"I Could Make a Difference"
Research and Theory on Fostering Adolescents' Political Efficacy and Engagement

By

Brett Miller Levy

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Jacquelynne S. Eccles, Chair
Professor Annemarie S. Palincsar
Associate Professor Michaela Zint
Professor Richard Niemi, University of Rochester

To my parents, teachers, and community leaders
who have shown me the importance
of civic and political engagement

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ABSTRACT

In democratic societies, many adult citizens choose not to participate in political processes. To address this problem, this dissertation explores and examines how educators can foster adolescents' political efficacy, one of the strongest predictors of political participation. Prior research indicates that political efficacy, the belief that individuals' action can influence governmental processes, increases when individuals have opportunities to (1) discuss public issues, (2) participate in small-scale democratic processes, and (3) develop connections with others who are politically engaged. However, this earlier research does not explain why or how these experiences support the development of political efficacy. Through three mixed methods empirical studies, this dissertation begins to fill this research gap.

First, I examined two educational programs – a Model United Nations club and a course on civic advocacy – in which students had the three types of aforementioned experiences. In Model UN, students attended conferences where they represented different countries, debated those nations' positions on a wide range of topics (such as security treaties), and developed solutions to major international challenges. The advocacy class, on the other hand, required students to select and research community-based problems or institutions, develop plans to influence relevant policymakers, and advocate for change through various means. To examine the implementation and outcomes of these programs, I gathered data during one semester through observations, interviews, surveys, and student papers. Findings indicated that both programs had a positive impact on students' political efficacy and that crucial to this growth was adult leaders' support of students' political knowledge (e.g., political processes and issues), political skills (e.g., communication), and political goal achievement.

The third empirical study sought to identify the broad set of factors that influence adolescents' political efficacy. By analyzing interview data from the two classroom-based studies and survey data from 142 undergraduate students, I found evidence to support a robust model that includes a wide variety of factors that contribute to political efficacy, such as political interest and political trust. Based on this theoretical model and the program-based studies, I provide practical recommendations to educators and researchers interested in preparing students for active political participation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For a democracy to thrive, political participation is essential, and during the past century, educators have acknowledged that one of their major responsibilities is to prepare youth for their future roles as democratic citizens. In *Democracy and Education,* John Dewey (1916) argued that students should be thoughtfully educated for their civic responsibilities and that schools had an important responsibility in this domain. Since then, leaders and organizations promoting social studies education have made preparing citizens for active political participation one of their central aims (Hertzberg, 1981). Recently, numerous educational organizations have affirmed this goal, including the National Council for the Social Studies (1993), the Center for Civic Education (1994), and numerous state education agencies (e.g., Michigan Department of Education, 2007; Nevada Department of Education, 2008; State Education Department of New York, 2002).

Despite ongoing educational efforts to prepare youth for political participation, researchers have found that political engagement has remained low, especially among youth (McDonald, 2008; Kirby & Kawashima-Ginsburg, 2009). During the second half of the twentieth century, young citizens discussed politics less (Galston, 2004, 2001) and become less trusting of government (Lopez, Levine, Both, Kiesa, Kirby, & Marcelo, 2006; Hetherington, 1998) than had previous generations. At the same time, civic knowledge among youth became alarmingly low, with less than ten percent of high school students able to cite two reasons why it is important for citizens to participate in a democracy (Damon, 2001). Even in the election of 2008, which brought a slight increase in political engagement across the board, only about half of 18- to 29-year-olds voted (Kirby & Kawashima-Ginsburg, 2009) – compared to about 62 percent of the general adult population (McDonald, 2008). These low levels of political participation have led to policymaking that does not fully reflect the will of the populace, and with lower levels of voting among low-income communities, the most vulnerable citizens are even less likely

to have their interests represented (Bartels, 2008). Thus, to strengthen both democracy and social justice, it is important to enhance political participation.

Why Study Political Efficacy?

In 2001, I became a middle school teacher in part to support the development of adolescents' civic and political engagement. Like many teachers, I expended tremendous energy to help my students develop knowledge about political systems, constitutional rights, current events, historical perspectives, and methods of participation. We regularly had open-ended classroom discussions about political issues, and occasionally I assigned and guided students to write letters to elected leaders about their concerns on public issues, hoping that these activities would further strengthen students' political knowledge. When I came to graduate school to learn about youth civic and political engagement, however, I found only limited evidence that political knowledge influenced political participation (Howe, 2006; Langton & Jennings, 1968). Furthermore, as I became sporadically involved in supporting government reforms on environmental policies, I found that some of my most knowledgeable graduate student colleagues were uninterested in becoming involved politically.

As the debate over the influence of knowledge in political action continued (e.g., Johann, 2010), I found evidence that there were myriad well-documented predictors of political participation, including socioeconomic status (Verba & Nie, 1972; Conway, 1991), social connectedness (Putnam, 1995; Robnett, 2007), leadership experience (Damico, Damico, & Conway, 1998), group identity (Hardy-Fanta, 1993; Wilcox & Gomez, 1990), political context (Geys, 2006), and political interest (Horner, 2007). Among the strongest and most reliable predictors of political participation, however, has been political efficacy (Beaumont, 2010) – the belief that individuals' action can influence the government.

When people have high levels of political efficacy, they are more likely to vote (Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001; Pollack, 1983; Guyton, 1988; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960), contact public officials about issues of concern (Hirlinger, 1993; Pollack, 1983; Sharp, 1982), become involved in political activism (Abrams & DeMoura,

2002; Paulsen, 1991; Tygart, 1977), use informational news media (Newhagen, 1994; Tan, 1981), and become psychologically involved in politics (Cohen et al., 2001; Bell, 1969). Furthermore, evidence indicates that educational programs can support and have supported the development of political efficacy through practices that many teachers can easily employ (e.g., Dressner, 1990; Feldman, Pasek, Romer, and Jamieson, 2007; Hartry and Porter, 2004; Vogel, 1973). Therefore, developing a thorough understanding of political efficacy and how educators can foster it can yield results that can strengthen educators' ability to prepare their students for political participation.

Research Questions

As noted above, evidence indicates that certain types of experiences can positively influence political efficacy. However, researchers still understand little about the factors involved in students' development of political efficacy and how educators can help to shape these factors. Scholars have found that there are three major categories of experiences that can influence political efficacy. First, when individuals participate in democratic processes, such as legislative simulations (Dressner, 1990) or voting (Glenn, 1972; Ikeda, Kobayashi, & Hoshimoto, 2008), their political efficacy tends to increase (Langton, 1980; Takei & Kleiman, 1976; Almond & Verba, 1963). Another experience that enhances political efficacy is discussing salient public issues (Lee, 2006; Morell, 2005; Wells & Dudash, 2007). Finally, individuals tend to have higher political efficacy when they experience a sense of belonging to politically engaged or politically powerful groups (Lambert, Curtis, Brown, & Kay, 1986; Louis, Taylor, & Neil, 2004).

Although these research findings (detailed more in subsequent chapters) are helpful, they do not explain differences among students or offer insights about the optimal methods for managing such experiences to support students' political efficacy. Furthermore, although some studies (e.g., Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990; McPherson, Welch, & Clark, 1977) examined similarities and differences between internal political efficacy (related to one's own competence) and external political efficacy (related to government responsiveness), few considered other potential dimensions of political efficacy. Thus, I embarked on my research with a few key questions:

1. Why does students' political efficacy tend to increase when they participate in certain experiences, such as political discussion or small-scale democratic processes?
2. How do educators foster political efficacy?
3. In what ways should researchers and educators distinguish between different dimensions of political efficacy?

Approaches to Address Unanswered Questions

To address these questions, it was necessary to use a variety of methods. First, to examine students' political efficacy growth during various experiences, it was important to gather quantitative data (with surveys) on students' political efficacy and also to conduct interviews and observations to explore students' cognitive and emotional processing of their experiences. Although there were some useful measures of political efficacy (e.g., Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990), some leading researchers in the field considered them to be inadequate (e.g., S. Craig, personal communication, October 10, 2008). Thus, to conduct a strong study of political efficacy, it was necessary to have survey items (or questions) that sufficiently captured the variability and dimensions of political efficacy. Finally, understanding effective methods of fostering political efficacy required that I observe and interview teachers or adult program leaders as they planned and led educational programs for students.

Because prior research suggests that neither students' political efficacy (Langton, 1980) nor teachers' practices (Richardson & Placier, 2001) are entirely consistent, I knew that a longitudinal study would be necessary to adequately examine students' political efficacy. Given the time constraints of a dissertation project, I was somewhat limited in this regard, but I was able to gather data for pilot studies (preliminary dissertation work) over the course of two months and for my dissertation over the course of six months. With this effort, I set out to address questions that seemed central to the field of civic education and lay the foundation for future research in this area.

Pilot Studies

Measurement Study

During the fall of 2008, I conducted two pilot studies – one focused solely on developing measures of political efficacy and another that employed my new political

efficacy measures to examine a political education program. For the measurement study, I developed new measures of political efficacy (Levy, 2008). Through a combination of interviews, "think alouds" (Wineberg, 2001), and surveys (N=44), I found that students had different levels of political efficacy for different political issues and different levels of government, and their answers were fairly stable over the course of three weeks. However, findings also indicated limited variability among students, which suggested that my items' answer options needed to be more explicit. Thus, for my dissertation studies' measures of political efficacy, I constructed items that included very explicit answer choices and which referred to different levels of government.

Model United Nations Study

While I conducted the measurement study, I also began a small-scale study of students' political efficacy development during their participation in a program that included the three educational elements that researchers have found to influence political efficacy – discussing public issues, participating in small-scale democratic decision making processes, and belonging to a politically engaged group (Levy, 2009). These public school students (N=18) were enrolled in a for-credit Model United Nations class in which they were preparing to represent a various countries' interests on certain pre-selected topics at a regional conference. Although there has been some research on Model UN (e.g., Patterson, 1996; Turner, 1997), no prior studies had examined Model UN students' political efficacy during their experiences in the program.

In this eight-week, study, I observed the class several times and administered surveys to students to measure their political efficacy at the beginning and end of the study period. Results indicated that eleven students experienced at least some gains in political efficacy; four experienced no change, and three experienced declines. In their open-ended responses, students indicated that their political efficacy depended on their capacity to communicate clearly and work effectively with others. Thus, for my dissertation, I decided first that a Model UN program would be a good context in which to study political efficacy development and that in addition to asking students about their internal and external political efficacy, I should ask them about their beliefs about their self-efficacy for their own political skills. Overall, these pilot studies helped me to develop a more nuanced set of questions and measurement tools for my dissertation.

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Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation contains four major sections – three mixed methods empirical studies (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003) of political efficacy among adolescents and one conceptual paper about how research on the development of political efficacy may be useful in the fields of environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD).

Studies of Educational Programs

The first two empirical studies (Chapters 2 and 3) involved students and adult leaders involved in educational programs at Elmwood High School (all names of locations and individuals are pseudonyms). One program, a class on civic advocacy, required its 13 students to select and research community-based problems or institutions, develop plans to influence relevant policymakers, and advocate for change through various means. The other program, a Model United Nations club, involved over fifty students who attended conferences where they represented different countries and debated those nations' positions on a wide range of topics, including nuclear proliferation and international health policy. Whereas high school courses involving civic advocacy are quite rare, Model UN worldwide involves nearly 400,000 students per year, making it one of the most popular civic education activities (Williams, 2009).

For both of these studies, I gathered data throughout the course of the fall semester in the 2009-2010 academic year through observations, surveys, interviews, and students' written work. In both contexts, adult leaders provided opportunities for students to discuss and learn about broad sociopolitical challenges and participate in developing solutions. Whereas in the class, students worked to directly address a problem, such as unhealthy school lunches or sweatshop labor, Model UN was a simulation, in which students designed and debated written resolution that lacked real power.

Despite these differences, students in both programs experienced substantial gains in internal and external political efficacy. (Model UN students also developed greater political interest and greater self-efficacy for their own political skills.) My qualitative findings suggest that among the key factors in supporting political efficacy were students' development of political knowledge, political skills, and rapport with their politically engaged peers, and adult program leaders fostered these by creating an open environment

in which students were encouraged to pursue their own interests in public issues, practice their communication and political strategizing skills, and work closely with others who shared their goals. Overall, these studies show that educational programs can influence students' political efficacy relatively quickly and that with certain pedagogical strategies (detailed in chapters 2 and 3), adult program leaders can support this development.

Identifying Key Factors that Influence Political Efficacy

The third empirical study in this dissertation (Chapter 4) explores and identifies the factors that influence political efficacy among adolescents. For this study, I first re-analyzed the qualitative data from the two aforementioned program-based studies, developing more specific codes for the issues students mentioned when I asked them about their political efficacy. After building a qualitative model, I then examined these relationships quantitatively by designing and administering a survey to 142 undergraduates. The survey measured students' political interest, political efficacy (various dimensions), political experiences, background characteristics, and other factors. After analyzing these data with a series of multiple regressions (and other methods), I combined my qualitative and quantitative findings into a mixed model. This model (Figure 4.5) provides a useful framework for educators interested in supporting their students' political efficacy and for researchers interested in conducting further studies of how political efficacy develops.

Framing a Research Agenda for Environmental Political Efficacy

The last major section of this dissertation (Chapter 5) frames a research agenda for examining a specific type of issue-specific political efficacy that I consider particularly important: environmental political efficacy. As many scientists and scholars have noted, many of our planet's ecosystems are rapidly deteriorating (Brown, 2011), so for humanity's long-term survival, it is essential that humans begin to live more sustainably. In autocratic nations, a small number of leaders can decide to dramatically shift their nations' methods of producing energy, transporting goods and people, and growing crops; but in democratic societies, where such decisions are made more collectively, it is important that informed citizens participate in the political processes necessary to enact such reforms.

Because political efficacy can be content-specific (Langton, 1980; Levy, 2008), it is important to examine how youth develop a sense of political efficacy vis-à-vis environmental issues – that is, *environmental* political efficacy. Leaders and scholars in the fields of EE and ESD have long promoted the importance of civic learning. Thus, researching environmental political efficacy would both suit the goals of environmental as well as social studies educators, and Chapter 5 explains how such research might best be conducted.

Implications and Limitations

Overall, the findings and ideas in this dissertation have useful implications for educators and researchers. As described in each of the subsequent chapters, there is much that educators can do to support adolescents' political efficacy, but there is also substantial research left to do in this area. Findings from the empirical studies described herein are not necessarily generalizable, and certain aspects of political efficacy may in fact be context-specific, so it is important for future researchers to examine the factors and strategies explored in these chapters in various contexts. Nonetheless, this dissertation provides a useful foundation for further research into this important topic.

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CHAPTER 2

**FOSTERING CAUTIOUS POLITICAL EFFICACY THROUGH
CIVIC ADVOCACY PROJECTS: A MIXED METHODS CASE STUDY
OF AN INNOVATIVE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS**

The major purpose of this study was to explore the potential of civic advocacy projects to enhance students' political efficacy and thus their likelihood of future political participation. Since the beginning of the 20th century, one of the central aims of social studies education in the United States has been to prepare citizens for active political participation (Hertzberg, 1981). Recently, numerous educational organizations have affirmed this goal, including the National Council for the Social Studies (1993), the Center for Civic Education (1994), and numerous state education agencies (e.g., Michigan Department of Education, 2007; Nevada Department of Education, 2008; State Education Department of New York, 2002). Despite ongoing educational efforts to prepare youth for political participation, researchers have found that political engagement has remained low, especially among youth (Kirby & Kawashima-Ginsburg, 2009; McDonald, 2008).

For decades, political scientists have bemoaned Americans' declining levels of political engagement, citing decreasing voter turnout (Burnham, 1980; Gibson & Levine, 2003), lower involvement in political organizations (Putnam, 2000), declining political interest (Galston, 2001, 2004), and decreasing confidence in government (Hetherington, 1998; Lopez, Levine, Both, Kiesa, Kirby, & Marcelo, 2006). Even in the election of 2008, which brought a slight increase in political engagement, only about 62% of the population voted (McDonald, 2008), including about half of 18- to 29-year-olds (Kirby & Kawashima-Ginsburg, 2009). When citizens decide to participate politically (or not), there are numerous contributing factors,

including prior experiences and contextual factors. But if one major charge of social studies educators is to prepare citizens for political participation, what can they do to change the trend of low participation?

Political scientists have consistently found that one of the strongest predictors of political participation is *political efficacy—*the feeling that an individual's political action can influence the political process (e.g., Almond & Verba, 1963; Becker, 2004; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001; Guyton, 1988; Paulsen, 1991). Evidence indicates that certain experiences, such as politically oriented group work and discussing political issues, can have a positive influence on political efficacy (e.g., Beaumont, 2010; Dressner, 1990). In this article, I explore how high school students' experiences conducting civic advocacy projects (CAPs) may be an effective means of fostering their political efficacy. CAPs require students to research and publicly advocate for issues they have selected, and in the process they participate in many activities that researchers have found to influence political efficacy. This study explored how one teacher used CAPs as a means to strengthen students' political efficacy and prepare them for the authentic challenges of active political participation.

Background

Why Political Efficacy Matters

During the past half-century, political scientists have explored why individuals in democratic societies choose to participate politically or not. Their research suggests that political participation can be explained by various factors, including individuals' levels of social connectedness (Putnam, 1995; Robnett, 2007), economic resources (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995), and leadership experience (Damico, Damico, & Conway, 1998), but one of the strongest and most reliable is political efficacy (Abrams & DeMoura, 2002; Cohen et al., 2001; Leighly, 1999). Political scientists in the 1950s first defined political efficacy, and their definition is still widely cited today:

> [Political efficacy is] the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change (Campbell et al., 1954, p. 187).

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When an individual has high levels of political efficacy, she or he is more likely to vote (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Cohen et al., 2001; Pollack, 1983), contact public officials about issues of concern (Hirlinger, 1992; Pollack, 1983; Sharp, 1982), become involved in political activism (Abrams & DeMoura, 2002; Paulsen, 1991; Tygart, 1977), use informational news media (Newhagen, 1994; Tan, 1981), and become psychologically involved in politics (Bell, 1969; Cohen et al., 2001).

Through factor analyses, political scientists have concluded that political efficacy consists of at least two distinct dimensions: internal political efficacy and external political efficacy (Aish & Joreskog, 1990; Balch, 1974; Zimmerman, 1989). External political efficacy is the belief that one's own actions can influence governmental decisions, and internal political efficacy refers to a person's belief that he or she is able to understand and participate competently in political processes (Miller, Miller, & Schneider, 1980). Although these two dimensions are often correlated (Craig, 1979) and studied as one coherent construct, some researchers have considered them separately. In the studies described here, most scholars considered them as one construct, but when they do distinguish between the two constructs (as I did in the original work described in this article), I will indicate such.

Factors Influencing Political Efficacy

Both political scientists and educational researchers have explored how to increase individuals' political efficacy, and many of their findings have important implications for educators. One effective method of increasing individuals' political efficacy is political participation itself. For many individuals, simply voting (Finkel, 1985; Ikeda, Kobayashi, & Hoshimoto, 2008) or participating in other campaign activities, such as attending political meetings or verbally promoting a party or candidate, can boost political efficacy (Finkel, 1987; Stenner-Day & Fischle, 1992). Other studies indicate that an individual's political efficacy can increase if one's preferred political outcomes occur (Bowler & Donovan, 2002; Clarke & Acock, 1989), but decrease if an individual feels marginalized or unheard (Freie, 1997; Stenner-Day & Fischle, 1992). For educators, this research implies that political action can be a very useful tool in strengthening students' political efficacy but that it is important for students to have opportunities to feel that they have achieved the goals set for their political action.

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Another related set of activities that can strengthen political efficacy is participation in small-scale democratic decision-making processes. Researchers have found that when children are involved in making family decisions, they are more likely to become politically efficacious (Almond & Verba, 1963; Langton, 1980; Takei & Kleiman, 1976). In schools, students can develop higher political efficacy when they have opportunities to make classroom rules (Glenn, 1972) and participate in school-wide governance (Siegel, 1977). Even simulations of democratic processes can have positive effects. Researchers have documented political efficacy increases from participation in mock elections (Stroupe & Sabato, 2004), legislative role-playing games (Boocock, 1968; Vogel, 1973), and simulations involving negotiations of government energy conservation strategies (Dressner, 1990). However, one study found that if students have disempowering experiences in simulations, their political efficacy can decrease (Livingston, 1972). Thus, research suggests that teachers aiming to build students' political efficacy should give students opportunities to feel successful in real or simulated democratic decision-making processes.

Recently researchers have also found that when individuals have opportunities to learn about and discuss political information and perspectives, they are more likely to believe that they can participate effectively in the political system. Several studies indicate that political efficacy, especially internal political efficacy, increases when individuals read newspapers or watch television news (Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Lee, 2006; Wells & Dudash, 2007). Discussing political issues with peers also appears to have a positive effect on political efficacy (Hahn, 1999; Morrell, 2005). However, some research shows that exposure to confusing or negative political information can decrease external political efficacy (Lee, 2006; Miller, Goldenberg, & Erbring, 1979). Thus, evidence suggests that if teachers want to strengthen both dimensions of students' political efficacy, it is important for them to give students opportunities to learn and process political information but also to clarify complex political realities and avoid expressing excessive pessimism.

In addition, research indicates that identifying strongly with a group, especially a politically-oriented group, can enhance individuals' political efficacy. Scholars have found that people have higher political efficacy if they feel more closely connected to

their communities through personal relationships (Steinberger, 1981) or if they identify strongly with a particular demographic group (Koch, 1993). Also, identifying with a political party (Louis, Taylor, & Neil, 2004), especially the party in power (Lambert, Curtis, Brown, & Kay, 1986), tends to strengthen political efficacy. Family politicization also seems to play a role. When adolescents believe that their parents are interested in political issues, they develop higher political efficacy than their peers (Ichilov, 1988; Langton & Karns, 1969). Overall, this evidence suggests that the perception that one belongs to a politically engaged group can strengthen political efficacy. For educators, this research suggests that providing students with opportunities to work with others on civic or political challenges can be an effective way to foster their political efficacy.

Finally, researchers have found that certain demographic and personal characteristics are consistently related to political efficacy. People tend to have higher political efficacy if they are older (Koch, 1993; Wu, 2003), more educated (Ichilov, 1988; Wolfsfeld, 1985), from families with higher socioeconomic status (Lambert et al., 1986), or more intelligent (Carmines & Baxter, 1986; Jackman, 1970). The effects of ethnicity are mixed (Campbell et al., 1954; Takei & Kleiman, 1976; Wu, 2003). In most studies examining political efficacy (including the study presented in this paper), most of these variables have been statistically controlled, so despite the relationship between these demographic and personal characteristics and political efficacy, individuals' experiences and affinities still have a strong influence on political efficacy. Furthermore, some research indicates that demographic factors influence the types of civic and political learning experiences that students have (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008).

Altogether, there has been a large amount of research examining factors related to political efficacy, and Figure 2.1 summarizes the overall findings from these studies and the theoretical framework of this study.

Discussing and Learning about Controversial Public Issues

Other Factors

Demographic and Personal Characteristics

Identifying with a Politically-Oriented Group

Internal Political Efficacy

Political Participation

External Political Efficacy

Small-Scale Democratic Decision-Making Experiences
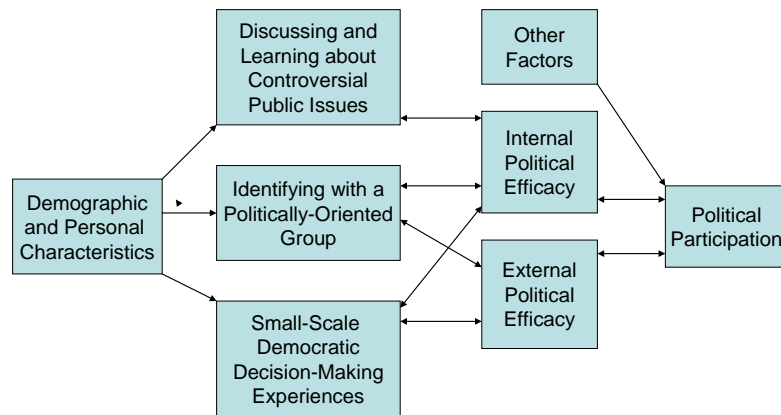
Figure 2.1. Research-based Conceptual Model of Factors Related to

Political Efficacy and Participation

Persistence in Civic Action

Persistence involves continued effort towards a goal in the face of difficulty (Phan, 2009; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002) and is considered an important indicator of students' motivation (Agbuga & Xiang, 2008). Addressing civic and political challenges often requires substantial long-term investments of time and energy (Alinsky, 1971), so if an individual possesses both high political efficacy and high persistence, it may be more likely that she or he will achieve her or his desired political ends. Numerous studies indicate that there is a strong relationship between persistence and goal achievement (e.g., Blair & Price, 1998; Reiss & Dyhdalo, 1975), and recent research suggests that even students' perceptions of their own persistence can influence their achievement (Agbuga & Xiang, 2008).

Thus, because persistence is a necessary component of achieving one's civic goals, it is important to examine how students' self-efficacy for their own persistence develops during their civic education experiences. Encountering extrinsic barriers is inevitable in civic efforts—often to a greater degree than in classroom efforts to which youth are accustomed. Whereas developing a sense of political efficacy is vital for citizens in democratic societies, it is also important that citizens be realistic about their

goals, what is necessary to achieve them, and the potential challenges involved (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Through this process, they are more likely to develop realistic – or cautious – political efficacy.

Civic Advocacy Projects (CAPs)

Completing CAPs requires students to research community-based problem or institutions, develop plans to influence a relevant policymaker, and advocate for change through various means. This process combines aspects of problem-based learning and service learning as it engages students in addressing authentic collective challenges. Problem-based learning is rooted in Dewey's (1938/1997) notion that practical experiences are vital to education, and in recent decades, educators and educational researchers have explored the strategy's utility in various contexts (Savery & Duffy, 1996; Stapp, Wals, & Stankorb, 1996). Typically, the process involves guided inquiry into an authentic problem through which students develop specific questions, research key related issues, and synthesize their learning. Researchers have found that using this problem-based learning strategy can lead to greater student skill development and motivation than traditional teaching (Lam, Cheng, & Ma, 2009; Strobel & Van Barneveld, 2009).

Service learning, on the other hand, includes a range of experiences that involve authentic action in the broader community. Numerous researchers have documented the effects of service learning programs, finding that when students become involved in community action, they often develop greater self-esteem and sense of social responsibility (Eccles & Templeton, 2001; Niemi, Hepburn, & Chapman, 2000). Researchers have also found that some service learning and out-of-school activities can strengthen various aspects of civic engagement (Beaumont, 2010; Billig, Jesse, & Grimley, 2008). However, whereas some service learning involves efforts to change systems and policies, many involve direct service that could be characterized as charity (Kahne & Westheimer, 1999; Walker, 2002).

In this study, students completed problem-based learning oriented towards community change. Their CAPs provided them with opportunities to engage in many of the activities that researchers have found to influence political efficacy (see Figure 2.1). Substantial prior research has described and examined students' engagement in similar

forms of civic research and action (e.g., Checkoway, Figueroa, & Richards-Shuster, 2008; Claus & Ogden, 1999; Delgado, 2004; O'donoghue, 2006; Stapp, Wals, & Stankorb, 1996). Many of these studies provide rich and informative descriptions of students' and adult leaders' actions and accomplishments, but the overwhelming majority is qualitative, examines extracurricular programs, and does not focus on political efficacy. Thus, this study is unique due to its mixed methods examination of political efficacy development in a classroom-based civic learning experience.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How does a teacher guide students through the process of conducting civic advocacy projects? Exploring the teachers' methods may provide a flexible model for how to prepare students for this unique work.

2. How do different students engage in civic advocacy projects? Students' level and manner of engaging in the projects may relate to changes in attitudes that they experience, so it is important to consider how seriously students take their work and how they respond to its challenges.

3. To what extent and in what ways does students' internal and external political efficacy develop during their participation in civic advocacy projects? Exploring students' political efficacy development will provide insights into if, how, and why conducting civic advocacy projects influences their political efficacy.

Method

Case Study Context

To address these research questions, I conducted a classroom case study. A case study is an important step towards strengthening our understanding of how educators can best foster the development of political efficacy. Although quantitative studies of political efficacy have produced numerous helpful insights (as summarized in Figure 2.1), case studies enable the close examination of how phenomena actually occur in authentic educational contexts. The resulting analyses of specific patterns and processes can be useful to practitioners and policymakers (Collins & Noblit, 1978; Merriam, 1988; Reichardt & Cook, 1979). Furthermore, conducting a case study can be a useful method

for identifying nuances within new areas of inquiry (Foreman, 1948; Stake, 1995). Because of the absence of research on the specific processes involved in fostering students' political efficacy, this case study makes an important contribution to the literature on political engagement and civic learning.

To strengthen this contribution, I conducted both qualitative and quantitative methods longitudinally to enhance our understanding of how political efficacy might develop over time. Using both methods of inquiry provides several affordances. First, whereas quantitative methods are typically used for verification of theories and qualitative methods for theory generation, employing both allows researchers to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions. Second, having both qualitative and quantitative data can enhance the explanatory power of a study's conclusions. Even if the different types of data provide divergent findings, this can stimulate an important reexamination of the original theory (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In this case study, collecting and analyzing both types of data enabled me to better understand students' experiences and how various aspects of their experience related to their political efficacy development.

This case study, which took place at Elmwood High School (all names of sites and individuals are pseudonyms), was part of a multi-pronged exploration of political efficacy development in several contexts (Levy, 2011). Elmwood is a secondary school in an affluent semi-urban area bordering a major Midwestern city, and it had approximately 1,650 students (90% white), with average composite ACT score of 21 and a graduation rate near 90%. Per capita income in the school district was $36,800. Although prior research has suggested that students of different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds may have varying views of civic engagement (Rubin, 2007), I selected this setting because of the teacher's plans for his students to actively conduct CAPs. Despite the city's solid middle class, at the time of the study, there was a major budget crisis at the district (and state) level – with many programs expecting serious funding cuts.

Despite these looming potential changes, Elmwood High School's Advanced Placement English teacher and Model United Nations coach Sam Kendall (all names are pseudonyms) taught a new elective course that required students to complete civic advocacy projects. The course was open to all students, but it did not fulfill any

distribution requirements and was therefore most appropriate for juniors and seniors who had already completed their core curriculum courses. Students enrolled in the class for different reasons—some because of interest and some because they needed elective credits. The one-semester class met during each school day from September of 2009 through January of 2010, and Mr. Kendall spent class time teaching students about various social and political issues (e.g., food distribution, poverty) and guiding them through the design of civic advocacy projects, most of which were related to the issues explored in class.

Data Sources

During the course, I gathered data through four means: observation fieldnotes, interview data, survey responses, and student papers. Throughout the semester, I observed the class twice per week, keeping systematic fieldnotes and audio recordings of observations. At the study's outset, I told students that I would not be grading them in any way and that they should act as they normally would. Fieldnotes included the amount of time that the class spent on various activities, the degree to which different students were engaged, and how Mr. Kendall taught and guided students through the development of their CAPs. Students' papers explored the purposes, challenges, and outcomes of their advocacy work. The course included seven females and six males, and all students in the class were white except for one African-American female.

I administered surveys to 39 students at the beginning and end of the semester. Twelve of these students were enrolled in the course on civic advocacy, and 27 belonged to a comparison group. Although there were 13 students in the advocacy course throughout the semester, one of them did not take the final survey and was therefore excluded from the sample. The comparison group included members of the school's National Honor Society (NHS), an exclusive organization of high-achieving students who annually conducted at least twenty hours of community service. I selected NHS as a comparison group because its students, like most of those in the advocacy class, comprised generally serious students who would be engaged in efforts to improve their communities. Although the group occasionally had group service events, such as working with Habitat for Humanity, NHS students' community service was typically conducted independently, such as volunteering at an animal shelter; the club did not require students

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to write about, discuss, or otherwise reflect upon their service. The NHS advisor asked students to voluntarily complete the surveys, and they could earn service credit for doing so.

To gauge changes that occurred during the course of the semester, both the initial and final surveys measured students' (1) political efficacy, (2) political interest, (3) self-efficacy for persistence, and (4) background characteristics. I examined the latter three sets of items primarily as control variables because prior research suggests that these may be related to the choice to enroll in the course (e.g., Silvia, 2006). Items measuring internal political efficacy were adapted from the National Election Study (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990), and items measuring external political efficacy were based on a measurement study that I conducted (2008). To measure political interest, I adapted questions from studies of the expectancy-value model (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), and the item measuring persistence self-efficacy was adapted from a study of managers (Paglis & Green, 2002). (For a list of survey questions, see Appendix A.) The end-of-term student survey also included five open-ended questions (see Appendix B).

During this study, I conducted one-on-one semi-structured focused interviews (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990) with Mr. Kendall and seven students. After several classroom observations, I selected seven students who, based on the level and seriousness of their involvement in classroom discussions, seemed engaged to varying degrees. Clarissa and Karl were highly engaged, speaking frequently in their intellectual exchanges with Mr. Kendall and other students. Moderately engaged were Alessandra and Angela, who listened attentively but did not speak often. Gary was also moderately engaged, but his comments were often humorous and off-topic. I also interviewed two students who regularly seemed disengaged, Darren and Harriet. They regularly attended class but often rested their heads on their desks and only occasionally contributed to class discussions (see Table 2.1).

I spoke to each student interviewee at the beginning and end of the semester, and interviews usually lasted about 10 minutes. Initial interviews explored students' reasons for taking the class and their political efficacy, interest, and engagement. End-of-semester interviews also explored these issues in addition to students' experiences with their civic advocacy projects and their opinions of the class as a whole (see Appendix C). My

monthly interviews with Mr. Kendall explored his pedagogical goals, perspectives, and experiences (see Appendix D). Before each interview, I told interviewees that there were no right or wrong answers to my questions, that their identities would remain anonymous, and that I wanted them to be open and honest. Altogether, these data provided a rich corpus with which to explore how a teacher prepared students to conduct civic advocacy projects and how students engaged in and learned from them.

Table 2.1

Student Interviewees from Advocacy Class

Pseudonym	Grade	Age (Sept.)	Gender	Ethnicity	Number of Interviews	Stated Reason to Take Class
Alessandra	12	17	Female	White	4	political interest
Angela	11	16	Female	White	2	community interest
Clarissa	12	17	Female	African-Amer.	3	community interest, liked teacher
Darren	12	17	Male	White	2	seemed interesting and not hard
Gary	12	17	Male	White	2	recommended by guidance couns.
Harriet	10	16	Female	White	3	recommended by guidance couns.
Karl	12	17	Male	White	4	political interest, liked teacher

Data Analyses

To develop an understanding of classroom interactions and students' development, I analyzed my data on an ongoing basis. First, to analyze Mr. Kendall's pedagogy, I summarized my fieldnotes and transcripts of interviews with Mr. Kendall and then conducted open coding of these summaries, aiming to categorize the dominant modes of classroom interaction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1999). By the time the class ended, I had completed several rounds of coding and was able to combine my codes into four themes related to classroom activities and tone. Within each of these themes, I coded for various subcategories and then explored relationships among codes.

To explore students' engagement and political efficacy, I analyzed student interviews, surveys, and papers. First, I examined differences in the background characteristics of students who conducted advocacy projects and those in the comparison group by conducting cross-tabulations and t-tests. Then, I conducted exploratory factor analyses on items related to students' political efficacy and political interest. I also conducted exploratory factor analyses for the educational levels of students' mothers and fathers, two highly correlated background variables. After identifying appropriate items

and calculating the factors' reliabilities, I created factors that loaded items equally (see Appendix A).

Using these factors, I conducted t-tests and analyzed the variance of all students' political efficacy and self-efficacy for persistence at the beginning and end of the semester in order to measure whether or not there were any differences between students who had conducted civic advocacy projects and those who had not. In addition, I conducted ordinary least squares regression analyses in order to examine the relationship between participation in the class and students' changes in political efficacy and self-efficacy for persistence, controlling for students' initial levels of political interest and their background characteristics.

Also, throughout the study period, I conducted constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with student papers and interview transcripts. Through the process of open and then axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1999), I categorized students' experiences into four broad themes: (1) political efficacy, (2) challenges with civic advocacy projects, (3) perceived successes with civic advocacy projects, and (4) pedagogical strategies (of Mr. Kendall). While examining relationships between these themes, I wrote analytic memos to develop theories about these relationships (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Altogether, these analyses provided answers to my research questions that may be helpful to educators and educational researchers.

Findings

Teaching Civic Advocacy

Preparing high school students to conduct civic advocacy projects in their community is a challenging task. Mr. Kendall, who called himself "a political animal," pushed strenuously for Elmwood to offer a course in which such projects would be the central purpose. "One of my major goals as a teacher is student empowerment, and this class will give [students] a chance to try things they've never tried before," he told me in August before the class had begun. "The idea is to get out in the world and talk to people and change or shift something, and you don't do that with a worksheet" (Interview, August 28, 2009). As an English teacher, Model United Nations club advisor, and former debate coach, Mr. Kendall was interested (and skilled) in communicating complex arguments and building consensus, and his approach to the class reflected this orientation.

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The course focused on guiding students through the process of conducting CAPs and facilitating their learning and reflection from the process. Beginning with a flexible curriculum which he planned to adapt to students' projects and interests, Mr. Kendall focused the course on three objectives that were mutually supporting: (1) students' development of civic skills, (2) students' increased understanding of broad social challenges, and (3) students' completion of two student-developed projects which could be conducted individually, with partners, or in groups (one project aimed at raising public awareness about an issue and another aimed at influencing a policymaker in a position of power). Giving students substantial autonomy in their project choices, Mr. Kendall introduced them to sociopolitical challenges to help them develop their own questions to explore and taught students civic skills to help them to succeed on the projects they chose (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2
Key Pedagogies in Civic Advocacy Class

Problem-Framing	Skill-Building	Project Facilitation
Knowledge of Issues	Communication	One-on-one Guidance
Ethical Foundations	Source Evaluation	Group Feedback
	Vision-Building	Student Autonomy
	Action Reflection	

Intellectually framing social problems. To help students strengthen their interest in conducting their CAPs, Mr. Kendall engaged students intellectually in the ethical and concrete challenges embedded in taking social action. First, he asked students to consider the ethical dimensions. For example, in one lesson, he led discussions on whether or not a universal human ethic exists, if so what it might be, and how it would apply to students' lives and actions. In each of these lessons, he introduced the work of leading moral philosophers, including David Hume, John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant, and John Rawls. With the goal of strengthening students' moral convictions and motivation to take action, Mr. Kendall played devil's advocate to challenge their thinking. For example, after presenting the fundamental principles of Hume's moral relativism, he challenged the students to consider their own positions:

Here's your challenge: If you're relativists or if you're unsure, is there anything where

you're gonna say, 'No, this is the bottom line, you can't take your relativistic

opinions any further.'? I imagine you've said that to yourselves many times that

no one can cross *this* line… Is it possible to be neutral? (Class, September 28,

2009)

In response, students launched into an animated debate about when violating another's

physical space might or might not be necessary, and Mr. Kendall skillfully guided the

discussion with occasional pointed jokes to emphasize the inconsistencies of relativism.

Building on these lessons of ethical and moral questions, Mr. Kendall spent nearly

half of class time guiding students through explorations of social issues which they could

then analyze through an ethically critical lens. The first unit of the semester explored

food production and distribution, including its local and global components, and

subsequent units explored poverty, population growth, and the state and local budget

crises. Throughout these units, Mr. Kendall led discussions of small-scale and large-scale

questions students could pursue for their advocacy projects, such as the sustainability of

corporate farming, and many chose to address these issues. By teaching students about

major sociopolitical challenges as well as their ethical dimensions, Mr. Kendall helped

students to develop purposes and convictions for becoming involved in social issues.

Skill-building. Another major aspect of Mr. Kendall's effort to prepare students

to conduct civic advocacy projects was teaching them a range of political skills. These

skills, he thought, would help them strengthen their ability both to develop a plan of

action and implement it. Two skills that he taught explicitly were communication and

source evaluation. One of his goals was to teach students about how to frame an

argument and communicate it inoffensively.

When I teach about argumentation, it's not about driving your opponent into the

ground. It's a form of social argument. How do you argue with family? How do

you argue with friends? How do you argue with the principal, your boss? I want

to teach the kids about ways to structure arguments, ways to talk, ways not to, that

sort of stuff (Interview, August 30, 2009).

He began to teach communication strategies in early October, when students had

begun to select topics for their initial projects, and he continued to build students'

repertoire throughout the term. One of the key strategies that he emphasized throughout

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the semester was to control a discussion by getting the listener(s) to agree to a certain set of criteria (e.g., that field trips can be valuable learning experiences) by asking a small number of pointed questions. When students practiced their advocacy arguments in front of the class, Mr. Kendall reminded students to begin their arguments by first establishing points of agreement from which to build.

In addition to teaching students communication strategies, Mr. Kendall emphasized the importance of evaluating one's sources of information and taught strategies for doing so. "If you use Wikipedia as the sole source in a paper, that's not okay," he said to the class that had gathered in the computer lab in September. After explaining the benefits and shortfalls of wikis and responding to students' related comments and inquiries, he guided students through a discussion of internal and external source validity, projecting examples of websites on a large screen for all to see.

> If you go to the site for NORML [National Organization for the Reformation of Marijuana Laws], we can see internal consistency in their argument that recreational drug use can be safe; but is this information externally valid? Is it consistent with *other* sources? Let's take a look (Class, September 25, 2009).

