DEVELOPING CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES: A CASE STUDY OF

OLATHE, KANSAS' YOUTH CONGRESS PROGRAM

BY

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Abstract

An informed and active citizenry is essential for a well-functioning democracy, and how we

teach children citizenship has the potential to invigorate citizen engagement and responsibility.

This research looks at a program that seeks to do just that: the Student Development

Department's (SDD) Youth Congress program in Olathe, Kansas. Current and past Youth

Congress participants were surveyed as well as non-participants at the high school and college

levels to evaluate the effectiveness of Youth Congress as a civic education program. Results

found that current and past participants of Youth Congress scored higher on measures of political

and civic engagement than non-participants. Furthermore, Youth Congress is a significant

predictor of political and civic action. Finally, the study assessed how effective the SDD is at

recruitment and how they can increase access to their programs. These results provide direction

for schools wanting to provide more effective civic education for their students.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale

Habermas (1989), best known for his work on the public sphere, defined the same in the following way:

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason. (Habermas, 1989, p. 27)

Since Habermas and even before Habermas, others have provided their own take on the public sphere. Dewey (1927) emphasized the aspect of face-to-face communication and a sense of local community as a defining characteristic of the public sphere. Mouffe (2005) proposed agonism, "a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents," as a defining characteristic of a functioning public sphere (p. 20). Allen (2004) saw citizens coming together in the public sphere as "friends" in how they treated one another and made decisions for the good of the whole. Scorza (2004), rather than advocating actual friendship for interactions in the public sphere, emphasized communicative norms of friendship to serve as the framework for enacting citizenship in the public sphere.

These contemporary scholars depict some of the changes that have occurred in the public sphere since Habermas first described it, and while the health of the public sphere remains debatable, there appears to be consensus among scholars that a public space of some form where

people go to discuss/debate politics and their community is desirable and necessary for a well-functioning democracy. Moreover, an element of consensus among these scholars is that two basic conditions must be met for a public sphere to exist: 1) The public sphere must be populated by people communicating with one another; and 2) Those people must have something about which to communicate (Dewey, 1927; Habermas, 1989; Allen, 2004; Scorza, 2004; Mouffe, 2005).

Achieving a Vibrant Public Sphere

Scholars have, for some time now, been lamenting the demise of the public sphere due to the public's lack of knowledge and a lack of interest in politics and government (Delli Carpini, 2000; Putnam, 2000). If people do not show up to the public sphere, its aims are useless; if people show up and have nothing relevant to discuss or populate the discussion only with egocentric arguments, the public sphere does not serve its purposes (Levasseur & Carlin, 2001). If the scholars are right that a vibrant public sphere is a good thing to have for a healthy democracy, then something has to encourage participation and intelligent discussion in the public sphere. Likely, the source with the greatest influence over a citizen becoming engaged is one's parents (Maccoby, 1992; Zukin et al., 2006). However, the logistics of requiring parents to teach citizenship to their children are problematic.

Luckily, a democracy, such as the one in which we live, does have widespread influence over young citizens through the public education system (Dewey, 1916; Niemi & Junn, 1998). How we teach our children citizenship has the potential to greatly influence their sense of citizen engagement and responsibility (Zukin et al., 2006). With the decline in traditional citizen participation over the years, developing successful civic education programs becomes even more essential for the public sphere to thrive. As Dewey (1916) put it, "Education, in its broadest

sense, is the means of [the] social continuity of life" (p. 3). Civic education is the means of the continuity of American democracy.

Unfortunately, research into the public school curricula in America reveals that schools' treatment of civic education falls far short of where academics, dedicating their lives to researching civic education, feel it should be (Zukin et al., 2006). An examination of various state curricula reveals that the decline of the public sphere may very well be the result of underdeveloped civic education programs (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Zukin et al., 2006). The best hope for providing the kind of civic education necessary for American democracy is to have third party groups who specialize in it work with schools to give all students access to quality civic education experiences (McFarland & Thomas, 2006; Zukin et al., 2006). The federal government has provided millions of dollars in funding this approach to developing civic education, so it is even more important to understand the best methods for achieving a sound civic education. The practical question in response to this becomes, "How do we do that?"

A Case Study of Olathe Youth Congress

It is this question that serves as the foundation for this research. The most appropriate way to answer this question is through a case study since it provides a means to research an organization that has already implemented a quality civic education program. Specifically, the Student Development Department in Olathe, Kansas, provides numerous extracurricular civic education opportunities for all students in Olathe, whether in public or private schools. The specific program this research focuses on is the Olathe Youth Congress. Youth Congress is modeled after the U.S. Congress and has opportunities for more involved leadership positions year-round as well as limited involvement through participation in the annual General Assembly held over a day in the fall semester (Student Development Department, 2009). Students debate

resolutions regarding issues affecting the Olathe community and vote on which resolution they want to see come to fruition through follow up activities throughout the school year (Student Development Department, 2009). The 2009 Youth Congress focused on a "Go Green" theme for the resolutions debated at the General Assembly. The Youth Congress Mission Statements follows:

> The Olathe Youth Congress was established to provide youth in Olathe a voice in our community in a meaningful way, provide opportunities to experience the governmental process, as well as serve as an avenue for continued involvement in implementing and achieving the Youth Congress priorities. (Student Development Department, 2009).

Current and past Youth Congress participants were surveyed as well as non-participants at the high school and college levels to evaluate the effectiveness of Youth Congress as a civic education program.

