary because you're a woman?"

Her response shows additional understanding of both the experience of racism and her personal commitment to determine the candidate who best matches her beliefs regardless of his or her culture.

Social Connections Leading to Political Involvement

Denise summed up the two examples of non-political activities that led to political involvement opportunities. "Being in my classes and being involved on campus, a lot more opportunities have come my way to do things politically, like the debate on campus and when they're doing rallies, canvassing, phone banking or anything like that." The mechanisms through which they found out about opportunities within these venues through already involved friends and presentations by campaign organizers.

Opportunities Denise learned about in classes included how to get involved in the Democratic National Convention and working on a professors' gubernatorial campaign. She also learned about a "grass roots lobbying day" from involvement in a women's leadership institute hosted on campus. A fellow student involved in student government was the mechanism for Steve's awareness of political involvement opportunities. The next section, the development of civic skills through non-political activities generated many more examples.

Non-Political Experiences and the Development of Civic Skills

All of the students interviewed in this study were involved in multiple activities or on campus, both remunerated and unpaid. Table 3 outlines each student and their

involvement in non-political work activities, student organizations, and campus sponsored programs.

Table 1. Involvement in Non-Political On-Campus Activities

Interviewee	Non-political student organization(s)
Denise	Multicultural sorority member Volunteer service council member National Education for Women's Leadership institute leadership board Student Employee for the university president's Chief of Staff
Evelyn	Student newspaper student representative Multicultural Assistant in the residence halls
Mark	National Society of Collegiate Scholars president Chamber and symphony orchestras
Steve	Fraternity treasurer Student Government officer LeaderShape Institute alumni
Susan	Student Government program director Student activities council member LeaderShape Institute alumna
William	National Society of Black Engineers secretary American Society of Civil Engineers secretary Leadership Project House member Student recreation center employee

Workplace Involvement. Examples of work experiences provided by the students in the interviews took two forms. All of the interviewees held or recently held jobs while attending school. An internship experience also came out as a significant skill building experience preparing one individual for her position with a political campaign.

Employment. The interviewees held a wide range of on and off campus jobs. Two held paid positions in student government. Two held paid positions in political organizations in the community. Two had both on and off campus jobs simultaneously. Other on-campus jobs included teaching fitness classes in the recreation center, working as an office assistant for the university president's chief of staff and planning educational programs in the residence halls. Off campus jobs included working in a clothing resale shop, a cell-phone store, a property management group, a local community center and a bank. One also worked as a substitute teacher. Although the variety of positions held by these students does not readily lend itself to the generation of significant themes, Verba, et al. (1995) found that any type of work has the potential to both enhance skills that prepare individuals for political participation and create the types of interactions between people that connect individuals to opportunities to participate. William, for example, shared that his experiences in giving presentations and teaching health and fitness topics in his job related to persuasion skills utilized when working on campaigns. Evelyn and Susan also found that on-campus jobs provided a venue to talk about cultural and political differences and to present programs that facilitated discussion among their fellow students on political topics.

Internships. One of the unique and particularly powerful work experiences that came up in the interviews was effectiveness of an internship in developing transferable skills. The only individual interviewed who shared a college internship experience was Evelyn. Her experience, however, held many elements that related to how she came to be effective in her political participation and, thus is included as an important work experience. In her internship, she managed projects, ran meetings and worked with others to generate enthusiasm for projects. She related what she learned as, “an amazing asset, especially running meetings for [her chosen political candidate]. Planning and organizing, staying on task, having an agenda and following it...people think it’s easy but it really does take practice.”

Academic Experiences. Three of the students interviewed were political science majors, two were business majors and one was a civil engineering major. It was unexpected to me that all three of the political science majors were less engaged in politics in high school than the other three interviewees. All but one of these three interviewees articulated connections between their academic pursuits and their political involvement. These connections were both direct and indirect. Interestingly, two of the political science majors planned to use their major to go to law school. The third chose political science because the institution does not offer a degree in international relations. The individual who chose political science as a minor did so for “sheer passion” for the content. Although the civil engineering major did not directly relate a political element to his studies, he conveyed a strong sense of societal purpose that he believed could be achieved through his chosen field. William said,

I have this idea that you can combine cultural, modern and traditional styles all in one in both design and structure and it will create a well-balanced and better society. Better and stronger structures. To do that, I have to know every culture. I have to go around and talk to people so I can make decisions as a representative of an open society.