After giving several other examples likely to interest students, Mr. Kendall gave students class time to find several sources on topics related to their advocacy projects while he circulated the room to help them individually. There were several similar lessons during the fall semester, and supporting arguments with valid sources became an ongoing theme in the course.

Whereas Mr. Kendall taught students explicitly about argumentation and source evaluation, he taught two other major civic skills more implicitly: self-assessment and vision-building. Regarding the latter, students had opportunities both to learn about how individuals have addressed social challenges and also to design their own potential solutions. For example, students viewed films and websites of individuals creatively working for social change, either through artistic or political means. Also, students studied various social challenges, such as corporate farming, and then discussed potential local and global solutions. Furthermore, through full-class discussions of students' projects, students were able to learn about how their own peers were actively advocating for change. Occasionally, Mr. Kendall even told students about his own activism,

including his school improvement efforts through the local education association. Thus, students regularly had opportunities to learn about and envision how social changes can occur.

Another skill that students had the opportunity to develop experientially was critical self-assessment of one's own civic action. In post-project papers and during class meetings, Mr. Kendall required that students honestly discuss not only the level of their project's success (as defined by students themselves) but also what they could have done differently to achieve greater success. After completing their projects, students spoke to the entire class about their work and answered challenging questions from Mr. Kendall and their peers about how in the future she or he might be more effective—either by structuring an argument differently, addressing a different decision-maker, or the like. In this way, students had the chance to develop habits of self-reflection that are vital in ongoing civic action efforts.

Project facilitation. Facilitating community-based projects in a classroom context requires unique kinds of support and attention. For the class, students were required to complete two advocacy projects and related written reflections—the first aimed at spreading awareness of an issue and the second targeted towards an institutional decision-maker. By offering students choice, one-on-one guidance, and opportunities to learn from peers, Mr. Kendall prepared most students to successfully conduct these projects.

One of his most distinct practices was giving students substantial choice and flexibility in completing their projects. As a strong believer in William Glasser's (1998) choice theory, Mr. Kendall designed project assignments that allowed students to pursue their own genuine interests in ways that they themselves determined—with or without partners, addressing a local or global issue, with a student-determined timeline (within the constraints of marking periods), and for an audience that the students chose.

Along with this autonomy, Mr. Kendall tried to get students engaged in a project of interest to them by providing personalized support, advice, and feedback. About two or three times per week, the second half of the class was reserved for students to work on their projects largely independently, and during this time, Mr. Kendall offered guidance on anything from topic selection to argumentation strategies. On one afternoon that I

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observed, he helped several students identify an appropriate audience for their advocacy. For example, Angela's main concern was the negative health impact of meat products from animals given numerous antibiotics, and while she spoke to the class informally, Mr. Kendall asked her questions about what local consumers and businesses might think about the issue, steering her towards a project focused on increasing consumer choice in local stores.

Meanwhile, Sarah was interested in preventing budget cuts to the school district's music program, and Mr. Kendall advised her to consider addressing one of several feasible targets, including school board members or the district's financial manager, to build an alliance with someone with decision-making power and influence. Effective civic action is often an iterative process which requires ongoing assessment of goals and strategies, and the one-on-one advice that Mr. Kendall provided was a central feature of his pedagogy.

Students also received detailed feedback from one another. Regularly students would report the status of their projects to the whole class and get peer and teacher input on possible future directions. When Karl wanted to address the low nutritional value of school lunches, for instance, he spoke to the class about potential approaches and got feedback from numerous peers. Gary and Rebecca suggested the most appropriate decision-makers to address at the school level; Angela reminded Karl that cost would probably be a central issue in the discussion; and Mr. Kendall explained how to build a more research-based argument. Such full class feedback sessions provided students with an opportunity to build a sense of community and support towards the completion of a challenging task.

Student Engagement

Most of the 13 students enrolled in the civic advocacy course engaged thoughtfully in class activities, but not all students were fully involved in every aspect of the experience. Three students frequently put their heads down during class meetings; others sometimes worked on homework for other courses; yet most remained attentive and participated in course activities. During the first marking period, nine students conducted projects aimed at boosting public awareness about an issue, and in the second

marking period, 11 students conducted advocacy projects directed towards institutions; two students failed the course for inadequate projects (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3
Projects of Students in Civic Advocacy Class

Public Awareness Projects
Televised Debate on Corporate Control of Farming
Creating and Distributing Pamphlet on Climate Change
Canvassing Shoppers about Factory Farming
YouTube Video on Childhood Obesity
Poster in School on Effects of Deforestation

Institutional Change Projects (Objectives)
Reducing local businesses' sale of clothing produced in sweatshops
Improving nutritional value of school cafeteria lunches
Reducing pet adoption costs charged by the state Humane Society
Strengthening the school district's vocational education program
Increasing local businesses' sale of local and sustainable food
Eliminating school district's bureaucratic hurdles for field trips
Combining school district music programs' parent booster groups

Whereas the flexibility of the project assignments might have contributed to some students' difficulties, other students seemed to benefit from this autonomy. As Karl said,

What I liked was that I got to set my own homework. At first, I thought it was cool that I didn't have to do anything. Then I realized that it made me care about the project more. [Mr. Kendall] said we could pick what we want to do, how to do it, etc. If I change course, that's fine, and he'll help. What I liked is that the effectiveness of the class depended on me. (Interview, January 22, 2010)

Although this high degree of autonomy seemed to boost motivation for some students like Karl, it gave other students so much freedom that they did not get past the beginning stages of their projects.

Evidence from interviews and observations suggests that students engaged differently in their projects based on their reasons for taking the class. Of the seven students I interviewed, four took the course because they were interested in learning about civic involvement, and three enrolled for other reasons—either a guidance counselor's suggestion, needing another half-credit to graduate, interest in taking a test-free class, or some combination of those reasons. Overall, students who took the course due to an interest in civic involvement developed more ambitious projects and became more engaged in learning about related issues.

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For example, Clarissa, the only African-American student in the class, entered the class with a strong interest in promoting animal rights, even starting her own related school club while taking the course. Her advocacy project aimed to reduce pet adoption costs at the Humane Society in a nearby impoverished urban area (from the unusually high cost of $450); in the process she developed broad knowledge about pet adoption processes, animal protective services, and the local economy. Likewise, Alessandra, who regularly read news magazines before entering the class, deeply explored the problems of sweatshop labor before approaching local business owners to request that they consider selling more clothing from manufacturers that use fair labor practices.

A few students who had enrolled in the course primarily to earn elective credits, however, did not engage enthusiastically in their projects. Darren, for example, who enrolled in the course after dropping out of a Spanish class, had little interest in issues that did not affect him directly. He struggled to find the motivation to design a project until the last week of the class and then tried to salvage his grade by "raising awareness" about the school's disc golf club, of which he was a senior member, by putting up fliers. Similarly, early in the term Harriet had planned to create a YouTube video about childhood obesity with classmate Alessandra but simply did not make the effort to meet outside of class time to record the video. During class sessions, Darren and Harriet were frequently disengaged, sometimes with their heads on their desks. Thus, although most students took the course and their projects seriously, this positive approach was not universal.

However, nearly all students, even those who did not develop appropriate projects, participated actively in some skill-building activities aimed at strengthening their civic advocacy efforts. Angela and Karl reported that, aside from the projects, the most valuable classroom activities were those that involved the learning and practice of communication strategies. As Angela recalled, "Mr. Kendall told us to use pictures when we tried to tell people about factory farming practices… [Learning these strategies] helped us to feel more prepared" (Interview, January 29, 2010). Even Darren, who had not engaged in many course activities, commented in his exit survey that he had learned useful communication strategies in the course.

In addition, students were typically very engaged when their classmates, especially their friends, led discussions about their own projects and solicited feedback. For example, when John spoke to the class in November about his public awareness project on deforestation, several students offered suggestions, ranging from sources that he should consult to ways to keep his message simple enough for the target audience of high school students. The regularity of such sessions helped to create a community of actively engaged learners strategizing to address challenging public issues. Thus, through discussing and learning about challenging public issues, developing a sense of civic community with their classmates, and collectively reflecting on their community action, most students engaged thoughtfully in the course activities.

Students' Development of Cautious Political Efficacy

Students' participation in civic advocacy projects positively influenced their political efficacy and also helped them to learn about the enormous challenges involved in civic action. Many students' second projects, aimed at institutional change, were ambitious (See Table 2.3), and due to time constraints and other barriers, students often did not achieve their full objectives before the class ended. Thus, few students expressed complete satisfaction with what they had accomplished, but overall their experiences taught them about the potential effects and challenges of civic action and inspired several to plan future efforts.

Table 2.4

Characteristics of Students in Civic Advocacy Class and NHS (N=39)*

Variable	Students in Advocacy Class (N=12)	NHS Students (N=27)
% Ethnic Minority (non-white)	8.3	7.7
% Mothers with college degrees or more	50.0	64.0
% Fathers with college degrees or more	41.7	56.0
Mean Age	16.7	16.4

*None of the demographic differences between these two groups were statistically significant.

Increased political efficacy. Results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses suggest that students involved in the CAPs developed a stronger belief in their own ability to influence political processes than student in the comparison group. First, results of cross-tabulations and t-tests examining students' background characteristics indicated that students conducting advocacy projects and those in the comparison group were

similar demographically (see Table 2.4). Despite these similarities, results of t-tests and analyses of variance indicated that students in the civic advocacy course experienced growth in both internal and external political efficacy whereas students in the National Honor Society did not (see Table 2.5).

Table 2.5

Results of T-tests Examining Students' Changes in Political Efficacy (N=39)

Factor	Beginning of Semester		End of Semester	
	NHS Students (N=27)	Advocacy Class (N=12)	NHS Students (N=27)	Advocacy Class (N=12)
Internal Political Efficacy	4.8	4.8	4.4	5.3*
External Political Efficacy	4.8	4.5	4.3	5.2*

*p<.05

Table 2.6

Effect Sizes (Unstandardized B Values) of OLS Regression Model Examining Changes in Political Efficacy (N=39)

Independent Variables	End-of Semester Internal Political Efficacy	End-of-Semester External Political Efficacy
Participation in Advocacy Class	.876***	.731*
Internal Political Efficacy, Time 1	.621***	.236
External Political Efficacy, Time 1	-.050	.279*
Political Interest, Time 1	.148	.210
Parental Education	-.060	-.240
Persistence Self-Efficacy	.074	.127
Age	-.263	-.445
Grade Level	.080	.640
Race/Ethnicity (White)	.522	-.095
Constant	5.703	7.043
R^2	.732***	.562**

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

In addition, results of ordinary least squares regression corroborate this trend. Controlling for parental education, age, grade, level, race, and initial levels of persistence self-efficacy, political interest and political efficacy, students who participated in the civic advocacy course had end-of-semester internal and external political efficacy levels that were nearly a full point higher than those of the NHS students (see Table 2.6). Students' initial levels of internal political efficacy significantly influenced their end-of-semester internal political efficacy, and to a lesser degree their beginning-of-semester external political efficacy influenced end-of-semester external political efficacy. The variables in the models explained about 56% of the variance in students' end-of-term external political efficacy and about 73% of the variance in students' end-of-semester internal political efficacy. For both of these models, the residuals follow a normal

distribution and are heteroskedastic, so the model fits the assumptions of regression and adequately explains the outcome.

This positive change in students' political efficacy reflects an assessment of their recent experiences learning about community issues and achieving modest successes in influencing others. Many students had never attempted such action before, and this class provided them with opportunities to channel their beliefs into action. In interviews, students indicated that their projects had allowed them to use their knowledge and skills in meaningful ways that expanded their visions of what they could achieve. As Angela said,

> I feel like this class has definitely opened my eyes, and it's gonna [*sic*] get me involved in more community projects…I'm a vegetarian and was interested in these things before. But before I didn't know how to go about doing that—or that I could make a difference, but now I feel like I can.…I've never even considered doing the advocacy thing before. I feel like now that I know what goes on, I know how to approach certain projects like that. (Interview, January 29, 2010)

Also, in the process of conducting their projects, students learned that large-scale change can be facilitated by small-scale local changes that they could more feasibly achieve. For example, in an interview at the beginning of the semester, Alessandra expressed skepticism about her ability to influence the government at all, pointing to its overwhelming size and corruption. However, after completing both a public awareness project and an advocacy project for the course, she maintained some skepticism but had gained some confidence in her own potential to make a difference:

> You can't just jump up the ladder and hit the highest step. You have to build it, and if we get a community working together…and build awareness in smaller steps gradually, that's the way to do it… the more you spread awareness, the more people are gonna be behind you (Interview, January 13, 2010).

Even students like Darren, who completed projects requiring little skill, developed a stronger sense that they could have an impact if they tried. "If the disc golf thing can be successful, then I think I can do other things, too" (Interview, January 22, 2010).

Harriet, however, expressed little confidence in her own ability to impact civic or political institutions throughout the term. Although regularly attending class, she did not

complete either project and participated in class discussions only minimally. Harriet seemed to struggle to find a project topic that interested her, and in interviews, she expressed extreme distrust of government. On the exit survey, she wrote, "I really don't like going out and trying to change things because it's not my thing and I'm not good at it." Her lack of engagement in the projects combined with her general lack of confidence for political tasks (indicated in other survey responses) likely contributed to her consistently low political efficacy; her status as the youngest student in the class (and the only sophomore) might have played a role, as well.

Overall, however, students' participation in the course, particularly the advocacy projects, helped students to develop a vision of how they could influence political processes. By working with their civically-engaged peers to learn about and advocate for causes that interested them, students gained experiences that helped them to develop generally more positive attitudes towards political participation.

Understanding the real challenges of civic action. Although students in the advocacy class developed a stronger sense of political efficacy, they also learned first-hand about many of the challenges involved in conducting civic and political action. By learning about the time and persistence required to influence community change, students grew more prepared for the realities involved in civic action.

Time commitment. First and foremost, students learned that effecting social and political changes often requires substantial time. Out of the final reflection papers from 13 students, nine mentioned time as a limiting factor in the success of their projects. Whereas three of these students merely blamed themselves for procrastinating, most students wrote that they simply had not anticipated how much work was required to achieve their goals. For example, Angela wrote about her team's effort to reduce the Humane Society's pet adoption costs, "As we did more research and delved deeper into our project, we discovered that our project was too complex to finish in our estimated timeline" (January 28, 2010). For high school students accustomed to completing short-term projects for courses, adapting to the timelines of relatively larger institutions was an important learning experience.

Encountering substantive disagreement. Nearly every student who undertook a project on a serious political issue encountered substantive disagreements with either

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individual decision-makers or members of the public. To some extent, students were prepared for this due to Mr. Kendall's argumentation instruction and classmates' feedback, but directly confronting an individual with opposing views can be a powerful way to learn about the unpredictability of civic advocacy and the skills required to overcome it. As Clarissa said about her public awareness project targeting shoppers' awareness of factory farming processes,

> You really have to know what you're talking about because people are going to ask you questions, and if you don't have your information and evidence, they won't want to listen – especially as kids; that's even a bigger disadvantage (Interview, November 2, 2009).

Karl had a similar learning experience when he attempted to convince the Elmwood High School cafeteria director Matthew Jenson that school lunches should be healthier. Although Karl had prepared to address Mr. Jenson's argument that profits were an essential priority of the food services company, he had not expected Mr. Jenson's assertion that providing a full range of choices to students was the company's highest priority. Karl told me that during the discussion he became frustrated by his own uncertainty about how to address Mr. Jenson's points, but upon reflection, he came to accept that part of advocacy work is learning about others' positions.

The need for persistence. Above all, the biggest challenge that students learned about was the difficulty of remaining persistent in one's efforts towards civic change. Even highly engaged students acknowledged the challenge of staying motivated amidst obstacles. Clarissa and Angela, for example, who canvassed a local shopping area to raise awareness about the unhealthy nature of factory farming, were frustrated that more people were not interested in joining their effort to combat the problem. Clarissa expressed some hope amidst her discouragement:

> Once you first get people to care, then you need to help people get passion. I don't know how to get that passion from people. We gave people the facts and they said, "Aw that's too bad." But I don't know how to get that passion from people… But some people do care, and if we can get a lot of people to do something, then maybe we'll get more people on the bandwagon. Then it can be a

chain reaction… It was discouraging, but having this experience gives me more drive. It makes me want to go bigger. (Interview, November 2, 2009)

Learning that success would not come easily was an important learning experience to prepare students for the realities of civic action.

Even students who struggled to begin projects learned about the role of persistence in civic action. As they listened to their peers discuss their projects in full-class feedback sessions, they heard about the challenges faced by even their most diligent classmates. In interviews at the end of the semester, Harriet, Darren, and Gary all said that effecting social change required substantial motivation that they were not sure they possessed. As Darren explained, "I know I can get people to do stuff if I really care about it. But I really need the motivation…Right now I don't really care enough to try very hard" (Interview, January 22, 2010). Through their own experiences and vicariously those of their classmates, these students learned that persistence is an essential but challenging aspect of successful civic action.

Table 2.7
Effect Sizes (Unstandardized B Values) of OLS Regression Model
Examining Changes in Persistence Self-Efficacy (N=39)

Independent Variables	End-of-Semester Persistence Self-Efficacy
Participation in Advocacy Class	-.565*
Persistence Self-Efficacy, Time 1	.587**
Internal Political Efficacy, Time 1	-.008
External Political Efficacy, Time 1	.076
Political Interest, Time 1	.117
Parental Education	.036
Grade Level	.061
Ethnicity/Race	-.083
Constant	1.350
R^2	.561**

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

Results of my quantitative analyses suggest that participating in advocacy projects can make persistence seem even more challenging. Through ordinary least squares regression analyses, I found that participation in the advocacy class negatively influenced students' perception of their own persistence, controlling for political efficacy, political interest, race, parental education, and grade level (see Table 2.7). Compared to NHS students who were not enrolled in the class, students in the civic advocacy course had end-of-semester persistence levels that were .565 points lower (p<.05). Thus, while

students learned about the effort, time, and persistence required for effective political action, they began to view themselves as less persistent. Results also indicated, that students' beginning-of-semester persistence self-efficacy was closely related to their end-of-semester persistence self-efficacy, which suggests that this attitude was also shaped by factors prior to their experiences in the course.

<div align="center">**Limitations**</div>

Despite the strength of these qualitative and quantitative findings, the relationship that this study makes between participation in civic advocacy projects and the development of cautious political efficacy has several important limitations. First and foremost, this study examined an educational process in one particular context—a moderately affluent, predominantly white school with a dedicated teacher and students who were generally engaged in school. Students' backgrounds and communities, including their school context, may shape their orientation towards political action (Rubin, 2007), and one large-scale quantitative study found that African-American students receive lower quality civic education (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Thus, similar strategies may not always elicit the same results in due to students' differing prior learning experiences. Also, Mr. Kendall's capacity to guide students' diverse projects and support their skill development was related to his prior political and debate experiences, and some educators may require additional support and/or training to lead such a course.

Another limitation of the study involved one aspect of my research methods. In my observations of classroom interactions twice per week, I aimed to be a "fly on the wall," sitting in the back of the room quietly taking notes and occasionally interviewing students individually in an adjacent room or after class, but as other researchers have noted, the presence of an additional adult might affect students' and teachers' behaviors (e.g., Shirley, 2009; Washer, 2006). Nonetheless, direct observations are an essential method for learning about the details of classroom interactions. In an effort to minimize any "observer effects" while also strengthening my ability to gather valuable data, I made a conscious effort to be pleasant (by greeting students when appropriate to make them feel comfortable), but also unobtrusive (by sitting separately and limiting my conversations with students). Thus, although my quantitative and qualitative data

included various means of examining my research questions, the effects of the study's specific context and methods may limit the generalizability of its findings.

Discussion

With appropriate guidance and scaffolding, civic advocacy projects can be an effective means of providing students with experiences that will both strengthen their political efficacy and prepare them for the challenges involved in civic and political action. As a unique blend of problem-based learning and service learning, students have opportunities to develop expertise in an area of interest and work towards an authentic community-oriented goal. In the process, they participate in numerous activities that civic education researchers have found to foster political efficacy—discussion and learning about public issues, identifying with a politically engaged group, and participating in democratic processes. Although students encounter barriers along the way, understanding these challenges further prepares students for the realities of civic action.

Fostering Political Efficacy

In this case study, students who conducted CAPs developed significantly more political efficacy than members of their school's National Honor Society, regardless of prior political interest and efficacy or background characteristics. This finding has several implications. First, it adds evidence to the claim that community involvement has a stronger impact on civic outcomes when accompanied by a focused instructional component (e.g., Walker, 2002). Currently, students around the country are engaged in community service, but such work (although valuable) often does not involve instruction about the sociopolitical issues encountered during such service, as in the case of this study's comparison group. Many scholars have found that when service does involve structured learning experiences, students can reap moral, social, and academic benefits (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). This study offers evidence that when students learn deeply about local and distal political challenges, develop the skills critical to advocating for change, and have a supportive environment in which to pursue such change, they are more likely to become engaged in a way that influences their political efficacy.

Given the long-established link between political efficacy and political participation, my findings also suggest that some students will become more politically engaged if they have opportunities to conduct CAPs in their communities. When

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individuals believe that their actions can influence political processes, they are more likely to participate in those processes (Almond & Verba, 1963; Becker, 2004; Cohen et al., 2001); and when students have opportunities to select a political challenge and engage in authentic actions to address it, they often realize that it is possible to have one's voice heard. Despite this study's findings, however, its implications are limited by its context, so future researchers should examine to what extent participation in civic advocacy projects relates to political efficacy changes for students in urban, rural, and suburban areas, with students of varying socioeconomic backgrounds, and/or with teachers who provide different types of support.

Third, my findings imply teachers will inevitably encounter challenges if they aim to foster political efficacy with the teaching strategies described in this paper. Providing students autonomy to select and design projects and create their own timelines for completion may foster the intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) of some students, such as Clarissa and Karl, but those with little prior political experience or motivation, such as Darren and Harriet, may procrastinate when given so much leeway. Then, if they do become interested late in the course, it may be too late for them to develop feasible projects. Some teachers therefore might benefit from creating a slightly more regimented structure than Mr. Kendall did, perhaps with stricter timelines or with students organized into heterogeneous projects groups. Even with these adjustments, however, there will be variation in students' levels of engagement that teachers will need to address.

Likewise, in some contexts, students might not always be supportive of one another's work. In this case study, most students got along well and were generally interested in learning about each others' projects during full-class project feedback sessions. This created a positive atmosphere and a subjective norm of political interest, which prior research suggests can support political motivation (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Furthermore, when students have opportunities to reflect critically with others, these exchanges can enrich their learning and help to contextualize their challenges (Koliba, 2004), thus enhancing their perception that they can learn to overcome obstacles to their goals. Some teachers face greater obstacles than others in developing a supportive classroom environment.

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Nonetheless, as teachers have always done, they must adapt the strategies to suit the needs, challenges, interests, and talents of their students—varying the structure, activities, and content to suit their unique groups. Researchers could support our increased understanding of students' civic and political education by examining how different teachers guide such projects and how students' political attitudes develop during these experiences.

Challenges of Political Action

Students undertaking CAPs learned that successfully achieving civic and political goals can be difficult. In their efforts, they encountered substantial disagreement and time constraints, and they quickly learned that accomplishing their initial goals would require enormous persistence, to a degree that some were unsure they possessed. This suggests that in the course of pursuing their projects students faced different challenges than they had faced before—challenges requiring more time, effort, and persistence to tackle effectively. Possessing a realistic understanding of the barriers to success in civic and political action is important for their political development, for otherwise, students will be unprepared for the challenges they may encounter when pursuing political goals later in life (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Future researchers should consider exploring the extent to which different types of barriers deter students or influence their political efficacy.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

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Leaders in social studies education have long emphasized the importance of preparing students to become active democratic citizens. A large body of research suggests that political efficacy is a strong, consistent predictor of political participation, so it is important that educators attend to its development. Often high school courses do not engage students in activities that researchers have found to positively influence political efficacy, so civic advocacy projects may provide an excellent means for students to have these experiences. When students engage in such work, the process can be exciting and rewarding for both teachers and students, and meanwhile students may develop skills and knowledge that will strengthen their political efficacy. Furthermore, by encountering authentic barriers during their projects, students can become aware of the

real challenges of civic and political action while also learning that they can make a difference, thus developing a sense of cautious political efficacy.

Appendix A

Measures and Factor Analysis Results

Table 2.A1
Items in Each Factor or Variable for Advocacy Class and NHS Students

Factor	Variable Question/Statement	Response Choices (7 levels)
Internal Political Efficacy	*I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.*	No Understanding – Excellent Understanding
	I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our world.	No Understanding – Excellent Understanding
External Political Efficacy	*Do you think that your words and/or actions could persuade a local elected official to consider your policy views?*	Definitely Could Not Persuade – Definitely Could Persuade
	Do you think that your words and/or actions could actually affect the outcome of local policy?	Definitely could not affect the outcome – Definitely could affect the outcome
	How many people do you think would listen to you discuss your concerns about a local political issue?	Fewer than 10 – 60 or more
	How many people do you think would listen to you discuss your concerns about an international political issue?	Fewer than 10 – 60 or more
	When I have to work with other people to achieve a goal, I can motivate others to complete the tasks necessary to achieve it.	Never – Always
Political Interest	*Compared to most of your other activities, how useful is learning about political issues?*	Not at all useful – Very useful (5 levels)
	For me, being good at understanding political issues is:	Not all important – Extremely important
Persistence Self-Effic.	*When I have difficulty completing a task, I can motivate myself to complete it.*	Never – Always
Parental Education	*What is your mother's highest level of education? What is your father's highest level of education?*	Less than high school – graduate degree

Table 2.A2
Results of Factor Analyses for Advocacy Class and NHS Students

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained
Internal Political Efficacy, Time 1	.866	1.77	88.6%
Internal Political Efficacy, Time 2	.810	1.68	84.1%
External Political Efficacy, Time 1	.755	2.77	55.3%
External Political Efficacy, Time 2	.708	2.48	62.1%
Political Interest, Time 1	.658	1.50	75.0%
Parental Education	.643	1.48	74.0%

Appendix B

Open-Ended Questions on End-of-Term Student Survey

1. What do you think are the most valuable things that you have learned in your sixth hour class? Please explain why you think what you have learned is valuable.

2. Did you complete the first major project for your sixth hour class? If so, please describe the project briefly. If not, please explain briefly why you chose not to complete the class project.

3. If you did complete the project, what do you think were the most important things that you learned through the process of completing the project? (If you did not complete a project, please move on to the next question.)

4. Are you working to complete the second major project for your sixth hour class (or have you completed it already)? If so, please describe the project briefly. If not, please explain briefly why you chose not to complete the class project.

5. If you did complete the project, what do you think were the most important things that you learned through the process of completing the project? (If you did not complete a project, please move on to the next question.)

Appendix C

Student Interview Questions

Beginning-of-Term Interview Protocol

1.   Why did you decide to take this class?

2.   Overall, do you like to spend time learning about political issues? If so, why? If not, why not?

3.   How do you feel about your ability to understand the issues that our community, state, and country face?

4.   When you think about yourself in relation to the government and its elected leaders, do you think that there's anything that you can do to influence the things that governing bodies do (at the local, state, or national level)?

5.   If the government (at the local, state, or national level) were doing something that you thought was bad or wrong, do you think that there's anything that you could do to change the outcome?

6.   When you think about how you might get people involved in trying to influence the government (at the local, state, or national level), do you think you might be able to do that?

End-of-Term Interview Protocol

1.   When you think about this class, do you think you learned anything valuable or useful? If so, what did you learn, and what parts of the class helped you learn it?

2.   When you think about the project(s) you completed, was there anything especially good or bad that you remember?

3.   How do you feel about your skills at understanding the issues that our community, state, and country face?

4.   When you think about yourself in relation to the government and its elected leaders, do you think that there's anything that you can do to influence the things that governing bodies do (at the local, state, or national level)?

5.   If the government (at the local, state, or national level) were doing something that you thought was bad or wrong, do you think that there's anything that you could do to change the outcome?

6. When you think about how you might get people involved in trying to influence the

   government (at the local, state, or national level), do you think you might be able to do that?

7. When you think about your experiences in this class, do you think that any of them affected how much you think you can influence the government or get other people involved? If so, what?

Appendix D

Example of Teacher Interview Questions

Beginning-of-Term Questions

1. This class seems unusual, so I'm wondering if you can tell me how you and the school decided to offer it.
2. When you think about your plans for this class, what would you say are your main goals for students?
3. By the end of the term, what would you like for students to accomplish?

Middle-of-Term Questions

1. When you think about the class overall, how would you say it's going?
2. As you think about the different students in the class, how do you think they're doing on their advocacy projects and other aspects of the class?

End-of-Term Questions

1. Overall, how do you think the students in the class did with their projects?
2. What do you think went well, and why do you think those things worked?
3. When you think about what didn't work well, what do you think are the reasons that they didn't go as you'd hoped?

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CHAPTER 3
FOSTERING POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT THROUGH
MODEL UNITED NATIONS: A MIXED METHODS CASE STUDY

In recent decades, the US has experienced low levels of political engagement, including decreasing citizen involvement in political organizations (Putnam, 2000), declining political interest (Galston, 2004, 2001), and decreasing confidence in government (Lopez, Levine, Both, Kiesa, Kirby, & Marcelo, 2006; Hetherington, 1998). Even in the election of 2008, which brought a slight increase in political engagement, only about 62 percent of the population voted (McDonald, 2008), including only about half of 18- to 29-year-olds (Kirby & Kawashima-Ginsburg, 2009). Although some scholars argue that Americans are compensating for low "conventional" political participation (e.g., voting) with new forms of civic activity (e.g., blogging, volunteering), most would still contend that traditional forms of engagement are vital to the strength of our democracy (Gibson & Levine, 2003).

In the United States, educators and political leaders alike have long been interested in preparing citizens for democratic participation through schooling (e.g., Jefferson, 1782/1955; Dewey, 1916/1968). Since the early twentieth century, leaders and organizations promoting social studies education have made preparing citizens for active political participation one of their central aims (Hertzberg, 1981). Recently, numerous educational organizations have affirmed this goal, including the National Council for the Social Studies (1993), the Center for Civic Education (1994), and numerous state education agencies (e.g., Michigan Department of Education, 2007; Nevada Department of Education, 2008; State Education Department of New York, 2002). Despite ongoing educational efforts to prepare youth for political participation, researchers have found that political engagement has remained low, especially among youth (McDonald, 2008; Kirby & Kawashima-Ginsburg, 2009). Given the broadly supported goal of fostering political engagement through education, how can this be done successfully?

Political scientists have explored various explanations for political engagement, but they have consistently found that among the strongest predictors of political participation are individuals' psychological resources for political engagement (Teixeira, 1992; Guyton, 1988; Almond & Verba, 1963). These include both (1) political efficacy – the extent to which individuals believe they can influence the government (Paulsen, 1991; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954), and (2) political interest – one's willingness to pay attention to politics at the expense of other endeavors (Stromback & Shehata, 2009; Pan, 2006; Lupia & Philpot, 2005). In short, when individuals are interested in learning about political issues and believe that they can influence them, they are more likely to participate politically. Evidence indicates that certain experiences, such as participating in political discussions or small-scale democratic processes, can have a positive influence on these psychological orientations (Morrell, 2005; Hahn, 1999), and educators interested in preparing students for political participation have designed various opportunities for students to have such experiences.

One of the world's largest political education programs is Model United Nations. With over 400,000 participants each year worldwide (Williams, 2009), Model UN gives students opportunities to research, discuss, debate, and develop solutions to some of the world's most vexing problems, ranging from water scarcity to nuclear proliferation. Although prior studies have examined the history and structure of Model UN programs (Patterson, 1996; Turner, 1997), no published research has closely examined the ways in which students' Model UN experiences relate to their developing political engagement (political efficacy and interest). The major purposes of this paper are to examine (1) the ways and the extent to which students' Model UN experiences foster their development of political engagement, and (2) how adult advisors of one Model UN club support this development. By analyzing students' experiences and developing political attitudes, I offer insights about the potential benefits and challenges of fostering students' political engagement through Model United Nations.

Background

Factors Related to Political Participation

For decades, political scientists have explored why individuals in democratic societies choose to participate politically or not. Much of this research suggests that

political participation can be explained by various factors, including socioeconomic status (Verba & Nie, 1972; Conway, 1991), social connectedness (Putnam, 1995; Robnett, 2007), leadership experience (Damico, Damico, & Conway, 1998), or group identity (Hardy-Fanta, 1993; Wilcox & Gomez, 1990). Although these variables have substantial explanatory power, they do not fully account for the psychological factors underlying individuals' decisions to participate.

Since the 1950s, other researchers have explored these psychological factors and have found them to be both excellent predictors of political participation and closely related to key variables from other theories (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001). Foremost among these psychological resources are political efficacy and political interest (Stromback & Shehata, 2009; Pan, 2006; Teixeira, 1992; Guyton, 1988; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954), and my own prior research suggests that self-efficacy for certain political tasks, such as public speaking, influences individuals' political efficacy (Levy, 2009). Following is a brief review of literature on the three constructs that were central to this study: political efficacy, self-efficacy, and political interest.

Political Efficacy

Definitions and significance of political efficacy.

Political efficacy was first defined by political scientists who were studying electoral behavior in the mid-1950s, and this definition is still cited widely today. These researchers defined it as follows:

> The feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954, p. 187).

Since that time, researchers have developed reliable measures of political efficacy and have found it to be an excellent predictor of political participation (Beaumont, 2010). When individuals have high levels of political efficacy, they are more likely to vote (Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001; Pollack, 1983; Guyton, 1982; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960), contact public officials about issues of concern (Hirlinger, 1993;

Pollack, 1983; Sharp, 1982), become involved in political activism (Abrams & DeMoura, 2002; Paulsen, 1991; Tygart, 1977), use informational news media (Newhagen, 1994; Tan, 1981), and become psychologically involved in politics (Cohen et al., 2001; Bell, 1969).

Political efficacy is often conceptualized and studied as a multi-dimensional concept. Through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, political scientists have concluded that political efficacy consists of at least two distinct dimensions: internal political efficacy and external political efficacy (Aish, 1990; Zimmerman, 1989; Coleman & Davis, 1976; Balch, 1974). Whereas external political efficacy (EPE) is the belief that the public can influence governmental decisions and actions, internal political efficacy (IPE) refers to a person's belief that he or she is able to understand politics and competently participate in political acts (Miller, Miller, & Schneider, 1980). These two dimensions are often correlated and studied as one coherent construct (Craig, 1979), but some researchers have considered them separately.

For this study, I created more nuanced dimensions. To reflect my initial hypotheses about students' distinct competencies, I subdivided IPE into two dimensions: IPE/knowledge and IPE/skills. Whereas the former describes an individual's self-efficacy for understanding and knowing facts, concepts, and theories relevant to politics, the latter describes a person's self-efficacy for competently performing politically relevant tasks, such as public speaking and constructing reasoned arguments. In the following literature review, most of the studies described consider political efficacy as one coherent construct, but when researchers did distinguish between internal and external political efficacy, I indicate such.

Factors related to political efficacy.

Both political scientists and educational researchers have explored how to increase individuals' political efficacy, and many of their findings have important implications for educators. One major finding is that political participation itself can be an effective method of increasing individuals' political efficacy, especially participation that results in one's preferred political outcomes. For many individuals, simply voting (Ikeda, Kobayashi, & Hoshimoto, 2008; Finkel, 1985) or participating in other campaign activities, such as attending political meetings or verbally promoting a party or candidate,

can boost political efficacy (Stenner-Day & Fischle, 1992; Finkel, 1987). Other studies, however, indicate that voting promotes political efficacy much more definitively when one's preferred candidate wins (Bowler & Donovan, 2002; Clarke & Acock, 1989). In fact, some research suggests that participating in political action in which participants are marginalized or unheard might reduce their political efficacy (Freie, 1997; Stenner-Day & Fischle, 1992). Altogether, this research suggests that educators can support students' political efficacy development by involving them in political action, but these studies do not explore the psychological mechanisms through which this process occurs.

Another related set of activities that can strengthen political efficacy is participation in small-scale democratic decision-making processes. Researchers have found that when children are involved in making family decisions, they are more likely to become politically efficacious (Langton, 1980; Takei & Kleiman, 1976; Almond & Verba, 1963). In schools, students can develop higher political efficacy when they have opportunities to make classroom rules (Glenn, 1972) and participate in school-wide governance (Siegel, 1977). Even simulations of democratic processes can have positive effects. Researchers have documented political efficacy increases resulting from participation in mock elections (Stroupe & Sabato, 2004), legislative role-playing games (Vogel, 1973; Boocock, 1968), and simulations involving negotiations of government energy conservation strategies (Dressner, 1990). However, one study found that if students have disempowering experiences in simulations, their political efficacy can decrease (Livington & Kidder, 1972). Thus, research suggests that teachers aiming to build students' political efficacy might achieve these goals by providing their students opportunities to be successful in either real or simulated democratic decision-making processes. However, these studies again do not attend to why these experiences support some students' political efficacy development but not others'.

Recently researchers have also found that when people have opportunities to learn about and discuss political information and perspectives, they are more likely to believe that they can participate effectively in the political system. For example, numerous studies indicate that political efficacy, especially internal political efficacy, increases when individuals read newspapers or watch television news (Wells & Dudash, 2007; Lee, 2006; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Discussing political issues with peers also appears to have

a positive effect on political efficacy (Morrell, 2005; Hahn, 1999). However, there is also evidence that exposure to confusing or negative political information can actually decrease external political efficacy (Lee, 2006; Miller, 1979). In sum, these studies suggest that if teachers want to strengthen students' internal and external political efficacy, it may be important for them both to give students opportunities to learn and process political information and also to clarify complex political realities and avoid expressing excessive pessimism. However, like the studies described earlier, these do not examine the reasons that these experiences might influence political efficacy.

In addition, evidence indicates that identifying strongly with a group, especially a politically-oriented group, can enhance individuals' political efficacy. For example, identifying with a political party (Louis, Taylor, & Neil, 2004), especially the party in power (Lambert, Curtis, Brown, & Kay, 1986), tends to strengthen one's political efficacy. Family politicization also seems to play a role; when children believe that their parents are interested in political issues, they develop higher political efficacy than other children (Ichilov, 1988; Langton & Karns, 1969). Researchers have also found that people have higher political efficacy if they feel more closely connected to their communities through personal relationships (Steinberger, 1981) or if they identify strongly with a particular demographic group (Koch, 1993). In schools, when students are more socially connected, they are more likely to vote later in life (Callahan, Muller, & Schiller, 2010). Overall, this evidence suggests that the perception that one belongs to a politically engaged group can strengthen political efficacy. For educators, this research implies that providing students with opportunities to work with others on civic or political challenges may be a way to foster their political efficacy.

Finally, researchers have found that certain demographic and personal characteristics are consistently related to political efficacy. People tend to have higher political efficacy if they are older (Wu, 2003; Koch, 1993), more educated (Wolfsfeld, 2006; Ichilov, 1988), from families with higher socioeconomic status (Lambert et al., 1986), or more intelligent (Carmines & Baxter, 1986; Jackman, 1970). Some studies also suggest that ethnicity is related to political efficacy (Kleiman, 1976; Campbell et al., 1954), but other studies indicate that ethnicity's effect may vary based on the context (Wu, 2003; Emig, Hesse, & Fisher, 1996). Recent research has found that African-

American students and those in schools with low average socioeconomic status typically experience lower quality civic education (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008), so this might explain some of these demographic differences. In most studies examining political efficacy (including the original study presented in this paper), many of these demographic variables have been statistically controlled.

Self-Efficacy

Definition and significance of self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is defined as "a judgment of one's ability to organize and execute given types of performances" (Bandura, 1997, p. 21). Political efficacy is, in fact, one type of self-efficacy, so research on the latter may be helpful for understanding the former. Many studies on the causes and effects of various types of self-efficacy have similar findings to those of political efficacy: For example, numerous studies indicate that self-efficacy to successfully perform certain tasks has substantial effects on the performance of those tasks and that certain formative experiences can positively influence these self-efficacy judgments. Because political action often requires the successful completion of a broad set of tasks, such as public speaking and constructing arguments (i.e., activities related to IPE/skills), supporting the development of political efficacy might require attention to more specific types of self-efficacy. Thus, it is important to consider research in these areas.

Numerous studies indicate that self-efficacy for particular tasks influences various aspects of performance, including both achievement levels and persistence. For example, when students believe that they are more competent at certain academic activities, they achieve greater success in those activities (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1986; 1984). Likewise, greater self-efficacy for monitoring and changing one's health habits can positively influence one's likelihood of initiating, adopting, and maintaining positive new health habits (Bandura, 2005), and when individuals believe they can manage their phobias, they are more likely to cope successfully with the sources of their fear (Bandura, 1977). Research also shows that increased levels of self-efficacy have a positive influence on persistence for tasks such as fulfilling one's employment responsibilities (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984) and solving problems (Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivee, 1991). Although specific self-efficacy

judgments are more accurate predictors of the directly relevant task, some studies show that these specific self-efficacy judgments can also generalize to other tasks (Bandura, 1986). Thus, increasing students' self-efficacy for certain political tasks might have important consequences for their performance of both those and other political tasks.

Prior research on self-efficacy development.