Chapter 2 addresses background literature on citizenship, civic and political engagement, and civic education, as well as the hypotheses and research questions that were tested. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study. Chapter 5 provides discussion and analysis of the results as well as conclusions and directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Citizenship

A study of the effectiveness of civic education must begin with a definition of civic education. For the purpose of this research, it is defined simply as educating for good democratic citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Sherrod et al., 2002; Warren, 1954). This prompts the question, "What is a 'good citizen'?" Unfortunately, the answers to this question are numerous, varied, and date as far back as Aristotle.

One could probably spend a lifetime reading literature on citizenship from the perspective of dozens of disciplinary, theoretical and methodological approaches. To narrow the scope of research informing the current study, the focus is on foundational scholars and on the research of those relating citizenship specifically to citizen engagement, or in other words, the role of a citizen, not merely the condition of being a legal member of a nation state.

It is appropriate to start near the beginning of the discussion on citizenship. According to Kalu (2003), "For Aristotle, the instrumentality of one's participation and contribution to the good life in the polis confers authentic citizenship not as a matter of right, but as a matter of doing that which brings the highest good (happiness) for the community" (p. 420). A person achieves citizenship by holding office or other positions of authority that allow the individual to be a part of the decision making process for the community.

Aristotle's definition of citizenship was in reference to democratic forms of government, but since American democracy was considered unique at the time of its inception, more modern definitions of citizenship are most relevant. Tocqueville wrote, in *Democracy in America*, "In America the people is a master whose exigencies demand obedience to the utmost limits of possibility" (p. 58). Tocqueville saw American citizenship as defined primarily by participating

in the process of self-governance. He marveled at all the opportunities Americans had to influence the laws that directed their day-to-day lives, from the most local of levels all the way to national government. Even when certain members of society, such as women, did not have a vote, they were able to use other means to participate in government. The First Amendment gives U.S. citizens the right to "assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances," which many people used, and still use, as a means for persuading those in power to change certain laws (Buchanan, 2010).

Even more recent definitions of American citizenship echo Tocqueville's reflections. Shklar (1991) holds citizenship to lofty standards. She provides the following definition of American citizenship:

> The good democratic citizen is a political agent who takes part regularly in politics locally and nationally, not just on primary and election day. Active citizens keep informed and speak out against public measures that they regard as unjust, unwise, or just too expensive. They also openly support politics that they regard as just and prudent. Although they do not refrain from pursuing their own and their reference group's interests, they try to weigh the claims of other people impartially and listen to their arguments. They are public meeting-goers and joiners of voluntary organizations who discuss and deliberate with others about the politics that will affect them all, and who serve their country not only as taxpayers and occasional soldiers, but by having a considered notion of the public good that they genuinely take to heart. The good citizen is a patriot. (p. 5)

Hadenius (2001) generally agrees with Shklar's many requirements for good democratic citizenship. He says that active citizenship includes having

…a developed political interest, a desire to become involved, and a wish to exert influence. The persons in question should also have a firm faith in their ability to make their voices heard. In their basic political attitudes, moreover, they should be open, tolerant, and broad-minded, and they should apply a rationalist and deliberative method. (p. 18)

Hadenius (2001) also emphasizes the resources that an active citizen should have, including political knowledge and time and money available to influence politics and government. The third component of active citizenship that Hadenius (2001) stresses is an individual's connection to or relationship with others as a means of accomplishing politically oriented goals.

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) offer categories for three different types of citizenship, as well as an argument for which conceptualizations of citizenship best reflect the idealized standard to be achieved through education in the U.S.. The three types of citizenship are: personally responsible citizens, participatory citizens, and justice-oriented citizens. Below are the core assumptions of each kind of citizen, according to Westheimer and Kahne (2004):

- Personally responsible citizen: "To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community" (p. 240)

- Participatory citizen: "To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures" (p. 240)

- Justice-oriented citizen: "To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question, debate and change established systems and structures that reproduce patterns of injustice over time" (p. 240).

The authors note the importance of focusing on definitions that are inherently about democracy when defining American citizenship. For this reason, they critique using definitions of citizenship in the category of personally responsible citizens since government leaders in a totalitarian regime would also like their citizens to demonstrate these qualities (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Additionally, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) demonstrate through quantitative and qualitative research that the categories are not cumulative, so educational programs that focus on developing justice-oriented citizens do not necessarily produce qualities of participatory citizens. This is also true in reverse. In fact, others join Westheimer and Kahne (for example, see Walker, 2002) in arguing that programs focused on participation in community service (participatory citizens) are actually substituting volunteer work for civic action. For this reason, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argue that definitions of a "good citizen" should include ideals of both participatory and justice-oriented citizens, and civic education should teach the ideals of both.

Dalton (2008) also distinguishes between different definitions of citizenship, but offers just two categories. "Duty-based citizenship," which is what Dalton believes most people think of when referring to citizenship. Duty-based citizenship focuses on "the traditional norms of American citizenship—voting, paying taxes, belonging to a political party" (p. 5). Dalton argues, "it is just as important to examine new norms that make up…engaged citizenship.… Engaged citizenship emphasizes a more assertive role for the citizen and a broader definition of the elements of citizenship to include social concerns and the welfare of others" (p. 5). Dalton believes the changing landscape of America also requires a change in the definition of what makes someone a "good citizen" to include elements of engaged citizenship.