The three students who are majoring in political science attributed varying degrees of how much their major led to their involvement. Mark shared that because he is a political science major his life is dominated by keeping up with the news. He also found his classes helpful in continuing to evaluate information to develop his political identity. Meanwhile, as mentioned in the last section, Denise shared only examples of how her classes introduced her to involvement opportunities. Susan expressed an indirect relationship between her political science and her involvement by expressing, “I wouldn’t say that what I took in from classes helped as far as my involvement. It maybe gave me more things to talk about, more issues to research, more talking points, and more understanding of the process, which helped me to get more involved.”

Although these findings are surprising, given the national information asserting that political engagement is not an intentional outcome of most political science curriculums (Hunter & Brisbin, 2002), these students all mentioned the influencing factor of one specific professor who role modeled political engagement. This professor served the state as the legislature’s minority leader. She also ran for governor and in the 2008 election defeated an incumbent to secure a seat in the United States House of Representatives. Hunter and Brisbin (2002) found that faculty political engagement was

the strongest factor related to the outcome of encouraging political participation outcomes.

Non-Political Student Organizations. The interviewed students were involved in a wide variety of student organizations. In fact, all of them were involved in some sort of non-political student organization while only half were involved in political student organizations.

When asked to relate whether their participation in these organizations led to political involvement, several shared that it did either directly or indirectly. These non-political organizations included clubs related to their majors, campus activity boards, student government, Greek letter social organizations (fraternities and sororities), honor societies, and arts learning about other opportunities, or indirectly through informal individual contact with students who were already involved. Half of them were also involved in student political organizations that I will discuss later as a form of political involvement. These results support the literature that generally supports that certain types of student organizations, particularly instrumental organization (those organizations whose purposes are beyond sharing an interest) participation can result in higher likelihood to vote or be involved in politics (Kirlin, 2003). Two types of skills emerged in the interviews, organizational skills and interpersonal skills.

Operational Skills. All of the students shared examples of non-political activities that helped build the skills they needed for future political involvement. Examples included organizing campus events, leading a student organization, completing reports

and mobilizing people. Mark described the skills he gained as president of a student organization as,

...that's all I do, planning and organizing. It's like overseeing a company or a town or anything but on a micro level... There's always some presentation to put together, some kind of deadline that needs to be met, or something that needs to be filled out, somebody needs to be called.

Interpersonal Skills. Interpersonal skills also emerged as a theme as the subjects shared examples such as the “diplomacy” required in maintaining successful relationships in a sorority, talking to people to encourage involvement and being honest and authentic. Steve, for example said that he has learned that, “all leadership is relational.” These examples demonstrate the importance they place on effective interpersonal skills and relationships.

Campus Sponsored Leadership Development Programs. One experience that was not explored in the development of the conceptual framework that emerged from the interviews was the impact of campus sponsored leadership development programs. Several students were involved in intentional learning opportunities sponsored by the university. Although these were leadership development related programs, the interviewees related them to their political involvement. Steve and Susan participated in leadership retreats and William in an intentional leadership living-learning community. Steve summarized the lessons of authenticity and integrity learned at a leadership institute as, “Just try to have good morals and integrity, you'll go a lot further in life than you could without it.” He also related this to political involvement as being a key element in canvassing—being convincing while staying honest and not “telling them

what they want to hear.” Both Steve and William identified these programs as mechanisms contributing to their political involvement.

Service Participation. Participation in volunteer activities was a common part of these students’ college experience, though not one that they related strongly to their current practices of political involvement. Five of the six interviewees reported participating in one or two community service activities. Their volunteer activities ranged from working with homeless youth, volunteering with Big Brothers and Big Sisters, tutoring in the local schools, raising money for philanthropic causes, and working in a soup kitchen. This was not unanticipated, given the findings in the literature that identified strong links between community service and many other civic outcomes, but failed to consistently link either community service or service learning directly to political engagement outcomes (Einfield & Collings, 1998; Galston, 2001; Kelleher, 2002; Mathews, 1996; Myers-Lipton, 1998).