Psychologists have long explored how self-efficacy develops, and this research can be helpful to educators interested in developing students' political skills. First, individuals can develop self-efficacy for various tasks by having "enactive mastery experiences" (Bandura, 1997). By having opportunities to try and succeed at certain tasks, even in simulated environments, people can develop greater confidence in their abilities in those areas (Smith, 1989). In addition, individuals can develop self-efficacy through vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1997). When children observe their peers succeeding at certain tasks, such as learning, developing skills, or coping with stress, these children develop more self-efficacy in their own abilities to succeed at these tasks (Schunk, 1987). In one study, computer training involving modeling was even more effective at promoting self-efficacy and skills than computer training using active tutorials (Gist, Schwoerer, & Rosen, 1989). Modeling can be detrimental to self-efficacy, however, if the models do not succeed at their task (Brown & Inouye, 1978). This research suggests that educators who hope to use modeling to build students' self-efficacy should plan activities so that students can observe examples of success. This can be difficult to arrange, however, in cases when achieving success requires overcoming a serious of challenging obstacles (as in this study of political action).

Studies have also identified other factors that can influence self-efficacy. Verbal encouragement, for example, can heighten individuals' confidence in their abilities (Bandura, 1997). When students are told that they can succeed, they tend to succeed more often (Schunk & Cox, 1986; Schunk, 1982), and feedback can be even more helpful to self-efficacy when framed in terms of an individual's degree of success rather than deficiency (Jourdan, 1991). More recent research, however, suggests that for boosting children's achievement motivation, praising individuals' aptitudes can have negative consequences than praising effort (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Although more research in

this area is needed, the evidence suggests that students benefit from specific feedback about their actions.

Also, physiological and affective states can influence self-efficacy. These states influence people differently, however. Whereas low-anxiety individuals often find that stress and arousal facilitate performance, high-anxiety individuals may find such situations debilitating (Hollandsworth, Glazeski, Kirkland, Jones, & Van Norman, 1979). In general, however, positive emotional experiences have been shown to strengthen social and intellectual resources (Fredrickson, 1998). Thus, the feedback and support that educators provide during challenging situations can substantially influence students' development of IPE/skills. Overall, research on self-efficacy suggests that adolescents' political efficacy may be related to the extent to which their political activities provide opportunities for (1) mastery experiences, (2) observation of successful models, (3) receiving targeted verbal encouragement, and (4) feeling emotionally supported. This research provides useful principles with which to consider how educational programs might strengthen political efficacy, but none of these studies specifically address the development of political skills, knowledge, or efficacy.

Political Interest

Definition and significance of political interest.

Political scientists have defined political interest in various ways (Horner, 2007), but over several decades of research, most have conceptualized and measured the concept as "citizens' willingness to pay attention to politics at the expense of other endeavors" (Lupia & Philpot, 2005, p. 1132; Verba & Nie, 1972; Almond & Verba, 1963). Using items to reflect this definition, researchers have found political interest to be a consistent predictor of various forms of political participation (Stromback & Shehata, 2009; Leighly & Vedlitz, 1999; Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 1997), especially voting (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Studies also indicate that political interest influences citizens' amount of political talk (Pan, Shen, Paek, & Sun, 2006), political knowledge (Stromback & Shehata, 2009; Delli Karpini & Keeter, 1996), and exposure to informational news media (Stromback & Shehata, 2009). Thus, political interest is essential for fostering awareness of political issues and processes (Van Deth & Elff, 2004).

Prior research related to political interest development.

Despite the mounting research pointing to the significance of political interest, there have been relatively few studies of how to foster it (R. Niemi, personal communication, July 30, 2010). Early research suggested that certain demographic characteristics, such as socioeconomic status, are related to political interest (Scott & Acock, 1979); but more recent studies indicate that political interest is positively influenced by the same types of political experiences that flow from it, such as media exposure (Kazee, 1981; Stromback & Shehata, 2009) and participation in political discussions (Hahn, 1999; Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2010).

More general research on interest development, however, suggests that although certain activities may foster interest, the outcomes of such activities will vary based on a number of factors. One of the most prominent and strongly supported theories in interest development contends that four *collative variables* contribute to individuals' development of interest: novelty, complexity, uncertainty, and conflict (Berlyne, 1960; Berlyne, 1974; Berlyne, Robbins, & Thompson, 1974). Although these variables stimulate interest for individuals from various age brackets and cultures, researchers have not identified why they function in this way.

Recent research suggests that these collative variables may be manifestations of emotional experiences. For example, Silvia's (2006) research on the emotion-attribution theory found that when individuals experience positive emotions and then attribute those feelings to a particular type of activity, they become more interested in that type of activity. When considered alongside research in political interest, the emotion-attribution theory implies that political discussions and learning could indeed promote political interest but that they would be most effective at doing so if accompanied by positive emotions and subsequent reflection on those positive political experiences and learning. Also, the emotion-attribution research suggests that a wide variety of activities could positively influence students' political interest *if* students associate the emotionally positive aspects of those experiences with their engagement in political learning.
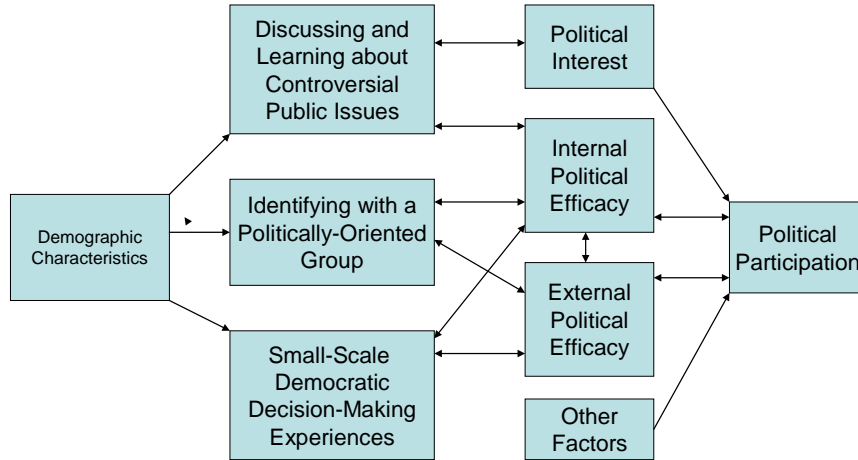
Figure 3.1. Evidence-based conceptual model of variables related to political efficacy and participation

Summary of Theoretical Framework

The research findings on the relationship between individuals' psychological resources and their political participation are summarized in Figure 3.1, and this provides the theoretical framework for this study. As the figure illustrates, political efficacy, political interest, and other factors contribute to political participation, and various experiences, such as involvement in democratic decision-making processes, support individuals' development of political efficacy and interest. Often these experiences are conducive to the growth of self-efficacy for political skills, knowledge, and achievement. For example, when individuals discuss political issues in groups, they have opportunities to see others who are informed about and skilled at explaining political issues (i.e., models), and when participating in small-scale democratic processes, individuals have opportunities to have enactive mastery experiences. Demographic variables, though often linked directly to political efficacy and participation, relate to individuals' political engagement due to individuals' and groups' differential exposure to the experiences involved in high-quality civic education.

Model United Nations

Model United Nations is a loose network of independently run programs that provide students with opportunities to represent different countries in discussions,

debates, and problem-solving exercises on major international issues. The centerpiece of the Model UN experience is the interscholastic conference. These conferences can include anywhere from a few dozen students to several thousand, and at every conference, each student is assigned to represent a specific country's policies at a meeting of a particular committee. Specific committees are identical or similar to actual UN entities, such as the World Health Organization or the Security Council, and at each conference these committees typically address two major topics, such as North Korea's nuclear program or the prevention of international influenza pandemics. Before conferences, students research the topics that their committees will discuss in order to prepare to represent their assigned countries' positions on those topics. Then during the many hours of committee meetings – over 20 hours at a three-day conference – students strive to design and pass (by majority vote) resolutions aimed at addressing the challenges under discussion in their committees (see Appendix A for an example of a resolution).

Students and educators first began to hold Model UN assemblies when the United Nations was founded in the 1940s, and before that, there were similar events simulating the League of Nations. Over the years, schools and non-profit organizations have supported these conferences and their associated school clubs. Although controversial among individuals skeptical of the UN, Model UN programs have grown fairly steadily since their founding (Turner, 1997). Today, about 400,000 students around the world participate in Model UN assemblies each year (Williams, 2009), and there has recently been a concerted effort to expand these programs into urban areas in numerous countries: Since 2000, the UN Association's Global Classrooms project has started Model UN programs in 24 cities around the world – including Beijing, Beirut, Johannesburg, Los Angeles, Mexico City, and New Delhi – with the goal of reaching traditionally underserved communities (United Nations Association of the USA, 2009).

Despite the popularity of Model UN, no published research closely examines how individual clubs function, how adult advisors manage their clubs, or how students' experiences in the program relate to their political engagement. This study fills an important gap in the research literature by contributing to our understanding of both (1) the ways and extent to which students' political engagement develops in such a program,

and (2) how adult advisors can structure the Model UN experience to strengthen students' political engagement.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. To what extent and in what ways does students' political engagement (i.e., political interest and political efficacy) develop during their experiences in Model United Nations?

2. In what ways does students' Model UN experience contribute to their political engagement?

3. What role do Model UN advisors play in guiding students' Model UN experiences in a way that fosters their political engagement?

Method

Mixed Methods Case Study

To address these research questions, I conducted a mixed methods case study of one high school's Model UN club. A case study can provide an important step towards strengthening our understanding of how educators can best foster the development of political engagement. Although quantitative studies of political engagement have produced numerous helpful insights, case studies enable the close examination of how phenomena actually occur in authentic educational contexts. The resulting analyses of specific patterns and processes can be useful to practitioners and policymakers (Merriam, 1988; Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Collins & Noblit, 1978). Furthermore, conducting a case study can be a useful method for identifying nuances within new areas of inquiry (Stake, 1995; Foreman, 1948). Because of the absence of research on the specific processes involved in fostering students' political interest and political efficacy, this case study makes an important contribution the literature on political engagement and civic learning.

To strengthen this contribution, I conducted both qualitative and quantitative methods longitudinally to enhance our understanding of how political efficacy might develop over time. Using both methods of inquiry provides several affordances. First, whereas quantitative methods are typically used for verification of theories and qualitative methods for theory generation, employing both allows researchers to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions. Second, having both

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qualitative and quantitative data can enhance the explanatory power of a study's conclusions. Even if the different types of data provide divergent findings, this can stimulate an important reexamination of the original theory (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In this case study, collecting and analyzing both types of data enabled me to better understand students' Model UN experiences and how various aspects of their experience, such as debating at conferences and advisors' coaching, related to their political efficacy development.

Context of the Study

This study examined the Model UN club at Elmwood High School (all names of locations and individuals are pseudonyms), a secondary school in a middle-class semi-urban area bordering a major Midwestern city. Elmwood's Model UN club was established in 1995 through the efforts of a handful of students and one faculty advisor, and in the fifteen years since, it has grown into a club with three advisors and up to sixty students per year. During each school year, the club brings students to four interscholastic Model UN conferences, with between 20 and 35 Elmwood students attending each one.

Table 3.1
Characteristics of Elmwood High School

Number of Students	1,650
Graduation Rate	90%
Average ACT Composite Score	21
% Ethnic Minority	10
Per Capita Income (in district)	$36,800

Elmwood High School itself has approximately 1,650 students, and the student body is 90 percent white, two percent African-American, two percent Asian-American, three percent Latino, and three percent other (See Table 3.1). With only one African-American and one Asian-American, the membership of the Model UN club reflected this demographic pattern. Many Elmwood students participated in extracurricular activities, but anticipated district budgetary shortfalls led to policies requiring students to pay to participate in many of these activities, a policy that reduced participation. Although at the time of the study the requirement had not yet been applied to after-school clubs like Model UN, this was a looming possibility, and during this study, Elmwood's Model UN officers considered whether or not their club should leave the district and become a non-profit organization.

In the midst of these challenges, Elmwood High School's Model UN program was one of the school's largest and most active clubs, holding frequent regular meetings and other events (See Table 3.2). Even before the school year began, the club's nine officers and main advisor, Sam Kendall, met for three 6-hour days to discuss their plans for the upcoming school year. Throughout the year, the entire club met for one hour every Monday after school, and on Friday afternoons there were one-hour officers' meetings. Mr. Kendall, an English teacher, and the other main advisor, history teacher Evan Stein, were usually present at these meetings, but students also conducted many club activities unsupervised. For example, students organized and led fundraisers and educational programs for their high school peers and for middle school students. Although students often worked effectively without Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein, these advisors provided ongoing guidance to students and were regularly available to students seeking additional help or advice.

Table 3.2
Elmwood High School Model UN Club's Activities

Activity	Duration	Frequency
Interscholastic Conferences	1-4 days	4 per year
Conference Preparation Meetings (small groups)	1-2 hours	Usually 2-4 times per conference
Full Club Meetings	1 hour	Weekly
Officers' Meetings	1 hour	Weekly
Fundraisers	1-5 days	5 per year
Strategic Planning Meetings	4-6 hours	2 per year
Educational Events (for non-members)	1-6 hours	2-4 per year

This study began in late August of 2009 and ended in early March of 2010; during that time Elmwood's Model UN club attended three interscholastic conferences. These three conferences were managed and directed by different groups – one by high school students, one by college students, and the third by an independent non-profit organization. These groups determined the conference committees and the specific topics each committee would address. Between 200 and 400 students registered to attend these conferences, and several weeks before each one, conference organizers informed club advisors which countries their clubs would represent and to which committees those countries should send delegates. After receiving Elmwood's country assignments, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein solicited students' committee preferences, discussed how to make strong country delegations, and then assigned students to committees and countries. Once

they received their assignments, students began the challenging work of preparing for the conferences, which included independent research, country delegation meetings, meeting with an advisor, and (for most conferences) preparing a position paper to clarify their stances on the issues coming before the committee (See Table 3.3 and Appendix B).

Table 3.3

Committees and Debate Topics at a Model UN Conference attended by Elmwood Students

Committee	Debate Topics
Human Rights Council	Freedom of the Press Rights of Lesbian and Gay Individual
Social and Economic Committee	International Labor Standards Indigenous Land Rights
World Health Organization	Pandemic Flu Access to Safe Drinking Water
Security Council	Afghanistan's Instability Iran's Nuclear Program
Political Committee	Illicit Trade in Small Arms Electoral Violence and Intimidation
Special Political Committee	Situation in Korean Peninsula Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee	Children in Armed Conflict Eliminating Racism

Once at the conferences, students attended their committees' sessions, which typically lasted 3-4 hours each in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Each committee explored its pre-assigned topics, but about halfway through each conference, surprise "crises" (e.g., a skirmish between India and Pakistan or a massive drought in China; See Appendix C) were introduced by conference organizers. In these committees, students used parliamentary procedure to set the order of the agenda and signed up for the committees' speakers' lists to give short speeches about their countries' positions. Frequently the sequences of speakers were interrupted by students' motions to hold caucuses (informal meetings), and during these caucuses, typically between five and fifteen minutes, students talked informally in groups to negotiate their differences and design working papers (prospective resolutions) to address the major issues under discussion. When students finished writing a working paper, they presented it to the committee, proposed that it be debated as a resolution, and then – if it was approved by majority vote to become a resolution – participated in that debate. In the process, there were countless opportunities for students to work with others, form alliances, discuss substantive political issues, vote on specific measures, and lobby others for their votes

(See Figure 3.2). By the end of each conference, most committees had passed at least one resolution, but some had passed up to three or four.

Figure 3.2. Model UN students voting on an amendment to a resolution

Most Elmwood students were fairly active conference delegates, especially the upperclassmen, and they received substantial encouragement from their advisors. At conferences, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein were joined by a third advisor – Lisa Paulson, one of Mr. Kendall's former students who had since become a lawyer. These three advisors spent a substantial portion of the conferences sitting in the back of committee rooms, observing students' progress, and offering occasional words of support or advice. At the end of each conference day, advisors held a full team meeting during which they typically congratulated students for their endurance and successes and offered advice to the team as a whole.

Table 3.4
Characteristics of Conferences Attended by Elmwood High School Model UN Club during Study Period

Conference Location	Date	Total Days	Elmwood Participants	Elmwood Countries	Conference Committees	Approximate Total Delegates
High School	Oct., 2009	1	30	10	11	190
Large Hotel	Nov., 2009	3.5	21	6	7	250
University	Jan., 2010	3.5	35	7	11	400

Overall, Elmwood's Model UN club was an extremely active program, and for many students, the club became a central aspect of their high school experiences (See Table 3.4). By participating in conferences and school-based Model UN activities, many club members developed strong social bonds that extended far beyond the context of

Model UN – socializing with one another during school lunches, the weekends, and summer vacation. Thus, for many students, the program was an important educational and social experience.

Data Collection

I gathered three major types of data during students' Model UN experiences: interview data, survey responses, and records of observations. Throughout the semester, I observed students' weekly membership meetings each Monday and officer meetings each Friday, keeping systematic field notes and audio recordings of each observation. I also attended all three interscholastic conferences and observed students in their committee meetings and in student-advisor interactions. Field notes recorded (1) the amount of time and the ways in which students engaged in various activities, (2) students' opportunities to develop political engagement and skills, and (3) advisors' roles in the process.

At the beginning and end of the first semester of the 2009-2010 school year, I administered questionnaires to 36 Model UN participants from Elmwood High School. These questionnaires measured students' political efficacy, political interest, and IPE/skills (primarily communication and negotiation). Also included on the survey were questions about students' backgrounds, including their age, race, grade point average, and parents' levels of education. For the purposes of comparison, I administered the same questionnaire at similar time points to 27 students who were members of the National Honor Society, an exclusive student group of high achievers regularly engaged in community service. Although the two groups' surveys were nearly identical, the Model UN students' second survey included a few additional questions about their Model UN experiences, including the number of events they had attended and the number of friends they thought they had in Model UN.

Items measuring internal political efficacy for knowledge were adapted from the National Election Study (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990), and items measuring external political efficacy were based on a measurement study that I conducted (Levy, 2008). To measure political interest, I adapted questions from studies of the expectancy-value model (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), and items measuring internal political efficacy for skills were adapted from a study of managers (Paglis & Green, 2002). Table 3.5 includes the items I used to measure these concepts.

Table 3.5
Items in Political Engagement Factors

Factor	Variable Question/Statement	Response Choices (7 levels)
External Political Efficacy	*Do you think that your words and/or actions could persuade a state elected official to consider your policy views?*	Definitely Could Not Persuade – Definitely Could Persuade
	Do you think that your words and/or actions could actually affect the outcome of local policy?	Definitely could not affect the outcome – Definitely could affect the outcome
	Do you think that your words and/or actions could actually affect the outcome of state policy?	Definitely could not affect the outcome – Definitely could affect the outcome
Internal Political Efficacy/ Knowledge	*I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.*	No Understanding – Excellent Understanding
	I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our world.	No Understanding – Excellent Understanding
Internal Political Efficacy/ Skills	*I am confident in my public speaking abilities.*	Not at all Confident – Extremely Confident
	I am confident that I can construct arguments about political issues (in writing or speech) that are logical and well-reasoned.	Not at all Confident – Extremely Confident
	I can persuade my peers of my point of view on political issues.	Never – Always
	When I disagree with a peer, I am comfortable expressing my point of view to him or her.	Never – Always
Political Interest	*Compared to most of your other activities, how useful is learning about political issues?*	Not at all useful – Very useful (5 levels)
	For me, being good at understanding political issues is:	Not all important – Extremely important
	How much do you like learning about political issues?	Not at all – Tremendously

In addition to administering surveys and observing Model UN activities, I conducted focused semi-structured interviews (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990) at various points during the study period with nine students and all three advisors. The students included three freshmen, three upperclassmen new to Model UN, and three veteran members who also served as club officers. I spoke with each student at least four times, once at the beginning and end of the semester and twice or more during their conference and club experiences (See Table 3.6).

At interviews towards the beginning of the semester, I asked students about their reasons for joining Model UN, experiences thus far in the club, external political efficacy, political interest, IPE/skills, and IPE/knowledge. End-of-semester interviews explored the latter issues, as well, but instead of asking about students' reasons for joining the club, I

asked about their reasons for continuing to participate in club activities. Whereas interviews at the beginning and end of the semester both lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes, mid-semester interviews, which occurred during conferences and after club meetings, were shorter (typically five or fewer minutes) and asked students about their current experiences, learning, and/or concerns. In interviews with advisors, I asked about their goals, challenges, and perceptions of their own roles. Altogether, these data provided a rich corpus with which to explore students' Model UN experiences, how students' political engagement developed during these experiences, and how advisors effectively managed the club.

Table 3.6
Model UN Student Interviewees

Name	Gender	Age	Grade	Status in Club	Conferences Attended During Study
Brad	male	17	12	New member	2
Carol	female	14	9	New member	3
Emily	female	16	11	New member	3
Erin	female	14	9	New member	2
Evelyn	female	17	12	Officer, 3rd year in club	3
Julia	female	16	11	New member	2
Mark	male	14	9	New member	2
Randall	male	16	11	Officer, 3rd year in club	3
Sarah	female	17	12	Officer, 4th year in club	3

Data Analysis

Exploring answers to my research questions required detailed analysis of the large amount of data collected. First, I analyzed my qualitative data on an ongoing basis. Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I conducted open coding of interview transcripts and field notes beginning in September, and throughout the study, I repeatedly revised, combined, and reorganized these codes. Major categories of codes were related to students' development of (1) political skills, (2) political knowledge, (3) persistence, (4) rapport, (5) IPE/skills, (6) IPE/knowledge, (7) external political efficacy, and (8) political interest. The ninth coding category was students' achievement of political goals, and the tenth major category was related to advisors' roles (See Appendix D for index of codes). While specifying subcategories within these codes, I wrote analytic memos on a weekly basis to explore coding dimensions and relationships among them. After I finished collecting data at the end of the semester, I continued to narrow my

coding scheme, analyze relationships among codes, record analytic memos, and develop theory about students' development of political engagement.

In addition to conducting these qualitative analyses, I analyzed students' survey responses to identify quantitative changes in their political interest and internal and external political efficacy. To do this, I first conducted exploratory factor analysis and then created factors out of variables that shared an underlying construct. Then, to compare Model UN students and NHS students on these factors over time, I conducted t-tests and analyzed the variance of these factors at the two time points. Next I calculated correlations among these factors and demographic variables to explore their relationships with one another.

To examine students' decision to participate in Model UN, I conducted logistic regression analysis, using Model UN participation as the outcome variable and students' background characteristics and initial political engagement as covariates. Finally, I conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses to more closely examine the relationship between Model UN participation and students' changes in external political efficacy, political interest, IPE/knowledge, and IPE/skills. Controlling for students' initial levels of political interest, external political efficacy, IPE/skills, and IPE/knowledge, I examined the extent to which Model UN participation was associated with increases on these four political engagement factors. Due to missing data on a range of variables, the sample size in the regression models is smaller than the overall sample.

Findings

Advisors' Multifaceted Roles

Elmwood High School's Model UN club had three advisors who provided various types of support to students as they navigated the program. Although all three were committed to the Model UN club and worked together productively, they each had slightly different goals and talents, and their differing roles reflected this. Analyses of interview and field note data indicate that as a whole, advisors fulfilled three primary functions: program facilitators, informational resources, and dedicated supporters.

Advisors' backgrounds and goals.

The three Model UN advisors had different backgrounds that enabled them each to provide unique contributions to the club. Sam Kendall, the Model UN club's main

advisor, was a 22-year veteran English teacher who taught courses to freshman and to AP English Literature students. He had long been interested in political issues and political activism, and in the 2009-2010 school year, he was vice president of the local teachers' union. Evan Stein, the club's main co-advisor, was a 12-year veteran history teacher who taught world history and AP European history. Mr. Stein, a diligent teacher with a sharp wit, also served as the school's Varsity football coach and had two young children at home. Both Mr. Stein and Mr. Kendall had graduated from teacher education programs at nearby public universities. The club's third advisor, Lisa Paulson, was Mr. Kendall's former English student and had no background in teaching. However, she had recently completed a law degree and as an immigration attorney, had developed insights into international issues and negotiation methods (See Table 3.7).

Table 3.7
Characteristics of Model UN Advisors

Advisor	Age	Years Advising	Main Goals for Students	Involvement in Model UN
Sam Kendall, English Teacher	46	15	Empowerment Leadership Opportunities	Weekly Full Club Meetings Weekly Officers' Meetings All Conferences (four/year) Pre-conference Delegation Meetings Fundraisers (occasionally)
Evan Stein, History Teacher	37	12	Confidence to Work w/ Others Awareness of World Issues	Weekly Full Club Meetings All Conferences (four/year) Pre-conference Delegation Meetings
Lisa Paulson, Attorney	29	2	Overall Self-Confidence	Most Conferences (three/year) Pre-conference Delegation Meetings

The school's Model UN club had developed gradually over time. Mr. Kendall established the club in 1995 with a small number of students; with prior experience as a debate coach, he decided to start a new club that would allow him to utilize those skills. After two years of developing the club, he and several students invited their school's new history teacher Evan Stein to become a co-advisor. After about a decade of working together, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein wanted to add a female advisor to help manage female students at conference hotels and to serve as a potential role model. Mr. Kendall found Ms. Paulson on Facebook and soon thereafter invited her to become the third advisor. With their varying backgrounds, the three advisors also had different approaches

to their work in the club, but for all of them, building students' confidence was a primary objective.

Sam Kendall.

Mr. Kendall's main goal was student empowerment, and he viewed all aspects of the program – meetings, conferences, fundraisers, and social gatherings – as contributing to this objective. As he told me,

> I want the students to feel empowered to succeed, to try things, and also to fail and learn from that failure. I give them enough rope so that they can hang themselves if they so choose, but most of them choose not to do that obviously. The program is going to be a lot more meaningful to them if they have the chance to do things on their own. At the same time, I draw the line at the point where I know they're going to hurt the organization or the school (Interview, September 21, 2009).

Thus, Model UN students had nearly limitless opportunities to initiate, plan, and implement various projects aimed at building and strengthening their club. Although Mr. Kendall was present at nearly every full club meeting and officers' meeting, the standard procedure was for students to manage these gatherings. Mr. Kendall's function was to answer students' questions, which he often redirected towards them:

> When [students] say they want to do something, I ask, "Okay, how are you going to do it?" They know that they have to get it done. And if they don't follow through, they learn from that; or if they don't rally other people enough, they learn from that. Every aspect of this is educational – not just the international relations aspect (Interview, September 21, 2009).

At the same time, Mr. Kendall realized that building students' sense of empowerment required that they experience success, and he committed substantial effort to create opportunities for them to do so. Whether by advocating to the administration for permission to hold an on-campus fundraiser or by coaching students in public speaking skills before a conference, he was firmly dedicated to creating opportunities for students to practice and develop leadership skills.

Evan Stein.

Mr. Stein had a similar orientation, but he directed his efforts primarily towards students' success at interscholastic conferences. His main goals were for students to strengthen their understanding of international issues and to develop confidence in their ability to work with others to address controversial challenges. Throughout his work as an advisor, he worked to broaden students' perspectives on world affairs:

> We have students who enter the club with very distinct political opinions from their parents or wherever – whether it's to the left or to the right. My goal is to see a more broad awareness – not necessarily to win them over but to get them to be more open-minded. I get scared when I hear political opinions coming from adults that are very closed-minded, like they don't want to hear anyone else…With [Model UN], if we have a student who's a little right of center, we might have them represent North Korea, Iran, or China; or if we have students who are left of center, we got them to represent the US under the Bush administration. These students who disagreed with Bush on many things had to learn about the reasons behind the US position – even if it was opposite of what they believed. It was great to have those kids learn to understand that – as their goal was to convince other countries of that viewpoint.

When assigning students to countries and committees for each conference, Mr. Stein and Mr. Kendall thought carefully about which assignments would create the optimal learning experience for students.

Mr. Stein also enjoyed enabling students to develop their confidence and leadership skills:

> It can be very tangible watching a student who is a freshmen or sophomore or a new upperclassman who's not very outspoken – watching that student become a leader by the time he or she is a senior. It's pretty rewarding as an educator to see that sort of growth (Interview, November 18, 2009).

During conferences, Mr. Stein visited committee rooms to support this development, observing students' progress and answering their questions about various conference strategies, such as how to phrase a speech to best appeal to delegates from a wide array of countries.

Lisa Paulson.

Ms. Paulson was a similarly attentive advisor, but as a full-time attorney with no teaching experience and limited contact with students, she viewed her role much differently. She wanted to become an advisor both to help students to be confident amidst challenges and to serve as a role model of a young, responsible professional. Working long hours at her job, she was only occasionally able to attend students' regular meetings at school, but in advance of every conference, Mr. Kendall assigned her one country delegation (usually 3-5 students) to work with; they would typically meet three times at a coffee shop during evenings several weeks prior to an upcoming conference. During conferences Ms. Paulson advised students one-on-one when they approached her with questions, typically doling out tips on persuasion and interpersonal skills. She openly admitted that she had limited prior knowledge of many of the specific Model UN topics, but she felt that helping students prepare for conferences, providing support, and fulfilling "the big sister role" (Interview, July 20, 2010) made an important contribution to the club.

Table 3.8
Roles of Elmwood's Model UN Advisors

Program Facilitators	Informational Resources	Dedicated Supporters
Administrative Duties	Content Knowledge	Availability
Holding Students Accountable	Political Strategies/Skills	Crisis Management
Leadership Opportunities	Institutional Memory	Encouragement
Management Advice	Research Guidance	
Reminders		

Thus, the three advisors brought unique perspectives and experiences to the club and provided students with opportunities to receive various types of input and guidance. Whereas Mr. Kendall unique expertise was argument strategy, Mr. Stein's specialty was historical content, and Ms. Paulson was particularly attuned to students' emotional needs. Meanwhile, the advisors had a positive interpersonal dynamic among themselves and with students, bringing both a seriousness of purpose and a sense of humor to group interactions, which ultimately contributed to strong rapport between students and advisors. Despite their different areas of expertise, collectively they served in several key roles that supported students' development: program facilitators, informational resources, and dedicated supporters (See Table 3.8).

Advisors as program facilitators.

One major role that advisors played was as program facilitators. Rather than direct the club and its activities, the advisors structured and maintained a system in which students could assume leadership. As facilitators, advisors undertook five types of duties that supported students' capacity to serve as leaders: performing and distributing administrative duties, holding students accountable, structuring student leadership opportunities, providing management advice, and consistently reminding students of their responsibilities.

Administrative duties.

First, Elmwood's Model UN students would not have been able to attend conferences or conduct many other activities without a faculty advisor to perform administrative duties, and Mr. Kendall ensured that these responsibilities were completed. For each conference, Mr. Kendall completed forms to obtain permission from the school district to take students on a "field trip." Also, for some fundraisers, such as selling concessions at football games or having a pie-throwing contest during a school lunch, Mr. Kendall had to contact appropriate individuals at the school to gain permission. Similarly, he had to sign and approve the posters that students put on the school's walls to publicize the club.

Advisors also fulfilled many administrative responsibilities related to conferences, but when possible, they shifted these duties to students and tracked their progress. Preparing to attend a conference requires many administrative tasks, including registering for the conference; assigning students to countries and committees; booking hotel rooms; arranging transportation; collecting, tracking, and depositing students' fees; ensuring that students complete and submit their position papers; and more. Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein typically fulfilled the initial tasks of conference registration and assigning roles to students, but they facilitated students' work on the other administrative tasks. For example, one of the main duties of the Undersecretary General (USG) of Finance was to collect conference fees from students, deposit them into the club's account, and issue payments to hotels and conference organizers. At several Friday officers' meetings, Mr. Kendall explained the challenge of bus transportation costs and asked students to recruit an "army" of potential parent drivers for conference transportation; two students thereafter called parents to solicit volunteers. Thus, the club's experienced advisors

conducted and tracked the completion of vital administrative duties but shared some administrative responsibilities with students when possible.

Holding students accountable.

In addition to performing and distributing administrative duties, the Model UN advisors facilitated the club's operations by holding students accountable for a wide range of responsibilities. For each of the nine officer positions, there was an official club-approved document that listed what the person serving in that office was expected to do, and if an individual ran for office, got elected, and repeatedly failed to fulfill those duties, the advisors would remove officers from their positions. In the spring of 2009 (about six months before this study began), in fact, the club held early elections to replace a group of officers who had grown extremely lax in their duties. According to Mr. Kendall, this is something that happens every few years:

> I do something like [holding early elections] every five or six years just so that it forms kind of a legendary moment and everyone remembers it. They'll say, "Oh, yeah. He'll cancel that trip!" It's okay at the institutional level for that to happen, but I also need to send a message to all of my students that leadership means leadership. It doesn't mean holding an office for a resume or anything else. That message was delivered pretty loud and clear last year (Interview, August 28, 2009).

During my study, one officer was particularly inattentive to her duties – missing meetings and procrastinating on the year's largest fundraising effort. Mr. Kendall consulted the other officers about replacing her, and those officers pressured her to complete her duties, which she then did. Thus, although advisors rarely impose concrete consequences, officers do know that they can be dismissed and replaced with just cause.

For less severe situations, concrete consequences are not needed. For example, in the fall of 2009, a senior officer in charge of checking the club email rarely did so; she therefore risked missing important messages that could affect the whole group. Mr. Kendall explained to her the importance of this duty several times, and eventually she began to complete this task regularly. Likewise, at one meeting that I observed, a student was scheduled to present details of an upcoming carwash fundraiser to the group, but she had not yet solidified a location for the event. Mr. Kendall reminded her that she had

promised to do so by that day, and she then spent the first portion of that meeting completing that task. Throughout the year, officers and members committed to completing certain tasks, and Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein held students accountable for those responsibilities.

Structuring leadership opportunities.

The club's advisors facilitated the operation of the Model UN program by providing and structuring numerous leadership opportunities for students. As previously mentioned, the Model UN club had nine officers, each with distinct responsibilities (See Table 3.9). For example, whereas the secretary-general was responsible for solidifying the club's purpose and direction, the president of assembly had to run large membership meetings with up to 40 attendees. Several positions, such as treasurer (USG of Finance), were typical to most clubs, but others were unusual, requiring students to communicate with organizations beyond the school to solicit financial support or to train middle school students for Model UN. All three advisors encouraged younger students to run for one of these nine positions, so among the officers that I observed were two sophomores, two juniors, and five seniors. Amidst the heavy duties that officers often carried, non-officers were invited and welcomed at officers' meetings, and underclassmen were often recruited to manage events, such as fundraisers.

Table 3.9
Major Responsibilities of Officers for Elmwood Model UN**

Office	Main Responsibilities
Secretary-General	Plan meeting schedules; Develop vision for club; Monitor club's activities
President of Assembly	Plan meeting agendas; Preside over meetings; Enforce Constitution
*USG of Finance	Manage treasury, funds, and dues
*USG of External Affairs	Form and maintain inter-school and community partnerships
USG of Advocacy	Propose and organize events to support authentic causes
Rapporteur	Maintain research library, archives, and achievement
*USG of Internal Affairs	Form and maintain relationships with other district schools
SEMMUNA Ambassador	Organize and lead SEMMUNA (Southeast MI Model UN Association) Conference
*USG of Technology	Update and maintain club web site; Check club email account

*USG=Under-Secretary General   **All officers are also expected to be positive role models of leadership.

Besides providing opportunities to serve in various leadership capacities, advisors offered all Model UN students the chance to participate in strategic thinking and planning – a key political skill (Bernstein, 2008). Twice per year, Mr. Kendall hosted a strategic planning meeting, or "SPlaM." At these meetings, held in late August and mid-March,

the secretary-general and Mr. Kendall created the agenda, which included discussion of both the prior year's events and the upcoming year's goals and strategies. Students ran and dominated the discourse at these meetings, with only occasional comments from Mr. Kendall. Topics included how to expand the club's membership, prepare new members for conferences, and organize more successful fundraisers, among others; and students spent between twenty minutes and one hour on each topic. Students also had opportunities to develop strategic thinking skills during conferences. Either at one-on-one meetings in the hallway or in full-team meetings, the three advisors asked students to clarify their goals in their committees and consider how to achieve those goals.

In their effort to build students' confidence and empowerment, the Elmwood Model UN advisors also institutionalized several other leadership opportunities for students. Over the years, the advisors had developed relationships with middle school teachers with established Model UN clubs, and Elmwood Model UN students were regularly invited to help those middle school students learn about Model UN – either at after-school meetings or at middle school conferences. Another leadership opportunity for students was participating in the Elmwood Forums: Traditionally once or twice per year, Model UN students organized demonstration debates at their own school. Social studies teachers were invited to bring their students to listen and ask questions as Model UN students presented information on and debated controversial international issues, such as intellectual property rights. Each of the two forums that I observed had over one hundred other Elmwood students in the audience.

Occasionally, very unusual leadership opportunities arose, and the advisors offered these to students and encouraged them to follow up. In early 2010, for example, a state senator considering a run for Congress had his office contact Mr. Kendall to invite Model UN members to come to his office and brief him on international issues. When Mr. Kendall presented the idea to the officers, the club's secretary-general eagerly embraced the opportunity. Several weeks later, she and eight other students, including one freshman and two sophomores, prepared presentations on four major issues: overpopulation, international labor rights, climate change, and the PATRIOT Act. At the one-hour meeting in the state capital, the senator listened carefully to students' presentations, asked questions, and occasionally challenged their arguments. (The state

senator soon thereafter won election to Congress.) Mr. Kendall told me that opportunities like this arose every couple of years and that students prepared for these events largely independently, similarly to how they prepared for conferences. These numerous leadership opportunities gave students additional practice with many of the skills they developed at Model UN conferences.

Providing management advice.

Although Elmwood's Model UN advisors allowed students to establish the tone, direction, and priorities of the club, the advisors facilitated students' ability to achieve their goals by offering specific management advice on an ongoing basis. For example, when students discussed their interest in better preparing new Model UN members for conferences, they made a list of facts that they wanted new members to learn. Mr. Kendall, however, did not allow students to end their discussion there; he encouraged them to discuss methods for effectively teaching new delegates. Likewise, when two freshmen assumed responsibility for planning a fundraiser, Mr. Kendall did not leave them to only to their own devices; several weeks before the event he met with them after school for about fifteen minutes to discuss the elements of the event, including publicity, decorations, and soliciting volunteers. The students took notes at the meeting, talked to him briefly at a later date, and ran a successful fundraiser.

Providing reminders.

Finally, the advisors facilitated the Model UN club's operations by issuing frequent reminders about all that students needed to do. Like most high school students, Elmwood's Model UN members often had a dizzying array of responsibilities, not to mention social distractions, so Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein knew that many students needed several reminders to remember the tasks required of an extracurricular activity. At each Monday's full club meeting, the officers reserved a few minutes for advisors to speak, and much of this time was spent making announcements that had also been made in previous weeks. Among the more common reminders were those concerning deadlines for conference position papers, conference registration, or conference fees; holding country delegation meetings; and getting involved in fundraisers. Although reminding students of deadlines and duties was quite repetitive, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein, as

experienced teachers, understood how essential this was in facilitating the success of a student organization.

Advisors as informational resources.

For high school students to manage a complex organization and succeed in a competitive political environment, they need to learn a tremendous amount. Elmwood's Model UN advisors were knowledgeable professionals who served as vital informational resources for students. They assisted students in various tasks by providing four key types of information: content on international issues, political strategies and skills, historical information about Elmwood's Model UN club, and research methods.

Sharing content knowledge.

As veteran Model UN advisors with about 25 years of cumulative experience, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein had an enormous amount of content knowledge about a wide array of international issues, and they readily shared this information with their students. In the days and weeks leading up to conferences, students' country delegations would arrange after-school or lunchtime meetings with Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein to ask questions and strengthen their content knowledge and arguments. At one meeting before an autumn conference, Mr. Kendall spent about a half hour with four freshmen who planned to represent Turkey on various committees. After asking each student what they had learned from their research, he presented key facts about Turkey's history, culture, and geography that he believed would be central to their framing their arguments. Mr. Stein took a similar approach. In a meeting with the four-member Ghana delegation just before a winter conference, he first asked the students what they had learned from their research and then proceeded to talk to them for several minutes about Ghana's sources of wealth and its relationships with other countries.

Advisors also shared their content knowledge with their students during conferences, and this was especially helpful for those students who had developed a firm understanding of their own countries but not necessarily of countries with whom they had to negotiate in committee. For example, one student representing China on the Security Council did not know how to approach the issue before her committee – piracy in Somalia (a surprise "crisis" topic for which she had been unable to prepare). In a conversation with Mr. Stein in the hallway outside her committee room, he informed her

about the challenges that piracy presented to world trade and how that could potentially influence not only China but the entire world. Short two- or three-minute conversations like this one were the most common means for students to learn important information at conferences, but advisors also occasionally met with students after committee sessions (in the evening) to thoroughly clarify key points. At one such meeting, Mr. Kendall discussed the practical challenges of Afghan security with a student whose committee was addressing that issue; he provided her with useful information about food production, poppy cultivation, the Taliban, the Karzai government, and the relationship among them. Thus, both at conferences and in preparation for conferences, the club's advisors provided helpful content knowledge to students.

Teaching political strategies and skills.

In addition, advisors served as vital information resources for the Model UN students through their explanations and demonstrations of political strategies and skills. Foremost among these skills were public speaking, negotiation, and political writing. Although some Model UN students were talented public speakers, some were uncertain of their skills and turned to their advisors for guidance. Carol, for example, was a shy student who lacked confidence in her ability to speak competently to her committee. Before the winter conference, she sought advice from Mr. Kendall after school one day, and he provided extensive guidance:

> I told her three things. First, "Don't try to be bombastic. You have a natural speaking voice that's quiet. Let that be your strength. Be slow; look at them; let your voice drop, and watch the room gravitate to your level of discussion." Then I told her not to read her speeches. One of her strengths is her expressiveness, her eyes; so she needs to just write an outline and then raise her face so they can see her and listen to her that way. The third one was to put two things at the beginning of every speech – a quick outline of the points she'll make…and acknowledgements of other delegates' points. If she does these things, she's gonna be a lot further along…You find the strength of a delegate and you let that

work for them. Kelly is a bombast [*sic*] and could stand to tone down a bit, but

that's not going to work for Carol (Interview, January 13, 2010).[1]

During conferences, Mr. Kendall visited different committees and offered specific

speaking tips to students, often related to pacing, tone, and volume.