While each of these scholars has a different perspective on exactly what a good, responsible citizen should do, one theme remains consistent: A citizen should participate in ways

that have the potential to influence those entities that have control over the citizen's, and his or her neighbors', day-to-day lives. Citizen engagement is good citizenship.

Civic and Political Engagement

A recent trend in the literature has been to bemoan the decline in citizen engagement among the younger population of the country (Delli Carpini, 2000; Mattson, 2003; Mindich, 2005). A more recent trend in the literature has been to disagree with that trend or qualify it as inaccurate or incomplete (Andolina et al., 2002; Zukin et al., 2006; Dalton, 2008; Youniss & Levine, 2009). The discrepancy between the scholars often lies in how they choose to define citizen engagement. Those who point out the rapid decline in engagement among youth are typically referring to "traditional" forms of political participation such as voting, contacting a government official or volunteering on a campaign (Hudson, 2001; Mattson, 2003). Scholars who believe that youth are just as engaged as preceding generations cite participation in the form of volunteering, protesting, or creating social networks online to advocate for a position (Haste, 2004; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004; Dalton, 2008). These different approaches to defining engagement at times align themselves with what some scholars have come to distinguish as the difference between political and civic engagement, respectively.

Zukin et al. (2006) draw a distinction between the two types of engagement, following Verba, Schlozman and Brady's (1995) definition of political engagement as "activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action—either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies" (p. 38). Zukin et al. (2006) offer their own definition of civic engagement as "organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others" (p.7). Delli Carpini (2004) offers similar definitions, but goes further to separate engagement into both

attitudes and behaviors. He offers "democratic engagement" as a term encompassing all these elements, asserting, "a democratically engaged citizen is one who participates in civic and political life and who has the values, attitudes, opinions, skills, and resources to do so effectively" (Delli Carpini, 2004, p. 397).

Because attitudes are closely linked to behaviors, it is important to consider both when measuring an individual's political and civic engagement (Kahle, Klingel & Kulka, 1981). Most measures of engagement assess either behaviors or attitudes, but not both. For this reason, a variety of scales were used in the study to assess levels of both types of engagement.

Civic Attitudes

Variables being considered as a part of civic attitudes include social responsibility, civic accountability, and competence for civic action.

Berkowitz and Lutterman (1968), in their development of the socially responsible construct, found that individuals who scored high on social responsibility felt "a sense of participation and involvement in one's community and society" (p. 171). A key part of Zukin et al.'s (2006) conception of civic engagement is a strong connection to one's community, which in turn fuels the desire to help address the problems faced in the community.

Kahne, Middaugh and Schutjer-Mance's civic accountability construct (as cited in Flanagan, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2007) was originally developed to determine "the extent to which California students [were] committed to future civic participation" (Civic Engagement Research Group, n.d.). As previously discussed, attitudes and behaviors are closely linked, so a person's commitment to participation will play a significant role in whether or not that person actually participates civically (Kahle, Klingel & Kulka, 1981).

Flanagan, Syvertsen and Stout (2007) developed the competence for civic action measure by drawing items primarily from Kahne, Middaugh and Schutjer-Mance's work on the California Civic Index. This construct assesses "young people's perceived ability to engage in civic action" (Flanagan, Syvertsen & Stout, 2007, p. 4). Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that contexts supportive of competence promote positive motivation in a person, and the consequence of motivation is action (p. 76). Therefore, it will be important to measure for differences in competence among the study participants.

Political Attitudes

Variables being considered as a part of political attitudes include citizen duty, political efficacy, interest and understanding, and political alienation.

Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954) developed the citizen duty scale for their study measuring political attitudes. They wanted to determine how obligated citizens felt to vote in local and national elections despite overwhelming electoral odds against an individual's personal preferences. The researchers found that a strong sense of citizen duty was positively related to their political participation index, so the current study also looked for a relationship among these variables (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954).

Verba, Schlozman and Brady's (1995) political efficacy measure asks respondents to indicate how much attention local and national government officials would pay if they brought a complaint forward and how much influence the respondent feels he or she has over local and national government. The researchers developed a political efficacy measure to include in their study on American participation in civic and political life because the political attitude of efficacy has been shown "to be a strong predictor of political involvement" (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995, p. 346). This once again relates back to the notion that a person's attitude about

political involvement will be closely related to their political behaviors (Kahle, Klingel & Kulka, 1981).

The interest and understanding scale, as cited in Metz and Youniss (2005), serves a purpose for political attitudes similar to the purpose of the competency scale for civic attitudes. Ryan and Deci's (2000) argument that knowing how to do something is a positive indicator for actually doing that thing provides a compelling reason to see how competency in political action relates to taking political action.

Up to this point, all the variables considered in the current study are positive indicators of civic and political activity; however, Davis and Smith's (1996) political alienation scale (as cited in Robinson, Shaver & Wrightsman, 1999) is negatively related to political activity. The researchers found that higher political alienation was negatively correlated with voting in the 1976 election. Adams, Dow and Merrill (2006) validated those findings in their own study, which showed that "alienation…motivated significant amounts of voter abstention in the 1980-1988 U.S. presidential elections" (p. 65). Southwell (2008) also found that powerlessness and meaninglessness, two dimensions of political alienation, depressed voter turnout in presidential elections between 1964 and 2000.