Religious Institutions. One interviewee mentioned that she attended church and helped her mother with teaching confirmation. She did not, however, relate this experience to her political involvement. None of the other interviewees when asked about their on and off campus involvement mentioned any examples related to participation in religious institutions. These findings also affirm Andolina, et al.’s (2006) study results that found no connection between college student political participation and religious involvement.

In summary, the addition of the theme of human development from the interview data adds an important element to understanding college student political involvement.

Cognitive development and the ability to understand and articulate points of view, along with socio-cultural identity development and the mutual processes of understanding how identity fits into greater social and political experiences are key elements of the interview data. As expected in the conceptual framework students drew many connections between the skills they gained in their classes, in jobs, in non-political student organizations, and in co-curricular leadership development programs to skills they utilized in their political involvement. They also had many examples of how these experiences introduced them to political participation activities through involvement on campus and political science classes. The lack of findings to support connections between political involvement and service religious participation is also an important conclusion from the data.

Political Involvement

The conceptual framework presented in Chapter II from the integration of student development and political development models identified three types of political involvement activities, electoral behavior, political voice, and attentiveness. As established in the quantitative data from which the interview sample was drawn, these interviewees exceeded their peers in many behaviors in these categories.

Electoral Behavior

Of the six interviewees, five were involved in some type of political participation separate from political engagement. Of these five, all have been involved in some type of campaign activity with two taking on intensive leadership roles. Three of the

interviewees have been involved in the college Young Democrats organization. Table 4 provides examples of each interviewee and their political activities.

Table 2. Interviewee Political Participation

Interviewee	Non-political student organization(s)
Denise	Member of Young Democrats State governor candidate campaign volunteer
Evelyn	President of Students for Barak Obama Member of Young Democrats
Steve	Kerry/Edwards campaign volunteer
Susan	State President of Young Democrats Former Executive Director of Young Democrats President of ONE Campaign President of Students for Israel Kerry/Edwards campaign volunteer Local congressional district candidate campaign volunteer American Israeli Public Affairs Committee local organization
William	Sheriff candidate campaign volunteer Caucus volunteer for Democratic Party

Campaign Work. All but one of the interviewed students has been directly involved in campaign work. Two worked for the Kerry/Edwards campaign. Two were volunteering at varying levels with the Obama campaign. Although involvement in the high profile national campaign organizations was more common, these students were also involved in local political races. For example, one volunteered for a candidate for sheriff in high school and one volunteered for a candidate in a Lieutenant Governor race. They identified their contributions to the campaigns as canvassing, voter registration, organizing rallies, working at phone banks and staffing the caucus. They learned how to talk to people about their candidates and how to generate enthusiasm among their peers

and in their community. Susan, Evelyn and Steve all shared examples of tabling on campus or presenting programs designed to persuade others around a political issue.

Leadership Positions in Political Organizations. In addition to participating in campaign activities, two students held leadership roles for campaigns. One was the president of the university chapter for Students for Barak Obama. The other had an impressive resume of leadership positions in a variety of campaigns, in addition to work for the state democratic party. She was the state president of one of the national organizations for young Democrats. This included representing the state at the Democratic National Convention.

Student Political Organizations. As expected, these students were involved in political student organizations including the college Young Democrats and student campaign organizations. Not surprisingly, all of the references of members of the college Young Democrats were related to that organization as a source for information about other political involvement opportunities. Additionally, one student was involved in a political awareness group with both on and off campus organizations.

It was also clear that once involved in one political activity, the opportunity to do more quickly arises. Not surprisingly, participation in the college Young Democrats organization led to participation in the Kerry/Edwards campaign for one student and the Obama/Biden campaign for another.

Aspirations for Future Involvement. Three of the students I interviewed had aspirations for future involvement ranging from continuing to working for additional

campaigns to running for state office or, eventually serving on the United States Supreme Court.