The advisors also helped students develop strategies for negotiating and achieving

their goals in committees. For example, the World Health Organization at one conference

was challenged to address a crisis situation – a cholera outbreak in recently earthquake-

ravaged Haiti, and senior Model UN member Sarah disagreed strongly with other

delegates' approaches. They were developing a working paper that focused on the

building of infrastructure, a process that could take several months if not years, and Sarah

believed that in a crisis situation, immediate aid would be essential. She expressed her

frustration to Mr. Kendall when he was visiting the committee room, and he provided her

with a strategy for expressing her view while working with those with different priorities:

Think long-term and short-term. It's not *or.* Long-term *and* short-term. If you

contradict [other delegates], they shut you out…You should say, "that's a good

idea, but while we wait for the infrastructure, now we need to make sure people

are okay" (Observation, January 15, 2010).

Shortly thereafter, Sarah successfully designed a working paper with a group of students

representing different countries.

Besides providing guidance on negotiation skills, advisors offered advice on

parliamentary procedure, which can enable students to overcome challenging obstacles in

passing their resolutions. At one autumn conference, a senior serving on the Social and

Humanitarian Committee had determined that her resolution would fail if brought to a

vote, but she sought advice from Mr. Stein and learned about a rarely-used method for

skirting objections to unpopular measures – the division of the resolution into several

parts. After returning to her committee room, she raised her placard and made a "motion

to divide the question," proposing to divide the resolution into two, one of which would

include the popular portions of the resolution, the other of which would include aspects

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[1] At the conference the following weekend, Carol tried these strategies and told me that she had more
confidence than she had had at previous conferences.

which many delegates found objectionable. Shortly thereafter, her shorter resolution passed by majority vote.

Yet another skill with which advisors assisted students was political writing. For each conference, students had to compose a short paper that represented their countries' positions on the issues their committees would address; and advisors often provided students with feedback on those papers, helping students to use clearer, more diplomatic language. Also, during conferences, when students were writing working papers, they occasionally requested advice from Mr. Stein, Mr. Kendall, or Ms. Paulson about how to word a particular phrase to appeal to the broadest possible array of countries. Thus, Elmwood's advisors were important resources not only for public speaking tips and overcoming opposition in committee but also for developing skills in the language of diplomacy.

Advisors as institutional memory.

The third way in which Elmwood's Model UN advisors served as informational resources was as the club's institutional memory. In any student-run organization, there is rapid turnover in the membership and leadership, and advisors who have experienced various challenges and successes over the years can provide historical information to strengthen students' ability to make well-informed decisions, either about their organization or their own responsibilities. For example, at the club's strategic planning meeting in August, students began to discuss ways to network with outside organizations to generate financial support for conference scholarships. As students discussed possibilities, Mr. Kendall went to his computer and projected a Powerpoint slide that included numerous community organizations with whom previous iterations of the club had established relationships. Given this information, students did not have to start from scratch; they instead discussed how to rebuild those connections. There were countless other times when Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein used the wisdom of their experience to help students consider important issues when they planned fundraisers, meetings, and other events.

Research guidance.

Finally, all three advisors provided important information to students about how to conduct research – for the purpose of either preparing for conferences or planning an

event. Although advisors enjoyed sharing their content knowledge with students, their time was limited, and they wanted to give students the tools necessary to gather their own information and formulate their own arguments.

During winter break, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein held meetings at a public library so that students could prepare for an upcoming conference, and while students worked independently at tables, the advisors walked around and suggested web sites or books where students could begin to find information and references for their particular topics. Advisors also helped them determine key questions to explore as they navigated these sources. As junior Randall told me, "Mr. Stein helped me find the Law of the Sea and the articles that apply to my topic. He also referred me to the Antarctic Treaty, which I then looked into for how it applies to the moon and who can lay claims there." Randall, a junior officer, also served as the club's Rapporteur, or organizer of research materials. As the advisors and students accumulated materials, Randall's job was to organize those materials in Mr. Kendall's classroom and help students learn to use them for their purposes. Thus, to support students' development of research skills, advisors provided students with explicit guidance and structured opportunities for them to explore potentially useful information independently.

Advisors as dedicated supporters.

While the club's three advisors served as program facilitators and informational resources, they were also extremely dedicated supporters of their students. Although they received minimal compensation for these efforts, they were firmly committed to doing what was necessary to help students succeed in their Model UN experiences. Generous with their time and energy, they availed themselves to help students, managed crises when they arose, and made special efforts to encourage students to exert effort and take risks, all of which contributed to their development of strong rapport with students.

Availability.

First, advisors made themselves extraordinarily available to work with students, especially for conference preparation and coaching. Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein regularly invited students to plan meetings with them to prepare for conferences, giving students the option of coming to their classrooms during lunch or after school. Likewise, Ms. Paulson met with students during evenings several times before each conference. During

two days of winter break, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein reserved a room at the local public library for six hours and invited Model UN students to come there to conduct research, discuss debate strategies, listen to lunch hour mini-lectures (by Mr. Kendall), and enjoy each others' company. At the conferences, all three advisors circulated to students' committee rooms both to observe students and to answer their questions. At the conference hotels, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein shared a room that served as a sort of headquarters, where after committee sessions had ended for the day, students could visit to receive advice or interact casually with their advisors and one another.

Mr. Kendall also made himself available to help students with other activities beyond normal meeting or conference times. After Friday officers' meetings, quite regularly students stayed in his classroom to discuss issues in greater detail. After one meeting in the fall, for example, two students spent about a half-hour probing Mr. Kendall about the best strategies for soliciting food donations for a conference that Elmwood was planning to host. Later in the year, Mr. Kendall spent about twenty minutes with a student interested in helping with conference logistics; he informed her about specific details regarding how money is spent and how to keep track of those expenses. Even if students wanted to discuss issues unrelated to Model UN, Mr. Kendall would often make time for students. One day after a meeting, two students began a discussion with him about the value of education, which soon veered into questions of life's purpose, faith, the use of evidence, and other philosophical topics. Also, many Model UN alumni maintained contact with the advisors – either by visiting their classrooms, sending emails or letters, or meeting with the team at conferences. Thus, Mr. Kendall and the other advisors built rapport with students through their openness and availability.

Crisis management.

Another way in which advisors served as dedicated supporters was in their role as crisis managers. Although advisors preferred to let students direct the club's business and direction, their experience had taught them that certain situations were best handled by adults. For example, when students at conferences became sick or extremely stressed, one of the advisors attended to those students' needs. When unforeseen circumstances reduced the number of parent drivers to transport students to a conference, Mr. Kendall

made some phone calls to alleviate the problem. Also, as previously mentioned, when officers did not fulfill their responsibilities, advisors followed a series of steps: warning the officer, speaking to the full officer corps about the problem, putting the officer on probation, and then replacing the officer. During the period of this study, there were few serious crises, but when there were surprises that required adult intervention, the advisors effectively managed the situations.

Encouragement.

Finally, the advisors were extremely encouraging of students' putting forth effort and getting involved in the program. At weekly meetings, when student officers discussed plans for upcoming conferences and fundraisers, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein customarily added their endorsements and enthusiastically encouraged students to participate. Once students were at conferences, advisors pushed them to become involved, occasionally pulling aside students individually to encourage them to make a speech or develop a working paper. Often students had difficulties in their committees, facing stiff opposition or feeling nervous, and in such cases, the advisors listened to the students' concerns, made a suggestion or two, and offered encouraging words. Then after each day at a conference, there were full team meetings in the hotel room of Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein, and every advisor shared flattering stories of students' conference activities and encouraged them to continue to work hard the following day. For example, after a full day of committee work at the fall conference, Mr. Kendall issued high praise to a freshman delegate, noting that she had effectively promoted her country's position despite being in a room full of seniors. Ms. Paulson's comments included complimentary words for students in the General Assembly, but she also said that the next day they should strategize more carefully to network with other countries' delegations and win votes.

In short, Elmwood's Model UN advisors were tremendously dedicated supporters of students' work in the club and at conferences. By making themselves available to work with students, encourage their efforts, and manage unforeseen events, they provided a comfortable, positive atmosphere in which most students could thrive. Furthermore, their roles as facilitators and informational resources enabled students to assume leadership responsibilities with both authentic empowerment and a knowledgeable support structure.

Students' Experiences in Elmwood Model UN

Elmwood High School's Model UN program offered students numerous opportunities to learn valuable skills and develop meaningful relationships. Students joined the club for a variety of reasons, but once accepted (via a non-competitive application process requiring an essay of interest), they got out of it what they put into it. Simply being a member of the club required very little, but when students became deeply involved, they had a chance to develop knowledge and skills with tremendous generative potential.

Becoming involved in Elmwood Model UN.

Students decided to participate in Model UN for a variety of reasons, including personal interest, social factors, and building their resumes. For most students whom I interviewed, their interest in debating or learning about political issues was the primary draw. As Sarah recalled,

> I went to the first meetings and I was pretty much hooked on it immediately. It was just something I really loved because I love politics. I love history. It's like I really like knowing about what's going on in the world, so it was just like a perfect fit for me right away (Interview, October 2, 2009).

Likewise, several students told me they were attracted to the club by the intellectual challenge of debating. Randall, for example, looked forward to conferences because he liked to find flaws in other people's arguments: "I like showing people that my policy's the right one" (Interview, October 9, 2009).

Results of logistic regression analyses also indicate that students' political interest influenced their decision to participate in Model UN. Controlling for their age, race, GPA, grade level, parental education, and beginning-of-semester (Time 1) EPE, IPE/knowledge, and IPE/skills, students' political interest at the beginning of the semester had a significant impact on whether or not they chose to join the club (See Table 3.10). Their parents' composite levels of education had a marginal effect on their decision to join, but my analyses indicated that no other demographic variables were marginally or significantly related to their choice to join the club.

Although most Model UN students had an interest in political issues and debating, some became involved initially for other reasons. Brad and Julia, though interested in

learning about world affairs, had joined to bolster their college applications. Several other members cited friends and family influences as their primary reasons for becoming involved. Freshman Erin decided to join because her older sister, who had also been a member, thought she would enjoy it, and senior Evelyn joined because she had several friends who were joining the club. Most members described a combination of circumstances and interests that contributed to their decision to become and remain involved in Model UN.

Table 3.10

B Values (Unstandardized Coefficients) of Logistic Regression Model Examining
Reasons for Model UN Participation (N=50: MUN N=31, NHS N=19)

Independent Variables	*B* Value
Parental Education	.692~
Race	22.427
Grade	.264
Age	-1.261
GPA	-.364
IPE/Knowledge, Time 1	- .513
EPE, Time 1	.520
IPE/ Skills, Time 1	.158
Political Interest, Time 1	1.305*
Constant	-10.615
Nagelkerke R^2	-.464

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

To participate in Elmwood's Model UN program, students were required to submit an application, including an essay and a teacher reference, to the club's officers. Although nearly all applicants were admitted, the application requirement indicated that the group expected its members to have at least a certain minimum level of commitment and interest in world issues. Perhaps for this reason, the club's members were typically very strong students, with average scholastic achievement equivalent to that of the school's National Honor Society members (See Table 3.11). Having an academic orientation was indeed helpful in a program that involved learning about and discussing complex issues, but the club also included several students who were not high achievers, including some with learning disabilities, who excelled in program activities.

Table 3.11
Characteristics of Model UN and NHS Students (N=63)

Variable	Model UN Students	NHS Students
Mean GPA	3.8	3.7
Mean Age	15.8*	16.4
% Ethnic Minority	3.2	7.7
% Mothers with college degrees or more	60.6	65.4
% Fathers with college degrees	63.6	53.8

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

Once students were accepted into the program, they participated in the club's activities as they so chose. With weekly meetings, various fundraisers and social events, conferences four times per year, and annual officer elections, there were many opportunities to become deeply involved (See Table 3.2). However, the majority of the club's sixty members maintained a fairly moderate level of involvement, attending full club meetings semi-regularly and participating in one or two conferences per year. Attendance at each Monday's membership meeting was typically between twenty and thirty. Just before conferences, meetings would often have over thirty-five members, but right afterwards as few as fifteen students would attend meetings. Fundraisers and other major events, such as the Elmwood Forums, usually involved two major organizers and a handful of others who assisted them; but in ongoing projects, such as gift-wrapping during the holiday season, slightly more students participated. Despite students' varying levels of involvement, the vast majority engaged sufficiently to reap educational and social benefits, as described below.

Development of political skills.

As students participated in Model UN activities, they had opportunities to develop an array of political skills that could be useful in a variety of domains. By preparing for conferences, participating actively in conference committee meetings, and contributing to the club's operations, students could practice and hone their skills in information management and organizational planning (See Table 3.12).

Table 3.12
Political Skills Developed during Model UN Experiences

Information Management	**Organizational Management**
Examining Issues Critically	Managing Human Relationships
Communicating Ideas and Information	Planning Events
Negotiating Compromises	Organizational Planning
Following Debate Rules	Political Strategizing

Information management.

Examining issues critically.

To prepare for and participate in political debates, either at conferences or during club activities, students had to examine political issues critically and consider various perspectives on an issue. Students researched issues from their own countries' perspectives, but debating opposing countries forced them to consider – and often confront – very different points of view. Brad, for example, said that his conference experiences had helped him to understand that political biases sometimes stem from hearing one side of an argument before hearing the other. He credited his Model UN experiences with helping him to adopt a broader, "more peripheral view of political situations" (Interview, March 8, 2010). Even students who did not get heavily involved, such as Carol, were able to develop their ability to think critically about political issues. At the winter conference, she said:

> I've realized how to look at things differently, more creatively, I guess. I remember at the last conference I would almost always agree with what everyone was saying even if it contradicted [sic], but now I'm actually thinking about what they're saying. . . . I can see more easily how other countries are similar or different from my country's position. . . . I don't think I've contributed as much as I should have. But I've definitely learned more – more at the second conference than at the first (Interview, January 25, 2010).

Many other students made similar comments about how interactions during committee meetings, especially efforts to develop working papers and resolutions, had required them to listen carefully to opposing views and examine issues more critically.

Communicating ideas and information.

In addition to learning to examine political issues critically, Model UN students developed their communication skills. Through working with others in various settings – club meetings, conference committee meetings, country delegation meetings – students had opportunities to practice expressing their perspectives on controversial topics in a variety of ways. Whereas the conferences included numerous distal issues, such as how to distribute Iraq's oil revenues, club and officers' meetings involved authentic local

controversial topics, such as whether or not Elmwood's Model UN program should leave the school and become a non-profit organization. Thus, through both club and conference discussions, members developed their skills at argumentation.

Meanwhile, by communicating in different formats, students practiced their skills in political writing, persuasion, and public speaking. At conferences, students explained their countries' positions through speeches to their committees, which typically included between thirty and sixty people. Students also, however, communicated their ideas more directly to other delegates during caucuses; and this – like club officers' meetings – was a chance to practice communicating with a smaller number of people. Through the writing of working papers and resolutions, students could also hone their skills at communicating their political ideas in written form. In sum, students developed a variety of communication skills through their Model UN experiences.

Negotiating compromises.

Elmwood's Model UN students also practiced skills at negotiating and building coalitions. For example, at one conference, senior Evelyn, who represented the relatively small nation of Burkina Faso, worked closely with delegates representing the United States and India to develop, support, and pass a resolution to address India's water scarcity. This unlikely alliance required Evelyn to bridge disagreements between the two larger countries over how to fund projects to improve India's water supply. By developing a viable working paper (that included proposed plans of action) and expending great effort to convince the US and India that their agreement would garner support from many other nations, she was eventually able to contribute to building a broader coalition that passed a strong resolution.

Students also practiced negotiating compromises in their club meetings. At the strategic planning meeting in August, for example, students spent 45 minutes discussing various strategies for expanding their club's membership, and they did not always agree on the avenues to pursue. In negotiating compromises in both conference and club settings, students followed the subtle example of Mr. Kendall, listening to one another, building on each others' comments, finding common ground, and eventually working toward consensus.

Following debate rules.

Students also developed the political skill of following strict procedural rules of debate. Both Model UN conferences and club meetings operated with rules of parliamentary procedure, so to communicate in these settings, students had to abide by these norms. This meant that to give a speech, students had to sign up for the speakers' list in advance and then wait for their turn. If students wanted to propose a solution to the topic of debate, there was a long series of procedures for introducing working papers to the floor for debate. Students had to make specific "motions" for voting, holding a caucus, ending debate, and various other types of interactions; and even in Elmwood's club meetings, students followed some of these procedures. Although freshmen, such as Erin and Mark, entered the club with limited understanding of these procedures, by the end of their first autumn conference, making motions seemed second-nature to them. Thus, students developed skills at following structured rules for interaction.

Organizational management.

Planning events.

All club members were welcome to participate in planning events, such as fundraisers, conference logistics, and club outreach and social events. Although officers usually spearheaded event planning, they distributed more responsibilities to non-officers towards the middle of the school year. Thus freshmen Mark and Carol, among others, led major fundraisers in February, and in the process they learned about logistical planning and publicity. The officers were constantly planning events, and their weekly meetings enabled them to consider openly how to make each event most successful.

Managing human relationships.

Perhaps the most important skill that Model UN students regularly practiced was how to manage human relationships by working closely with others on tasks requiring cooperation. In the club's school-based activities, students had opportunities to do this when organizing events, directing meetings, and training others. Although the secretary-general and president of assembly led most meetings, other members also occasionally directed membership meetings and frequently led country delegation meetings. The leader of each full club meeting would have to lead discussions of logistical matters, manage delegate activities (e.g., training sessions, creating publicity materials), answer

peers' questions, and keep distracted students focused (as a teacher might). Country delegation leaders were in charge of preparing junior members of their delegations to perform well at conferences, and at the actual conferences, they sometimes became mentors to younger members of their country delegations. Students who ran fundraisers also had to manage others – by recruiting participants, delegating duties, and ensuring that they fulfilled those responsibilities. These experiences provided students opportunities to practice leading peers, an essential skill in political action.

Students could also learn to manage others by serving as committee chairs at the local high school-run conference or by assisting others in learning about Model UN. For example, officers occasionally used club meetings to hold mock debates and then debrief in order to teach less experienced members about parliamentary procedures and debating strategies. Also, in December, eight Elmwood Model UN members organized and managed a one-day Model UN conference for fifty local middle school students. Whereas senior students like Evelyn moderated the debate and taught students about parliamentary procedures, less experienced students like Carol circulated among the middle school students and helped them prepare speeches and working papers. Thus, the club's members had opportunities to practice education and training as a form of leadership.

Finally, at interscholastic conferences students learned to manage relationships in the process of building support for resolutions. First, students developed skills at approaching new individuals in conversation. This occurred in committee caucuses in which delegates made initial attempts to develop alliances and also in hallways at conferences before debate began. Even Carol, a shy freshman, improved in this arena over time; with each successive conference, she became increasingly involved in speaking to delegates from other schools. For teenagers and even for some adults, talking to new individuals can be uncomfortable, but Elmwood's Model UN delegates and delegates from other schools regularly initiated conversations with individuals they did not know.

Political strategizing skills.

As students had opportunities to practice their skills in working with others, communicating effectively, and examining political issues, some also demonstrated an understanding of political strategizing. Political strategizing requires clarifying one's

goal, identifying potential pathways and obstacles to that goal, and adjusting one's plans in order to maximize the likelihood of achieving that goal. Most students that I observed in Model UN did not think very strategically; they represented their countries' interests through voting, speeches, and working papers or resolutions but did not think holistically about the conference process and culture. Some experienced Model UN students, however, such as Randall and Evelyn, approached each conference with a clear vision of how they could maximize their outcomes. In an interview after one conference, Evelyn told me about her experience working with Randall and another senior student to represent Afghanistan in a simulation of the General Assembly:

> Rebecca, Randall, and I . . . know how to pick people who are gonna work with us and help us reach our goal. . . . The issues being debated were related to what was going on in Afghanistan. . . . We were always speaking, caucusing, and writing and pushing for amendments. We used a strategy where one person would stay at the table and someone would be caucusing. Our team was one of the reasons [the General Assembly was] able to get through four different topics. By the time the next topic came around, we were already ready with amendments. . . .We talked to so many countries individually, like Israel. We got really good at turning people's answers and ideas into things that were similar to ours (Interview, December 11, 2009).

Thus, experienced members of Elmwood's team often developed means of leveraging their negotiating skills and knowledge to strategize for political success. As students progressed through the program and developed skills in communicating clearly, working with others productively, examining issues critically, and strategizing collectively, they learned both from their own experiences and by observing others.

Organizational planning.

In addition to building organizational skills in planning events and managing people, many students also participated in long-term organizational planning. At the strategic planning meeting in March, for example, students spent 25 minutes discussing how to organize fundraisers such that the raised money could be distributed fairly to reduce the conference fees of the students who participated in the fundraiser. They spent an equal amount of time discussing how to make September a strong month for

membership recruitment at their school. These opportunities for long-term goal-setting and planning enabled students to develop a sense for how successful organizations function.

Development of knowledge

Students who fully participated in the Model United Nations club (i.e., preparing for and attending conferences and club activities) developed substantial political knowledge. Through their research preparing for conferences (including writing position papers), discussions and debates on political issues, and listening to their peers, students gained a richer understanding of the specific political processes, issues, and actors.

Most substantial was Elmwood Model UN students' learning about political issues. When they prepared for conferences, they frequently conducted research in country delegations – at coffee shops, in an advisor's room, or at the library; and although this time was not always used for research (with socializing inevitably occurring), each student's end product was a position paper, which required students to write from their countries' perspectives about the issues that they would address in their committees. Before the January conference, for example, Randall shared various details about treaties that he had studied to prepare for his role representing Algeria on the mock Security Council, which is planning to discuss how to revise a treaty for space exploration:

> The treaty we're using was written in the 1960s. And I [representing Algeria] want them to completely revamp the treaty so that we use aspects of other treaties – like NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] and Law of the Sea – and then we can apply those principles to space and then take care of all the major problems that we've run into. The nations that have the technology to go into space should teach developing nations that technology. That's actually part of the NPT, saying that nations with nuclear technology should help nations without it to develop equally powerful technology for peaceful purposes. No one really acknowledges that clause, especially the US and UK. That's North Korea and Iran's arguments for why they should have nuclear energy. . . . (Interview, January 13, 2010).

Randall clearly developed political knowledge through his Model UN experiences. Likewise, other students gained substantial knowledge of Somali piracy, oil in Africa, the

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Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reconstruction in Iraq, journalists' rights of free expression, and more.

Although most Elmwood students did not acquire knowledge with the level of detail that Randall did, they typically learned sufficient facts about their country's positions on the designated topics to participate actively in committee debates. Then at the conferences, they learned about other countries' positions and their justifications through the process of debates, caucuses, and designing resolutions. Even after committee meetings – in their hotel lobbies at night and at club meetings in following weeks – Elmwood's Model UN students frequently discussed the most contentious issues they had addressed in their committees.

In addition to learning about major political issues, students also learned about political processes and actors. By studying specific challenges around the world, students learned about consequential political figures not typically included in high school curricula, such as Hu Jintao, Robert Mugabe, Mahmoud Abbas, Benjamin Netanyahu, Muhammar Khadafi, Hosni Mubarak, Hugo Chavez, Fidel Castro, and Nicholas Sarkozy, among other current and former leaders. Also, through the process of debate, students learned about specific rules of debate and decorum, such as how to make a motion, formally pose a question, and amend a resolution. Although some of these procedures were specific to only Model UN, they provided students with a general understanding of the structure within which large-scale debates must take place.

Table 3.13
Types of Challenges Encountered during Model UN Experiences

Challenges Encountered
Personal Challenges
Intellectual Challenges
Tactical Challenges
Social Challenges

Development of persistence.

Model UN members faced many challenges both at conferences and in their club, and the members who continued to participate in the program learned to persist amidst these diverse challenges. Persistence can influence various aspects of self-efficacy

(Bandura, 1997) and political efficacy (Levy, 2011), so developing a sense of persistence may be helpful to students' development of political engagement (See Table 3.13).

Persistence amidst personal challenges.

Elmwood's students encountered a large number of personal challenges through their Model UN experiences. One of the most common was nervousness about public speaking. Freshmen told me repeatedly about their discomfort with giving speeches before rooms of upperclassmen. For example, Erin said:

> It's hard at conferences. I'll admit that I got nervous, but I'm glad these conferences are more than one day. That really helps. . . . Having multiple days helps you get more comfortable in the committee. I'm gonna debate and say what my country wants to say; I'm probably never gonna [sic] see these people again. There's really nothing to get embarrassed about (Interview, March 1, 2010).

Erin did give four speeches at her first conference, and she planned them carefully. Although she and other new members were nervous about speaking, all of them confronted this challenge and gave several speeches.

Another personal challenge that some students faced was addressing other students' lack of motivation. Both in the club's activities and at conferences, sometimes students simply did not want to exert much effort; and this attitude was difficult for diligent students to confront. However, several students told me that they had developed strategies for involving these students, including building a personal relationship or distributing rewards (e.g., points for club members to attend meetings, or signatory status on a resolution to win votes).

The third major personal challenge that Elmwood's team members encountered was frustration. Conference committees presented various political challenges that were difficult if not impossible to overcome. For example, when Randall represented Algeria on the UN Security Council, he starkly encountered the power of the Council's permanent members:

> In the Security Council, people are really stuck in their own views. They're like, "I'm China, and you can't change what I think. You're gonna have to change to fit my needs." And everyone's like that so it's hard to negotiate and to get

anything good to come out of it. Especially because I was a smaller country, it

was hard to get in there and influence anyone (Interview, February 12, 2010).

This type of opposition made this conference experience quite frustrating for Randall.

Delegates on other committees encountered obstacles, including difficulty winning

sufficient votes to pass favored resolutions, but with persistence amidst such challenges,

Elmwood students were often very successful at stewarding resolutions to passage.

Persistence amidst intellectual challenges.

In addition to these personal challenges, students also confronted intellectual

challenges. During my observations, Elmwood students represented a wide array of

countries, including Cuba, Lebanon, Somalia, Ghana, China, North Korea, Bolivia,

Guatemala, Ivory Coast, and Turkey, among others. Due to the different perspectives and

policies of these countries, students often had difficulty both identifying with the

countries they represented and also developing sound, research-based ideas about their

countries' perspectives on certain issues.

Freshman Erin, for example, was sometimes uncertain about what Turkey's

position would be on certain specific elements of a working paper before her committee:

"I have no problem stating my opinion, but it's hard to know exactly what your country

would say" (Interview, March 1, 2010). As students became more experienced, they

typically realized the importance of being persistent amidst these challenges. After new

member Emily's first conference, she told me, "I'm planning to do much more research

for [the next conference]. Next time I'm Burkina Faso, so I'll need to know a lot more"

(Interview, December 14, 2009). For the next conference, she worked diligently with

other members of the Burkina Faso delegation to learn about the country and prepare for

debate, and they won the "best delegation" award at that conference (out of more than

fifty delegations).

A second – yet related – intellectual challenge students faced was the demand of

thinking on one's feet – either in response to a question following one's speech, when a

crisis situation arose, or when the specific topic changed shortly before one's turn on the

speakers' list. While this made some students nervous and uncomfortable, Emily enjoyed

this challenge: "I like that at some point . . . you get that really quick fire-back-like

response where maybe you weren't – you didn't research as much as you could have and

then you're just relying on your own wits. I think that's really fun" (Interview, January 25, 2010). For students like Emily, already confident in her verbal sparring ability, these challenges could be energizing, but for others like Erin and Julia, they were intimidating. In the wake of these intellectual challenges, however, these students pledged to prepare even more for the next conference.

Persistence amidst tactical challenges.

Students also faced tactical challenges at conferences, and this was especially true for students new to Model UN. Julia, a junior who had just joined the club, did not get very involved at her first conference because she was trying to figure out how to navigate the meeting's procedural rules. For her second conference, however, she studied the rules and motions in advance, and she was thus able to get more involved in the substantive issues of debate. Brad had a different concern. During caucuses, when two people were discussing an issue seriously, he found it difficult to get involved. He observed that more experienced members of the team did this, however, by making eye contact and positioning their bodies appropriately, and he soon learned to imitate their tactics. Thus, Elmwood's Model UN students encountered tactical challenges but tried to develop means of overcoming them.

Persistence amidst social challenges.

Finally, students in Model UN persisted amidst various social challenges. Within Elmwood's club, these were rather limited: with some students sensing that there were cliques that were difficult to penetrate. At conferences, however, the spectrum of interpersonal challenges was much broader. Elmwood students occasionally expressed frustration about the difficulty of working with some other schools' delegates in their committees, noting these delegates' competitiveness, unfair tactics, or lack of fidelity to their countries' policies. Sarah recounted one incident in which delegates used her ideas in their working paper but did not include her as an author: "When I got to them, they had just started their [working paper]. They took stuff from my working paper verbatim" (Interview, December 6, 2009). Shortly thereafter, however, Sarah promoted her own competing resolution. Brad encountered difficulty when another delegate tried to discredit him by asking a facetious question after one of Brad's speeches.

Incidents like these were fairly unusual, but when rivalries emerged between delegates, unfriendly behavior became more likely. With more experience and coaching, students often became more able to manage these situations diplomatically and continue to pursue their goals. Overall, amidst these personal, social, intellectual, and tactical challenges, many of Elmwood's students remained persistent, vowing to return to the next conference better prepared and with greater wisdom about how one's efforts could be successful.

Achieving political goals.

Through students' experiences in Elmwood's Model UN club, many achieved political goals. For club members, particularly officers, there were numerous opportunities to set and accomplish concrete goals for both the club and for one's conference performance, and advisors provided adequate support to help them achieve these goals. Events including fundraisers, membership drives, and delegate training required planning and typically yielded positive results, in the form of money for the club, new club members, and better trained delegates, respectively.

Likewise, at conferences students had numerous opportunities to develop potential solutions to major international challenges and have their peers approve of those ideas. As Sarah explained during the winter conference, "Today we got two groups that were working separately to get together and work on the same resolution. The resolution is on women's rights and changing the education system in a way that helps women's rights" (Interview, January 14, 2010). A few hours later, Sarah helped steward this resolution to passage and expressed great excitement about that achievement. By the time each conference had ended, nearly every Elmwood student had several stories about how they had contributed in some way to development or passage of a resolution – whether by authoring it, actively caucusing with its authors, or voting for it.

Indeed there were also instances when students did not achieve their political goals. At the November conference, for example, Sarah worked on designing, building a coalition around, and speaking in favor of a resolution on reducing the likelihood of an international influenza pandemic; but a similar resolution was passed and hers defeated. Such situations were frustrating for many students. In this case, Sarah's persistence stimulated her to revive her ideas by amending the passed resolution – an effort that

succeeded. Thus, over the course of a multi-day conference – and certainly over the course of several such conferences – most students participated in successful political efforts, despite regular setbacks.

Rapport among politically engaged individuals.

Many of Elmwood's Model UN students developed strong personal relationships with one another, and this contributed to the strong functioning of the club. Survey responses indicated that nearly 70 percent of students (N=36) believed that they had eight or more friends in the club, and according to Randall, strong relationships among club members made it easier for them to work together toward common goals. My observations suggested that students developed these relationships through structured experiences within the club, informal time during Model UN gatherings, and activities beyond the confines of the club experience (See Table 3.14).

Table 3.14
Opportunities for Model UN Students to Build Rapport

Structured Club Experiences	Informal Club Experiences	Beyond the Club
Conference Preparation	Humor at Meetings	Lunchtime
Conference Trips	Time for Informal Talk	Classes
Structured Rapport-Building		Outside of School
Frequent Contact		

Structured club experiences.

First and foremost, there were many opportunities for students to develop personal relationships through the structured activities of the program. By seeing each other regularly at meetings and traveling together to attend conferences, students had frequent contact with one another and grew familiar with each others' personalities, interests, and senses of humor. Officers often included brief discussions or debates of current events, and this provided further opportunity for students to express themselves, listen to others, and develop community. Furthermore, to prepare for conferences, students worked in delegation teams over the course of several weeks – sharing information, conducting research, reading each others' papers, and discussing ideas. Then at conferences themselves, students consulted with their country delegations and also with other Elmwood students in their committees, often authoring working papers with their schoolmates. The process of working together in this way enabled students to develop friendships.

In addition, club activities included several intentional efforts to build rapport among students. For example, in advance of each conference, advisors strongly urged country delegations to do something unique as a team, such as wearing similar outfits, designing a team t-shirt or making delegation stationary or binders. Also, for conferences, officers paired each underclassman with an upperclassman "buddy." Buddies kept track of each other on transportation routes and were expected to exchange something unique for each day of the conference – a small gift, poem, or the like.

Advisors also structured social and educational activities that built rapport among students. For example, at one of the August officers' meetings, Mr. Kendall reserved a few minutes for a game in which each student had one third of a puzzle and, without speaking, had to determine who had the two matching pieces. This resulted in some effective non-verbal communication, tremendous laughter, and a meaningful debriefing discussion about seeing multiple options and working effectively with others. Thus, both advisors and club officers designed structured ways for the members to develop rapport and community.

Informal club experiences.

Students also developed rapport through unstructured experiences within and beyond the club. During club meetings, there was usually time for students to interact on a one-on-one basis, with five or ten minutes of unstructured time in which students could sign up for a fundraiser or conference or work with their country delegations. Also, students often came to meetings early or stayed late to talk informally. Meetings often included many humorous elements which allowed students to relax and share an enjoyable moment with their fellow club members. For example, officers regularly presented information about outlandish news stories from around the world, and members shared stories about funny comments or incidents from their conference committee experiences (See Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3. Students at an Elmwood Model UN meeting laughing at a fellow student's humorous speech

Beyond the club.

The regular structured and unstructured interactions among Model UN members developed strong rapport that extended well beyond the confines of the club. Many members sat near each other in their classes, ate lunch together regularly, spent time at each others' homes, and traveled together during school vacations. As Evelyn shared:

> A lot of times Rebecca, Mary, Randall, Kelly, Allison, and I [all pseudonyms] – we like go out to lunch together everyday, so it becomes a lifestyle, I guess. . . . A lot of people find their niche in high school and become emotionally invested in it, and this is mine. And I think [Model UN is] so pertinent for a lot of us to what we want to do with the rest of our lives. . . . And I think it really helped me kind of like embrace the person I always was but wasn't necessarily like accepting (Interview, February 26, 2010).

Students also told me that when they spent time with other Model UN members outside of the club setting, they often discussed and pursued their common interest in politics. These experiences seemed to strengthen students' connections to one another, their interest in political issues, and their ability to work effectively together in the club. Thus, the personal relationships among Elmwood's Model UN members were quite strong, and my analyses indicate that these were rooted both in what happened when the club was together as well as beyond the club setting.

Students' Development of Political Engagement

Elmwood's Model UN students participated in a large number of activities that provided them with opportunities to develop political knowledge, skills, achievements, and relationships, and these experiences supported their development of political engagement. Results of analyses of student interviews and surveys indicate that participating in Model UN contributed to students' political efficacy and political interest.

Descriptive findings.

Factor analysis.

Results of factor analyses indicated that political engagement comprised four coherent constructs at both the beginning and end of the study period: (1) external political efficacy, (2) political interest, (3) IPE/knowledge, and (4) IPE/skills (For items in each factor, please see Table 3.5). Each of these factors included the same items at both time points – the beginning and end of the first semester of the 2009-2010 academic year. I also found that students' mothers' and fathers' levels of education were closely related and thus could be combined into a single factor. Results of confirmatory factor analyses indicated that all of these factors were highly or moderately reliable, with all having alpha values over .6 (See Table 3.15). In converting these nine scales (one for parental education and one for each political engagement factor at both time points), I added the values of the relevant items and divided by the number of items in the factor.

Table 3.15

Results of Factor Analyses for Model UN and NHS Students

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Eigen Value	Variance Explained
IPE/Knowledge, Time 1	.885	1.79	89.7%
IPE/Knowledge, Time 2	.861	1.76	88.1%
IPE/Skills, Time 1	.605	1.85	46.3%
IPE/Skills, Time 2	.731	2.26	56.5%
External Political Efficacy, Time 1	.855	2.33	77.5%
External Political Efficacy, Time 2	.840	2.27	75.9%
Political Interest, Time 1	.774	2.15	71.7%
Political Interest, Time 2	.914	2.55	84.9%
Parental Education*	.731	1.58	78.8%

*Parental education is the only demographic characteristic measured by more than one variable.

Changes in political engagement levels.

Results of t-tests and analyses of variance indicated that students' participation in Model UN was related to increased levels of political engagement (as measured by

political interest and political efficacy). As Table 3.16 shows, at the beginning of the
semester, students in Model UN and students in NHS (the comparison group) had nearly
equivalent levels of internal political efficacy (for skills and knowledge) and external
political efficacy, but by the end of the semester, Model UN students measured
significantly higher on these three factors. On the political interest factor, Model UN
students were significantly higher than NHS students at both the beginning and end of the
study period, but the difference was larger and more significant at the end (See Tables
3.16 and 3.17).

Table 3.16

*Results of T-tests Examining Differences between Student Groups' Civic Engagement
Factors (N=63)*

	Beginning of Semester		End of Semester	
Variable	**NHS Students**	**Model UN Students**	**NHS Students**	**Model UN Students**
IPE/Knowledge	4.8	5.1	4.5	5.5***
IPE/Skills	4.9	5.3~	4.9	5.6***
EPE	4.3	4.6	3.7	4.6***
Political Interest	4.4	5.3**	4.7	5.9***

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

Table 3.17

Results of Analyses of Variance of Factors for Model UN and NHS Students (N=63)

Factor	Beginning of Semester Sums of Squares		End of Semester Sums of Squares	
	Between Groups	Within Groups	Between Groups	Within Groups
IPE/Knowledge	1.91	79.74	18.57	54.91
IPE/Skills	1.94	38.80	9.06	33.34
External Political Efficacy	1.57	70.17	13.10	57.33
Political Interest	13.02	84.04	21.79	49.25

During the course of the study, Model UN students' IPE/knowledge, IPE/skills,
and political interest increased, but their external political efficacy remained the same.
Over the same period, however, NHS students' external political efficacy decreased
substantially. As Table 3.17 shows, the variance between the two groups was greater at
the end of the semester than at the beginning. These results suggest that although Model
UN did not produce clear increases in students' external political efficacy, the experience
might have counterbalanced the potential for increased political alienation and cynicism.
During this study, the broad political environment included a statewide budget crisis, a

school district budget crisis, and debate over the national healthcare plan, so this might have contributed to these results.

Correlations.

Correlation results suggest that there were many significant and strong relationships among key indicators of political engagement. First, at the beginning of the term, Model UN participation correlated only with political interest, but by the end of the term, participation in Model UN was highly correlated with IPE/skills, IPE/knowledge, EPE, and political interest. This suggests that students' decision to join Model UN is related more to their interest in political issues than in their belief that they can influence political processes. In addition, these results suggest that participating in Model UN is positively related to changes in students' political efficacy (See Table 3.18).

Table 3.18
Correlations of Major Variables of Interest

Variable	Model UN Participation	IPE/Skills Time 1	IPE/Skills Time 2	EPE, Time 1	EPE, Time 2	IPE/Knowl., Time 1	IPE/Knowl., Time 2	Pol. Int., Time 1	Pol. Int., Time 2
Model UN Participation	1								
IPE/Skills, Time 1	.218~	1							
IPE/Skills, Time 2	.462**	.747***	1						
EPE, Time 1	.148	.068	.075	1					
EPE, Time 2	.431***	.132	.281*	.482***	1				
IPE/Knowl., Time 1	.153	.668***	.610***	.027	.279*	1			
IPE/Knowl., Time 2	.503***	.633***	.709***	.243***	.440***	.746***	1		
Pol. Interest, Time 1	.366**	.514**	.573***	-.056	.327*	.554***	.543***	1	
Pol. Interest, Time 2	.554***	.532**	.643***	.257	.547***	.632***	.777***	.821***	1

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

Development of internal political efficacy for skills.

One of the most salient benefits of Model UN was students' opportunities to gain and practice various political skills. During their experiences preparing for and participating in conferences, students conducted research on countries' policies, wrote position papers, constructed political arguments, made speeches, and worked closely with other students to develop resolutions. My quantitative and qualitative analyses suggest that these experiences strengthened students' self-efficacy for various political skills.

Overall results of regression analyses indicate that students' Model UN participation had a positive influence on their IPE/skills, controlling for age, race, grade level, GPA, parental education, and beginning-of-semester political interest, political efficacy, IPE/knowledge and IPE/skills (See Table 3.19). Students who participated in Model UN had end-of-term IPE/skills that was about one-third of a standard deviation higher than that of NHS members (p<.01). Also, students' initial IPE/skills had a significant impact on their end-of-term IPE/skills. Model 2 of the hierarchical regression indicated that students' beginning-of-term IPE/knowledge influenced end-of-term IPE/skills, but this relationship was no longer significant in Model 3 when students' beginning-of-term IPE/skills was added to the model. Likewise, political interest had a significant effect in Model 2, but once Model UN participation was added to the equation in Model 4, the effect of political interest was not even marginally significant. Participation in Model UN was closely correlated to beginning-of-term political interest and therefore explained much of the same variance in end-of-term IPE/knowledge (p<.01; See Table 3.18). The variables in Model 4 explained about 71 percent of the variance in students' end-of-semester IPE/skills (p<.01).