Civic and Political Behaviors

In addition to measures of political and civic action, a measure of public voice was used to assess participation in political and civic behaviors. The measure in the current study for political participation was adapted from Verba and Nie's (1972) study on political participation in America. Factor analysis in Verba and Nie's (1972) study revealed that their measure of political participation could be categorized as four dimensions of participation: voting, campaign

activity, contacting and cooperative activity. These dimensions are consistent with the literature regarding traditional forms of political participation (Hudson, 2001; Mattson, 2003).

Since the distinction between civic and political engagement used in the current study was drawn primarily from Zukin et al. (2006), the measure for civic action was also adapted from Zukin et al.'s study. The measure asks respondents participating in the study about their behaviors related to "organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others" outside of government or political organizations (Zukin et al., 2006, p. 7). The focus on organized voluntary activity as a distinct type of engagement from political engagement was also recognized by Putnam (2000), although Zukin et al. (2006) broaden civic engagement to include other forms of "participation aimed at achieving a public good" (p. 51).

Finally, the measure for public voice was also adapted from Zukin et al. (2006). The public voice scale measures "expressive forms of participation [other] than electoral behavior" (Zukin et al., 2006, p. 58). The researchers admit that "the lines between civic and political engagement, while meaningful, are porous, and that this interrelationship is captured in our 'public voice' measures" (Zukin et al., 2006, pp. 58-59). The current study also recognizes the possible overlap between political and civic engagement, which is why the public voice measure is an important variable to consider.

Disengagement?

As Alexis de Tocqueville traveled through America observing the new democracy, he mused, "The political activity that pervades the United States must be seen in order to be understood. No sooner do you set foot on American ground than you are stunned by a kind of tumult" (Tocqueville, 1946, p. 318). Tocqueville recognized through his writing that one of the qualities that makes American democracy so unique is citizen participation, but the way citizens

participate has changed over time, leading some scholars to question whether engagement levels remain as high as Tocqueville observed. On the other hand, other scholars have made arguments for not only high levels of engagement, but greater opportunities for engagement.

No matter which form of engagement to which one refers (political or civic), evidence exists that U.S. citizens, and young people in particular, are not as tuned in as citizen engagement scholars would like. This was truer prior to September 11th, but some scholars still make claims about low engagement levels. Delli Carpini (2000) lists a string of statistics pointing out young people's lack of interest, knowledge and participation in political, and even some civic, affairs. Niemi and Junn (1998) claim, "A politically knowledgeable citizenry is…a goal rather than a reality" (p. 1). Levine (2007) points to statistics reflecting a decline in voting, news consumption and protesting over the last few decades. Even the spikes in voter turnout in 2006 and 2008 are still nowhere near the levels they should be. In 2006, 48% of voting-age citizens cast a ballot, and those in the youngest age group (18-24) had the lowest voting rate at 22% (Edwards & Hait, 2008). In 2008, the increase in voter turnout for the historic presidential election seemed significant, but was actually statistically unchanged from 2004, at 64% (Edwards, 2009). Furthermore, the youngest age group (18-24) still had the lowest voting rate at 49% (Edwards, 2009).

Despite these trends in disengagement, scholars also point out the increase in the amount of non-traditional participation, such as volunteering, that young people take part in (Zukin et al., 2006; Levine, 2007; Dalton, 2008). Another trend in recent literature points to the use of new media technologies in citizen engagement. In the introduction of his volume on how young people use new media to learn citizen engagement, Dahlgren (2007) notes the trend in the literature toward declining citizen engagement. He also recognizes that the Internet has not

become the ultimate savior of democracy that some hoped it might be. Instead, he examines the potential the medium has in U.S. democracy:

> There is no simple technological solution for democracy's dilemmas, and the availability of communication technology is no guarantee that it will be used for civic purposes. Yet, if the optimists overshot the mark [on how the Internet would function to revitalize democracy], so too did the pessimists who scoffed at the notion that the Internet would play any significant political role. Today few would simply dismiss the idea that the Internet has become an important feature of political society….The Internet is contributing in various ways to how many young people learn to become citizens, how they develop the role of civic agents, and even to the manner in which they engage in politics. Dahlgren, 2007, pp. 1-2.

The problem with this is that the types of non-traditional participation that young people are doing more of are not enough for the more complete citizen engagement that is necessary for a robust democracy. Not only should citizen engagement include increased voter turnout, but citizens should demonstrate an increased awareness of the problems and issues facing their communities and country and work to address those issues using the resources available to them. As Dewey (1916) pointed out nearly a decade ago, education is a necessity of life, and more specifically, of democracy in order for it to thrive. Something has to trigger citizen engagement, and research has shown that education is an effective means for doing so (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Torney-Purta, 2002; Zukin et al., 2006).

Civic Education

While the focus of civic education may be on youth, the impact of it must be long-term for the education to be effective. Metz and Youniss (2005) and McFarland and Thomas (2006)

demonstrate that providing opportunities for engagement during the more formative years of a citizen's life will lead to increased levels of engagement in early adulthood. Metz and Youniss (2005) conducted a longitudinal study on two different groups of high school students: one with a mandatory 40-hour community service requirement and one with no such requirement. The authors found that students required to participate in community service later reported greater levels of civic involvement than those with no requirement (Metz & Youniss, 2005). McFarland and Thomas (2006) used data from two longitudinal national datasets to examine the role of participation in high school voluntary associations on adult political participation. The research found that "youth organizations that demand student time commitments and that concern service, political activity, and public performance, have the most significant, positive relation to long-term political participation" (McFarland & Thomas, 2006, p. 416).