Political Voice Activities

Examples of political voice activities include things such as canvassing, petitioning, boycotting, communicating with elected officials, and protesting (Lopez, et al., 2006). The students shared a wide variety of examples of staffing tables on campus (Susan and Evelyn) and canvassing (Susan, William and Steve). The two students involved in student government exercised their political voice on a local level through advocacy for student issues such as rising tuition and the impact of state budget cuts on higher education. One student, Steve, even took the initiative to organize a rally, contact all of the members of the university's Board of Regents, and initiated a student government resolution articulating his concern regarding state budget cuts for higher education. On a broader level, Susan, as President of the campus ONE campaign, a anti-poverty advocacy organization, called all of her elected officials to register her desire to see them support the identified goals of the organization.

Attentiveness

Almost every interviewee commented that their involvement included staying aware of current political issues. They possessed a strong sense that understanding political issues and their impact on individuals, the community, the country, and the world truly matters. Three of the interviewees also expressed significant frustration with their peers who do not connect political issues with personal impact. Susan reported questioning her friends, "Do you not realize how much of your life is effected by what

your state legislator decides to vote on, or what your county commissioner decides to approve?” She went on to say that she was frustrated about the disconnect among her fellow students who, on one hand find frustration with rising gas prices and on the other hand, cannot identify ways that political issues impact their lives. Evelyn expressed greater optimism. Her sense was that more of her peers are becoming interested as evidenced by them sending her e-mails of articles they read, updates and notes regarding the upcoming election and ongoing campaigns. She recounts,

They see me, they know how involved I am and they’ll send me [*New York Times*] articles with a note. Things like, ‘I saw this and thought of you.’ The fact is that they’re paying attention, saw things, read it. It’s really cool with the primaries and everything. They send updates and congratulations notes on the wins and sorry about the loss. I get so excited when I walk around the residence halls and see Hilary Clinton sticker or Barak Obama billboard or McCain—anything! I just say, oh good, people care! That’s all I’m asking. My main priority, beyond getting a Democrat elected is getting young people interested in politics.

Summary

Through these interviews and subsequent data analysis, I found two unanticipated themes, cognitive development and socio-cultural identity development, that were mitigating factors through which experiences may be more likely to result in political involvement. I also found the interviews did not substantiate the original conceptual mode’s expectation that there would be connections between political participation and both service participation and involvement in religious institutions. These additions and deletions will be addressed in Chapter V in the discussion and revision of the conceptual model.

The interviews did affirm many aspects of the original conceptual model. In the discussion of inputs, setting the stage for political involvement, the interviews provided little information to shed light on time and money as aspect that provide a foundation that allows for political involvement. All of the elements of political engagement were found in the interview data. These categories included interest in politics, a sense of efficacy, solid political information and party identification. Within the theme of developing interest in politics, family interactions and high school government courses were factors for several students. Students' sense of efficacy equated to both a personal belief in their ability to make a difference and the potential of political systems to be effective. The interviewees demonstrated both competencies in understanding political systems and knowledge of sources of ongoing information on current political issues. Finally, all of the students had either a specific political party or an ideological affiliation.

The interviews supported the conceptual framework, identifying strong relationships between non-political experiences and political involvement. The theme of human development was supported by examples related to both cognitive and socio-cultural development. The data included examples of experiences that led to the development of more complex ways of knowing and of understanding knowledge. The findings also demonstrated an increased understanding of both minority and dominant cultures as a way of increasing self-understanding. These human development processes occurred in tandem with a wide variety of experiences that led to political participation.

In the data on college experiences and how they led to political involvement, some connections were made between experiences such as student organization political

involvement and political science classes as mechanisms for learning about political involvement volunteer opportunities through friends and through presentations by organizations seeking volunteers.

Involvement in non-political activities also led to significant outcomes in the development of skills needed to effectively participate in political activities. Work experiences, including on and off campus employment and internships, helped students learn how to run meetings, make persuasive presentations, and present programs and activities for their peers on political issues. Class experiences, particularly in political science, provided a forum for the development of skills in discussion and debate and kept students abreast of current political issues. Political science classrooms were also forums for students to learn about volunteer political activities. Finally, an unanticipated theme in this area was the impact of a faculty member's role as a state senator, candidate for governor and candidate for the United States House of Representatives.