Table 3.19

Unstandardized B (and Standardized Coefficients) of OLS Regression Models Examining Students' End-of-Term IPE/Skills (N=50; MUN N=31; NHS N=19)

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Parental Education	.060 (.095)	.042 (.067)	.038 (.062)	.004 (.006)
Race	.092 (.020)	-.037 (-.008)	-.032 (-.007)	-.289 (-.064)
Grade	-.131 (-.161)	.196 (.240)	.182 (.223)	.239 (.293)
Age	.012 (.014)	-.255 (-.309)	-.198 (-.239)	-.180 (-.217)
GPA	-.165 (-054)	.055 (.018)	.186 (.061)	.165 (.054)
EPE, Time 1		.085 (.115)	.057 (.077)	.013 (.018)
IPE/Knowledge, Time 1		.328 (.455) **	.120 (.166)	.154 (.214)
Political Interest, Time 1		.214 (.338) *	.138 (.219)~	.055 (.088)
IPE/Skills, Time 1			.552 (.541) ***	.538 (.528)***
Participation in Model UN				.513 (.309)**
Constant	5.820	5.391	2.743	3.458
R^2	.031	.493***	.640***	.705**

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

Results of constant comparative analysis substantiated and supplemented these findings. In interviews throughout the study, most students shared that their Model UN

experiences were helping them to feel more confident in both their communication and leadership abilities, and my observations corroborated their claims of increased confidence. Among the key communication skills with which students expressed (via interviews) and demonstrated (via a greater frequency of involvement) increased self-efficacy were public speaking, persuasion, and political writing – all skills that Model UN provided them numerous opportunities to practice. Meanwhile, students developed IPE/skills through their experiences working with others, taking initiative, and achieving their goals (See Table 3.20).

Table 3.20
IPE/skills Developed During Model UN Experiences

Communication	Collective Leadership
Public Speaking	Working with Others
Persuasion	Taking Initiative
Political Writing	

Public speaking.

All students that I interviewed mentioned public speaking as a major area of improvement during their time in the club. For example, Julia, a junior who joined Model UN shortly after I began my study, barely spoke in her committee at her first conference, describing herself as a "nervous wreck." By the end of her second conference, however, she was regularly on the speakers' list and seemed to have overcome her fear. As she told me,

> I used to be very afraid of [public speaking] and I've been in cheerleading since seventh grade and in performing arts since like elementary school. But that's a different kind of presentation, you know. It's not the same. I think that through Model UN I've really learned how to go up in front of people and like talk – even actually like speak. And I definitely would not have run for president [of my senior class] if I hadn't joined Model UN this year because I would have been terrified. I would have said, "I can't do speeches. Forget this!" (Interview, February 8, 2010).

She told me that her initial mode of public speaking had been to over-prepare and then speak quickly but that her experiences in Model UN had given her practice speaking slowly, deliberately, and extemporaneously.

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Other students experienced similar boosts in their self-efficacy for public speaking, but younger students seemed to experience these changes more gradually. Mark, a freshman, told me that at conferences he had learned to confront and temporarily overcome his fear of public speaking but was not always completely confident:

> I've always had a bit of a fear of public speech, speaking in front of groups of people. I still have that, and it's good because it keeps you on your toes and keeps you understanding the material you're presenting. But I don't have as much of a fear as I used to. . . .It helps to know your audience. If you screw up, it's okay because these people are my friends and they'll understand. When it's in front of other people, if you screw up, you don't know how they'll react (Interview, March 5, 2010).

When I observed Mark in his committee meetings, he spoke regularly and participated in developing working papers. As a freshman, however, he was less confident in his understanding of political issues than many older students. Nonetheless, having numerous opportunities to practice his skills and persist through his discomfort enabled him to build confidence in his public speaking ability gradually.

Persuasion.

Many students' Model UN experiences also helped them to develop greater self-efficacy for their ability to persuade others. When describing improvements in their persuasive abilities, several students specifically referenced the utility of seeing and acknowledging multiple sides of an issue. Their experiences representing countries vastly different from their own had given them insights into how to find common ground with those who had a different perspective. Savvy new Model UN member Emily had learned quickly that understanding and addressing other delegates' interests – as well as helping them to make contacts – was an effective way to persuade those with differing views:

> It's more of just appealing to their interests. And you can sort of read them and see, like, what they want to hear or who they want to talk to rather than constantly just pushing your country's interests. I think it's more of a – I don't want to say manipulative, but that's sort of what it is. Like I don't know, it's just sort of acting a certain way or playing a certain part so that they feel more comfortable, and in

that way I obtained a lot more votes than I did simply arguing policy (Interview, January 25, 2010).

Like Emily, Mark agreed that his experiences listening to other countries' viewpoints had bolstered his capacity to negotiate effectively, and he also said that building an understanding of different viewpoints had strengthened his ability to argue persuasively for his own views beyond Model UN. After representing what he called Iran's "idiotic" positions on freedom of speech at one conference, he believed the experience had helped him understand how to counter those anti-freedom arguments most effectively. Meanwhile, he had gained experience communicating with individuals representing vastly different perspectives:

> I've learned a lot about persuasion during caucuses. You need to understand [that it's hard]; you're not gonna persuade them from the country's policy, but you might be able to sway them a little bit to agree at a moderate level if you have two extremes. And maybe you can get everyone to agree on one thing (Interview, March 5, 2010).

Although he and other Elmwood students did not always succeed in persuading other delegates of their countries' perspectives, their experiences illustrated for them how effective persuasion might occur.

Political writing.

Another communication skill that many Elmwood Model UN students believed they developed was political writing. Freshman students told me at their first conferences that the prospect of writing resolutions was very challenging and intimidating; Erin, for example, was amazed by their typical six-page length and was uncomfortable trying to contribute to them. By the time these freshmen had completed their second conference, however, they became increasingly involved in the process. At the middle school conference held at Elmwood High School in December, Carol even helped several middle school students craft their own resolution. With more experience, students became more comfortable with the process. For example, experienced juniors like Randall enjoyed the art of writing resolutions:

When resolutions are being written, you can like see that the way you choose to word things and . . . if you can convince enough people, you can change things. . . . I like playing with the language to get it perfectly so everyone, so it's hard to be against it. And that shows that like you can . . . get other people on your side in the process (Interview, October 9, 2009).

Evelyn and Sarah expressed similar sentiments. Through their Model UN experiences, these students had developed confidence in their ability to use the written word diplomatically to forge and maintain alliances.

Working productively with others.

Model UN conferences provided students countless opportunities to work with their peers to address challenging political issues, and every Elmwood student I interviewed told me that these experiences had enhanced their ability to work productively with others. As Mark told me, "I've always been pretty good at working with people, but I think I'm just improving with every conference really" (Interview, January 15, 2010). To be successful in conference committees and in the leadership team of Elmwood's club, not only did students have to have strong communication skills, but they also had to be skillful at building relationships that could overcome prior disagreements. Randall's experiences at conferences had shown him that these relationships could be helpful in building political success:

At the beginning of a conference if you just try and talk to as many people as you can . . . then once they're familiar with your face it's like they can, they'll come to you with ideas and you can go to them with ideas and it can make you feel like it's easier to get the resolution that you want passed, passed (October 9, 2009).

During committee caucuses, Randall often moved between groups, listening carefully to competing ideas for working papers and contributing his ideas judiciously; but by the end of each conference he had usually developed a strong alliance that was close to passing a resolution.

Other students told me that their Model UN experiences had taught them specific techniques for maximizing one's power in their conference committees. Julia, who said her diplomatic skills had improved through Model UN, learned both to be open to working with a wide variety of delegates and how to be more

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assertive. By observing how other delegates assumed greater leadership roles during caucuses by moving to the center of discussion circles, she learned about the potential importance of making one's physical presence known. Likewise, she learned to be more accepting of potential future allies:

> I initially didn't like these reps from Japan or Kuwait. I had some personal issues with them; they were kinda preppy and very confident. Yesterday I was talking to her the other day, and I just realized that she's just getting her view out there. . . . Being in Model UN has really emphasized the importance of having a level of diplomacy in social relations because you never know when you're going to come to realize that someone's intentions weren't what you thought. If you let those personal issues get in the way, then you're not going to be able to participate in a lot of the things that are going on in the world. That's one issue that we often have in government – people letting personal things get in the way (Interview, January 15, 2010).

By working with people from different schools and backgrounds, Julia had become increasingly confident in her capacity to work with a broad spectrum of people.

Succeeding at Model UN conferences required students to work together to solve problems, and like Julia, Sarah had also learned strategies and developed increased confidence in their ability to do so:

> In Model UN, you actually have to work with people towards a common goal. You often have to work with another country with a completely different policy. You have to come up with something that will satisfy as many countries as possible. It's a valuable skill for life because you need to work with other people. You need to be able to communicate, accept what others say, and talk to people in a way that doesn't offend people in the way that you say it. Tone of voice. Don't tell them that they're wrong. Address it like, "I understand what you're saying, but did you consider this?" I learned that through experience (Interview, February 5, 2010).

Like many students, Sarah had developed confidence in her ability not only to effectively communicate but also in her ability to accept others' perspectives and reach a compromise.

Taking initiative.

Several Elmwood Model UN students indicated that their conference experiences had positively influenced their self-efficacy for initiating action for change. At conferences, students told me regularly about amendments, working papers, or resolutions that they had helped to design and/or pass; one student even worked on writing a resolution during an Elmwood team dinner. Approaching conferences with the goal of addressing an issue of global importance, many Elmwood students developed proactive dispositions. Evelyn, for example, told me that although she used to be shy around her peers, Model UN conferences had helped bring her out of her shell: "It's sort of a tradition. When we're milling around waiting to go into committee on the first day, you go up and shake everyone's hand and introduce yourself and tell them your country and that you might be interested in working with them" (Interview, September 16, 2009).

Certainly not all students were equally direct or outgoing. Freshman Carol, for example, spent most of her first two conferences observing and made only a half-dozen short speeches during all three conferences. During her third conference, though, she became involved in writing a resolution with a delegate from another school. More experienced students who had developed more confidence and experience in communication and negotiation were usually more willing to place themselves at the forefront of their committees. Sarah, for example, a senior who wistfully recalled her first "terrible, embarrassing" speech at a Model UN conference, was eager to take a stronger leadership role during her final conferences:

> I think I learned the most this year in the club – more than in other years. I was head delegate for two conferences. It was my last chance to really step up. I had to prepare not only my stuff but helped other delegates prepare theirs. This was my last chance to really get out there and try to have the best experience I could in the committees. I've learned that I need to just step up a little more. In the past I've hung back more. I proved to myself that I could be a leader rather than just take part in something (Interview, February 5, 2010).

At the large fall conference, Sarah's first resolution was rejected by her committee, and when her committee rejected that resolution in favor of a similar one, she attempted to have the approved resolution amended so that it would reflect her country's goals. Giving

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several speeches in front of a combined committee session of over 150 people, she built support for that amendment which led to its passage. Like Sarah, many Model UN students developed self-efficacy for taking initiative; because of the skills required to successfully achieve one's goals, however, such confidence was more common among experienced members.

Development of internal political efficacy for knowledge.

Elmwood's Model UN students also developed higher internal political efficacy during their experiences in the program. Results of regression analyses indicate that participation in Model UN had a positive influence on students' internal political efficacy, controlling for race, grade level, age, GPA, parental education, and beginning-of-semester political interest, EPE, IPE/skills, and IPE/knowledge (See Table 3.21). Students who participated in Model UN had end-of-term IPE/knowledge that was about one-third of a standard deviation higher than those of NHS members ($p<.01$). I also found that students' beginning-of-term external political efficacy and IPE/knowledge were positively related to their end-of-term IPE/knowledge, which indicates that students who began the semester with higher confidence in their political knowledge and ability to influence the government were likely to experience greater growth in confidence in their political knowledge. The variables in Model 3 explained about 78 percent of the variance in students' end-of-semester IPE/knowledge.

Results of Model 2 of the hierarchical regression indicate that beginning-of-term IPE/skills positively influenced students' end-of-term IPE/knowledge, but this relationship became insignificant when controlling for students' beginning-of-term IPE/knowledge. Because of the strong correlation between IPE/knowledge and IPE/skills at the beginning of the term, the former accounted for the variance explained by the latter. Likewise, results of Model 2 indicated that students' beginning-of-term political interest influenced their development of IPE/knowledge, but this relationship became insignificant when adding beginning-of-term IPE/knowledge to the model.

My qualitative analyses also suggested that students developed substantial internal political efficacy during their Model UN experiences. In the process of preparing for and participating in conferences, most students studied not only the countries they represented but also the issues before their committees, and through these experiences,

many students developed increased knowledge (as noted above) and increased confidence in their ability to understand political issues. As senior Sarah told me energetically, "I've learned that from Model UN by having to prepare for debates, distinguish credible sources from non-credible sources, and being able to look into a country's policy" (Interview, February 5, 2010). Sarah emphasized that these skills had been useful to her well beyond Model UN. In addition, some students developed confidence in their knowledge through their discussions of political issues with their Model UN peers and advisors outside of conference time – either after club meetings, after school, or during lunchtime in Mr. Kendall's classroom.

Table 3.21

Unstandardized B Values (and Standardized Coefficients) of OLS Regression Models Investigating Students' End-of-Term IPE/Knowledge (N=50; MUN N=31, NHS N=19)

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Parental Education	.031 (.038)	.048 (.058)	.004 (.005)	-.043 (-.053)
Race	.839 (.142)	.528 (.089)	.481 (.081)	.128 (.022)
Grade	-.432 (-.402)	-.156 (-.146)	.120 (.112)	.199 (.185)
Age	.177 (.163)	-.003 (-.002)	-.272 (-.250)	-.247 (-.227)
GPA	-.108 (-.027)	.274 (.068)	.451 (.112)	.421 (.105)
IPE/Skills, Time 1		.584 (.435)**	.220 (.164)	.201 (.150)
EPE, Time 1		.235 (.242)*	.237 (.244)**	.176 (.182)*
Political Interest, Time 1		.267 (.320)*	.124 (.149)	.010 (.012)
IPE/Knowledge, Time 1			.548 (.577)***	.595 (.627)***
Participation in Model UN				.705 (.323)**
Constant	2.999	-1.536	1.329	2.313
R^2	.088	.557***	.705***	.776**

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

Not all students had developed the same confidence as Sarah, however. Freshman Carol participated only occasionally at her first few conferences because she was "afraid I don't know what I'm talking about" (Interview, January 15, 2010). Nonetheless, she appeared to develop more internal political efficacy with each conference. Whereas at the first conference she focused primarily on figuring out the parliamentary procedures, by her third conference she was listening carefully to the substance of the arguments and considering how her country would address those arguments. This trajectory was gradual but not entirely atypical, and by the time most Elmwood Model UN students had one year

of experience, they were usually quite confident in their ability to understand and participate in political processes.[2]

Development of external political efficacy.

Elmwood's Model UN students developed higher external political efficacy during their experiences in the program. Results of regression analyses indicated that participation in Model UN had a positive influence on students' external political efficacy, controlling for race, grade, age, GPA, parental education, and beginning-of-semester political interest, IPE/skills, IPE/knowledge, and external political efficacy (See Table 3.22). Students who participated in Model UN had end-of-term external political efficacy that was about .37 standard deviations higher than those of NHS members who were not in Model UN (p<.01).

Table 3.22

Unstandardized B Values (and Standardized Coefficients) of OLS Regression Models Investigating Students' End-of-Term External Political Efficacy (N=50; MUN N=31, NHS N=19)

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Parental Education	-.176 (-.217)	-.187 (-.231)	-.123 (-.151)	-.176 (-.217)~
Race	1.389 (.238)	1.395 (.239)~	.898 (.154)	.502 (.086)
Grade	.065 (.061)	.244 (.230)	.259 (.254)	.347 (.327)
Age	-.063 (-.058)	-.223 (-.207)	-.264 (-.246)	-.236 (-.219)
GPA	-.801 (-.201)	-.811 (-.204)	-.593 (-.149)	-.626 (-.157)
IPE/knowledge, Time 1		.240 (.256)	.243 (.259)	.296 (.316)~
Political Interest, Time 1		.243 (.296)~	.287 (.349)*	.160 (.194)
IPE/skills, Time 1		-.258 (-.194)	-.332 (-.250)	-.353 (-.266)~
External Political Efficacy, Time 1			.434 (.453)**	.366 (.382)**
Participation in Model UN				.788 (.366)**
Constant	7.391	8.400	6.639	7.738~
R^2	.124	.267~	.451*	.542**

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

I also found that students' beginning-of-term external political efficacy was very closely related to their end-of-term external political efficacy (p<.01) and that students' beginning-of-term IPE/knowledge, beginning-of-term IPE/skills, and political interest were marginally related to students' end-of term external political efficacy. In Model 3 of my hierarchical regression, political interest was related to students' development of

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[2] During informal observations of Carol at a conference in January, 2011, she was much more involved and assertive in committee debates than she had been one year earlier.

external political efficacy, but this relationship was no longer significant when Model UN participation was added to the model. The variables in Model 4 explained about 54 percent of the variance in students' end-of-semester external political efficacy.

My qualitative analyses support these conclusions. At both the beginning and end of the semester, most Model UN students expressed a general belief that their actions could influence the government; but their comments at the end indicated a broader understanding of the means they could use to accomplish their civic goals. For example, early in the semester, when I asked students if they believed they could influence the government, several discussed the importance of voting and writing to representatives. Erin exemplified this sentiment:

> At this moment, all I can do to make a difference would be to write a few letters. Maybe in the future – like ten or 20 years from now – I could make a difference. If I get into a good college and get a good job, maybe I could make a difference. So in the future, yes (Interview, November 9, 2009).

While working in conference committees to develop solutions to challenging international challenges, most Elmwood students developed greater knowledge and skills for working with others to address large-scale issues. Mark, who represented Lebanon on the UN Legal Committee, indicated that working with others to develop ways to handle Somali pirates had made him feel increasingly empowered:

> I'm speaking up a little bit more, and people are actually listening to me – which is kind of nice. They're actually giving me a decent amount of intellectual conversation directly pointed at the arguments that I've been making [in my speeches]. This is happening mostly in caucuses….Sometimes things are going against the way that I want, but mostly they're going in the direction that I want (Interview, January 15, 2010).

These experiences working towards and approaching the achievement of one's political goals, while contributing to students' development of IPE/skills and internal political efficacy, also helped students to envision how they might work with others towards producing larger-scale changes. When responding to my questions about their external political efficacy at the beginning of the semester, only the veteran Model UN members discussed the importance of working with others. By the end of the semester,

however, nearly all students – new and experienced alike – spoke about the potential of collaborating with fellow citizens to confront civic challenges. Julia, for example, told me enthusiastically about the potential of pursuing political change by building bridges between organizations:

> I think that you just need to like be an initiator and really communicate between different groups of people because there's groups all over the place and usually if one person in the group is like up for something you know most of them are because they . . . do things in similar ways and they have similar goals and motives (Interview, February 8, 2010).

She told me that to be effective in such endeavors, however, strong communication skills and a willingness to continuously expend effort (i.e., persistence) were essential.

Likewise, freshman Erin developed a broader conception of her own potential to initiate civic changes which went well beyond writing letters to elected leaders. In her final interview, she mentioned the importance of spreading awareness about issues of concern, describing the potential of digital media to spread one's message. Since joining Model UN, she had even started a Facebook group for people interested in supporting Elmwood's music program, which had recently been threatened with severe budget cuts. The group had attracted about 600 members by mid-February.

Although most of my analyses indicated that the Elmwood Model UN experience had a positive influence on external political efficacy, this development was not always linear. Randall, a junior in his third year in the club, said that his Model UN experiences had made him more confident in his own skills but more skeptical about his potential to effect real political change. Even though he thought the conferences and club activities had strengthened his ability and willingness to clearly express his views, his recent experiences – in which he had failed to achieve his goals in his conference committee – had made him more skeptical. Whereas his skepticism at the beginning of the semester was mild, during the study period he had grown increasingly pessimistic due to his experience representing Algeria on the UN Security Council:

> If anything, I have less faith in the system by seeing how stubborn people can be and how unwilling they are to cooperate a lot of the time. I've always felt like people could make a difference but that it's hard. But in Model UN, I've seen

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how unwilling people can be to change – and even if it may help out more people,

they're still concerned with themselves the most….Probably my most recent

experience colors that opinion. The people in my conference room were pretty

selfish (Interview, February 12, 2010).

Through his frustrating experiences in a simulation of one of the world's most politically

contentious bodies, Randall had begun to feel less politically empowered.

Table 3.23

Typology of Political Knowledge and Hypothetical Examples for Model UN Delegate
Representing Lebanon in a Committee Addressing Rights of Journalists

Category	Opportunities	Barriers
Political Issues	Article 13 of the Lebanese Constitution allows freedom of expression, and a range of press outlets flourish in Lebanon.	Detention of journalists by Lebanese authorities could make others perceive that Lebanon violates human rights.
Political Actors	China, Iran, and other powerful nations support states' right to restrict some journalists' critiques.	The US, EU, and many international NGOs condemn perceived restrictions of free expression.
Political Processes	Building alliances with other governments threatened by critical journalists could reduce or prevent international criticism.	Other governments and international human rights organizations could damage Lebanon's reputation and possibly its economy with its critiques of journalists' treatment.

Other students made similar comments, often referring to specific knowledge that

made them feel particularly disempowered in their committees, such as the

disproportionate power of countries like the United States and China or the difficulty of

overcoming different governments' views on human rights. On the other hand, certain

types of knowledge, such as the existence of powerful international institutions or

provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, helped students to feel more

efficacious in their committees, even if representing small countries. Thus, whereas some

knowledge helped students to realize opportunities to make a difference, other types of

knowledge highlighted the barriers (See Table 3.23). Indeed, what one student viewed as

an opportunity might be viewed by another as a barrier, depending on the countries they

represented and their willingness to expend effort. The political processes at Model UN

provided students many opportunities and few barriers for developing solutions to the problems about which they learned, and this, paired with the persistence that many of them developed, helped to strengthen their external political efficacy.

Overall, students' participation in the Elmwood High School Model UN program strengthened their external political efficacy. Although some students' Model UN experiences with realistic political barriers created frustration and skepticism about an individual's ability to make a difference, many of these students still benefited from the program by developing useful skills and knowledge. By working with other student delegates at interscholastic conferences, most students learned that collaborating with others could be a productive way to develop solutions to political challenges.

Development of political interest.

Elmwood's Model UN students also developed greater political interest during their experiences in the club. Results of regression analysis indicate that when students participated in Model UN for one semester, their political interest was about .24 standard deviations higher than that of NHS students who were not in Model UN ($p<.01$), controlling for age, grade, race, parental education levels, grade point average, and beginning-of-semester political interest, EPE, IPE/knowledge, and IPE/skills (See Table 3.24). Regression results also indicated that end-of-term political interest was influenced by students' grades and beginning-of-term political interest, IPE/knowledge, and external political efficacy, which suggests that higher political efficacy and achievement are related to political interest.

Students' comments and interactions likewise suggest that their political interest developed during their Model UN experiences. Evelyn's words exemplify students' sentiments: "I think my interest has definitely increased, and my drive to stay current and know what's going on in the world has increased" (Interview, September 16, 2009). Whereas my qualitative analyses support the quantitative findings that political efficacy has a positive influence on political interest, my findings also suggested that two other major factors contributed to this development: social influences and an increased understanding of how politics influence issues relevant to students' lives.

Table 3.24

Unstandardized B Values (and Standardized Coefficients) of OLS Regression Models Examining Students'
End-of-Term Political Interest

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Parental Education	-.070 (-.082)	-.100 (-.116)	-.041 (-.048)	-.078 (-.091)
Race	1.014 (.164)	.690 (.112)	.717 (.116)	.444 (.072)~
Grade	-.443 (-.395)	.043 (.039)	-.096 (-.085)	-.035 (-.031)
Age	.158 (.139)	-.242 (-.212)	-.122 (-.107)	-.102 (-.090)
GPA	-.807 (-.192)	-.275 (-.065)	-.638 (-.152)*	-.661 (-.157)**
EPE, Time 1		.206 (.204)~	.267 (.263)***	.220 (.217)**
IPE/Knowledge, Time 1		.518 (.523)**	.215 (.217)*	.252 (.254)**
IPE/ Skills, Time 1		.205 (.146)	-.077 (-.055)	-.091 (-.065)
Political Interest, Time 1			.638 (.733)***	.550 (.632)***
Participation in Model UN				.544 (.239)**
Constant	6.557	5.352	4.484~	5.244*
R^2	.132	.521***	.857***	.896**

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

Political efficacy.

Results of qualitative analyses, consistent with regression results, indicated that political efficacy contributed to the development of political interest (See Table 3.20). First, when students had greater confidence in their ability to understand political issues (IPE/knowledge), they often became more interested in learning more about them. Julia is one of many examples:

> I would definitely say I'm more interested just because… I've never really completely understood the scope of, like, political…international issues . . . So, I think I've become more interested because I know what they are now. It makes me want to just like, kind of know what's going on (Interview, February 8, 2010).

At club meetings, students often mentioned details of issues that they had debated in their committees – either with their peers or in conversations with their advisors. Although some students learned about issues only for the purpose of the debate, many continued to build upon their increased levels of understanding.

In addition, students' external political efficacy contributed to their development of political interest. Several students, especially upperclassmen, told me that they wanted to learn about political issues because that was a prerequisite for making a difference. Whereas Sarah was preparing simply to become an informed voter, Evelyn wanted to

learn about world health issues because she hoped to influence those policies professionally and politically. Likewise, Brad linked his interest in politics to his belief that possessing political information would enable him to have a voice in public affairs:

> It's more than being just an interest. It's something that you can really be a part of and have a say and have a sense that you actually did something because things that are being done in politics and stuff like that are going to be, are going to have profound effects decades, even centuries in the future (Interview, October 12, 2009).

Thus, when students believe that their actions can influence public affairs and that they are capable of understanding those issues, they are more likely to be interested in learning about them.

Social influences.

My analyses also suggested that students' social experiences during Model UN contributed to their development of increased political interest. Many students told me that they had initially become interested in political issues because they were exposed to political information and discussion at an early age. For example, Erin told me that her father constantly read the newspaper and that her mother listened to Sean Hannity when driving. Of his own experiences, Mark said, "My mom is conservative; my dad is more liberal. They talk politics a couple times a week – just thoughtful discussions" (Interview, November 30, 2009). Whereas students' initial interest in politics influenced their decision to join Model UN (See Table 3.10), their frequent and continual interactions with peers and advisors who shared that interest seemed to generate even greater interest.

Model UN students discussed political issues not only at conferences and at club meetings but also in settings well beyond the scope of the club. When socializing with other club members on weekends, during class, or during lunch, politics was a frequent topic of conversation, according to Evelyn and Randall. Then, at meetings and conferences, students spent a substantial amount of time with individuals who were researching and passionately discussing international social, political, economic, and security issues. Younger Elmwood club members often admired and looked up to the more senior members, especially after seeing them debate in committee. Given that students' initial political interest had emerged due to the influence of those around them,

their ongoing social experiences with other politically interested individuals likely contributed to their increased political interest.

Relevance of political issues.

In Model UN, students were required to learn about, discuss, and address issues about which they often had little prior knowledge, and these experiences helped them to develop an appreciation for the importance and relevance of these issues to their lives. This was particularly true for topics that were closely relevant to students' lives or identities, such as women's rights in developing nations, but often students become deeply interested in more obscure topics after several days of debating them. Sarah summarized her developing political interest in our final interview:

> So initially the motivation to learn about it is that you know you're gonna have to debate it. But sometimes you stay interested in these things well beyond the conference. For example, debating AIDS . . . I never would have thought to look up how much an AIDS cocktail costs. . . . But most people who get the disease can't afford that. So yeah, you research the issues for the conference, but then you realize that it's not just something that should be debated by high school kids for four days (Interview, February 5, 2010).

In the process of debating these issues, students became increasingly aware of the social and economic disparities in the world, and this new knowledge often inspired their curiosity. Julia, for example, told me that learning about maternal mortality in developing nations had put the US healthcare debate into perspective, forcing her to consider why such international topics get so little attention in the US:

> Sixty percent of births are unmonitored…It makes you consider the ethical obligation of a nation. . . . I think healthcare in our country is a big problem. There are a lot of people here who need help, but . . . what about the hundreds of thousands of women in Africa, in South America, in Southeast Asia? . . . If you think about those and say, "Is that more important?" I'd say so (Interview, February 8, 2009).

Julia had become much more interested in international issues. For each conference, students prepared to debate at least two issues, so during this study, most Elmwood Model UN students debated between four and six new topics. These experiences learning

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about the importance and relevance of major international issues positively contributed to students' development of political interest. During the Model UN experience, students' political interest was enhanced by their political efficacy, politically-oriented social influences, and perception of political issues as more relevant and meaningful.

Summary of Findings

Overall results of my analyses indicated that students' diverse Model UN experiences positively influenced their political engagement. Figure 3.4 summarizes this study's major quantitative findings: In short, students' initial levels of political interest were closely related to their decisions to participate in Model UN, and their subsequent participation was in turn related to increased levels of political interest and all three dimensions of political efficacy. Students' initial levels of external political efficacy positively influenced their end-of-semester IPE/knowledge, and beginning-of-semester EPE and IPE/knowledge had a positive impact on political interest (See Tables 3.19, 3.21, 3.22, and 3.24). IPE/skills had a marginal effect on students' external political efficacy. Altogether these findings suggest that there may be a feedback loop involved in Model UN participation: As students participate in the Model UN program, their political efficacy and interest tends to increase, which in turn makes them more likely to participate and develop more political efficacy and interest (See Figure 3.4).
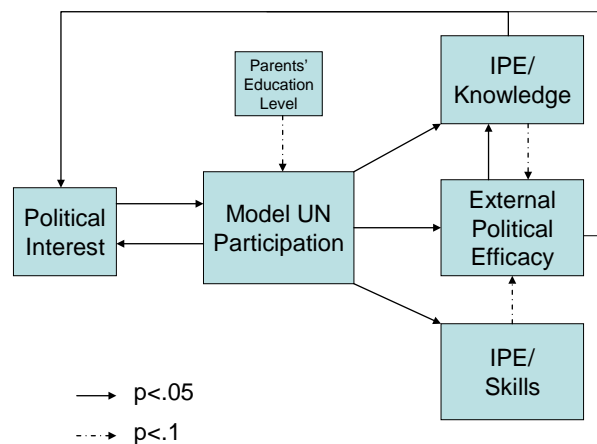
Figure 3.4. Summary of quantitative findings on Model UN's relationship to political engagement

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Qualitative analyses indicated that students' diverse experiences in the program included numerous opportunities to develop (1) political skills; (2) political knowledge; (3) persistence; (4) rapport with politically engaged individuals, including their peers and advisors; and (5) to achieve political goals. Whereas students' rapport with politically engaged individuals contributed to their political interest, their repeated practice of various political skills helped them to develop self-efficacy for those skills, and their increased political knowledge contributed to their IPE/knowledge. Meanwhile, evidence suggests that students' achievement of goals and sense of persistence contributed to their development of external political efficacy. Figure 3.5 integrates findings from the quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study. This model shows that students' development of political engagement occurred in conjunction with and as a result of their development of skills, knowledge, persistence, rapport, and their achievements.
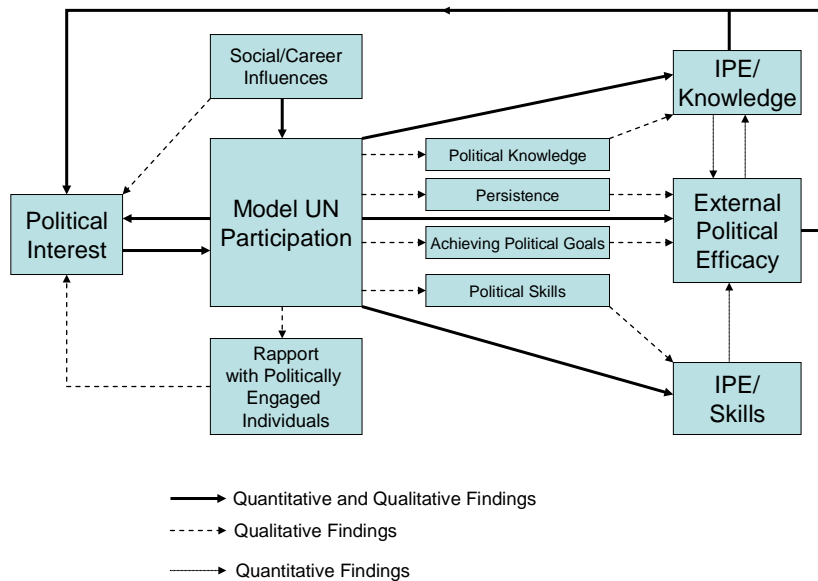
Figure 3.5. Mixed model of political engagement development through the Model UN experience

Limitations

Despite this study's findings about the potential benefits of participating in Model UN, it also has two major limitations, one related to generalizability and the other related to its specificity of processes. First and foremost, the fact that Elmwood's Model UN program positively influenced students' political engagement does not mean that other Model UN clubs do or will have a similar impact. Based on my observations at

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conferences and conversations with advisors from numerous schools, it was clear that Elmwood's program is unusual in many ways, including its large number of students, deeply involved advisors, and frequent club events. Although there are many strong Model UN clubs, each is unique and independent; there is no formula or template for how clubs must operate. The one consistent element of the Model UN experience is the interscholastic conference, which is largely similar across contexts (though varying widely in size). With appropriate preparation and support, many Model UN participants may develop political skills, knowledge, rapport, and engagement, but the types of support from advisors, peers, families, and communities are inconsistent. The second major limitation of this study is its lack of precise specificity regarding the causal relationships between activities and outcomes. Although results of my analyses suggested that certain broad processes related to certain outcomes, such as the relationship between political skills and IPE/skills, my results do not identify whether specific activities, such as writing position papers for conferences, were most closely related to these developments.

Discussion

Contributions of this Study

One of the primary purposes of social studies education in the United States is to prepare students to become active, informed citizens, but educators and educational researchers have little understanding of the processes involved in generating students' political engagement. This study begins to fill this research gap by documenting the operation and impact of a popular civic education program that has not been closely examined previously. Although Model UN has millions of alumni, previous empirical studies of its impact on students have been quite rare (e.g., Patterson, 1996). Findings from this study relate closely to well-known theories of motivation (Eccles, 2005; Bandura, 1997) and behavior (Azjen & Fishbein, 1980) which suggest that individuals' values (or interests), norms, and self-efficacy beliefs can both influence and be influenced by behavioral choices (See below for more on this). However, this study also offers a unique contribution to the literature on civic and political learning through its thick descriptions and analyses of students' political development, their advisors' guidance of the program, and the relationships among them.

In this case study, students experienced substantial gains in political interest and all three dimensions of political efficacy. Although precise causal mechanisms are impossible to determine, evidence from the study suggests that most consequential for students' increased political engagement were their opportunities through Model UN to develop (1) political skills, (2) political knowledge, (3) persistence, and (4) rapport with politically engaged individuals, and (5) to achieve political goals (See Figure 3.5). Prior research on political engagement indicates that participating in certain activities, such as discussions of controversial political issues and simulations of political processes, enhances political efficacy and interest, but these earlier studies did not explore the specific reasons for these outcomes. This study, on the other hand, explored students' experiences and the types of adult support that may be necessary for such outcomes to occur, and it therefore offers useful guidance for educators interested in preparing students for increased political engagement.

Relationship of Findings to Other Theories

Several of the above findings relate closely to prior psychological theories. First, two of my key findings are supported by Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Planned Behavior. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, one major aspect of an individual's behavioral intentions (and subsequent behavioral choices) is the subjective norm, defined as the "perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behavior in question" (p. 57). Subjective norms are distinct from more general social norms insofar as they are focused on "important others" rather than others more broadly. In this case study, first I found that many Model UN members joined the club because "important others," such as parents, peers, or teachers, suggested that they do so. Second, Model UN members became increasingly interested in political issues as they developed relationships with students and advisors who were interested in learning about, researching, and discussing political issues. With Model UN clubs flourishing worldwide, the extent of political interest undoubtedly varies from club to club, but for Model UN members at Elmwood, with its tradition of conference preparation, political learning, and success, political interest was a strong subjective norm that likely played a role in their decisions to remain involved in the club and other political activities.

Elmwood students' development of political interest also lends support to Silvia's (2006) emotion-attribution theory of interest development. This theory contends that when individuals attribute their positive emotions to their experience conducting a particular task, they develop a greater interest in that task. Elmwood's Model UN students generally had positive emotional experiences during their club activities through their strong relationships with peers and advisors, success at conferences, and informal club experiences (See Table 3.14). At club meetings immediately after conferences, members frequently discussed their challenging yet enjoyable times in their committees, providing them with opportunities to attribute their positive emotions at conferences with their political experiences.

Another major theory that relates closely to my findings is Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, which posits that individuals base their self-efficacy for specific tasks on their prior performance on similar tasks. In Model UN, as students developed political skills and knowledge, they also developed self-efficacy for their political skills and knowledge. Likewise, as students accomplished political goals and overcame obstacles through persistent effort, they developed greater external political efficacy. The Model UN conference experiences, the club experiences structured by advisors (in their roles as program facilitators), and the support provided by advisors (in their roles as informational resources and dedicated supporters) provided Elmwood's Model UN members with numerous opportunities to utilize their knowledge and skills, repeatedly attempt to address authentic political problems, and experience success in these domains (See Table 3.8). Ultimately, results suggest, this supported their development across the three dimensions of political efficacy.

Implications and Future Research

There are several major implications of this work, but there is also much more research needed to understand how educational programs can best prepare students for political participation. One major implication of this study is that highly interactive political simulations like Model United Nations can be a powerful means of enhancing students' political engagement, especially when students have multiple opportunities to participate and the strong support of adult leaders. Prior studies have also found that short-term political simulations generally produce greater political efficacy for student

participants (Stroupe & Sabato, 2004; Dressner, 1990; Vogel, 1973; Boocock, 1968), but another study found that such experiences can also reduce political efficacy if students become overly frustrated (Livington & Kidder, 1972).

Whereas these prior studies did not closely examine students' experiences, the current study's findings suggest that crucial elements of students' increased political engagement are their opportunities to achieve success and their development of knowledge, skills, persistence, and rapport. Fostering these experiences may require that students have *several* opportunities to learn about political challenges, discuss them, develop solutions, and promote those solutions among others – not simply one-day opportunities with numerous participants (let alone, one class period). For classroom teachers who have students for one hour or less per day, more students would likely benefit from multiple simulations that each last several class periods. Future research should examine methods by which teachers could integrate such simulations into their curricula. In addition, although the evidence from this study suggests that the five aforementioned elements (See Figure 3.5) are important components of developing political interest and efficacy, future studies should closely examine these factors and perhaps others that may contribute to students' development of political engagement. For example, different types of political knowledge may differentially influence political efficacy development (See Table 3.23). Such research would strengthen our understanding of how educators could foster greater civic engagement.

Another implication of this study is that serving as an advisor who fosters students' civic engagement in an extracurricular Model UN program may require extraordinary commitment and skill. When I conducted this study, the Elmwood club's advisors' work as program facilitators, informational resources, and dedicated supporters had been twelve years in the making, so they had well-established methods for structuring student leadership roles, preparing students for conferences, and generating a culture of accountability (See Table 3.8). Furthermore, through their experiences guiding students' research on countless international topics, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Stein had accumulated a tremendous amount of content knowledge on world political affairs. Although these advisors' level of commitment may not be essential for fostering students' political engagement, there is an important role for advisors in maintaining a

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structure in which students can lead and learn but also have adequate support and encouragement. Given the number of Model UN programs around the country, studies comparing programs and advisors and their respective students' development could be quite practical to conduct and useful to educators.

This study's findings also imply that various types of school clubs and activities can foster the development of political skills – not just politically oriented clubs. My analyses suggested that some of the most important skill-building experiences of the Model UN students were their opportunities to conduct organizational planning. Although advisors served an important facilitative role, students had substantial control over the operations and decisions of the club. Officers and other highly involved members strategized to build the club's membership, raise funds, teach their classmates, and train new delegates, among other things. Students were responsible for managing the events that they planned and helping each other prepare for conferences, and the advisors had created numerous leadership positions to fulfill the various tasks that they hoped the club would accomplish. This flexibility and autonomy created numerous opportunities for students to practice various skills that are often central to success not only in the political sphere but in organizations more broadly. Thus, educators who hope to prepare students to be leaders in their communities should consider structuring authentic leadership opportunities for students that provide them with genuine autonomy and influence. Future research should examine the extent to which participating in organizational leadership in various types of organizations, ranging from community service clubs to performance groups to sports teams, might relate to students' development of political skills.

Conclusion

Overall, this study offers useful analyses for educators and educational researchers about how an extracurricular political education program can support the development of students' political engagement. Managing such programs can be demanding, and students may have widely varying experiences; but if educators are interested in preparing their students for future political participation, organizing and supporting an active Model UN club could be an excellent means of doing so.