Civic Education Programs

Having established that civic education is an effective means for promoting increased civic and political engagement, the focus must shift to addressing ways to provide quality civic education programs to students. Advocates for civic education have established programs across the country to promote civic education. Kids Voting USA provides instructional material for grades kindergarten through 12th that teaches students about "democracy through a combination of classroom activities, and authentic voting experience and family dialogue" (Kids Voting USA, 2009). A completely different kind of civic education program is the Close Up program at state and national levels, which provides middle school and high school students with a hands-on exploration of the governmental process at a state event or in Washington. The program requires participant fees as well as the travel expenses to get to the location of the state events or to Washington, so it is a more exclusive civic education program. We the People is a similar state

and national program that examines constitutional issues in public policy. Additionally, Boys and Girls State and Nation, sponsored by the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary, have taught youth about governmental decision-making and the election process since 1935 for boys and 1937 for girls (American Legion Auxiliary, 2006; American Legion, 2010).

With other national civic education programs making their mark, less focus is given to local programs such as Youth Congress. However, the success of organizations such as Kids Voting USA has paved the way for Youth Congress to be taken more seriously and to be expanded to offer more people the kind of valuable civic education opportunities Kids Voting and other programs offer their participants. Research on the effectiveness of Kids Voting has found that it narrows the civic involvement gap between white and non-white participants. It not only encourages increased civic involvement and competence from participants, but also from the parents of participants. Kids Voting serves as a catalyst for deliberative democracy, it serves as a catalyst for long-term involvement, and it encourages people to vote (McDevitt et al., 2003; McDevitt & Kiousis, 2004; McDevitt & Kiousis, 2006). With such promising outcomes demonstrating the effectiveness of civic education, it only makes sense to continue developing and expanding opportunities for civic education through established programs like Youth Congress that follow a strategy similar to Kids Voting.

The Olathe Youth Congress program is sponsored by the Student Development Department of the Olathe School District. This program is distinct from some of the other programs discussed in that Youth Congress is coordinated by the school district and offered as a co-curricular opportunity for all Olathe middle school and high school students. Additionally, Youth Congress promotes both political and civic engagement, which is a broader focus than programs such as Boys and Girls State and Nation. Students participating in Youth Congress

learn about the governmental process while working with their peers to solve community problems.

Youth Congress was established in 1999 and is modeled after the United States Congress with the purpose of bringing students together from grades 7-12 in the Olathe School District to brainstorm, debate and vote on resolutions that address issues in the community. Students who remain involved after the fall General Assembly then pursue whichever resolution receives the most votes during the General Assembly in hopes of making the resolution a reality. Steps to enact at least portions of each of these initiatives have been taken; to turn a resolution into reality, students meet with community members for help with funding, institutional support and other necessary resources. Resolutions must include background research on the topic as well as a realistic solution and plan for accomplishing the action. Furthermore, resolutions must include a solution that students in grades K-12 can be a part of and that will have a local impact (Wilson-Shryock, 2010).

Youth Congress is completely student-run, especially on the day of the General Assembly. Students are trained as cabinet members, scribes, whip leaders and subcommittee chairs so that student leaders are available at every level to direct the events of the day and answer questions of participants who may be less familiar with the program. Adults present at the general assembly are there only to observe, but not to intervene. Kory Norris, director of the Student Development Department explains further:

'As silent supporters, the adults take a step back and allow students to branch out and connect with their peers….It is also an opportunity and an invitation to reach out to our quiet leaders and to help them find a voice. Many students who participate are able to return to the classroom with the newfound confidence to speak out.' (Wilson-Shryock, 2010)

In the past, resolutions passed by Youth Congress have included an ongoing "Promote the Vote" campaign, a recycling program in the schools, a city beautification project and a teen coffeehouse open on the weekends as a safe place to go for area youth. Today, nearly 400 students participate in Youth Congress annually.

Based on the research about civic education reviewed in this paper, Youth Congress provides a model of civic education that should effectively accomplish the goals of increasing civic and political engagement. This study sought to determine if Olathe Youth Congress is indeed effective as a civic education program designed to increase citizen engagement by testing the following hypotheses.

> H1: Current participants in the Olathe Youth Congress program will score higher on measures of political and civic engagement (social responsibility, civic duty, civic accountability, political participation, sense of public voice, competence for civic action, civic participation, political efficacy, and political interest and understanding) than current high school students who are not program participants.

> H2: Alumni of the Olathe Youth Congress program will score higher on measures of political and civic engagement (social responsibility, civic duty, civic accountability, political participation, sense of public voice, competence for civic action, civic participation, political efficacy, and political interest and understanding) than college students who did not participate in the program.

> H3: Current participants in the Olathe Youth Congress program will score lower on a measure of political alienation than current high school students who are not program participants.

H4: Alumni of the Olathe Youth Congress program will score lower on a measure of political alienation than college students who did not participate in the program.