Non-political student organizations were also a venue for the development of skills utilized in political participation. These skills included both operational skills and interpersonal skills. Operational skills included abilities related to planning and organizing such as running meetings, implementing campus activities and writing reports. Interpersonal skills included maintaining relationships and motivating others. One aspect of non-political student activity involvement that emerged was participation on campus sponsored leadership development programs. The participants in these programs linked aspects such as authenticity, increased involvement, and personal integrity were vital skills for political participation.

The political involvement outcomes resulting from student political engagement and non-political activities included outcomes in all of the political involvement elements. The findings supported that electoral behaviors, political voice activities and attentiveness are all relevant outcomes for studying college student political involvement. Electoral behavior was demonstrated through volunteering for a wide variety of political campaigns, leadership in local political organizations, and involvement in student political organizations. Political voice activities included canvassing, issue advocacy, and contacting elected officials. Attentiveness to current political issues was also a dominant theme.

Chapter V will address how these findings relate to the original research questions, including reviewing the data points where there were differences between the high and low pre-college political involvement cases. In Chapter V, I will also summarize how these findings contribute to a revised model integrating student development and political involvement theories.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research questions for this study focused on presumed differences between politically active students who had limited political involvement before college and those with high pre-college political involvement.

Research Question Findings

1. How do politically active students who had limited political involvement before attending college describe the impact of the college experience on their political involvement?

In the original survey used to identify participants for this study, the two highest scoring participants on the questions related to college political involvement were in the low pre-college group of the study. This led me to wonder whether or not differences would be explained more by current involvement level than by pre-college involvement level. In fact, there were no differences between the low pre-college involvement groups that were true for all three participants and not found in the high pre-college group. The research question was written on an assumption that these differences would exist. Without these differences, the findings of the study do not uphold either this or the next research question.

Only one theme was found exclusively in the low pre-college group. Two of the three low pre-college participation interviewees took a high school government course in their senior year and specifically credited the power of an influential teacher on their enthusiasm for politics. Upon entering college, they cited this experience as pivotal to their interest and involvement in politics. One student who was in the high pre-college engagement group indicated his high school government course as the impetus for his involvement but credited it to the significant experiential learning components that were imbedded in the curriculum. These findings suggests that developing an interest in politics through any mechanism, even late in the high school experience, may have a positive impact on future political involvement in college.

2. *How do politically active students who were highly politically active before attending college describe the impact of the college experience on their political involvement?*

In the original survey used to identify participants for this study, the two lowest scoring participants selected for interviews were in the high pre-college group of the study. These two individuals participated in more direct political participation in high school than in college, though they remained highly engaged. Their engagement, however, was strongest in the attentiveness behaviors of keeping up with political and current issues. They are also the only two students who did not either major or minor in political science. They drew the most connections between student organization and employment experiences and their political involvement. These experiences, however, were not unique to this group, nor were they markedly different from the low pre-college group.

One theme within this group that differed from the low pre-college group was the impact of family discussions about politics and political involvement. This was characteristic of two of the three interviewees and not present in the low pre-college group.

As with research question one, the assumption of the research question that there would be differences between the groups was not substantiated, therefore the research question cannot be answered. However, one observation that I made from these two research questions is that college experiences are significant in the continuing involvement of students in political activities. The two areas where there were some differences, pre-college family involvement around politics and the impact of an effective high school government teacher were both related to mechanisms for political engagement. There were no differences exclusively explained by differences between the two groups that impacted their ability to learn from experiences and apply them to their political involvement.

3. *What are the similarities and differences in students' reported experiences of political involvement in college between students whose political involvement was limited and those who were highly active?*

The only three differences found between the two groups was in the level of activity in college, in reported pre-college experiences of family discussions about politics, and in the powerful influence of a high school government instructor. I conclude that, for an interested and engaged student, college academic, work, and extracurricular activities are effective in contributing to the development of political involvement outcomes. College

political involvement can be influenced by college experiences and is not predicated upon a pre-college predisposition toward political involvement.