Appendix A

Selected Model UN Conference Resolution

Resolution: #601
Submitted to: World Health Organization
Topic: Maternal Mortality
Sponsored by: USA, Kuwait, Nigeria, Pakistan, Croatia, Australia, Sudan
Signatories: Iran, France, Cuba, Japan, Venezuela, Algeria

<u>Recognizing</u> the urgent need for a universal decrease in the world's maternal mortality rates and the need for a stable UN agenda to set guidelines and put a plan into action, and

<u>Deeply troubled by</u> the fact that the aforementioned rates are not in line with existing medical advancements, and

<u>Alarmed by</u> the challenge that women face to receive legal, social, political, and economic equality in society, and

<u>Fully convinced</u> that it is in the best interest of the global economy to rely on previously established organizations in order to solve this problem efficiently, and

<u>Cognizant</u> of the importance of community-based education regarding nutrition and reproductive health, and

<u>Taking into account</u> the mission of the MDG5 in lowering maternal mortality rates by 2015:

1. <u>Endorses</u> the reallocation of resources and funds of NGOs that, after having familiarized themselves with the needs of each specific nation, will work concurrently with ECOSOC in order to more effectively remedy the situation;

2. <u>Encourages</u> said pre-existing NGOs to continue their efforts in community-based education in terms of:
   a. Pre and post-natal care,
   b. Prenatal nutrition,
   c. Proper sanitary procedures,
   d. Types and use of contraceptives,
   e. All scopes of culturally sensitive family planning;

3. <u>Further encourages</u> pre-existing NGOs to continue their medical treatment of and resource distribution to women at risk of pregnancy complications within developing nations, including, but not limited to:
   a. Oxytocin (for injection after childbirth to lower blood pressure and prevent excessive bleeding),
   b. Magnesium sulfate (to treat hypertensive reactions such as eclampsia),

      c. Partographs (to discern both maternal and fetal conditions during progress of labor, and, if necessary, to save the mother from a dangerous, obstructed labor and indicate need for Caesarian section),

      d. Sterile equipment (to prevent sepsis and other infections),

4. <u>Further endorses</u> the training of doctors, nurses, and midwives by organizations such as IMPAC;

5. <u>Recommends</u> NGO aid reports to be given every three years in order to more accurately monitor progress toward achieving MDG5;

6. <u>Recognizes</u> the right of each nation to either reject or accept the use of NGOs or implement suggested practices as it sees fit.

Appendix B

Selected Position Paper for Model UN Conference
Author: Evelyn

SUBMITTED TO: Special Political Committee
FROM: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
SUBJECT: Question of Palestine

The legal status of Palestine has caused much strife in the Middle East and much conflict abroad over the past 60 years. To the nation of Afghanistan, a fellow Islamic entity, the answer is obvious; the region of Palestine should be recognized as a sovereign nation by members of the United Nations, particularly the states of Israel and the United States.

The territory of Palestine, under the control of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), is prepared to become an official sovereign state thanks to the structure of the PLO and its overwhelming support from Palestinians. The PLO functions as a government, maintaining a parliament (Palestine National Council), a standing army (Palestine Liberation Army), and a treasury department (Palestine National Fund).

Despite this level of organization lacked even by some current members of the United Nations, Palestine is continuously barred from gaining nation status by the undermining of Palestinian dignity by the state of Israel. Israel continues to expand their borders into Palestinian territory and prevent foreign aid from entering the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The fundamental human rights of Palestinian citizens must be protected. The most effective way to ensure this is to legitimize borders between Israel and Palestine. An assurance of legitimacy would stabilize the region and lead to the creation of diplomatic relations between Middle Eastern nations involved in this conflict.

Palestine not only deserves recognition as a sovereign nation, but has proved itself worthy of said recognition countless times.

Although the answer to the Palestinian question is an easy one, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan understands the process of achieving such a solution will not be so quick. However, the status of the Palestinian territories should ultimately be the decision of Palestine, under the direction of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Appendix C

Selected "Crisis" Situations at Model UN Conferences

In the World Health Organization committee:

There is now an outbreak of cholera in Haiti. Although there has always been cholera in Haiti, the lack of clean, moving water is creating an escalated situation. Current reports of 100 confirmed cases of cholera from hospitals, but since many people cannot get to medical attention, the estimated number from our doctors is about 1,500. However, this number is triple what we found yesterday.

Usual treatment of cholera is oral hydration, but giver the lack of water in the country, external aid is needed. Oral hydration is drinking water along with salts and sugars. Each moderately dehydrated adult needs 4 liters of water in the first 4 hours. Severely dehydrated adults need intravenous fluids. Thus, our best estimates give a need of 10,000 liters of water for today, but at least 100,000 liters over the course of the next week in order to curb future infection rates.

Also, 5,000 doses of doxycycline (antibiotic) are needed; along with 1,000 doses of trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (antibiotic) for children, and 700 doses of furazolidone (antibiotic) for pregnant women.

In the Disarmament and Security Committee:

Manhattan, NY – At 9:52 AM EST, the UN delegate from Laos in the DISEC committee was abducted by what is now confirmed as a radical group of Tibetan separatists, the Three Dragons. The Three Dragons released a hostage video showing the delegate demanding small arms and 70 million dollars from Laos and other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) governments in exchange for the hostage. Laos has expressed interest in negotiating for the hostage's release. Other ASEAN nations have publicly stated their official policies that they will not negotiate with terrorists. Further journalistic investigation reveals that many of the ASEAN governments are secretly negotiating for the release of the UN delegate. The ten ASEAN nations are Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippenes, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Negotiations could be crippling toward any rescue missions and would violate international laws regarding arms trade.

Appendix D

Qualitative Codes Employed in Data Analysis

Table 3.A1

Qualitative Codes for Categorizing Students' Development during Model UN

Major Coding Category	Codes and Sub-Codes within Category*			
Political Skills	**Information Management** Examining Issues Critically Communicating Ideas and Info Negotiating Compromises Following Debate Rules	**Organizational Management** Managing Human Relationships Planning Events Organizational Planning Political Strategizing		
Political Knowledge	**Conference Preparation**	**Conference Participation**	**Other**	
Persistence	**Persistence amidst Social Challenges** Competitiveness Unfair Opposition Off-Policy Delegates	**Persistence amidst Personal Challenges** Nervousness Others' Lack of Motivation	**Persistence amidst Intellectual Challenges** Understanding Issues Thinking on Feet	**Persistence amidst Tactical Challenges** Procedures Being Heard
Rapport	**Structured Club Experiences** Conference Preparation Conference Trips Structured Rapport-Building Frequent Contact	**Informal Club Experiences** Humor at Meetings Time for Informal Talk	**Beyond the Club** Lunchtime Classes Outside of School	
Achievement of Political Goals	**Expressly Political Goals**	**Organizational Goals**		
IPE/Skills	**Beginning of Semester** Brad Carol Emily Erin Evelyn Julia Mark Randall Sarah	**End of Semester** Brad Carol Emily Erin Evelyn Julia Mark Randall Sarah	**Communication** Public Speaking Persuasion Political Writing	**Collective Leadership** Working with Others Taking Initiative

IPE/Knowledge	**Opportunities** Political Processes Political Issues Political Actors	**Neutral** Political Processes Political Issues Political Actors	**Barriers** Political Processes Political Issues Political Actors	
EPE	**Beginning of Semester** Brad Carol Emily Erin Evelyn Julia Mark Randall Sarah	**End of Semester** Brad Carol Emily Erin Evelyn Julia Mark Randall Sarah		
Political Interest	**Relevance of Issues**	**Social Influences/Rapport**	**IPE/Knowledge**	
Advisors' Roles	**Program Facilitators** Administrative Duties Holding Students Accountable Leadership Opportunities Management Advice Reminders	**Informational Resources** Content Knowledge Political Strategies/Skills Institutional Memory Research Guidance	**Dedicated Supporters** Availability Crisis Management Encouragement	

*Some categories had a smaller number of codes and sub-codes than others.

Appendix E

Evelyn's Reflections on her Model UN Experience
January, 2011 (six months after graduation)

I joined Model United Nations my sophomore year of high school in a quest to find a group of people who shared my desire to live beyond the confines of our overcrowded high school. When I signed up I knew that it was an international debate club, where members researched countries and topics and debated at conferences around the state and around the country. What I did not know was that the club was also an advocacy organization that promoted local, national, and international volunteerism, and a well-developed social environment thanks to its ten plus years as a prominent high school organization.

I regard my first year in Model UN as pivotal to my personal development. For the first time in my life I found a group of people my age with whom I had things in common besides my class schedule. Knowledge of current events and international politics was regarded as cool and mature, not weird. I had been very shy in elementary school and very awkward in middle school, and finally my sophomore year I developed not just confidence in myself, but also confidence in my ability to speak in public and debate and collaborate with strangers.

Model UN quickly became my favorite extracurricular activity. My junior year I was appointed Ambassador to Southeastern [State Name] Model UN Association, a position whose main responsibility is to organize a conference among Model UN teams in southeastern [State Name]. My senior year I was elected the secretary general of the club, putting me in charge of all club business, performance and goals. It was a position I took very seriously and still reflect on often. It was an experience that helped me put together my career goals and realize my potential. I had always been interested in medicine and politics, and Model UN introduced me to the field of public health, a pathway that combines my interest in politics, humanitarian work and healthcare. Researching for conferences became a hobby as opposed to an obligation. I no longer followed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict only because I had to debate it in committee, but because I expect myself to keep current and because I think it's important.

As secretary general I was able to spend a lot of time with younger students who were very reminiscent of me my freshman and sophomore year. I like to think that I became to them what the older Model UN members were to me when I first joined; unforgettable role models. I watched as they found their niche in a high school of just under 2000 and helped them to realize their own potential as students, community members, and world citizens.

The experiences and skills I took away from Model UN are invaluable. I learned to organize events and fundraisers, how to network effectively, how to formulate arguments, defend them, and write about them. I developed the skills to lead groups of people and to command the attention of my equals and superiors. I learned how to prioritize, how to balance my time between school, extracurriculars and a social life. I was able to research topics that pique my interest while learning how to study, and learning about what I want to do with the rest of my life. Not only have I come away

from Model UN well versed in history, international relations, humanitarian efforts, and the global community, but I believe I have developed a broad worldview, a unique perspective on life and my surroundings, and a goal-oriented sense of adventure that will take me wherever I chose to go.

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CHAPTER 4
TOWARDS A THEORY OF POLITICAL EFFICACY DEVELOPMENT

Political participation in the US has been stubbornly low, especially among youth. Even in 2008, when voter turnout increased across the board, barely half of 18- to 29-year-olds voted (Kirby & Kawashima-Ginsburg, 2009). For decades, one of the central goals of social studies educators in the United States has been to prepare youth for political participation (Hertzberg, 1981), but this has been a difficult goal to achieve because of our limited understanding of how youth become politically engaged. Closely examining the psychological dimensions underlying political action, however, may be an important first step.

Political scientists have found that one of the strongest predictors of political participation is *political efficacy* – the belief that an individual's political action can influence the political process (Beaumont, 2010; Becker, 2004; Guyton, 1988; Almond & Verba, 1963; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954). Despite the importance of political efficacy, there is little published research on how it develops. With this paper, I begin to fill this gap by presenting analyses of the factors that contribute to the development political efficacy during adolescence – a crucial time for political identify formation (Jennings & Stoker, 2004).

Problem and Purpose

In the second half of the twentieth century, Americans' political efficacy declined in tandem with overall declines in political participation and engagement (Shaffer, 1981), and this was especially true for youth. The percentage of Americans who thought they had input into governmental decisions decreased from 72 percent in 1960 to 50 percent in 2000, and among 18- to 25-year-olds, the decline was even steeper – from 82 percent to 40 percent (Gibson & Levine, 2003). This period also saw decreases among youth in voter turnout (McDonald, 2008), use of informational news media, discussion of political issues, and the belief that keeping up with politics is important (Galston, 2003, 2004). Although recent elections have brought a slight increase in youth civic engagement, voter

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turnout among citizens aged 18 to 29 was still only 51 percent in 2008 (Kirby & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2009).

Policymakers and educational leaders have acknowledged that low political engagement among youth is a serious problem that needs to be addressed, and several large-scale programs have attempted to strengthen young Americans' engagement with political processes. The federal government's *Teaching American History* program, for example, has distributed grants to over one hundred locally-organized projects every year since 2002 to enhance students' knowledge of US history (US Department of Education, 2006). Various non-profit organizations, such as the Center for Civic Education and the Annenberg Public Policy Center, have launched comprehensive new programs to support civic learning. Quantitative evaluation of these programs indicate that some have been successful at increasing students' political efficacy (e.g., Christie, 1991; Hartry & Porter, 2004; Feldman, Pasek, Romer, & Jamieson, 2007; Pasek, Feldman, Romer, & Jamieson, 2008), but no one fully understands why. This lack of understanding makes it difficult for educators to replicate these successes in their own classrooms.

Some research, however, has provided some useful insights. For example, many quantitative studies of civic education programs and classroom practices indicate that students' political efficacy is more likely to increase when they participate in certain activities. Among these are discussions of controversial issues, simulations of democratic processes, and other group-oriented political activities (Morrell, 2005; Hahn, 1999; Siegel, 1977; Vogel, 1973). Although this research is helpful, it does not consider the processes through which these activities influence students' political efficacy and thus cannot explain why they might or might not work in various circumstances. Nor does this research present detailed explanations of the relationships among political efficacy and other factors related to political participation, such as political interest (Stromback & Shehata, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to address these unexplored issues. To do so, I conducted a two-phase study. First, I developed grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1999) about the kinds of experiences and orientations that influence students' political efficacy by examining the evolving political attitudes and behaviors among student participants in two high school civic education programs.

Second, I examined this theory quantitatively by designing and administering a survey to 142 college students (mostly freshmen and sophomores). By analyzing these quantitative and qualitative data on adolescents' political efficacy development, I present insights that may be helpful to educators interested in preparing youth for political participation.

Background

Why Political Efficacy Matters

For decades, political scientists have explored why individuals in democratic societies choose to participate in the political process (i.e., vote, contact representatives, join political organizations, attend political demonstrations). Their theories and research suggest that political participation can be a function of numerous factors, including socioeconomic status (Verba & Nie, 1972; Conway, 1991), social connectedness (Putnam, 1995; Robnett, 2007), group identity (Hardy-Fanta, 1993; Wilcox & Gomez, 1990), or historical context (Geys, 2006). However, they have consistently found psychological resources to be closely related to both political participation and to several of the key variables mentioned above (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001).

Foremost among these psychological resources is political efficacy, which for decades has been one of the strongest predictors of political participation (Becker, 2004; Guyton, 1988; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954). Political efficacy was first defined by political scientists who were studying electoral behavior in the mid-1950s, and this definition is still cited widely today. These researchers defined it as follows:

> the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954, p. 187).

Since the term was coined, researchers have developed reliable measures of political efficacy and have closely examined the relationship between political efficacy and various forms of political participation: When an individual has high levels of political efficacy, she or he is more likely to vote (Becker, 2004; Cohen, et al. 2001; Guyton, 1988, 1982; Pollock, 1983; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960), contact public

officials about issues of concern (Hirlinger, 1993; Pollack, 1983; Sharp, 1982), become involved in political activism (Abrams & DeMoura, 2002; Paulsen, 1991; Tygart, 1977), use informational news media (Newhagen, 1994; Tan, 1981), and become psychologically involved in politics (Cohen et al., 2001; Bell, 1969). Given these relationships, it is important to consider how individuals develop this attitude.

Dimensions of Political Efficacy

Political efficacy is often conceptualized and studied as a multi-dimensional concept. Through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, political scientists have concluded that political efficacy consists of at least two distinct dimensions: internal political efficacy and external political efficacy (Aish, 1990; Zimmerman, 1989; Coleman & Davis, 1976; Balch, 1974). Whereas external political efficacy (EPE) is the belief that the public can influence governmental decisions and actions, internal political efficacy (IPE) refers to a person's belief that he or she is able to understand politics and competently participate in political acts (Miller, Miller, & Schneider, 1980). These two dimensions are often correlated and studied as one coherent construct (Craig, 1979), but some researchers have considered them separately.

In this paper, I created more nuanced dimensions that reflect my qualitative findings. First, in both phases of the study, I subdivided IPE into two dimensions: IPE/knowledge and IPE/skills. Whereas the former describes an individual's self-efficacy for understanding and knowing facts, concepts, and theories relevant to politics, the latter describes a person's self-efficacy for competently performing politically relevant tasks, such as public speaking and constructing reasoned arguments. Also, based on analyses in the first phase of this study (explained more in the findings portion of this paper), I subdivided EPE into two dimensions: EPE/local, which refers to an individual's belief that he or she can influence community or local governmental institutions, and EPE/distal, which refers to one's external political efficacy at the state and national level. In the following literature review exploring factors related to political efficacy, most of the studies described consider political efficacy as one coherent construct, but when researchers did distinguish between internal and external political efficacy, I indicate such.

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Factors Related to Political Efficacy

      Political participation.

      Both political scientists and educational researchers have explored how to increase individuals' political efficacy, and many of their findings have important implications for educators. One effective method of increasing individuals' political efficacy is political participation itself. For many individuals, simply voting (Ikeda, Kobayashi, & Hoshimoto, 2008; Finkel, 1985) or participating in other campaign activities, such as attending political meetings or verbally promoting a party or candidate, can boost political efficacy (Stenner-Day & Fischle, 1992; Finkel, 1987). Other studies indicate that an individual's political efficacy is more likely to increase if one's preferred political outcomes occur (Bowler & Donovan, 2002; Clarke & Acock, 1989) and decrease if an individual feels marginalized or unheard (Freie, 1997; Stenner-Day & Fischle, 1992). Altogether, this research suggests that educators can support students' political efficacy development by involving them in political action, but these studies do not explore the psychological mechanisms through which this process occurs.

      Participation in small-scale democratic processes.

      Researchers have also found that participating in small-scale democratic decision-making processes is related to the development of political efficacy. For example, when children are involved in making family decisions, they are more likely to become politically efficacious (Langton, 1980; Takei & Kleiman, 1976; Almond & Verba, 1963). In schools, students can develop higher political efficacy when they have opportunities to make classroom rules (Glenn, 1972) and participate in school-wide governance (Siegel, 1977). Simulations of democratic processes can have positive effects. Researchers have documented political efficacy increases resulting from participation in mock elections (Stroupe & Sabato, 2004), legislative role-playing games (Vogel, 1973; Boocock, 1968), and simulations involving negotiations of government energy conservation strategies (Dressner, 1990). However, one study found that if students have disempowering experiences in simulations, their political efficacy can decrease (Livingston, 1972). Thus, research suggests that teachers aiming to build students' political efficacy might achieve these goals by providing their students opportunities to be successful in either real or simulated democratic decision-making processes. These studies again do not attend to

why these experiences support some students' political efficacy development but not others'.

Learning about and discussing political issues.

Recently researchers have also found that when people have opportunities to learn about and discuss political information and perspectives, they are more likely to believe that they can participate effectively in the political system. For example, several studies indicate that political efficacy, especially internal political efficacy, increases when individuals read newspapers or watch television news (Wells & Dudash, 2007; Lee, 2006; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Discussing political issues with peers also appears to have a positive effect on political efficacy (Morrell, 2005; Hahn, 1999). However, there is also evidence that exposure to confusing or negative political information can actually decrease external political efficacy (Lee, 2006; Miller, 1979). In sum, these studies suggest that if teachers want to strengthen both dimensions of students' political efficacy, it may be important for them both to give students opportunities to learn and process political information and also to clarify complex political realities and avoid expressing excessive pessimism. Like the studies described earlier, these do not examine the reasons that these experiences might influence political efficacy.

Identifying with a politically oriented group.

Evidence also indicates that identifying strongly with a group, especially a politically-oriented group, can enhance individuals' political efficacy. For example, identifying with a political party (Louis, Taylor, & Neil, 2004), especially the party in power (Lambert, Curtis, Brown, & Kay, 1986), tends to strengthen one's political efficacy. Family politicization also seems to play a role; when children believe that their parents are interested in political issues, they develop higher political efficacy than other children (Ichilov, 1988; Langton & Karns, 1969). Researchers have also found that people have higher political efficacy if they feel more closely connected to their communities through personal relationships (Steinberger, 1981) or if they identify strongly with a particular demographic group (Koch, 1993). In schools, when students are more socially connected, they are more likely to vote later in life (Callahan, Muller, & Schiller, 2010). Although these studies did not explore why these experiences and identities strengthened political efficacy, their findings suggest that the perception that

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one belongs to a politically engaged group can indeed have that effect. For educators, this research implies that providing students with opportunities to work with supportive others on civic or political challenges can be an effective way to foster their political efficacy.

Demographic and personal characteristics.

Finally, researchers have found that certain demographic and personal characteristics are consistently related to political efficacy. People tend to have higher political efficacy if they are older (Wu, 2003; Koch, 1993), more educated (Wolfsfeld, 2006; Ichilov, 1988), from families with higher socioeconomic status (Lambert et al., 1986), or more intelligent (Carmines & Baxter, 1986; Jackman, 1970). Some studies also suggest that ethnicity is related to political efficacy (Kleiman, 1976; Campbell et al., 1954), but other studies indicate that ethnicity's effect might be context specific (Wu, 2003; Emig, Hesse, & Fisher, 1996). Research examining political efficacy's relationship with gender has also yielded mixed results (e.g., Lee, 2006; Bowler & Donovan, 2002). Overall, the research on demographic variables suggests that elevated social status might influence individuals' feelings of political empowerment. As in the previously described studies, however, the mechanisms behind these relationships are unclear. In most studies examining political efficacy (including the original study presented in this paper), many of these demographic variables have been statistically controlled. Figure 4.1 summarizes the research described above and the theoretical framework shaping this paper.
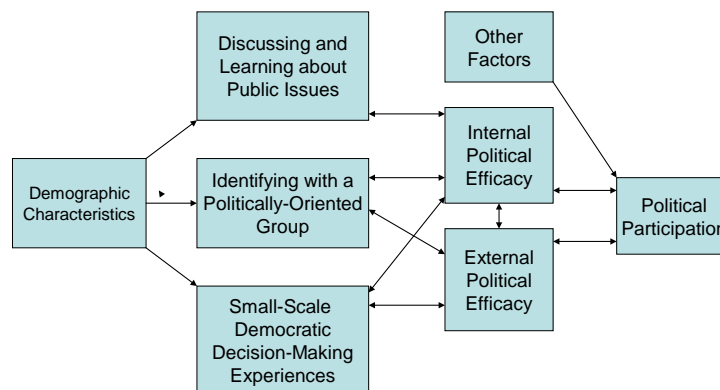

Figure 4.1. Model of factors related to political efficacy and participation

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The Relevance of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as "a judgment of one's ability to organize and execute given types of performances" (Bandura, 1997, p. 21). Political efficacy is, in fact, one type of self- efficacy, so research on the latter may be helpful for understanding the former. Many studies on the causes and effects various types of self-efficacy have similar findings to those of political efficacy: For example, numerous studies indicate that self-efficacy to successfully perform certain tasks has substantial effects on the performance of those tasks and that certain formative experiences can positively influence these self-efficacy judgments. However, some studies of self-efficacy provide insights that can be helpful in understanding how students develop confidence in the political domain.

Effects of self-efficacy.

Numerous studies indicate that self-efficacy for particular tasks influences various aspects of performance, including both achievement levels and persistence. For example, when students believe that they are more competent at certain academic activities, they achieve greater success in those activities (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1986; 1984). Likewise, greater self-efficacy for monitoring and changing one's health habits can positively influence one's likelihood of initiating, adopting, and maintaining positive new health habits (Bandura, 2005), and when individuals believe they can manage their phobias, they are more likely to cope successfully with the sources of their fear (Bandura, 1977). Research also shows that increased levels of self-efficacy have a positive influence on persistence for tasks such as fulfilling one's employment responsibilities (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984) and solving problems (Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivee, 1991). Although specific self-efficacy judgments are more accurate predictors of the directly relevant task, these specific self-efficacy judgments can also generalize to other tasks (Bandura, 1986). Thus, increasing an individual's self-efficacy for certain political tasks might have important consequences for both their performances of those tasks and their general political efficacy.

Factors that influence self-efficacy.

Psychologists have long explored how self-efficacy develops, and this research can be helpful to educators interested in preparing students for political participation. First, individuals can develop self-efficacy for various tasks by having enactive mastery

experiences (Bandura, 1997). By having opportunities to try and succeed at certain tasks, even in simulated environments, people can develop greater confidence in their abilities in those areas (Smith, 1989). In addition, individuals can develop self-efficacy through vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1997). When children observe their peers succeeding at certain tasks, such as learning, developing skills, or coping with stress, these children develop more self-efficacy in their own abilities to succeed at these tasks (Schunk, 1987). In one study, computer training involving modeling was even more effective at promoting self-efficacy and skills than computer training using active tutorials (Gist, Schwoerer, & Rosen, 1989). Modeling can be detrimental to self-efficacy, however, if the models do not succeed at their task (Brown & Inouye, 1978), so educators who hope to use modeling to build students' self-efficacy should be careful to arrange activities so that students can observe examples of success.

Studies have also identified other factors that can influence self-efficacy. Verbal encouragement, for example, can heighten individuals' confidence in their abilities (Bandura, 1997). When students are told that they can succeed, they tend to succeed more often (Schunk & Cox, 1986; Schunk, 1982), and feedback can be even more helpful to self-efficacy when framed in terms of an individual's degree of success rather than deficiency (Jourdan, 1991). Also, physiological and affective states can influence self-efficacy. These states influence people differently, however; whereas low-anxiety individuals often find that stress and arousal facilitate performance, high-anxiety individuals may find such situations debilitating (Hollandsworth, Glazeski, Kirkland, Jones, & Van Norman, 1979). Thus, the feedback and support that educators provide during challenging situations could substantially influence students' development of political efficacy. Overall, research on self-efficacy suggests that adolescents' political efficacy may be related to the extent to which their political activities provide opportunities for (1) mastery experiences, (2) observation of successful models, (3) receiving verbal encouragement, and (4) feeling emotionally supported. In the prior research on political efficacy, these elements might have been present, but they were not usually documented and therefore not considered in the analyses.

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Central Research Question

Although researchers have studied political efficacy over the course of several decades, they have not clearly identified the mechanisms involved in its development. Certain aspects of self-efficacy development may be related to fostering political efficacy, and this broader perspective may be helpful in identifying the factors that influence political efficacy. Thus, the guiding research question for this paper is: What factors influence the development of adolescents' political efficacy?

Method

Employing Mixed Methods

To address this question and develop an initial theory of how political efficacy develops, I used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Using both methods of inquiry provides several affordances. Whereas qualitative methods are useful for theory generation, quantitative methods have typically been used for verification of theories, so employing both iteratively allows researchers to answer exploratory and confirmatory questions. Second, having both qualitative and quantitative data can enhance the explanatory power of a study's conclusions. Even if the different types of data provide divergent findings, this can stimulate an important reexamination of the original theory (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In this study, by using both methods, I provide evidence of how certain variables relate to one another, illustrate examples and counter-examples, and produce hypotheses and questions for future exploration.

Data Collection

Phase I: Qualitative data collection.

The first phase of data collection included interviews and observations in two civic education programs during the fall semester of the 2009-10 academic year: (1) an extracurricular Model United Nations club and (2) a class focused on civic advocacy projects. I selected these programs as research sites because the programs required student participants to engage in activities that researchers have found to support growth in political efficacy, including discussions of public issues, participation in democratic processes, and working within a politically engaged group. Both of programs were situated at Elmwood High School (all names and locations are pseudonyms), a four-year secondary school in a middle-class semi-urban area bordering a major Midwestern city.

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The Model United Nations club involved nearly sixty students, and over the course of the semester, students participated in various activities, including club meetings, fundraisers, and interscholastic conferences (See Table 4.1). At interscholastic conferences, each student represented a certain country's positions in debates on specific issues, such as nuclear proliferation in Asia or water scarcity in the Middle East. In the process, students had opportunities to discuss major political challenges, design potential solutions with other students, and vote on resolutions, amendments, and motions.

Table 4.1
Elmwood High School Model UN Club's Activities

Activity	Duration	Frequency
Interscholastic Conferences	1-4 days	4 per year
Conference Preparation Meetings (small groups)	1-2 hours	Usually 2-4 times per conference
Full Club Meetings	1 hour	Weekly
Officers' Meetings	1 hour	Weekly
Fundraisers	1-5 days	5 per year
Strategic Planning Meetings	4-6 hours	2 per year
Educational Events (for non-members)	1-6 hours	2-4 per year

The civic advocacy class involved thirteen students, some of whom took the class because of an interest in political issues and others who enrolled to obtain sufficient credit to graduate (and because the class had no tests). During class, which met five days per week, the teacher led discussions on various local and global political challenges, helped students to learn various civic skills, and facilitated their development of civic advocacy projects. Completing these projects required students to research and publicly advocate for issues that they had selected, either individually or in groups (See Table 4.2). In the process, they designed an advocacy strategy, participated in community action, and received ongoing feedback and support from their classmates and teacher.

In both programs, I regularly observed meetings and conducted interviews with students. Over the course of the semester, I interviewed twenty-five students from the Model UN club and seven from the advocacy class, and I spoke with most students at least twice – once at the beginning and end of the semester. In these semi-structured focused interviews (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990), I asked students about their internal and external political efficacy, experiences in the civic education program, and how those experiences did or did not relate to their political efficacy. Each interview was audio-

recorded and later transcribed or summarized for analysis. During observations, I recorded extensive fieldnotes, tracking the amount of time spent on various activities and attending closely to students' opportunities for active involvement in political learning and decision-making processes.

Table 4.2
Student Projects

<u>Public Awareness Projects</u>
Televised Debate on Corporate Control of Farming
Creating and Distributing Pamphlet on Climate Change
Canvassing Shoppers about Factory Farming
Youtube Video on Childhood Obesity
Poster in School on Effects of Deforestation

<u>Institutional Change Projects (Objectives)</u>
Reducing local businesses' sale of clothing produced in sweatshops
Improving nutritional value of school cafeteria lunches
Reducing pet adoption costs charged by the state Humane Society
Strengthening the school district's vocational education program
Increasing local businesses' sale of local and sustainable food
Eliminating school district's bureaucratic hurdles for field trips
Combining school district music programs' parent booster groups

Phase II: Quantitative data collection.

During the second phase of data collection, I administered surveys to 142 college students at a large Midwestern university who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course. Surveys were administered online and included questions about students' internal and external political efficacy, experiences participating in school-based political activities, and demographic characteristics – gender, GPA, ethnicity, parental education, and number of books in the home. The latter is a proxy for socioeconomic status (e.g., Baldi, Perie, Skidmore, & Greenberg, 2001). In addition, surveys included questions about various factors that Phase I analyses had indicated were related to various types of political efficacy (i.e., internal political efficacy and external political efficacy), including political interest, trust of government, and persistence. To measure political efficacy and political trust, I adapted items from the American National Election Survey (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990; Heatherington, 2005), and to gauge political interest, I adapted items from studies of the expectancy-value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). I designed the questions measuring persistence. Appendix A includes the full battery of questions that measured the constructs examined in the survey.

Data Analyses

Qualitative analyses.

To develop a preliminary theory of political efficacy development, I analyzed data from my interviews and fieldnotes on an ongoing basis. Employing the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I iteratively coded my data, revised codes, wrote analytic memos, and analyzed relationships among codes. Ultimately, I categorized all data into four broad themes, based on factors related to students' (1) external political efficacy, (2) IPE/knowledge, (3) IPE/skills, and (4) school-based civic learning experiences. Through ongoing analyses, I developed hypotheses about relationships among these themes and their subcategories. As I continued to collect and analyze data, I developed grounded theory of the components that contribute to the development of political efficacy among adolescents.

Quantitative analyses.

To examine my results from Phase I quantitatively, I extensively analyzed my results for college students' surveys. First I conducted factor analyses to combine closely related items into robust factors (See Appendix A). Like my qualitative analyses, my factor analyses identified two types of both internal political efficacy (IPE/knowledge and IPE/skills) and external political efficacy (EPE/local for community/local issues and EPE/distal for state and federal issues). Thus, I created eight factors for further analysis: IPE/knowledge, IPE/skills, EPE/distal, EPE/local, political interest, persistence, trust of government, and participation in school-based political activities (See Appendix A). Examining my emerging theory through structural equation modeling would have been ideal, but the large number of variables and relatively small sample size would have rendered the results largely powerless (Kline, 2005). Therefore, I instead conducted a series of five multiple regressions, a method also capable of providing analyses of a complex web of relationships. In each of these, I controlled for various background variables, including GPA, gender, age, ethnicity, parental education, and number of books in the home.

Findings

By analyzing the attitudes and experiences related to adolescents' political efficacy, I have developed an evidence-based theoretical model of the factors that

contribute to adolescents' civic engagement. My findings indicate that different dimensions of political efficacy are related yet distinct – and that there are indeed ways that educational programs can influence various aspects of political efficacy.

Qualitative Findings

Analyses of interviews and observations indicate that the development of political efficacy is related to a multitude of factors. Through constant comparative analysis, I identified ten factors that influence external political efficacy (examined as one coherent construct in this section), four factors that influence IPE/skills (most of which are mediated by political skills), and three factors that influence IPE/knowledge (two of which are mediated by political knowledge). Students' participation in school-based civic learning experiences indirectly influenced the development of all types of political efficacy by facilitating growth in political knowledge and skills as well as students' relationships with politically-engaged peers (See Figure 4.2). My analyses also found several reciprocal relationships involving feedback loops, all of which are described in detail below.
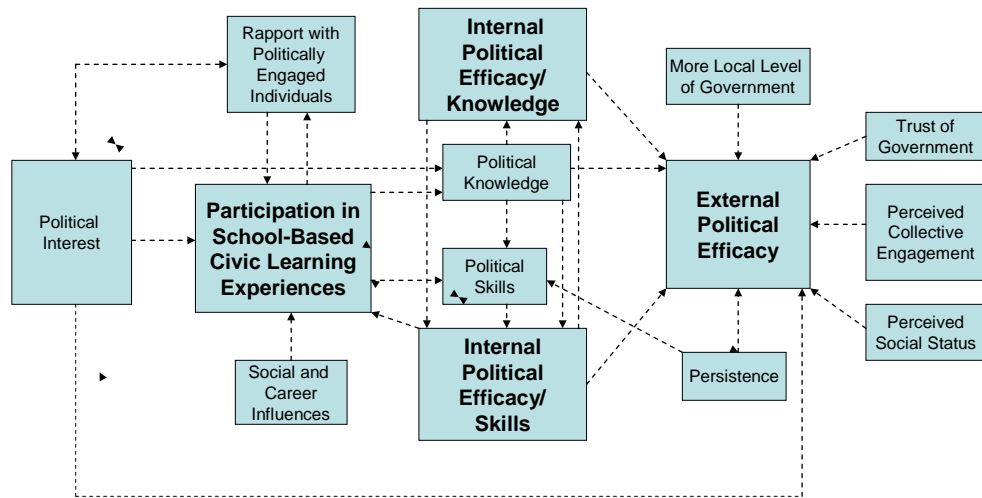

Figure 4.2. Summary of qualitative analyses of factors related to political efficacy

Factors related to external political efficacy.

Level of government.

When students discussed the extent to which they believed they could influence the government, they frequently made a clear distinction between the levels of government that they thought they could influence. In general, students thought that they would have a stronger chance of effecting change on local policies than on state, federal, or international policies. Model UN student Krista's (all names are pseudonyms) comments were typical:

> Locally right now I think we could do something and make a change – maybe even at the state level. But once you start getting national, it gets a bit tougher to be able to do as much. It's just the sheer mass of the undertaking (Interview, September 16, 2009).

Several students expressing low external political efficacy said that the government was simply "too big" to influence, but nonetheless the majority of these students said that they thought they could make a difference on issues that were closer to home: "There are a lot of, like, social things that I think I can change," said Model UN veteran Melissa. Considering students' numerous similar comments, my emerging theory of political efficacy development distinguishes between the levels of government at which individuals believe they can be effective.

Political Interest.

Numerous students indicated that they believed their efforts at political change would be more successful if they were highly interested in the issue at hand. Most, whether passionate about a particular issue or not, had a general understanding of the challenges involved in effecting policy or elections, and they therefore sensed that undertaking effective action would require substantial effort, driven at least partially by a deep interest in a specific challenge. Victoria, a diligent Model UN student, put it this way:

> I think it would depend on me and how much I cared about the issue. I'm not so cynical as to completely lose faith in the system or to think that one person can't do anything, but at the same time I'm realistic and I know how much effort it would take to get into that and to get other people to do it. . . . My ability to do that would be based on how much passion I had for the thing I wanted to change (Interview, February 12, 2010).

Like many students I interviewed, Victoria had a general sense that she was capable of learning about and communicating about political issues, but she believed that her likelihood of success in any political effort would largely hinge on her degree of interest in the issue. Darren, a fairly disengaged student in the civic advocacy class, concisely expressed a similar view: "You don't want to make a difference if you don't care about it" (Interview, January 22, 2010). Thus, my analyses of various student interviews suggest that students felt more empowered to influence issues in which they were personally interested.

Perceived collective engagement.

If students believed that others were likely to become politically engaged in a cause, they were more confident that change in that domain was possible. This is indeed a reasonable perception; for in a democracy, collective action is often necessary to elicit responses from elected leaders. As Gary, a senior in the civic advocacy class, told me, "[I]f you get a big group of people, things can change. But, like, the odds of one person changing things is [*sic*] pretty low" (Interview, October 16, 2009). Students in the civic advocacy class, facing challenges in their efforts to influence policies, often learned first-hand that collective action was an important aspect of successful civic action. Clarissa, an African-American student who worked on a project to publicize animal abuse in factory farms, said,

> It's a stretch to try to influence the government, but if a lot of us get together to try to make things happen, I think we can do it . . . It just seems, like, that ratio between people who have interest and those who don't is just too small (Clarissa Interview, November 2, 2009).

Numerous students – even freshmen who lacked political experience – expressed similar perceptions about the necessity of collective engagement. Jeremy, a freshman Model UN member who liked to discuss US politics, told me in that even though one vote could make a difference, it was their "collective will" that could really change the country. Likewise, Model UN veteran Andrea, who had attended five Model UN conferences, expressed her belief that political actors are more powerful when working in large numbers: "We'd want to get a lot of people involved. Two people can make a difference, but more people would be even more effective" (Interview, January 29, 2010).

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Overall, when asked about their external political efficacy, students overwhelmingly mentioned the importance of collective engagement.

Political knowledge.

My analyses found a direct relationship between students' actual political knowledge and their external political efficacy. There were three major types of political knowledge that students discussed: knowledge of general political processes (e.g., how to vote in elections, how laws are made, and how to organize a political group), knowledge of specific issues and how to address them (e.g., means of and challenges to reducing violent crime), and knowledge of political actors (e.g., individuals involved in political or civic action). Within all three of these categories are two ways of perceiving that knowledge: barrier, opportunity, and neutral/uncertain. Whereas perceiving a process as an opportunity (e.g., voting) could serve to enhance students' external political efficacy, perceiving a process as a barrier (e.g., corporate campaign contributions) could have the opposite effect. On the other hand, some students were unsure whether certain processes presented opportunities or barriers, especially if they were uncertain of how those issues related to their lives (e.g., local public forums on new road construction). In general, however, when students understood how governmental institutions function and change – that is, how citizens can work and have worked to influence government – they were more likely to expect that they too can have such influence (See Table 4.3).

Several Model UN freshmen, including Carol, Erin, Cory, and Mark, said that they believed that they could influence the government by undertaking various efforts they had learned about in school, such as voting, writing letters to representatives, and protesting (i.e., potentially successful governmental processes). To support his contention that he could influence the government, Mark recounted a historical anecdote:

> The 27th Amendment is a great example. It says that pay raises of Congress will not go into effect until the next Congress takes office. That's important because you don't have people passing laws in their own interest. It was a 200-year-old idea, and a Yale [*sic*] grad student pulled it out, thought it was a great idea, and it went through it a flash. That one person changed the Constitution. That's difficult; that's really difficult. You don't have to be a Yale grad student. You could be from New York, California, or anywhere (Interview, March 5, 2010).

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In truth, the amendment took ten years to be approved by the requisite number of states, but the story of the efforts of young Gregory Watson, a University of Texas undergraduate, to change the Constitution had created for Mark a model – or vision of the possible.

Table 4.3

Typology of Political Knowledge and Hypothetical Examples for Model UN Delegate Representing Lebanon in a Committee Addressing Rights of Journalists

Category	Opportunities	Barriers
Political Issues	Article 13 of the Lebanese Constitution allows freedom of expression, and a range of press outlets flourish in Lebanon.	Detention of journalists by Lebanese authorities could make others perceive that Lebanon violates human rights.
Political Actors	China, Iran, and other powerful nations support states' right to restrict some journalists' critiques.	The US, EU, and many international NGOs condemn perceived restrictions of free expression.
Political Processes	Building alliances with other governments threatened by critical journalists could reduce or prevent international criticism.	Other governments and international human rights organizations could damage Lebanon's reputation and possibly its economy with its critiques of journalists' treatment.

Several students told me that they had gained political knowledge through various activities and that these experiences had made them feel more empowered. These experiences had shown students primarily process-related and issue-based knowledge of successful political action. In one interview, sophomore Carey recounted her experiences working with her father to successfully prevent a Wal-Mart from being erected in her neighborhood. Senior Winnie worked on a similar effort with her parents, remembering, "That made me feel like I could make a difference, too" (Interview, October 19, 2009). Sara, also a senior, told me that attending a community meeting on education and learning about how the process worked had given her a similar feeling.