As previously discussed, attitudes are an important part of citizen engagement, but the behaviors are what scholars focus on when making claims about the decline in youth engagement or the rise in non-traditional forms of engagement. The literature argues that many factors, including the previously mentioned attitudes toward civics and politics, contribute to an individual's levels of civic and political participation. One concern with doing a study such as this is that any increased levels of engagement are often a product of self-selection rather than an effect of participation in the voluntary civic education program (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Metz & Youniss, 2005; McFarland & Thomas, 2006). A number of indicators that may contribute to self-selection, other than civic and political attitudes, have been shown to account for significant portions of the variation in engagement. Both Zukin et al. (2006) and McFarland & Thomas (2006) identify the following as indicators of engagement: gender (female), race (white), citizenship (legal citizen), family structure (live with two parents/guardians), government class (taken one), GPA (higher), religious service attendance (attend regularly), another person in household volunteers, political discussions at home (more frequent), and debate (participate in). Zukin et al. (2006) find number of friends (higher) and enjoyment of high school to also be significant indicators of engagement. Each of these indicators was included on the surveys for this study.

The following research question was examined to see which factors contribute most to civic and political participation, and what role participation in Youth Congress plays in contributing to civic and political participation.

RQ1: What factors predict higher levels of citizen participation (civic participation, political participation and public voice)?

How Civic Education Should Accomplish the Goal of Promoting Engagement

In 2003, 57 scholars and practitioners came together to produce a comprehensive report detailing goals for and approaches to a more robust civic education program in the U.S.. The report was, in part, a response to the consensus these individuals reached about the importance of school-based civic education, but also the disagreements that abound in how to achieve such an education.

The report offers four general principles to guide civic education programs in schools. The authors recommend that no matter the approach taken to provide young people with a civic education, the program should have the following characteristics:

- A deliberate, intentional focus on civic outcomes such as students' propensity to vote, to work on local problems, to join voluntary associations, and to follow the news.

- Explicit advocacy of civic and political engagement. In the process of teaching civic education, educators should encourage their students to participate personally in politics and civic society, including at the local level, although without advocating a particular position or party.

- Active learning opportunities that offer students the chance to engage in discussions of issues and take part in activities that can help put a "real life" perspective on what is learned in class. These activities can range from collaborative or independent research projects and presentations to simulations, mock trials and elections, service-learning projects, and participation in the student government.

- An emphasis on the ideas and principles that are essential to constitutional democracy, such as those found in the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, and how they influence our schools, religious congregations, the workplace, and local, state, and national governments. Students should grasp the relationship between these documents and the problems, opportunities, controversies, rights, and responsibilities that matter to them in the present. (Gibson, Levine, et al., 2003, p. 21)

First Guiding Principle: Focus on Civic Outcomes

The first guiding principle advocates for what some scholars have identified as competing characteristics of a good citizen: "traditional" characteristics such as voting and following the news, and more modern characteristics of citizen activism (involvement in local issues, potentially through town hall meetings or new media technologies, and participation in voluntary associations). As previously discussed, traditionally, researchers focused more on voting and watching the news as indicators of engagement, but more recent research has begun to argue for a balance of traditional and more contemporary values as a measure of a strong democracy, as is reflected by the first guiding principle (Dalton, 2008; Mouffe, 2005; Norton, 1991). Norton (1991) explains that high moral character in a citizen is characterized by following the laws of the government to maintain social order. However, Norton (1991) also recognizes, "the intended outcome of self-directed living provides a criterion for distinguishing good laws from bad" (p. 5). Dalton (2008) makes a similar argument when describing the shift from "good citizens" being defined as those who perceived citizenship as a passive duty (voting, following the news) to those who perceive citizenship as activism and participation in collective movements.

A stable democratic society benefits from a civic culture that balances a mix of traits. For instance, good democratic citizenship needs an allegiance to the state and obedience to the laws

of the government. Good democratic citizenship also requires that individuals participate in politics and challenge the government to represent their interests and fulfill their democratic responsibilities. Too much of the former pattern of citizenship leads to a deferential and potentially passive citizenry, where government may become unresponsive to its citizens, or worse. Too much of the latter may produce a system where division and political conflict could impede even a well-intentioned government from providing for the collective good. (Dalton, 2008, p. 163)

Therefore, civic education should help individuals recognize these competing interests and help people see the value in both sides. Civic education should teach the responsibilities (or "duties") of citizenship necessary to maintain social order, such as voting and following the news, but should also encourage questioning of the status quo and activism on behalf of one's own interests and the interests of one's local, or even global, communities.

Second Guiding Principle: Advocacy of Civic and Political Engagement

The second guiding principle advocates for instructors to actively discuss involvement with students. The role of the instructor as a catalyst for discussion and involvement amongst students is important because researchers insist that citizen engagement and politics are social in nature, though Americans often try to make it a solitary activity (Klofstad, 2007; Allen, 2004; Gutmann and Thompson, 2004 and 1996; Hudson, 2001 and Dewey, 1927). More specifically, these scholars believe that discussion is among the most vital components to a strong democracy. In fact, Hudson (2001) goes so far as to caution against a system (like the current one in America) that relies on and encourages individual decision-making. Hudson (2001) explains, "Without appropriate deliberative institutions, citizen opinion on issues becomes an aggregation

of individual snap judgments without the thoughtfulness, weighing of alternatives, and genuine engagement with an issue that democracy requires" (p. 117).

Allen (2004) and Gutmann and Thompson (2004) agree that civic education in the United States must foster dispositions toward discussion and deliberation with fellow citizens. Allen (2004) asks, "Can we devise an education that, rather than teaching citizens not to talk to strangers, instead teaches them how to interact with them self-confidently?" (p. 165). Klofstad's 2007 study provides empirical evidence in favor of discussing political and civic matters with friends, saying that this discussion serves as a strong predictor for civic engagement and participation. From this, instructors should see that their own discussions of political and civic matters in the classroom are likely to encourage their students to become more civically engaged than they might without those kinds of class discussions.