4. *How do the student responses in this study contribute to the understanding of student learning as it pertains to college student development through political involvement?*

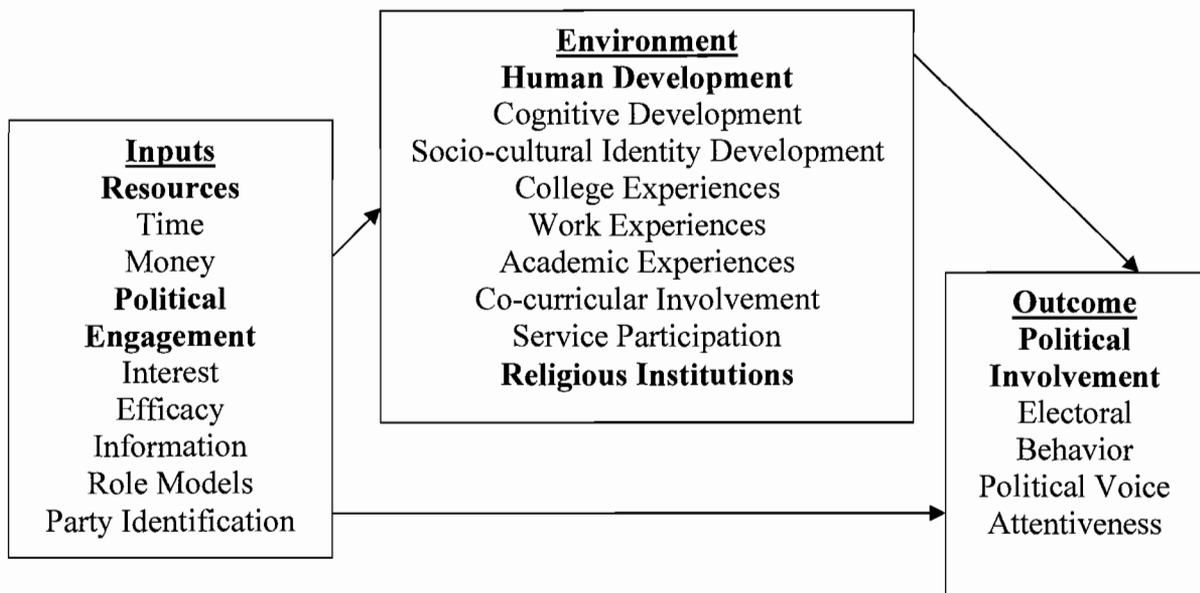
Most of the findings of this study upheld the combined conceptual model drawn from the review of the literature. However, several new categories emerged and several categories were not substantiated through these interviews.

The interview data analysis affirms the approach of the integration of Astin's theory of college impact (1970) and Verba, et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model as a way of understanding college student as defined by CIRCLE. It was not, however, sufficient to explain all of the aspects of college student political involvement. Nor were all of the aspects that were anticipated relevant to these students. These variances can be explained by two factors. First, college provides unique work, learning and extra-curricular activities for students. Students were able to identify a wide range of opportunities where they were building specific skills that they could transfer to political involvement. These experiences included internships as a type of work experiences and campus-based leadership development programs. Students also identified specific teachers who influenced their political involvement, both at the high school level and at the college level. In contrast, themes that were strong links to political participation for the adults in Verba, et al.'s study (1995), such as service participation and religious institution involvement were not present for these students.

Second, isolating the study to such an early stage of the lifetime of a politically active person places their political development concurrent with other developmental tasks common to young adulthood. Cognitive and socio-cultural identity development processes common to young adulthood played a role in the development of both political identity and the student's choice to participate in activities. Conflicts sometimes arose between these developmental frameworks and students were able to identify both the conflicts and their responses to them. Financial resources directed toward political organizations were not a factor in the political activities of these students.

These findings lead me to a revised model to include the additional findings on development and on the effects of particular teachers. I did not remove the categories that did not appear in this study because of the exploratory nature of my small sample (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Revised Model of College Student Political Involvement.



Study Limitations

There are some limitations to this study that suggest the need for additional research to affirm this revised model as an effective framework for studying and understanding college student political involvement. First, only six interview participants is a very small sample. Although a great deal of redundancy was achieved in the interviews, additional interviewing would provide an opportunity to both evaluate the strengths of the themes that were generated and to rule out those themes that did not emerge from this small data set.

Second, institutional factors can be strong determinants for the effectiveness of an institution in the encouragement of any student development outcome. The design of the study, therefore, has the limitation of being conducted at one institution. The effects of college experiences on the development of political involvement outcomes could easily vary between institutions and types of institutions. Students attending small, private, liberal arts colleges, for example, may have very different pathways to political involvement outcomes than those at the type of large, urban, public institution where this study was conducted.