While most students who expressed moderate levels of external political efficacy exhibited strong fundamental political knowledge, when students' knowledge of politics was largely about political barriers, they often became skeptical about their own ability to make a difference. Juniors Andrea and Randall, for example, were both extremely well-

versed in political issues, with deep and current knowledge of domestic and international politics. One afternoon, however, after a Model UN meeting they told me that the recent *Citizens United* Supreme Court case, which had expanded the ability of corporations to contribute to political campaigns, had disappointed them, leaving them feeling more disempowered than ever. As Andrea explained, "That's the Supreme Court. They're supposed to be the voice of reason above everyone else. Even if I had some faith in something before, they decided that and it just made me really cynical" (Interview, February 12, 2010). As she had begun to consider the challenges that she and her left-leaning political allies would have influencing elected leaders, suddenly the barriers to influencing the process seemed enormous. Thus, whereas some political knowledge, such as knowledge of individuals overcoming political barriers, can enhance one's sense of empowerment, knowledge of barriers may hinder external political efficacy.

Students who lacked even basic political knowledge had even less external political efficacy than the skeptical students described above. Harriet, for example, a sophomore in the civic advocacy class, demonstrated neither political knowledge nor a modicum of external political efficacy. Her main concerns were taking care of her family and getting passing grades. When asked if she thought she could influence the government, the idea seemed foreign to her: "I'll just let them do their thing. I don't really want to talk to those kinds of people [politicians]" (Interview, January 22, 2010). Gary and Darren, also low in EPE, made similar remarks. All three students were largely uncertain of the basic processes involved in influencing the political system. Thus, whereas possessing an abundance of negative political knowledge might depress individuals' EPE, students seem to need a certain foundation of knowledge about governmental processes in order to feel politically empowered.

Internal political efficacy/knowledge.

Along similar lines, students who not only possessed political knowledge and were confident in their mastery of political topics were generally more likely to believe that they could effectively address those challenges. For example, Karl, a student in the civic advocacy class, thought that his growing understanding of the supply chain for school lunches would strengthen his ability to influence food policy in this school district.

Likewise, Cory, a freshman Model UN student, agreed that such issue-based knowledge was very empowering:

> I feel that once you really understand something, if you've really done your research on it, you've done your homework on it, then you can get something done. Communication is so well [*sic*] these days, it's so easy to get your ideas out worldwide with the Internet (Interview, December 29, 2009).

Many students made similar comments, reflecting the sentiment that possessing knowledge was essential for confronting powerful leaders and institutions. As Model UN veteran Rebecca told me, "Because we've gained this confidence and this knowledge, now we have a better background for . . . making changes" (Interview, February 26, 2010). Likewise, students in the civic advocacy class believed that their stronger understanding of political processes helped prepare them to take effective action. As Angela told me, "I feel like now that I know what goes on and how to approach certain projects like that, and now that I know those things, I can go out and apply them better" (Interview, January 29, 2010). Despite the increased confidence that many students developed through their learning experiences, most of them also readily acknowledged that knowledge was but one necessary component for effecting changes at the governmental level.

Persistence.

My analyses also suggested that students' persistence and perceptions thereof influenced their external political efficacy. Achieving political successes often requires sustained commitment, and most students understood this. In my observations of Model UN conferences, students who doggedly tried to pass their resolutions were more likely than others to tell me in interviews that they thought they could influence the government. Sophomore Carey, for example, who represented China on the Social and Humanitarian Committee, proposed several resolutions in her committee despite having difficulty building alliances. Freshman Sheldon, on the other hand, often retreated to his chair or the hallway if other committee members did not quickly agree with his ideas. Whereas Carey believed that with adequate effort she could make a difference in her community and in the government, Sheldon was resigned to the fact that powerful forces beyond his reach were making decisions that would affect his life.

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In both Model UN and the civic advocacy class, students' experiences in political activities demonstrated the importance of persistence. On the one hand, there were several students like Cory, who reflected on his first high school Model UN conference by saying, "I'm going to keep on trying until I think I'm getting it right" (Interview, March 8, 2010). In one interview, he described his own high level of external political efficacy and steadfastness, explaining that if the government did something that he thought was wrong, he would knock on doors, gather supporters, signatures, and letters, and continue such efforts "until either persistence or some epiphany by the congressman or senator finally says this is actually a problem, we need to fix it" (Interview, March 8, 2010). On the other hand, some students who encountered barriers quickly gave up. Several students in the civic advocacy class who had not successfully completed their projects – Gary, Darren, and Harriet – all expressed strong doubts that they could influence the political system. This seemed to be related to their lack of initial success and an unwillingness to expend persistent effort. Overall, my qualitative analyses found a consistent relationship between students' external political efficacy and their own persistence.

Trust of governmental institutions.

For some students, having high external political efficacy was also related to the extent to which they trusted governmental institutions. Several students told me that changing or influencing a government policy would probably be impossible – even if they understood the issue, worked persistently, and had a large group of supporters. Alessandra, a junior in the civic advocacy class who regularly read news magazines outside of school, expressed the views of many cynical students: "In my opinion, the government is so corrupt right now that it's really hard to affect it. As much as people are trying to get their voices out, they get pushed to the side" (Inteview, January 13, 2010). Similarly, Model UN member Andrea painted American politicians with a broad brush: "I think they're all like [Zimbabwe's President Robert] Mugabe but to a lesser extent. In the end, everyone just wants money, and they're just greedy" (Interview, February 12, 2010). Perceptions of politicians as corrupt or beholden to vested interests (which may be related to their knowledge of barriers) reduced students' belief in their own ability to influence change.

For some students who were distrustful of the government, this feeling stemmed from a general sense that the government is a distant institution uninterested in citizens. Harriet, for example, doubted that she could influence the government because "they're above you . . . and they don't really care about what you want or what you think is right or wrong" (Interview, October 19, 2010). Harriet, though, could offer few details to support her position. Some students who had developed impressive amounts of political knowledge, however, often had similar sentiments. Rebecca, for example, told me that her experiences in Model UN had helped her to realize that overcoming political obstacles can be challenging: "We obviously understand . . . how, like, the whole system works and how you get stuff done, but at the same time because we understand that, we also understand that it's hard to actually change stuff" (Interview, February 26, 2010). Not all students felt this way, of course, but skepticism seemed to be more pronounced among upperclassmen than among freshmen and sophomores, perhaps due to their greater exposure to political information relating to political barriers. Overall, though, regardless of its source, one common effect of such cynicism was a decreased sense of external political efficacy, especially at higher levels of government.

Perceived social status.

These adolescents also expressed the belief that they would have more political power if they had higher social status, as measured by age, education, job, or demographic characteristics. Given that most interviewees could not yet legally vote, many saw their age as a barrier to political empowerment, but several thought that their youth would remain a liability even after they reached voting age. Also, a few students told me that they thought they would be more able to make political change if they got a good education, not necessarily due to knowledge but rather through the status attained through such accomplishment. As freshman Model UN member Erin told me, "Maybe in the future, like 10 or 20 years from now, I could make a difference. If I get into a good college and get a good job, maybe I could make a difference" (Interview, November 9, 2009).

Andrea, Randall, and Gary made similar comments and added that one's race or gender – although not a legal barrier – could still hinder one's ability to achieve political goals. Gary added that an individual's occupation could influence how her/his words are

perceived: "I think your status is one of the most important things. . . . if you're a doctor, people tend to listen to you more than some guy who's walking down the street" (Interview, January 29, 2009). He also thought George W. Bush had been elected because of his father, thus referencing another aspect of status: political connections. Overall, many students perceived that high social status or lack thereof were related to their own and others' potential for political influence.

Factors related to IPE/knowledge.

Political knowledge gained through political interest.

Many students' interest in political issues had inspired them to learn about political issues. This knowledge consequently boosted their confidence in their political knowledge, including general processes, specific issues, and actors involved. Freshman Model UN member Cory, for example, felt his internal political efficacy for knowledge (IPE/knowledge) increased as he pursued his interest in these topics:

> Well, when I first started watching CNN, I was watching it to really see what was going on in the rest of the world. At some point I had an epiphany – "Oh my gosh, I don't know what's going on in Europe or Mexico or anywhere". . . . At some point I thought, "That's going to change." And I started watching CNN [regularly]. I started looking at other countries, about what they were doing and what our country is doing. And to me, that's fun to me, to actually see how everything links together, how things pressuring the US affects people in Europe, which we saw in the 1930s. The US fell into the Depression; then Europe fell even further (Interview, March 8, 2010).

Like many other students, Cory's political interest motivated him to continue learning about political issues over time and to eventually become quite confident in his political knowledge.

Political knowledge gained through political learning experiences.

Students' experiences in political action facilitated their acquisition of political knowledge and thus enhanced their IPE/knowledge. Through both Model UN and civic advocacy projects, students had opportunities not only to acquire knowledge but also to use that knowledge to strategize and work towards their authentic civic and community goals. Alessandra, for example, designed a project aimed at convincing clothing store

owners to sell clothing from "sweatshop-free" manufacturers. In the process, Alessandra learned about a local merchant whose business focused on selling such products, and she developed an understanding of how such a store could sustainably operate. At the end of the semester, although she was unsure that her advocacy had convinced other local store owners to change their practices, she expressed an increased confidence of her understanding of the issues involved.

Likewise, Model UN students' experiences debating and designing solutions to large-scale political challenges positively influenced their self-efficacy for understanding those issues. First and foremost, many students prepared for conferences through individual and group study sessions in the weeks prior to the conference. Each student was expected to write a short paper summarizing her/his country's positions on the issues to be addressed in committee, and although these papers were not extensive, writing them required learning about specific political challenges and potential solutions. Typically, the students who spent the most time exploring issues in advance of conferences expressed more confidence in their political knowledge.

Also, once conferences began, students learned about political issues simply by listening to and working with other students (i.e., through models) and thus developed their IPE/knowledge. Furthermore, students' experiences actively communicating and working with others gave them opportunities to appreciate their own knowledge in new ways. For example, Julia was quite nervous at her first conference, but when reflecting upon it later, she recalled feeling increasingly confident throughout the first day: "I get in there and I realize, like, I had pretty solid, like, understanding of the different components of the issue" (Interview, February 8, 2010). Although she admitted that she wanted to be better prepared for future conferences, her initial conference experiences giving speeches and conducting negotiations about international agricultural policies had boosted her confidence in her ability to competently conceptualize these challenges. For some students, topic-specific IPE/knowledge strengthened their belief that they could become knowledgeable about a broader array of political issues.

Factors related to IPE/skills.

Political skills gained through participation in school-based political experiences.

Adolescents participating in Model UN and civic advocacy projects had opportunities to develop various skills, including public speaking, constructing political arguments, and working productively with others. Through their experiences practicing these skills and observing their peers utilizing them, students frequently developed increased confidence in those skills.

In both of these educational settings, students with limited experience often assumed an observational role initially, gradually becoming more involved as they became more comfortable with the demands of the tasks at hand. In Model UN, students had numerous opportunities to learn from one another gradually over time. Model UN freshman Carol, for example, gave only one speech at her first three-day conference and two speeches at her second, but at both she told me that she was watching other delegates closely to understand their approaches. As she continued to participate in the club, she became increasingly involved and confident, even coaching middle school students at their conference. Model UN veteran Jerry told me that his self-efficacy for his own political skills had grown during his years in the club:

> When I was younger, the juniors and seniors seemed so skilled, but now that I'm there, I don't feel as intimidated by my classmates. I do feel like my skills have gotten better. At my first conference I didn't talk at all; I just wanted to listen. Now I debate and get my ideas out there (Interview, December 30, 2009).

Like Jerry, upperclassmen Rebecca and Randall also told me that they had learned many communication strategies by observing more experienced delegates. Randall, for instance, said he had learned that when negotiating, it's important to address others' interests but also to speak to potential adversaries as if they already agree with him.

Figure 4.3. Model UN students voting on an amendment to a resolution at a conference

Likewise, Victoria told me that she learned from another delegate the potential power of standing firm in one's positions amidst challenges:

> The USA delegate was good at promoting her positions. . . .If you approached her and talked to her, she seemed to know everything, and that made me want to trust her. That's sort of what I want to emulate – that air of confidence. . . . Even if you're some crazy country like North Korea, you still have to defend what your country stands for; and that's sort of what you have to learn (Interview, February 12, 2010).

Victoria, John, Carol, and numerous other students told me that observing and learning from other delegates, including those from their own school, helped them to develop the belief that they could competently practice such skills. Thus, over time Model UN students learned substantial skills by observing others.

For most Model UN students, repeatedly attending conferences led to more involvement and hence more practice and competence with specific skills. Nearly every student that I interviewed said that participating in conference had helped them with their public speaking skills. Evelyn, for example, reflecting on her conference experiences over several years, said "I think that I've improved greatly when it comes to public speaking and debate skills, and they've really helped me in a lot of different areas" (Interview, September 16, 2009). In addition, many students learned through practice how to construct and express arguments strongly yet effectively – which is often difficult

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when addressing highly controversial issues. As Erin recalled, "Instead of just complaining and ranting, you can learn how to get your opinions across in a way that sounds professional" (Interview, March 1, 2010).

In addition to communicating arguments clearly and professionally, experience practicing certain skills also helped students learn how to work productively with others. Mark, for example, learned that by listening carefully during caucuses, he was able to find areas of agreement among delegates representing countries with divergent views. Likewise, Senior James told me, "I found that if I gave a little, I could get a lot more than I gave" (Interview, October 26, 2009). Overall, in Model UN many students developed self-efficacy for the skills that they had opportunities to practice in the program.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that these gains in skills and skills-based internal political efficacy were not linear or universal. Whereas some students' self-efficacy for public speaking or negotiation increased during their initial Model UN experiences and then stabilized, others' confidence increased slowly, and yet others' was quite variable over time, depending on recent experiences. For example, Carol's public speaking self-efficacy increased very gradually, but Jeremy relished the limelight and gained confidence quickly. On the other hand, junior Randall was quite confident in his ability to design compromises after the November conference, but after his frustrating experience on the mock Security Council at the January conference, he was less certain of this own skills. However, students in these two school-based civic education programs developed increased confidence in their political skills through both practice and observation, but the effort that they put forth and their emotional responses to setbacks influenced the extent – and sometimes the general direction – of this change.

Political skills and IPE/skills gained through political knowledge.

Adolescents were more likely to be confident in their political skills and related self-efficacy if they had substantial knowledge about politics, especially political processes and successful political actors. After all, without possessing political knowledge, it can be quite difficult to develop political skills (i.e., communicating about and developing solutions to political challenges) and or confidence in such skills.

Many students' experiences learning about political issues in Model UN and the civic advocacy class enhanced their political knowledge. For example, in Model UN,

delegates learned about procedural tactics that could be used to delay or expedite voting on an issue, negotiation procedures that could facilitate compromise, and historical precedents for solutions to various world problems (e.g., treaties, international cooperation). Some students developed this knowledge outside of school as a result of their own interest, often through television, newspapers, and the Internet. By learning about political processes and about others who have undertaken action for change, students were better able to communicate about political ideas and develop the confidence to do so.

Political skills gained through persistence.

Another important contributor to students' development of political skills was persistence. Many students did not demonstrate strong political skills when they first attempted to become involved in civic education programs, but if they continually put forth time and effort, they were usually able to develop the skills and then the confidence necessary to participate more fully. Freshman Carol, for example, continued to attend multi-day Model UN conferences even though she barely got involved in the debates. At her second conference, she told me, "I'm hoping that at the next conference I'll contribute more. I'm thinking more here [than at the last conference], but next time I'll get more involved actively" (Interview, January 15, 2010). At the next conference, Carol did in fact become more involved, giving four speeches there. One aspect of Carol's comments reflects what I heard and observed among other students, as well: the importance of deliberate thinking and effort in the process of developing new skills.

Learning novel and challenging skills can require tremendous focus and effort. Senior Brad, also new to Model UN and unsure of his public speaking skills, told me that to prepare for his second major conference, he was spending time doing some reading but also just simply thinking about his topics and how they related to other aspects of his knowledge: "I've been thinking just about the subjects, where [Bolivia] would stand . . . Just thinking about what, sort of, the position from that region would be and . . . if Bolivia would agree with those positions or whether they'd disagree" (Interview, March 8, 2010). Brad, a hardworking but shy student, told me in September that he had joined the club because he wanted to develop public speaking skills. His words were difficult to understand; he mumbled even in casual conversation. In conferences, however, he spoke

out – even if other delegates did not always listen to him (or made fun of him). Although the clarity of his speech improved only minimally, after preparing for and attending three conferences within six months, he told me with confidence that he had become much better at speaking in front of large groups of people (which I saw for myself both at conferences and at a school-wide debate). The persistent effort he had expended in thinking and studying others' participation had indeed contributed to this. Brad is one of many students I observed whose persistence enabled them to overcome personal challenges in order to develop their political skills and their skill-based internal political efficacy.

Reciprocal relationship between IPE/knowledge and IPE/skills.

IPE/skills and IPE/knowledge have a reciprocal, mutually reinforcing relationship. When students develop confidence in their own knowledge of political issues, they become increasingly comfortable expressing their thoughts and constructing arguments about them as well as negotiating compromises on those issues. Likewise, when students believe that they are competent at discussing and debating political issues, they tend to become increasingly confident in their understanding of those issues.

For example, in my observations and interviews in Model UN, I found repeatedly that once students became involved in debate, they were more eager to talk to me about their conference topics. Once they had an opportunity to *use* their knowledge and persuade and work productively with others, their internal political efficacy for their knowledge increased. First-year Model UN member Emily, for example, admitted to me that she had felt somewhat unprepared for the November conference but that once she began to work in her committee, she began to feel confident about her level of knowledge: "Shockingly people listened to me. . . . I was able to get a lot of my thoughts into the resolution" (Interview, December 14, 2009). Emily had been a dominant force in her committee, and her active involvement had helped her to gain confidence in her understanding of issues, as well.

However, several students told me that they felt more comfortable making speeches or arguments when they were confident in their knowledge of the relevant issues – and that without such knowledge, they would prefer not to discuss the issues. Gary, for example, a student in the civic advocacy class, told me that he would be

comfortable speaking in front of a large group about sports, a topic about which he had substantial knowledge, but not about politics. "I'm not the most politically knowledgeable child," he told me with a good-natured grin (Interview, January 29, 2010).

This phenomenon was also evident among Model UN students. I observed several like Mark, who prepared for conferences by reading articles and discussing their countries' challenges with club advisors before the conference. In one committee Mark confidently negotiated with other delegates, arguing Lebanon's position on protecting journalists: "My goal is to keep the rights of journalists in the control of the country where they live" (Interview, January 16, 2010), he told me. While Mark leveraged his knowledge and clarity of purpose to negotiate with other delegates and further develop his skills, in another committee his fellow freshman delegate representing Lebanon, Sheldon, sat in his chair and admitted that he knew little about his country's position. His lack of confidence in his knowledge kept him from participating and developing his skills and skill-based internal political efficacy.

Thus, just as IPE/skills can influence IPE/knowledge, the reverse can be true, as well. Although many students develop both IPE/skills and IPE/knowledge nearly simultaneously, this is not always the case; for whereas some students are more confident in their skills, others are more confident in their knowledge. Likewise, some students have strong IPE/knowledge without having strong IPE/skills. Although these two attitudes influence and feed back on each other, they are important to consider separately because, as illustrated above, they seem to develop through different processes. Whereas IPE/skills and IPE/knowledge emerge from the development, respectively, of political skills and knowledge, the former seems to require some type of hands-on interactive political experiences whereas the latter might be able to emerge from political interest that occurs without such experiences.

Participation in school-based civic learning activities.

Students' participation in school-based civic and political activities is related to various aspects of their civic development. As I described earlier, for many students, participating in these activities supported their development of political knowledge and political skills, which related, respectively, to development of IPE/knowledge and IPE/skills. In addition, students' participation in school-based civic learning experiences

facilitated their development of rapport with other politically engaged individuals and provided opportunities for them to experience political successes. These experiences may be vital levers for educators to prepare students for active political engagement.

First, these civic learning experiences facilitated many students' development of rapport with their politically-interested peers, which in turn reinforced their political interest. Students in Model UN, for example, had numerous opportunities to develop friendly relationships with other club members – through structured experiences in the club (e.g., working together to prepare for conferences, having a mentoring system to link new and experienced members), informal club experiences (e.g., informal time at meetings for humor, other informal exchanges), and experiences beyond the club (e.g., spending time together at lunchtime, in classes, or outside of school). Survey responses indicated that nearly 70 percent of Model UN students (N=36) believed that they had eight or more friends in the club, and according to Randall, strong relationships among club members made it easier for them to work together toward common goals.

When preparing and participating in conference activities, students spent substantial amounts of time with each other discussing political issues, thus to a large extent shaping their relationships around discussion of these issues. Often political exchanges overflowed into their informal interactions during club activities and to their activities beyond the schoolhouse and club walls. As Evelyn told me,

> A lot of times Rebecca, Mary, Randall, Kelly, Allison [pseudonyms], and I – we like go out to lunch together everyday, so it becomes a lifestyle, I guess. . . . A lot of people find their niche in high school and become emotionally invested in it, and this is mine. And I think [Model UN is] so pertinent for a lot of us to what we want to do with the rest of our lives. . . . And I think it really helped me kind of like embrace the person I always was but wasn't necessarily like accepting (Interview, February 26, 2010).

Students also told me that when they spent time with other Model UN members outside of the club setting, they often discussed and pursued their common interest in politics and history. For example, Evelyn told me that one night she and Rebecca stayed up all night watching the entire "Band of Brothers" series (which portrays WWII). These

experiences, along with many club activities, often strengthened students' connections to one another and fostered political interest.

Whereas Model UN students were often involved in the club for several years, students in the advocacy class were involved for only one semester; yet they also developed strong relationships around their political experiences. For example, Clarissa and Andrea worked closely together on two projects related to animal rights. Although they had not known each other before the course, they were close friends by the end, and many of their interactions were closely related to addressing political challenges, whether strategizing about how to publicize the inhumanity of factory farming or discussing the other public issues explored by their classmates (e.g., improving school lunches, local education policies). This rapport, developed in a political context, helped to strengthen students' interest in political issues. As Andrea explained,

> At beginning of class, I wasn't aware of some of the stuff we learned about. We went so in depth in events and projects and advocacy things. I didn't have much knowledge about it before. Then I got really involved in the projects, especially the animal project with [Clarissa]. It got us teaching other people about animals. I'd never done anything like that before. I feel like this class has definitely opened my eyes, and it's gonna [*sic*] get me involved in more community projects (Interview, January 29, 2010).

Thus, in both the civic advocacy class and the Model UN club, students developed rapport with other politically engaged students, created a stronger norm of political interest among their peers, and then strengthened their political interest, which in turn further enhanced their political knowledge and efficacy (See Figure 4.2).

Also, through students' experiences in Elmwood's Model UN club or the civic advocacy class, many achieved political goals, and evidence indicates that these successful experiences strengthened their external political efficacy. For Model UN members, at conferences students had numerous opportunities to develop potential solutions to major international challenges and have their peers approve of those ideas. As Sarah explained during the winter conference, "Today we got two groups that were working separately to get together and work on the same resolution. The resolution is on women's rights and changing the education system in a way that helps women's rights"

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(Interview, January 14, 2009). A few hours later, Sarah helped steward this resolution to passage and expressed great excitement about that achievement. By the time each conference had ended, nearly every Elmwood student had several stories about how they had contributed in some way to development or passage of a resolution – whether by authoring it, actively caucusing with its authors, or simply voting for it. Meanwhile, students in the civic advocacy class had successful experiences setting up meetings with public officials, organizing and implementing publicity campaigns, and speaking with leaders of organizations.

Indeed in the class and the club there were instances when students did not achieve their political goals. By the end of the semester, Clarissa and Angela were not able to get the pet adoption agency to lower their adoption costs; Karl's efforts to improve the nutritional content of school lunches made minimal progress. At the November Model UN conference, Sarah worked on designing, building a coalition around, and speaking in favor of a resolution on reducing the likelihood of an international influenza pandemic; but a similar resolution was passed and hers defeated. Such situations were frustrating for many students. However, when students did achieve some type of political goal – as most students in these programs did at some point – the experience typically strengthened students' belief that they could influence the political system.

Given the apparent benefits of participating in these programs, it is important to consider why students decided to participate. For most students, their initial baseline interest in political issues was a major motivating factor behind their decision to become involved in school-based political activities. Karl, for example, told me that he took the civic advocacy class because of his interest in learning about how to make a difference: "It's interesting that we always propose ideas and how people always plan out responses but that not many people actually act on that" (Interview, October 16, 2009). Similarly, many students became involved in Model UN because they were interested in learning about political issues. As senior member Sarah recalled,

> It was just something I really loved because I love politics. I love history. It's like
> I really like knowing about what's going on in the world, so it was just like a
> perfect fit for me right away (Interview, October 2, 2009).

Not all students became involved solely out of interest, however. Of the seven students that I interviewed from the advocacy class, four took the course because they were interested in learning about civic involvement, and three enrolled for other reasons – either a guidance counselor's suggestion, needing another half-credit to graduate, interest in taking a test-free class, or some combination of those reasons. Students in Model UN, though mostly interested in politics, also cited other reasons for becoming involved, including bolstering their college applications; following the suggestion of a friend, parent, or teacher; and/or an interest in debate and intellectual challenge. Overall, most participants described a combination of circumstances and interests that contributed to their decision to become involved in school-based political activities, but an interest in politics was among the most common.

Overall, my qualitative findings indicate that political efficacy may be related to a wide range of factors, several of which may be fostered through educational programs (See Figure 4.2). Although these findings are useful, the sample was small, so my quantitative analyses explored whether or not these relationships exist among a broader population.

Quantitative Findings

In my quantitative analysis of 142 college students' survey responses, I found further evidence to support many of the relationships that I identified in my qualitative analyses. Among my key findings were that political interest and participation in school-based civic experiences are important predictors of political efficacy. I also found that the various types of political efficacy are related though not as closely as I had expected. In addition, trust of government and persistence were closely related to external political efficacy (See Figure 4.4). Nonetheless, I also found some additional relationships that I had not found in my qualitative analyses, and I was unable to confirm some of my qualitative findings quantitatively. Altogether, these results offer useful insights about the components that contribute to adolescents' political efficacy.
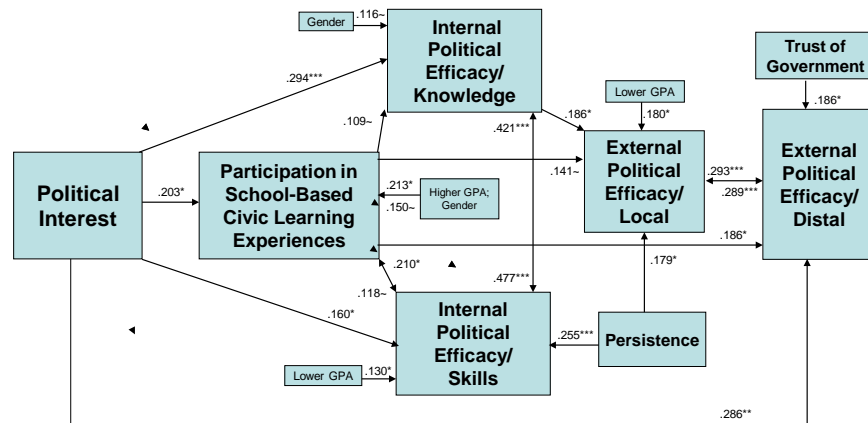
Figure 4.4. Summary of quantitative analyses of factors
related to political efficacy

Results of factor analyses.

After gathering data from a survey with nearly one hundred questions, conducting factor analyses enabled me to combine items into the broader underlying constructs that they represented (See Appendix A). Results of factor analyses indicated that the survey items employed to gauge students' attitudes on certain issues (i.e., political interest) yielded consistent responses. I found Cronbach's alphas above .7 in my factor analyses for EPE/distal, EPE/local, IPE/skills, IPE/knowledge, political interest, and perceived persistence, The alpha value for the factor measuring trust of government was slightly lower but still within acceptable limits (See Table 4.4). The factor measuring participation in school-based political organizations had a moderately weak alpha. This is partially due to the fact that the items in the factor were measured with several dichotomous variables asking about whether or not students participated in certain activities. However, the weak alpha also indicates that there is not a strong correlation between students' participation in student council and other school-based political clubs (such as Model UN or debate club). Nonetheless, the factor provides a simple but useful measure of students' exposure to small-scale democratic processes during high school and college.

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Table 4.4
Results of Factor Analyses

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained
EPE/Distal	.718	1.96	65.3
EPE/Local	.757	2.33	58.2
IPE/Knowledge	.865	2.37	79.0
IPE/Skills	.767	2.67	53.4
Political Interest	.919	5.49	61.0
Perceived Persistence	.862	2.84	70.9
Trust of Government	.580	1.79	44.7
School-Based Political Organizations	.425	1.49	37.1

Factors related to external political efficacy.

Results of ordinary least squares regression analyses indicated that adolescents' external political efficacy was influenced by their internal political efficacy, political interest, persistence, and trust in government. Also, when students were more likely to have participated in school-based civic activities, their external political efficacy was higher. In addition, although EPE/distal and EPE/local were closely related to one another, they were distinct constructs and related to students' other attitudes somewhat differently (See Table 4.5).

Factors related to EPE/local.

Students had higher levels of local external political efficacy when they had elevated levels of EPE/distal, IPE/knowledge, persistence, and participation in school-based political activities, controlling for gender, ethnicity, parental education, GPA, the number of books in the home, political interest, trust in government, and IPE/Skills. Also, GPA was inversely related to EPE/local, controlling for all other variables in the model (p<.05). For every one standard deviation increase in EPE/distal, students' EPE/local was .293 standard deviations higher (p<.001), and for each standard deviation increase in IPE/knowledge, EPE/local was elevated by .186 standard deviations (p<.05). Higher perceived persistence had a similar effect (p<.05), but college GPA had the opposite relationship: for every one standard deviation increase in GPA, EPE/local was .180 standard deviations lower (p<.05). Participation in school-based civic learning activities also had a marginally significant effect on EPE/local, controlling for all other variables in

the model. Altogether, the variables in my regression model explained about 36 percent of the variance in students' EPE/local (p<.001; See Table 4.5).

Table 4.5
Effect Sizes (Standardized B) of OLS Regression Models Examining Factors Related to External Political Efficacy and External Civic Efficacy (N=142)

Independent Variables	EPE/Distal	EPE/Local
EPE/Distal	---	.293***
EPE/Local	.289***	---
Political Interest	.286**	.079
IPE/Knowledge	.021	.186*
IPE/Skills	-.048	.055
Trust of Government	.186*	.090
Perceived Persistence	-.084	.179*
School-Based Political Activities	.168*	.141~
Mothers' Education	.085	.011
Fathers' Education	-.041	-.006
Number of Books at Home	-.054	-.024
Female	.094	.111
Minority Status	.090	-.104
College GPA	-.030	-.180*
Constant	.360	1.706*
R^2	.375***	.366***

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

Factors related to EPE/distal.

My analyses also indicated that students had elevated levels of distal external political efficacy when they had higher EPE/local, political interest, trust of government, and participation in school-based political activities, controlling for gender, ethnicity, parental education, GPA, the number of books in the home, perceived persistence, IPE/Skills, and IPE/knowledge. For every one standard deviation increase in EPE/local, students' EPE/distal was .289 standard deviations higher (p<.001), and for each standard deviation increase in political interest, EPE/distal was elevated by .286 standard deviations (p<.01). The effect of governmental trust was slightly smaller, with each standard deviation increase giving EPE/distal a boost of only .186 standard deviations (p<.05). Participating in school-based political activities had a similar effect on

EPE/distal (p<.05). Overall, the variables in this regression model explained about 38 percent of the variance in students' EPE/distal (p<.001; See Table 4.5).

Factors related to internal political efficacy.

Results of my ordinary least squares regression analyses indicated that IPE/skills and IPE/knowledge were closely related to each other and that both factors were also related to political interest. Despite these factors' reciprocal relationship and their conceptual similarities, I found that students' IPE/knowledge and IPE/skills were distinct and related differently to some of students' other attitudes and characteristics (See Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

Effect Sizes (Standardized B) of OLS Regression Models Examining Factors Related to IPE/Skills and IPE/Knowledge (N=142)

Independent Variables	IPE/Skills	IPE/Knowledge
Internal Political Efficacy/Skills	---	.421***
Internal Political Efficacy/Knowledge	.477***	---
Political Interest	.160*	.294***
Perceived Persistence	.255***	---
School-Based Political Organizations	.118~	.109~
Mothers' Education	-.009	-.060
Fathers' Education	-.004	.114
Number of Books at Home	.066	.054
Female	.028	-.116~
Minority Status	-.031	.062
College GPA	-.130*	.033
Constant	1.107*	-.443
R^2	.537***	.517***

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

Factors related to IPE/knowledge.

Students had higher levels of knowledge-related internal political efficacy when they had elevated political interest and IPE/skills, controlling for gender, ethnicity, parental education, GPA, the number of books in the home, and levels of participation in school-based political organizations. For every one standard deviation increase in students' political interest, students' IPE/knowledge was .294 standard deviations higher

(p<.001), and for each standard deviation increase in IPE/skills, IPE/knowledge was elevated by .421 standard deviations (p<.001). Also, being male and participating in school-based political organizations was marginally related to higher EPE/knowledge, controlling for ethnicity, parental education, GPA, the number of books in the home, IPE/skills, and political interest. Altogether, the variables in my regression model explained about 52 percent of the variance in students' IPE/knowledge (p<.001; See Table 4.6).

Factors related to IPE/skills.

Students had higher levels of skills-related internal political efficacy when they had elevated political interest, perceived persistence, and IPE/knowledge, controlling for ethnicity, gender, parental education, GPA, the number of books in the home, and participation in school-based political organizations. For every one standard deviation increase in students' political interest, students' IPE/skills was .160 standard deviations higher (p<.05), and for each standard deviation increase in IPE/knowledge, IPE/skills was elevated by .477 standard deviations (p<.001). Also, for each standard deviation increase in students' perceptions of their persistence, IPE/skills increased by .255 standard deviations (p<.001). In addition, higher GPA was related to lower IPE/skills, and increased participation in school-based political organizations had a marginally significant influence in boosting IPE/skills, controlling for all other variables in the model. Altogether, the variables in this regression model explained about 54 percent of the variance in students' IPE/skills (p<.001).

Factors related to participation in school-based political activities.

Results of my quantitative analyses also provided insights about the types of students who are most likely to participate in student council and other school-based political groups, such as Model UN. Students are more likely to participate in such organizations if they have higher IPE/skills, political interest, and GPA, controlling for ethnicity, parental education, and the number of books in the home. For every one standard deviation increase in students' IPE/skills, their likelihood of participating in school-based political activities is .210 standard deviations higher (p<.05), and for each standard deviation increase in political interest, their likelihood of such participation is elevated by .203 standard deviations (p<.05). Also, for every one standard deviation

increase in students' college GPA, their likelihood of participating in school-based political activities increases by .213 standard deviations (p<.05). Finally, being male has a marginally positive effect on the likelihood of participating in school-based political organizations. (Originally, I also included EPE and IPE/knowledge in this analysis, but I removed them because their effects were not significant.) Overall, the variables in my regression model explained about 22 percent of the variance in students' likelihood of participating in these activities (p<.001; See Table 4.7).

Thus, altogether my quantitative analyses confirmed many of the results of my qualitative analyses (See Figures 4.2 and 4.4), especially those related to the relationships among the different dimensions of political efficacy. Although I did not quantitatively assess some of the qualitative relationships that I found, in the mixed model and discussion below, I integrate my qualitative and quantitative findings and make suggestions for future research.

Table 4.7

Effect Sizes (Standardized B) of OLS Regression Model Examining Factors Related to Participation in School-Based Political Organizations (N=142)

Independent Variables	Participation in School-Based Political Organizations
Internal Political Efficacy/Skills	.210*
Political Interest	.203*
Mothers' Education	.063
Fathers' Education	-.132
Number of Books at Home	.031
Female	-.150~
Minority Status	.121
College GPA	.213*
Constant	-2.065***
R^2	.219***

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.1

Mixed Model

Both my qualitative and quantitative analyses yielded results that should be useful to educators and researchers. Although many of my qualitative and quantitative findings were consistent, I found several relationships qualitatively that I did not find (or did not examine) quantitatively, and vice versa. For example, my qualitative analyses indicated

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that perceived persistence and trust of government were related to external political efficacy, but when I separated EPE into local and distal factors, I found that trust and persistence both influenced one but not the other. Also, my qualitative analyses examined the rapport that students involved in political experiences develop with their peers and the achievement of political goals, but I did not explore these issues quantitatively. On the other hand, my quantitative analyses found that certain demographic characteristics, such as GPA and gender, were related to certain dimensions of political efficacy, which is not something that I examined qualitatively. Figure 4.5 summarizes the findings of both the qualitative and quantitative analyses described above.
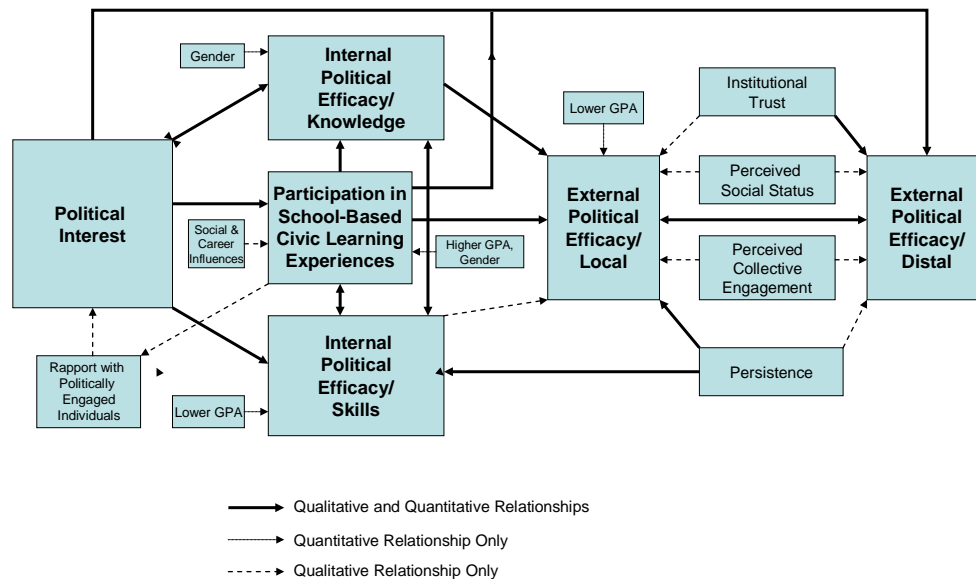
Figure 4.5. *Mixed model of factors related to political efficacy*

Limitations

This study examined the components that shape adolescents' political efficacy, but its findings and implications are limited by the context, sample, and duration of the study. First, my qualitative analyses were based on observations and interviews in one school over the course of six months. Although these students were diverse in personality, experience, and maturity, they were largely middle-class, white, college-bound, and, to some extent, involved in civic issues. This limited demographic diversity

might have reduced the variety of responses that students provided to interview questions, and with an expanded sample, I may have learned about additional factors that relate to political efficacy. Conducting such a study over a longer period of time might also provide additional insights, especially given how political and other contexts can shape individuals' experiences.

Likewise, my quantitative findings were limited by both the composition of the sample and its cross-sectional nature. This sample included college students at a major four-year university, most of whom had parents who graduated from college; so their perspectives cannot be generalized to youth at large. Also, these data measure students' attitudes and experiences at one point in time, so it is difficult to know the extent to which the relationships identified in my analyses will endure, strengthen, or weaken over time. Despite the limitations of this study, it provides useful analyses of factors that relate to adolescents' development of political efficacy.

Discussion

Political participation is fundamental to the sustainability of democratic societies, so it is vital that we understand how to prepare youth to participate in political processes. Adolescence is an especially important time for fostering civic engagement because individuals who are engaged in community issues as adolescents are more likely to remain engaged as adults (Jennings & Stoker, 2004). Prior studies indicate that political efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of political participation, so understanding how adolescents develop this belief can strengthen educators' capacity to support their students' civic engagement. Although researchers have included political efficacy as a quantitative outcome in various studies of political involvement, classroom activities, and social dynamics, there has been no published research focusing broadly on the array of factors that influence political efficacy. This paper begins to fill this gap in the literature by closely examining the dimensions of political efficacy and identifying several key factors that contribute to their development. My findings, which lay the foundations for a theory of political efficacy development, have important implications for both educational practice and for future research aimed at enhancing educators' capacity to prepare adolescents for active democratic citizenship.

Building a Culture of Political Interest

One of this study's key findings is that political interest can play a central role in adolescents' political efficacy. Whereas prior research indicates that both political interest (Stromback & Strehata, 2009) and efficacy were shaped by the same types of activities (e.g., political discussions), those studies did not identify a clear relationship between the two factors. In this study, individuals who were interested in politics were more apt to spend time acquiring political knowledge, developing political skills, and taking political action; and therefore they were more likely to experience political successes and develop self-efficacy in these domains. Furthermore, students had higher external political efficacy for specific issues when they perceived that others were politically engaged in those issues. Although more study is needed to explore these relationships with a broader sample, the consistent findings in this study suggest that educators can strengthen students' political efficacy by supporting both individuals' development of political interest and also that of their social context (i.e., students' perceptions of collective engagement and social norms of political interest). How might this be done?