Third Guiding Principle: Active Learning Opportunities

The civic education literature concerning an active and experiential learning process (the third guiding principle) is extensive. Norton (1991) was blunt in his assessment of the education system in America when he said, "The books-and-classroom overdosing that deadens the native curiosity of children begins in elementary school with the disregard of children's interests in favor or preparation for standardized test-taking" (p. 77). Norton and others agree that reading or hearing about citizenship is not enough for a person to learn it, or at least not enough for a person to learn it well (Metz and Youniss, 2005; Gutmann and Thompson, 2004; Hudson, 2001). Additionally, as Sherrod, Flanagan and Youniss (2002) point out, "having responsibility, having a role, and just being involved" in politically oriented activity at a young age are motivators for continued civic engagement (see also, Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Stoneman, 2002; Hildreth, R.W.,

2000). Clearly, active learning experiences of some kind are integral to civic education programs.

Norton (1991) believes that education should develop a child's curiosity through community service and apprenticeship opportunities in elementary and secondary schools and through altering formal study semesters with community service or work study semesters at the collegiate level. Norton (1991) argues that doing so will help individuals achieve the self-fulfillment necessary for becoming an engaged, morally developed democratic citizen. Metz and Youniss' (2005) previously mentioned longitudinal study of high school students offered evidence to support Norton's proposal for community service opportunities in elementary and secondary schooling. Their study found that students required to participate in community service later reported greater levels of civic involvement than those with no requirement (Metz and Youniss, 2005). Haste (2004) drew similar conclusions about youth participation in voluntary activity saying it is "central to political development" and engagement (p. 423). Metz and Youniss (2005) also believe their findings could have implications on the issue of inclusiveness in civic education.

> Since schools are the common institution that reaches all youth, as Dewey and Dunn noted decades ago, a service requirement can function realistically as a device for political and civic socialization. It could, in principle, compensate for background differences in resources and, thereby, help to equalize opportunity for students. (Metz and Youniss, 2005, p. 432)

Hudson (2001) provides a summary argument for incorporating experiential learning into an individual's civic education. Hudson (2001) explains, "One learns democracy by practicing it. The process of participation allows people to learn about public issues, to become more aware of

public needs and the needs of their fellow citizens. In sum, participation is a way of acquiring 'civic virtue'" (p. 95).

Fourth Guiding Principle: Emphasis on the Principles of Democracy

The focus in the literature that falls primarily under the fourth guiding principle is the discussion of diversity in democracy as it relates to the core ideas and principles of equality, opportunity, freedom and liberty established in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, in their current forms. As Habermas (1989) and many others have noted, the public sphere has a history of excluding anyone who is not a white, property owning male, and while more citizens than ever have access to the public sphere, remnants of this exclusion remain today. For this reason, scholars argue that civic education should promote the ideals of democracy that focus on equal opportunity and inclusive access to the governing process.

Furthermore, these scholars argue that educating for a more inclusive system would lead to greater citizen engagement. Allen (2004) explains that when the "burdens within the citizenry" are not evenly balanced, citizens carrying an unfair portion of those burdens will "disengage from politics and abandon the polity" (p. 111). By burdens, Allen (2004) is referring to the sacrifices that have been made in disproportionate amount by minority groups in America (e.g., unequal/limited access to the rights of education, transportation, equal pay for equal work, employment in general, etc.). In American history, the citizens consistently overburdened have been African Americans, according to Allen (2004).

Dalton (2008) and Hillygus (2005) both present evidence showing that access to education in the first place is a strong indicator of how civically engaged an individual will be. In other words, higher levels of education will directly correlate with an increase in political interest and engagement. Hillygus (2005) finds more specific results about the nature of the education,

suggesting, "an educational system geared towards developing verbal and civic skills can encourage future participation in American democracy" (p. 41). Therefore, all citizens should have equal access to civic education, but more importantly, civic education should teach the importance of an inclusive democracy so that the citizenry continues to expect and demand an inclusive political system that not only allows, but also encourages participation from all citizens.

Another line of research that falls under this guiding principle looks at the role of basic political knowledge in predicting civic engagement. While researchers disagree on what a good measure of political knowledge is (i.e., what citizens should know), their results are consistent in finding that more knowledge is a predictor of increased engagement and more knowledge is good for democracy (Dudley & Gitelson, 2003; Sherrod, 2003; Hart & Atkins, 2002; Torney-Purta, 2002). As Gutmann and Thompson (2004) succinctly put it, "Democracy cannot thrive without a well-educated citizenry" (p. 36).

Youth Congress as a Quality Civic Education Program

Youth Congress is set up as a civic education program that follows each of the guiding principles, and, at least on the surface, seems to include all the main elements scholars find necessary for a civic education program to be effective. Analysis of Hypotheses 1-4 and Research Question 1 quantitatively assess whether the program achieves goals of civic and political engagement. If the program effectively achieves these goals, the next question to ask is about how to expand access to the program.

To determine how effective the Student Development Department is at recruitment and how they can increase access and awareness of their programs, qualitative analysis was used to offer answers to the following research questions.

RQ2: How familiar with Youth Congress are current Olathe high school students who are not participants?

RQ3: What are the most effective methods of information distribution for Olathe high school students?