Third, this study could be improved by incorporating more robust triangulation methods such as involving the participants in more frequent member checking, utilizing multiple interviewers and multiple data analysts. Sharing the findings with experts in the fields of both political science and college student development would also strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although two of the research questions proposed in this study were based upon an assumption of differences between two groups that was not observed, the broader purpose of this study was achieved. *The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the development of political attitudes and behaviors in current undergraduate academic life.* As this study undertook this purpose, the most robust finding is its contribution to the understanding of student learning as it pertains to college student development through political involvement (research question 4). The model of college student political involvement that is presented offers college educators a framework for the study of college student political involvement and may, with additional research, offer a model for the development of strong educational programs that support the development of political attitudes and behavior for undergraduate students. The lack of meaningful differences between the embedded cases also emphasizes how important college experiences can be in developing political attitudes and behaviors. Lifetime behaviors and attitudes towards political involvement are shaped during these important developmental years.

As a result of the limitations of this study, understanding college student political involvement would be enhanced through future research testing the model through additional studies at diverse institutions with larger numbers of participants. Understanding differences between the experiences of students in more and less politically active states, more and less religious states and more community service oriented states could produce helpful information for understanding college student

political attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, studying the impact of varying types of institutions—small liberal arts, religious, rural and land grant institutions could generate very different findings. The development of a method of empirical testing of the model through multiple regression, nonparametric cluster analysis or nested logit models would also be an asset to the continued development of a theory to understand college student political involvement.

Further studies exploring the dynamics of cognitive development, teachers and pedagogy in both the cognitive and political development should be further explored. More studies that examine the role of high school government classes and college political science classes in developing political outcomes would also benefit this field of research.

Breaking down the socio-cultural identity development to examine more carefully the gender and race dynamics that impact political participation would also enhance our understanding of political involvement. More research specifically exploring the impact of minority and dominant culture experiences as they relate to political attitudes and behaviors would add to the volumes of research on minority identity development and to the research on college students' political development.

Finally, further studies on the relationship between college student campaign giving, religious participation and community service on political involvement are needed to determine whether or not these non-findings persist across broader student populations.

Recommendations for Changes in Practice

Several recommendations for educational practice can be made from the findings of this study:

- Educational venues, through both curricular and co-curricular programs, should be provided to ensure basic civic competency among college students.
- Service learning and curricular programs should be developed with learning outcomes that specifically promote political involvement.
- College admissions office staff should develop programs and admission processes that promote the mission of the institution to contribute to civic learning and universities should collaborate with high schools to promote civic knowledge as a competency required for success in meeting the expectations of the university.
- Student organization development programs, on campus programs, internships, employment opportunities and residence hall living should continue to provide educational development interventions which build skills that promote organizational and interpersonal effectiveness, as these skills are a strong asset in the movement from being interested in politics to political involvement.

Conclusions

With additional research and more data to support this model of understanding political involvement of college students, college and universities may find that being more intentional about encouraging political attitudes and behaviors of college students will help realize the educated democracy envisioned by Thomas Jefferson in the founding

of our nation and the public education system. The overwhelming enthusiasm of college students and young people demonstrated in the 2008 election of Barak Obama as President of the United States brings to the forefront the nation-wide impact of young people on a national scale. The potential for this election to have a lasting impact on the engagement and involvement of young people in their communities and in political processes is immense. College has the potential to play a significant role in influencing a lifetime of contributions to public life. The findings of this study have reinforced the effective role that college experiences may play in developing political outcomes and, in turn, the civic outcomes that are at the heart of the democratic state.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS FOR SAMPLE IDENTIFICATION SURVEY

EB—Electoral Behavior Scale

PV—Political Voice Scale

AT—Attentiveness Scale

In talking to people, we find that many are not registered to vote because they are too busy or move around often. Would official state records show that you are now registered to vote in your election district or not? (EB1) (Registered, Not Registered, Don't know) if *no*, skip to EB3

We know that most people don't vote in all elections. Usually between one-quarter to one-half of those eligible actually come out to vote. Can you tell me how often you vote in local and national elections? (EB2)(Always, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)