Although understanding how political interest develops was not the main focus of this study, I identified one factor that contributed to adolescents' political interest: rapport with one's politically-engaged peers. When students developed rapport with their politically engaged peers, their exchanges and interactions around political issues generated a social norm of political interest, which in turn inspired more political interest. Previous research has found that social norms can play a substantial role in shaping behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), and students in both Model UN and the civic advocacy class demonstrated this pattern.

Recent research on interest development suggests that when individuals attribute their positive emotional experiences to particular tasks, they develop interest in undertaking similar tasks in the future (Silvia, 2006); according to this research, students engaged in political activities would likely become more interested in politics if they enjoyed their political experience and later attributed that enjoyment to their political involvement. Although this research on interest development may be useful, it was conducted in psychology laboratories (rather than classrooms or the community) and did not involve political issues. Thus, future studies should more closely examine how

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political interest develops through authentic experience, especially given the central role of political interest in motivating individuals to engage in political learning and action (Stromback & Shehata, 2009; Leighly & Vedlitz, 1999; Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 1997). Until then, however, teachers are likely to contribute to adolescents' development of political interest by providing them with opportunities to learn about, discuss, and address political challenges with their peers in a positive, supportive environment.

Persistence and Trust of Government

Another major finding of this study is that persistence and trust of government can influence the development of political efficacy. Both of these factors directly affected external political efficacy, and persistence also influenced adolescents' skills-based internal political efficacy. These findings suggest that fostering political efficacy should include more than building students' political knowledge, skills, and interest; the process must also attend to individuals' attitudes towards governmental institutions and their willingness to expend ongoing effort to achieve goals.

Given the effects of persistence on political efficacy, especially internal political efficacy for skills, this is an important disposition for civic educators to foster. Prior research indicates that with appropriate encouragement and specific feedback, students can indeed learn to expend more effort and persist longer at certain tasks (e.g., Okolo, 1992). In the two civic education programs examined for this study, teachers encouraged students to try new approaches if initial efforts did not succeed and also provided specific suggestions to students about how they could improve their skills and strategies. Students engaging in authentic political action and simulations can indeed benefit from such encouragement and advice. However, there can be a fine line between encouragement and pressuring, and educators should be cautious not to overwhelm students or thus risk undermining their intrinsic motivation.

My qualitative analyses indicated that some adolescents become distrustful of government when certain experiences or information make their political goals appear less attainable. For example, after Randall's frustrating experience on the mock Security Council at a Model UN conference, he became more distrustful of political processes, as his own experiences had shown him that reasoned argument does not always prevail. Likewise, Andrea's disappointment about the Supreme Court's decision to overturn a

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campaign finance law made her doubt that elected leaders would heed the voices of non-corporate actors. This rational skepticism towards democratic processes can be an important aspect of political learning, and educators should consider how they might address such sentiments that are likely to decrease students' political efficacy. By guiding students to political information that highlights opportunities rather than barriers (e.g., providing potential models), educators might be able to defuse budding cynicism, but more research in this area is needed.

Demographic Characteristics

Results of this study also suggested that certain demographic factors can influence political efficacy, and educators should consider the role that these might play. First, whereas previous studies have found socioeconomic status to be closely related to political efficacy (Cohen et al., 2001; Lambert et al., 1986), my quantitative analyses indicated no political efficacy differences among students whose parents did or did not possess college degrees; nor did I find any differences based on the number of books students had in their homes of origin (a proxy for socioeconomic status). Although the role of socioeconomic status may be less than it once was, these results might also be related to the lack of socioeconomic variability in my sample, which included students at a major four-year university most of whom had at least one parent with a college degree. While future research should continue to examine socioeconomic differences in political efficacy, educators should be aware that socioeconomic differences in political efficacy might vary by school or community context.

Although my analyses identified no socioeconomic difference in political efficacy, they did reveal gender differences. In my sample, males had higher levels of internal political efficacy for knowledge and were more likely to participate in school-based civic learning experiences. Although some recent research has shown the virtual disappearance of the gender gap in political efficacy (McCluskey, Deshpande, Shah, & McLeod, 2004; Lee, 2006), other studies have shown that it still exists (e.g., Bowler & Donovan, 2002). However, as the inconclusive research on the racial gap shows (Wu, 2003; Emig, Hesse, & Fisher, 1996; Kleiman, 1976), such gender and racial differences might be context-specific. Thus, results of this study indicate that the political efficacy

gender gap might still exist in certain contexts, and this suggests that educators should be certain to encourage and support the political development of individuals of both genders.

The most surprising findings from this study were about the effects of GPA. Because prior studies had found that higher intelligence is related to higher political efficacy (Carmines & Baxter, 1986; White, 1968), I had expected GPA to have the same effect, but in fact, it had the opposite effect for the students in this study. My analyses indicated that lower GPA was related to both higher local external political efficacy and higher internal political efficacy for skills. Although one might expect that an individual who succeeds scholastically would be more confident in her/his ability to succeed in other domains, my findings could indicate, as my qualitative findings do, that having more knowledge (especially knowledge about the barriers to successful political action) can decrease one's belief in being able to make a difference. These findings suggest that teachers should be careful not to assume that more successful students will also be more politically efficacious because, in fact, the opposite might be the case.

Nonetheless, my analyses revealed that higher GPA supported an important factor linked to political efficacy development. Individuals with higher GPAs were more likely to participate in school-based civic learning experiences. Thus, students who were not as successful in school were less likely to reap the benefits of participating in such groups (i.e., increased skills and political efficacy). Although further research is needed to explore this relationship, it suggests that educators could support more widespread political efficacy development by encouraging students of all scholastic achievement levels to participate in active civic education programs.

Participation in School-Based Civic Learning Experiences

Among this study's most hopeful findings is that school-based civic learning experiences can positively influence all four dimensions of political efficacy (i.e., IPE/knowledge, IPE/skills, EPE/local, and EPE/distal). Such programs vary widely in quality and structure, but my qualitative analyses suggest that certain experiences within them are central to supporting students' political efficacy growth. First, to develop IPE/knowledge, adolescents can benefit from opportunities to build and demonstrate political knowledge. When adolescents had opportunities to learn about, discuss, and

design solutions for political challenges, whether in school-based groups or not, they often developed greater IPE/knowledge.

Likewise, my findings suggested that adolescents are more likely to develop greater IPE/skills if they have opportunities to both observe others successfully using political skills and also practice political skills successfully themselves. When students observe others (especially their peers) adeptly utilizing political skills, such as public speaking or negotiating a compromise, they often not only learn about the nuances of such skills but also begin to imagine how they themselves could enact those skills. Also, when they have opportunities to practice and develop competence with certain skills, they can develop self-efficacy in those areas. Simply having opportunities for practice and observation may not be sufficient, however, so teachers, advisors, and mentors – which could include adults and peers – can play an important role in helping individuals to develop techniques and strategies that will enable them to successfully perform a skill (such as explicit direct instruction, advisor-led exercises, etc.). Although school-based groups create a manageable and accessible setting where adolescents can experience these activities, there are numerous other appropriate environments in which such skills could be developed, such as service learning groups.

In addition to supporting the development of internal political efficacy, participating in school-based civic learning experiences can also strengthen adolescents' external political efficacy. First, there are indirect effects: Participating in these experiences often enhances IPE/skills and IPE/knowledge, which in turn influences EPE. In addition, however, the act of participating in political processes itself can have a direct effect on an individual's external political efficacy because it provides authentic opportunities to experience success in political processes. This comports with findings from previous quantitative studies indicating that political participation influences political efficacy (e.g, Ikeda, Kobayashi, & Hoshimoto, 2008; Finkel, 1985).

Several students told me that their political action in Model UN, in the civic advocacy class, or with a parent or teacher had made political processes seem more real and made political goals seem more achievable. However, these experiences, when unsuccessful or frustrating, could also have the opposite effect. Thus, although my analyses generally found a positive relationship between participating in school-based

civic learning experiences and political efficacy, further research is needed to explore how certain features of such experiences might contribute to or detract from adolescents' external political efficacy, especially the extent to which achieving political goals might contribute to the development of external political efficacy.

Given these findings, educators who aim to prepare adolescents to become active citizens in a democratic society should consider methods and strategies for integrating into the curriculum opportunities for students to learn empowering political knowledge, develop political skills, and have manageable political experiences. When structuring the latter, however, educators should also develop means of supporting students who encounter discouraging obstacles. Civics and history classes have long emphasized building students' political knowledge, and by also providing opportunities to use this knowledge, through either authentic political experiences or other skill-building activities, they can provide further motivation for students to build their knowledge while simultaneously developing aspects of their political efficacy.

Researchers in motivation psychology commonly cite four major methods for motivating students to learn: autonomy, competence, social connectedness, and value (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). By structuring activities in which students work with peers (social connectedness) on self-selected issues (autonomy) of interest (value) and experience feelings of accomplishment (competence), educators can help motivate students both to gain knowledge and skills and also to engage in political action. Time and resource constraints may indeed limit the extent to which classroom teachers can organize such activities, so extracurricular activities and specialized courses (e.g., the programs examined for this paper) can provide students with these opportunities. Future research, however, should examine how these activities can be successfully integrated into required classroom content. Understanding methods by which students can develop fundamental political skills and attitudes in a regular classroom context would enable a broad array of educators to more adequately prepare students for democratic political participation.

Conclusion

By understanding how to foster adolescents' political efficacy, educators will be better equipped to prepare them to become active democratic citizens. Whereas political

efficacy development is somewhat similar to the development of other forms of self-efficacy (through the positive influence of modeling, practice, persistence, and feedback), there are several factors that may be unique to the development of political efficacy. Among these are political skills, political interest, trust of government, and political knowledge type. Educators who wish to build students' political efficacy should thus consider not only prior research on self-efficacy but also how they can support students' development of political interest and skills, knowledge that illustrates the potential of citizen action (i.e., knowledge of opportunities), and trust that political systems respond to such action. Although there are indeed reasons for adolescents and adults alike to be skeptical of the efficacy of political action, despair frequently breeds inaction and political stagnation. With careful planning, guidance, and feedback, educators can play a crucial role in supporting adolescents' political engagement and thus contribute to the blossoming of a more active democratic polity.

Appendix A

Items Included in Factors

Table 4.A1

Items in Each Factor for Political Efficacy Survey of College Students

Factor	Variable Question/Statement	Response Choices (6 levels)
External Political Efficacy (EPE)/ Distal	*If there's a serious national problem, I can do something to get federal government officials to improve the situation.* *If there's a serious problem in my state, I can do something to get state government official to improve the situation.* *Public officials care what people like me think.*	Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree
External Political Efficacy (EPE)/ Local	*Leaders in my community care what people like me think.* *I can make a difference in my community.* *If I think there's a serious problem in my community, I can do something to improve the situation.* *If there's a serious local problem, I can do something to get local government officials to improve the situation.*	Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree
Internal Political Efficacy (IPE)/ Knowledge	*I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.* *I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our world.* *I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.*	Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree
Internal Political Efficacy (IPE)/ Skills	*I am confident that I can construct good arguments about political issues.* *When I share my ideas about political issues, people listen to me.* *When I have to work with other people towards a goal, I can get others to work towards that goal.* *I can persuade my peers of my point of view on political issues.* *I am confident in my public speaking abilities.*	Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree
Perceived Persistence	*If something that I want to achieve requires a lot of time and effort, I keep trying until I achieve success.* *When a task is hard, I can still motivate myself to complete it.* *When I face an obstacle to achieving a goal, I try hard to overcome the obstacle.* *When I fail to achieve a goal, I try again.*	Never – Always
Participation in School-Based Political Experiences	During high school, which of the following types of extracurricular activities did you participate in? During college, which of the following types of extracurricular activities have you participated in?	Student Government Political Clubs (such as Debate Club or Model UN) (Yes/No Response)

Trust of Government	How much of the time do you think you can trust the government to do what is right?	Never - Always
	Would you say that the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or for the interest of all the people?	By a few big interests looking out for themselves – For the benefit of all the people
	How many people in the government do you think are crooked?	None - Most
	How much of the money we pay in taxes do you think that people in government waste?	None of it – Most of it
Political Interest	*Compared to most of your other activities, how useful is learning about political issues?* *Compared to most of your other activities, how useful is learning about community issues?* *In general, how useful is learning about community issues?*	Very Useless – Very Useful
	For me, understanding political issues is: *For me, understanding community issues is:*	Not at all important – Extremely important
	How much do you like learning about political issues? *How much do you like learning about community issues?*	Dislike extremely – Like extremely
	Compared to most of your other activities, how important is it for you to be good at understanding political issues? *Compared to most of your other activities, how important is it for you to be good at understanding community issues?*	Not at all important – Extremely important

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CHAPTER 5
TOWARDS FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICAL EFFICACY:
FRAMING A RESEARCH AGENDA

In *World on the Edge*, the renowned USA environmental scholar Lester Brown (2011) argues that solving our environmental challenges will require individuals to become politically active. Likewise, many environmental leaders, educators and organizations have long supported this notion (e.g., Berkowitz, Ford, & Brewer, 2005; Jensen & Schnack, 1997; U.N. Conference on Environment and Development, 1992). How might environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) support individuals' engagement in environmentally-oriented political issues?

Evidence indicates that one of the strongest predictors of political participation is political efficacy – individuals' belief that their political action can influence political processes and systems (Almond & Verba, 1963; Becker, 2004; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001; Guyton, 1988; Paulsen, 1991). Moreover, researchers have found that certain educational activities, such as participating in political discussions and small-scale democratic experiences, can increase political efficacy (Dressner, 1990; Glenn, 1972; Hahn, 1999; Morrell, 2005). However, few scholars of environmental education (EE) or education for sustainable development (ESD) have examined political efficacy or how it develops in the environmental domain. The major purpose of this paper is to describe environmental educators' interest in preparing students for civic and political action, review research that informs our understanding of how to foster political efficacy, and offer suggestions for related environmental education research needs.

Over the past several decades, EE and ESD leaders have increasingly argued that an important goal of EE and ESD programs is to prepare youth for active political

engagement to address environmental problems. Whereas early educators made subtle reference to the importance of students' civic action (e.g., Stapp, 1969; UNESCO, 1978), recently there has been a greater explicit recognition of the central role that civic and political action should play in environmental education. For example, at the Earth Summit in 1992, representatives of 179 countries signed Agenda 21, supporting the idea that environmental problems would be more successfully addressed if citizens were actively involved in political processes (U. N. Conference on Environment and Development, 1992). Even some national governments have endorsed this idea. Canada (2002), for example, issued a set of environmental education goals that included the engagement of citizens in governmental decision-making processes, and the UK has considered including citizenship knowledge and skills among its key indicators of successful ESD (Huckle, 2009). Meanwhile, the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative, acknowledging the importance of citizen-government relationships, has aimed to strengthen environmental sustainability efforts by creating networks of schools, community members, businesses, and local governments (Flowers & Chodkiewicz, 2009).

In addition, a number of EE and ESD scholars have argued that preparation for political action should more often be included in EE and ESD programs. As Sakofs (1984) stressed about a quarter-century ago,

> [I]n this age where much of our lives is shaped by laws and other official local, state, and federal policies, an interpretive program which presents only scientific concepts and fails to address the connection between these concepts and official governmental policies, fails to address an important aspect of that information (p. 8).

Since then, numerous scholars have voiced their agreement on the importance of teaching students about governmental issues. For example, Tilbury (1995, 2011) has stressed the need for students to develop democratic skills and values and has cited political action as a key outcome of ESD. McKeown-Ice and Dedinger (2000) contend that social science concepts, such as civic ideals and governance, are foundational to EE in the US. Likewise, Berkowitz, Ford, and Brewer (2005) include civics literacy and practical skills as two of five key components in their comprehensive conceptual framework of pro-

environmental behavior, and Barry (2006) contends that "critical environmental citizenship" requires citizens to challenge governmental institutions. In addition, several other EE and ESD researchers have referenced the importance of broad social action to resolve environmental challenges (Chawla, 2007; Hungerford, 2009; Jensen & Schnack, 1997; Marcinowski, 2009; McClaren & Hammond, 2005; Stapp, Wals, & Stankorb, 1996).

Despite EE and ESD scholars' acknowledgement of the importance of civic and political action, most EE and ESD researchers have focused on other issues. Some of this research has been related to preparing students for civic and political action, such as studies of fostering locus of control (Hines, Hungerford, & Tomera, 1986-7; Hsu, 2004; Hwang, Kim, & Jeng, 2003), self-efficacy (Quimby, Seyala, & Wolfson, 2007; Moseley, Reinke, & Bookout, 2002), and conservation behaviors (Katzev & Mishima, 1992; Parnell & Larsen, 2005; Staats, Harland, & Wilke, 2004), but these outcomes have not been linked to political action. Similarly, some EE and ESD scholars have described civic action programs in which individuals have become involved in addressing local environmental issues, such as school-based environmental councils (Carlsson & Jensen, 2006) or farming communities shifting production to organic crops (Weisenfeld & Sanchez, 2002); but most of these studies have not explored these programs' measurable civic outcomes for individuals.

On the other hand, a small number of studies have begun to examine students' civic-related environmental learning. Dressner (1990), for example, found that college students who participated in a simulation of a legislative process aimed at energy conservation developed both greater political efficacy and conservation attitudes, and Kumler (2010) found that high school students who had participated in a land use curriculum expanded their knowledge of possible civic actions. Meanwhile, Hillcoat and Forge (1995) conducted a descriptive study that documented Australian adolescents' feelings of cynicism and powerlessness about their ability to address large-scale environmental challenges. If EE and ESD scholars want to better support and understand efforts to prepare students for civic and political action, it is vital that they examine how to foster the psychological orientations and educational experiences that can lead to such action.

iii

<div align="center">**Prior Research on Political Efficacy**</div>

Why Political Efficacy Matters

During the last several decades, political scientists have found that one of the strongest, most consistent predictors of political participation (e.g., voting, contacting officials, joining political organizations) is an individual's belief that he or she can influence the political process (Becker, 2004; Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001; Paulsen, 1991; Guyton, 1988; Tygart, 1977; Almond & Verba, 1963). Campbell, Gurin, and Miller (1954) first labeled this belief *political efficacy*, defining it as follows:

> the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change (p. 187).

Studies have shown that as political efficacy in populations rises and falls, political participation follows suit (Burnham, 1980; Gibson & Levine, 2003; Schur, Shields, & Schriner, 2003).

When an individual has high levels of political efficacy, she or he is more likely to vote (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Cohen et al., 2001; Pollack, 1983), contact public officials about issues of concern (Hirlinger, 1992 Pollack, 1983; Sharp, 1982), become involved in political activism (Abrams & DeMoura, 2002; Paulsen, 1991; Tygart, 1977), use informational news media (Newhagen, 1994; Tan, 1981), and become psychologically involved in politics (Bell, 1969; Cohen et al., 2001). Although much of this research was conducted on the US population, researchers have also found political efficacy to be a crucial predictor of political participation in Germany (Becker, 2004), Israel (Cohen, Samorly, & Vigoda, 2001), and 27 democracies (Karp & Banducci, 2008). Considering the low political engagement in numerous democracies in recent decades (Lijphart, 1997, McDonald, 2008), environmental educators interested in supporting students' political engagement should therefore consider ways to foster students' political efficacy.

It must be acknowledged that political scientists have also identified other factors related to political participation. These factors include socioeconomic status (Verba & Nie, 1972; Conway, 1991), social connectedness (Putnam, 1995; Robnett, 2007), group

identity (Hardy-Fanta, 1993; Wilcox & Gomez, 1990), political/historical context (Geys, 2006), and political interest (Leighly & Vedlitz, 1999). However, even controlling for many of these factors, political efficacy usually influences political participation (e.g., Cohen et al., 2001) and is therefore a useful concept on which to focus.

Types of Political Efficacy

Before further reviewing factors related to political efficacy, it is important to note that although many researchers have studied political efficacy as a single construct, others have conceptualized and examined political efficacy as a multi-dimensional construct. This is because exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses have suggested that political efficacy consists of at least two distinct dimensions: internal political efficacy and external political efficacy (Aish & Joreskog, 1990; Zimmerman, 1989; Coleman & Davis, 1976; Balch, 1974). Whereas external political efficacy (EPE) is the belief that individuals can have actual influence on governmental decisions and actions, internal political efficacy (IPE) refers to an individual's belief that he or she is able to understand politics and competently participate in political acts (Miller, Miller, & Schneider, 1980).

Researchers have also found that there may be further sub-dimensions of political efficacy. For example, individuals' feelings of political efficacy may vary based on the level of government (i.e., local, state, national, international) one is trying to influence (Langton, 1980; Levy, 2011). Furthermore, individuals' internal and external political efficacy can be different for specific issues, such as environmental, criminal, fiscal, or other public issues (Levy, 2011).

In this paper, I therefore introduce the term *environmental* political efficacy to refer to individuals' political efficacy relating to issues of environmental sustainability.

Despite these multiple dimensions of political efficacy, the literature review below often does not include these distinctions with most researchers examining political efficacy as a single construct. I will therefore address these multiple dimensions later sections of the paper.

Factors Related to Fostering Political Efficacy

Political scientists and educational researchers have explored factors related to individuals' political efficacy, and in this section, I summarize their findings. Although

only one of these numerous studies was conducted in an environmental context, findings from these other research domains have important implications for civic-oriented EE and ESD.

Participation in political processes.

Researchers have found that political participation itself can be an effective method of increasing individuals' political efficacy. For many individuals, voting (Ikeda, Kobayashi, & Hoshimoto, 2008; Finkel, 1985) or participating in campaign activities, such as attending political meetings or verbally promoting a party or candidate, can boost political efficacy (Stenner-Day & Fischle, 1992; Finkel, 1987). Other studies indicate that voting is more likely to promote political efficacy when one's preferred candidate wins (Bowler & Donovan, 2002; Clarke & Acock, 1989). However, some research suggests that participating in political action in which participants are marginalized or unheard might reduce their political efficacy (Freie, 1997; Stenner-Day & Fischle, 1992). Altogether, this research suggests that educators can support students' political efficacy development by involving them in political action in which they are likely to have their voices heard. If the political issues involved are environmental, such civic involvement might therefore enhance individuals' environmental political efficacy.

Evidence also indicates that participating in small-scale democratic decision-making processes can strengthen political efficacy. Researchers have found that when children are involved in making family decisions, they are more likely to become politically efficacious (Almond & Verba, 1963; Langton, 1980; Takei & Kleiman, 1976). In schools, students have developed higher political efficacy when making classroom rules (Glenn, 1972) and participating in school-wide governance (Siegel, 1977). Simulations of democratic processes can also have positive effects on political efficacy. Researchers have documented political efficacy increases resulting from participation in mock elections (Stroupe & Sabato, 2004), legislative role-playing games (Boocock, 1968; Dressner, 1990; Vogel, 1973), and debates about potential solutions to international challenges (Levy, 2011). However, one study found that if students have disempowering experiences in simulations (e.g., if the simulation leads to political gridlock), their political efficacy can decrease (Livingston, 1972). Overall, this research suggests that educators aiming to build students' political efficacy might achieve these goals by

providing their students opportunities to be successful in either real or simulated democratic decision-making processes, and such experiences might also support the development of environmental political efficacy.

Learning about and discussing political issues.

Researchers have also found that when individuals (adults and children) have opportunities to learn about and discuss political information and perspectives, they are more likely to believe that they can participate effectively in the political system. For example, several studies indicate that political efficacy, especially internal political efficacy, increases when individuals read newspapers or watch television news (Wells & Dudash, 2007; Lee, 2006; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Also, when children have more opportunities to discuss political issues with peers, their political efficacy tends to be higher (Hahn, 1999; Morrell, 2005). However, there is also evidence that exposure to confusing or negative political information can actually decrease external political efficacy (Lee, 2006; Miller, 1979). In short, these studies suggest that it may be important for environmental and ESD educators to give students opportunities to learn and process political information as well as to clarify complex political realities, being careful to avoid expressing excessive pessimism.

Identifying with a politically oriented group.

Evidence indicates that identifying strongly with a group, especially a politically-oriented group, can enhance individuals' political efficacy. For example, identifying with a political party (Louis, Taylor, & Neil, 2004), especially the party in power (Lambert, Curtis, Brown, & Kay, 1986), tends to strengthen individuals' political efficacy. Family politicization also seems to matter: when children believe that their parents are interested in political issues, they develop higher political efficacy than other children (Ichilov, 1988; Langton & Karns, 1969). Researchers have also found that individuals have higher political efficacy if they feel more closely connected to their communities through personal relationships (Steinberger, 1981) or if they identify strongly with a particular demographic group (Koch, 1993). In schools, when students are more socially connected, they are more likely to vote later in life (Callahan, Muller, & Schiller, 2010), and having a sense of rapport with politically engaged peers may enhance political interest (Levy, 2011). Overall, this evidence suggests that fostering a sense of belonging through a

supportive group working on collective environmental challenges may be helpful in fostering environmental political efficacy.

Summary of prior research on political efficacy.

The research findings on the relationship between individuals' experiences, political efficacy, and political participation are summarized in Figure 5.1. As the figure illustrates, EPE, IPE, and other factors contribute to political participation, and various experiences, such as involvement in democratic decision-making processes and discussions of public issues, support individuals' development of political efficacy. The figure also indicates that other factors contribute to political participation, but research suggests that several of these factors, such as education level (Wolfsfeld, 2006; Ichilov, 1988), age (Wu, 2003; Koch, 1993), and social context (Wu, 2003; Emig, Hesse, & Fisher, 1996), are mediated by political efficacy.
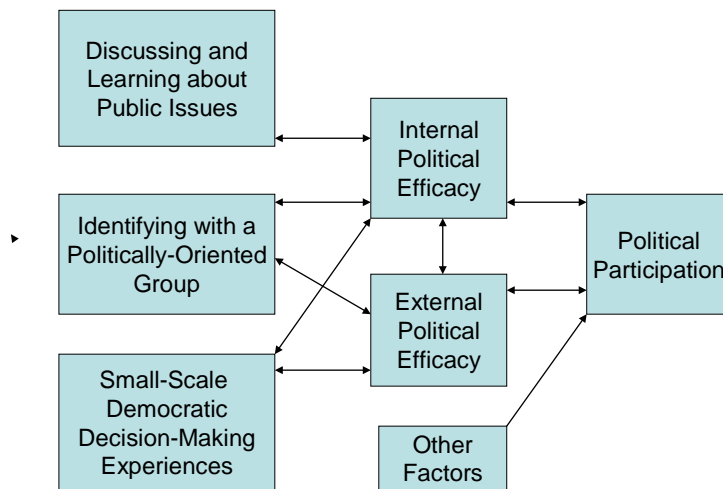
Figure 5.1. Summary framework of factors related to political efficacy and participation

A Research Agenda on Fostering Environmental Political Efficacy

Although prior research offers numerous useful insights about how to foster individuals' political efficacy, this work offers little guidance that focused on understanding and fostering environmental political efficacy. In this section, I propose a

research agenda for EE and ESD scholars to consider as they design studies that examine methods of preparing students for civic and political engagement in environmental issues.

First, to understand the factors and sub-dimensions involved in individuals' environmental political efficacy, researchers should produce rich descriptions of individuals' conceptions of their capacity to influence governments on environmental issues. What barriers and opportunities do individuals perceive? Which issues seem most feasible or challenging to address? Do these perceptions differ for individuals of different ages, educational backgrounds, ethnicities, cultural/geographic contexts, or other variables? Through interviews, surveys, and/or other methods, EE and ESD researchers could produce useful descriptions and overviews of individuals' environmental political efficacy that could help educators address students' and adult audiences' civic and political orientations.

To supplement and strengthen this descriptive work, EE and ESD researchers could develop valid and reliable measures of environmental political efficacy building on scales used to measure political efficacy. Over the years, political scientists and educators have used a variety of items to examine internal and external political efficacy. The most commonly used items are those that have been administered biannually as part of the American National Election Study (NES). When the NES first began to examine political efficacy as one coherent construct in the 1950s, it used a series of five questions (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; See Table 5.1). Since then, NES has conducted pilot studies of numerous potential political efficacy indicators and through confirmatory factor analyses has identified three items that measure external political efficacy (Craig & Maggiotto, 1982; Iyengar, 1980; McPherson, Welch, & Clark, 1977) and seven items that measure internal political efficacy (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990; Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991; See Table 5.2).

Table 5.1
NES Items Measuring Political Efficacy as a single construct

<u>Item Statement (Response Choices: Agree or Disagree)</u>
I don't think public officials care much what people like me think.
The way people vote is the main thing that decides how things are run in this country.
Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things.
People like me don't have any say about what the government does.
Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.

Although educational researchers have used and adapted these measures, scholars examining the development of environmental political efficacy would benefit from developing items more specifically related to issues of environmental sustainability. For example, one pilot item for environmental IPE might read, "I consider myself well qualified to participate in political decisions about environmental issues." However, because individuals often feel more politically efficacious on some issues than on others, it may be useful to have items measuring internal and external political efficacy for specific environmental challenges, such as climate change, deforestation, fisheries depletion, clean water, or other issues. Such measures may be also adaptable for examining civic effects of different curricula or experiences that are focused on different environmental issues. In addition, researchers might consider piloting new types of political efficacy measures, such as those that require participants to indicate their feelings of efficacy in certain hypothetical political scenarios (King, Murray, Salomon, & Tandon, 2004).

Table 5.2
NES Items Measuring Two Dimensions of Political Efficacy

Dimension	**Item Statement** (Responses on Agree-Disagree Likert Scale)
External Political Efficacy	*I don't think public officials care much what people like me think.* *Generally speaking, those we elect to Congress in Washington lose touch with the people pretty quickly.* *Parties are only interested in people's votes but not in their opinions.*
Internal Political Efficacy	*I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics.* *I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.* *Other people seem to have an easier time understanding complicated issues than I do.* *I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people.* *I often don't feel sure of myself when talking with other people about politics and government.* *I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people.* *Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.*

With these measures of environmental political efficacy, researchers could examine the extent to which experiences related to political efficacy are also related to environmental political efficacy. For example, it would be useful for environmental and ESD educators to understand whether or not discussing public issues would positively influence general IPE but not environmental IPE, or perhaps belonging to a politically-engaged group would have a positive effect on both general and environmental EPE. These may be important questions for educators who aim to motivate their students to become engaged in environmental civic and political action. While quantitative measures could prove quite useful in measuring trends, qualitative analyses of observations, written records, and interviews could strengthen educators' understanding of how certain experiences influence students' environmental political efficacy and how educators could adjust their pedagogy to strengthen students' political engagement.

Furthermore, educators would benefit from understanding how and if other activities not mentioned above influence individuals' environmental political efficacy. For example, if students participate in authentic activities or simulations related to solving community environmental problems, would this positively influence their environmental EPE and/or IPE? Prior research on fostering general political efficacy indicates that it might, but students' may respond differently when grappling with complex problems of environmental sustainability. There are many programs of this type. For instance, many students have participated in a curriculum called *action research and community problem solving* in which students conduct research on community problems and develop plans to resolve them (Stapp, Wals, & Stankorb, 1996), and at various institutions, students participate in efforts to improve their schools' environmental sustainability – developing strategic plans, holding "zero waste" events, and running recycling competitions (Marans, et al., 2010). Also, science and social studies educators have implemented simulations of local governments' decision-making processes (Dressner, 1990; Kumler, 2010). Educators interested in developing individuals' environmental civic engagement would benefit from knowing if such programs foster environmental political efficacy.

Finally, to enhance our broad understanding of how to foster environmental civic and political action, it is important for researchers to consider complementary lines of

research that extend beyond environmental political efficacy. Studies have found, for example, that political interest, skills, and knowledge can also play a role in both political efficacy and political participation (Leighly & Vedlitz, 1999; Levy, 2011; Stromback & Shehata, 2009, Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995), so if educators focus on enhancing only students' environmental political efficacy, they might neglect key opportunities for fostering students' engagement in civic and political affairs. The lines of research similar to those above – including close studies of perspectives, measurement methods, and educational programs – could be useful in these complementary domains, as well.

Conclusion

To resolve many environmental challenges, political participation is essential. Numerous scholars of EE and ESD have touted the importance of political participation, but there have been few empirical studies of how students develop the psychological orientations to become politically engaged in environmental issues or on educational interventions that foster environmental political efficacy. Substantial research has concluded that political efficacy influences political participation but that this relationship may vary by political issue and level of government. Thus, although studies have found that certain experiences, such as participating in discussions of political issues and identifying with a politically-engaged group, can enhance political efficacy (See Figure 5.1), this research does not examine the extent to which its findings hold true for individuals' environmental political efficacy.

Future studies that begin to fill this research gap could provide educators with a better understanding of how to prepare students for environmentally oriented political action. By producing descriptive, measurement, and educational studies of environmental political efficacy, researchers could lay a foundation for strengthening individuals' high-level engagement in issues vital to sustaining our planet. Ultimately, their findings and programs may be useful not only for youth but also for adults. Because working within the political domain can be sensitive, it is important that both educators and researchers approach their work without preconceived notions about what actions students should take – and that they allow students, through the learning process, to develop their own conclusions based on the best available evidence. Overall, pursuing this research agenda

could be a central component of preparing democratic populations to participate in the decision-making processes for some of the most important issues of our era.

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CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Participating in political processes provides citizens opportunities to have their interests and concerns represented in governmental decision-making processes. When individuals have higher political efficacy, they are more likely to be politically active and thus have their voices heard. Although prior research indicates that various experiences can enhance political efficacy, this earlier work did not closely examine the reasons that these experiences have such an effect or why they influence some students more than others. Understanding the factors that influence political efficacy can enhance educators' ability to prepare students to become active citizens. Thus, I began this project with research questions about (1) the specific dimensions of political efficacy, (2) the array of factors that influence these dimensions, and (3) pedagogical practices that enhance political efficacy; and my research produced answers in each of these areas.

First, findings identified a wide variety of factors that contribute to political efficacy (See Figure 4.5). The evidence suggests there are three types of variables that relate to the various dimensions of political efficacy – perceptions of oneself (e.g., perceived social status), perceptions of others (e.g., political trust, perceived collective engagement), and personal characteristics (e.g., political interest, knowledge, and skills). Secondly, educators who successfully support students' development of political efficacy may need to employ a broad range of strategies and skills while allowing students substantial autonomy in their work. The educators I examined served as facilitators, resources, and supporters – guiding students' learning, allowing them to make many decisions independently, and providing help when needed. To support students' political efficacy development, it seemed important that adult leaders strike a careful balance between providing structure (e.g., for students to learn key knowledge and skills within time constraints) and autonomy (e.g., for students to select topic areas and goals that appeal to them).

Third, I found that there are more dimensions of political efficacy than most researchers usually measure, and this will both complicate and enhance future research in the area. Both my qualitative and quantitative analyses indicated that individuals had different levels of political efficacy for different levels of government (local and distal), and my qualitative findings suggested that political efficacy may also vary by the political issue in question. Overall, these findings have helpful implications for both researchers and educators as they pursue work related to understanding and enhancing adolescents' political participation.

Practical Implications for Educators

My research suggests that educators can enhance students' political efficacy through a number of engaging activities. First, exposing students to models of successful political action, including how individuals address and overcome challenges, seems to be an especially important method of supporting students' political efficacy. Such exposure, whether in person (e.g., through a course, Model UN, or other program) or via media (e.g., video, written materials) can have several important effects. When students see others, especially their peers, engaged in successful political action, it demonstrates that creating change is possible and illustrates *how* it can be accomplished. Self-efficacy researchers have found that models can be a powerful means of strengthening self-efficacy in various domains (Bandura, 1997; Gist, Schwoerer, & Rosen, 1989; Schunk, 1987), and evidence from my program-based studies (See Chapters 2 and 3) suggests that this is the case in the political sphere, as well.

Another reason to expose students to models of political action is to help them view such engagement as a normal mode of human behavior. Prior studies have found that subjective norms can influence behavioral choices (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), and my studies suggest that such perceptions can have an impact on both political efficacy and political interest (which, in turn, influences political efficacy). Thus, providing students opportunities to see similar others engaged in successful political action can be a helpful way to support their development of political efficacy. Within the context of examining others' political action, however, it is also helpful and important for them to learn about the real challenges involved in effecting social change (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). If students have opportunities to see how others have addressed and overcome political

barriers or setbacks, they will likely be more willing and able to navigate such challenges themselves.

Secondly, educators can support students' development of political efficacy by helping them to develop political knowledge and skills (See Figure 4.2). Many social studies and history courses around the US and the world emphasize political knowledge and skills, but the findings of this dissertation suggest new frameworks in these domains. Regarding political knowledge, educators should consider the potential effects of different *types* of knowledge (See Table 4.3). Whereas some information might make students feel efficacious and empowered (e.g., successful letter-writing campaigns), other knowledge may have the opposite effect (e.g., corporate campaign financing). When students learn about successful models of political action, they are able to see the potential for citizens to influence the government; on the other hand, learning about the overwhelming power of corporations in politics (without attention to how this power can be countered) may stifle individuals' belief that they can have such an influence. Although it is important for students to understand the complexities of their political context (e.g., both opportunities and barriers), educators who hope to inspire their students to become politically engaged should consider how to balance the types of information they present so that students can understand the real challenges of political action but also the tremendous opportunities to make a positive difference.

Regarding political skills, there is a broad array of skills that may be helpful and necessary for achieving political goals (See Table 3.12). Among these are skills in managing information (e.g., communicating ideas, researching topics) and managing organizations (e.g., working with others, planning events). If educators want to prepare their students for political action, it is important to structure opportunities for students to develop these skills. This can be achieved with some of the pedagogical strategies detailed in the program-based studies described in this dissertation, such as explicitly demonstrating and discussing methods of effective communication or enabling students to practice these skills through authentic experiences.

Also, scaffolding authentic political and organizational experiences can provide opportunities for students of varying skill levels to become involved and then develop greater political skills and efficacy. For example, to develop communication skills,

students with no prior political experience can speak to small groups of other students before making progressively higher-stakes presentations before larger groups (i.e., public speaking). Likewise, to develop skills in event or organizational planning, inexperienced organizers can first work alongside more experienced or skilled students before assuming the lead in planning. Educators or adult organizational leaders can also lead students through simulations or exercises to prepare students for the real scenarios they will face during their political action.

Finally, in addition to providing models of and opportunities for successful political action, educators can help students productively reflect on their experiences. Reflection can positively influence students' political efficacy in several ways. First, if students achieve their goals, examining the specific reasons for their success can help to reinforce their sense of accomplishment (even for something seemingly minor) and thereby support their development of IPE/skills and external political efficacy (See Figures 3.5 and 4.2). On the other hand, if students do not achieve their political goals, analytical reflection may help them to learn why their efforts did not succeed and also how a different course of action might yield better results in the future. Such reflection could help students to develop a vision of potential political action that could support their political efficacy. In addition, if students had an emotionally positive experience during their political action, linking those emotions to politics could have the effect of positively influencing students' political interest (Silvia, 2006), which is closely related to political efficacy. Altogether, this dissertation's findings suggest that educators can support the growth of students' political efficacy by providing them opportunities to (1) observe examples of successful political action, (2) develop a range of political knowledge and skills, (3) become involved in political action, and (4) reflect analytically on their political experiences.

Future Research on Fostering Political Efficacy

Although this dissertation and prior research have enhanced our understanding of how educators can support adolescents' political efficacy, more research is needed if we are to fully understand the best methods for doing so. First, it is vital that social science researchers develop more reliable and nuanced measures of political efficacy's dimensions to strengthen our ability to conduct strong quantitative or mixed methods

studies. My findings indicate that individuals have different levels of political efficacy for different political issues and for different levels of government, but we do not have rigorously validated measures to examine these different dimensions. For measures of political efficacy at different levels of government, researchers should develop items that reflect individuals' beliefs that they can influence (EPE) and/or understand (IPE) city, state, federal, and international issues. Regarding issue-oriented measures, it would be impossible to pilot and study items for political efficacy on every issue, but the research community would benefit from having measures that could be adapted to different issues (e.g., environmental policies, public safety laws, etc.).

In addition, researchers should continue to examine which types of experiences have the greatest impact on political efficacy. Although prior studies (See Figure 2.1) and this dissertation (See Table 3.8) have identified factors and practices that support the development of political efficacy, researchers have not compared these activities to see which are most effective for different students. For example, future studies might examine whether in certain contexts, teaching communication skills may yield better results than presenting WHICH models of successful political action. Also, researchers could study the extent to which teaching students about political opportunities versus political barriers influences their political efficacy. Also along these lines, it may be worth examining the effects of current events. At this writing, there are popular mass demonstrations across the Arab world and in Wisconsin. When students learn about such contemporary actions – and their successes or failures, does this have an impact on their political efficacy?

Likewise, educators would benefit from more in-depth qualitative or mixed methods studies of programs and practices that successfully support students' political efficacy. Other than this dissertation, there has been very little qualitative work examining experiences that enhance students' political efficacy. Most useful to large numbers of educators would be studies that examine how classroom teachers – within the context of teaching regular required courses (e.g., US history, world history, civics) – conduct activities that support the development of political efficacy. Studies of this nature could produce examples of how teachers in various classroom contexts can prepare their students for political participation.

Finally, social studies educators have long considered enhancing political participation to be central goal of their work (Hertzberg, 1981), and researchers' increasing understanding of political efficacy can support the achievement of this goal. Nonetheless, guiding educators to learn about political efficacy, its related factors, and strategies to enhance it – through either teacher education, professional development, or other means – will be essential if this research is to be of any practical utility. Thus, if we hope to enhance political engagement of youth, researchers must also examine the most effective methods for preparing educators to engage in the practices that we know to be most effective in strengthening political efficacy. Ultimately, such work could enhance educational practices on a large scale and support the flourishing of participatory democracy.

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