When there is an election taking place do you generally talk to any people and try to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates, or not? (EB3) (Yes, No, Don't Know)

Do you wear a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or place a sign in front of your house, or aren't these things you do? (EB4) (Yes, No, Don't Know)

During the past 12 months, have you been contacted by someone PERSONALLY to vote for or against any candidate for political office? This does not include contact through a mass mailing or recorded telephone call. (EB5) (Yes, No, Don't Know)

During the past 12 months, have you been contacted by someone PERSONALLY to work for or contribute money to a candidate, political party or any other organization that supports candidates? This does not include contact through a mass mailing or recorded telephone call. (EB6) (Yes, No, Don't Know)

In the past 12 months, did you work for or contribute money to a candidate, a political party or any other organization that supported candidates? (EB7) (Yes, No, Don't Know)

Here is a quick list of things that some people have done to express their views. Have you done any of the following: (PV)

(First Scale: No, haven't done it, Yes, Have done it, but not in the last 12 months, Yes, have done it and within the last 12 months, Have done it, don't know if it was in the last 12 months or not, don't know if I have done it)

(Second scale (in high school): Did not do it, Sometimes did it, Frequently did it, Did it but don't remember how often, Don't know if I did it)

- Contacted or visited a public official at any level of government to express your opinion?
- Contacted a newspaper or magazine to express your opinion on an issue?
- Called in to a radio or television talk show to express your opinion on a political issue, even if you did not get on the air?
- Taken part in a protest, march or demonstration?
- Signed an e-mail petition about a social or political issue?
- Have you ever signed a written petition about a political or social issue?
- NOT bought something from a certain company because you disagree with the social or political values of the company that produces it?
- Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it?
- Personally walked, ran or bicycled for a charitable cause (this is separate from sponsoring or giving money to this type of event)?
- BESIDES DONATING MONEY, have you ever done anything else to help raise money for a charitable cause?
- Have you ever worked as a canvasser—going door to door for a political or social group or candidate?

Some people seem to follow what is going on in government and public affairs, whether there's an election or not. Others aren't that interested. Do you follow what's going on in government and public affairs? (AT1) (Most of the time, Some of the time, Rarely, Never, Don't Know/Depends)

In high school, did you follow what was going on in government and public affairs? (AT1) (Most of the time, Some of the time, Rarely, Never, Don't Know/Depends)

How often do you talk about politics with your family and friends? (AT2) (Very often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never, Don't Know)

In high school, how often did you talk about politics with your family and friends? (AT2) (Very often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never, Don't Know)

Here are some ways that people get news and information. Over the past seven days, please tell me on how many days you have done each of the following? (AT3) (1-7 days)

- Read a newspaper
- Read magazines like Newsweek, Time or US News and World Report
- Watch the national news on television
- Listen to the news on radio

- Read news on the internet

Reflecting on your activities in high school, generally, how many days a week did you have do each of the following? (AT3) (1-7 days)

- Read a newspaper
- Read magazines like Newsweek, Time or US News and World Report
- Watch the national news on television
- Listen to the news on radio
- Read news on the internet

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Pre-interview

- Thank interviewee
- Let them know the interview will be about an hour long
- Let them know it will be recorded
- Offer opportunity not to answer any question that makes them uncomfortable or to stop the interview.

1. Describe your political activities.
(affirming outcome, sets context)
2. What got you interested in politics?
(interest)

Follow up if answer lends itself to exploring how they found out about a particular opportunity
(information)

3. What are your major commitments on campus, including academic, campus employment and campus activities?
(money, time, environment)
4. What are your major commitments off campus, including church, community service, non-political organizations and employment?
(environment)
5. In any of these commitments, do you run meetings, make presentations, defend arguments or plan and organize things? If so, please describe.
(civic skills)
6. Have any of these commitments led directly to your choice to participate in political activities?
(information, experience → outcome)

7. What aspects of your university experience have influenced your political participation?
(experience → outcome)
8. What do you think keeps others from active political participation?
(input → outcome, experience → outcome)\
9. Some studies show that affiliation with a party increases political involvement. Do you have a party affiliation? (party identification)

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