RQ4: What reasons do individuals have for participating in a co-curricular program, such as Youth Congress?

RQ5: What areas for improvement do participants and past participants of Youth Congress recommend to increase the effectiveness of the program?

Finally, to determine whether the 2009 "Go Green" policy focus for Youth Congress has any impact on participants, the following research question was tested.

RQ6: Will high school students participating in the 2009 Youth Congress indicate an increased sense of importance for protecting the environment compared to high school students who are not participants in the program?

Summary

Previous research indicates a need for increased civic and political engagement, particularly among youth, for the public sphere to thrive and for American democracy to be healthy. The research also demonstrates that civic education is an effective means for increasing citizen engagement, but that schools are not yet doing enough on their own to promote engagement. A program such as Olathe Youth Congress could offer a model for other school districts to adopt to improve their civic education programs, and after a period of time, the quality of democracy in America. Chapter 3 reviews the methods that were used to offer answers about the effectiveness of Youth Congress.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

The study collected data from four different groups of subjects: Olathe, Kansas, high school students currently participating in the Olathe Youth Congress Program (to be abbreviated OSYC, i.e., Olathe Students: Youth Congress), Olathe high school students not participating in the program (abbreviated OS), college-age students (or older) who participated in the program while in high school (abbreviated YCA, i.e., Youth Congress Alumni), and college-age students who did not participate in the program, which were drawn from the research pool of the communication studies basic course at a large Midwestern university (abbreviated COMS). (See Appendix B for the complete survey.)

Using high school students for two of the subject groups provided additional obstacles for the study. In addition to obtaining Human Subjects Committee approval from the researcher's university, the Olathe School District also had a process for approving studies. The school district's review process was much more conservative and required minor alterations to the original study. (See Limitations and Future Research in Chapter 5: Discussion for more information on the concessions made for the Olathe School District.)

The Olathe Student Development Department (SDD), a department of the Olathe School District, recruited participants in the OS group through the area high school activity directors. The activity directors for each high school tasked the school's computer instructor to have one or more of their computer classes complete the surveys during an extended class period. This returned a usable subject pool of 166 participants. An additional 70 students attempted the survey but were prevented from completing the survey because of past participation in Youth Congress or because their parents had not received an Information Statement in advance. The

mean age for this sample group was 16.34 (*SD* = .96). The sample was 40% male and 60% female, and 5% Asian or Pacific Islander, 70% Caucasian, 5% African-American, 11% Spanish or Hispanic origin, 4% multi-racial, 2% Native American, and 4% other.

Students currently involved in Youth Congress were recruited during the annual daylong Youth Congress General Assembly that took place October 27, 2009. This returned a usable subject pool of 209 participants. Thirty-one surveys were not used in the data analysis because they were incomplete. The mean age for this sample group was 14.47 (*SD* = 1.62). Participants in this group reported an average age younger than the OS group due to the fact that junior high students were also invited to participate in the General Assembly. The sample was 33.5% male and 66.5% female, and 5% Asian or Pacific Islander, 64% Caucasian, 7% African-American, 12% Spanish or Hispanic origin, 7% multi-racial, 3% Native American, and 3 participants did not identify an ethnic background.

The COMS group acts as a comparison group to the YCA, similar to the way in which OS is compared to OSYC. Subjects from the COMS research pool were recruited through e-mail and a Blackboard course site that lists research information. Students in the research pool had the option of completing a course research requirement by participating in studies or completing a written assignment. This returned a subject pool of 324 students; an additional 2 students attempted the survey but were prevented from completing the survey because of past participation in Youth Congress. The mean age for this sample group was 19.63 (*SD* = 1.84). The sample was 39% male and 61% female, and 5% Asian or Pacific Islander, 80% Caucasian, 7% African-American, 3% Spanish or Hispanic origin, 3% multi-racial, 1% Native American, and 1% other.

The subjects in the YCA group were recruited in two ways. First, the researcher contacted individuals known to have participated in the program. Second, the SDD provided the researcher with lists of students who attended the General Assembly between 2005 and 2008. Because the information on file was at times incomplete or out of date, the researcher used a social networking site to contact past participants. Current information was verified for 80 past participants using these methods. A total of 64 Youth Congress alumni responded to the online survey sent out through email, for an 80% response rate. The mean age for this sample group was 19.97 ($SD = 2.24$). The sample was 58% male and 42% female, and 9% Asian or Pacific Islander, 77% Caucasian, 5% African-American, 2% Spanish or Hispanic origin, 3% multi-racial, 2% Native American, and 5% other. These frequencies demonstrate how comparable the two college-age groups are.

Measures

Civic Engagement was assessed with five scales. First, participants completed the Social Responsibility Scale (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968), which assesses "a person's traditional social responsibility, an orientation toward helping others even when there is nothing to be gained from them" (Robinson et al., 1999, p. 23). It has eight items scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Sample items include: "Letting your friends down is not so bad because you can't do good all the time for everybody" and "I feel very bad when I have failed to finish a job I promised I would do." Items were reversed-scored as appropriate so that higher scores are indicative of a greater sense of social responsibility. Chronbach's α was .68.

Next, participants completed the Civic Accountability Scale (Kahne, Middaugh, & Schutjer-Mance, 2005), which assesses "the extent to which citizens need to hold the

government accountable" (Flanagan, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2007, p. 7). It has four items and was also scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Sample items include: "If you love America, you should notice its problems and work to correct them" and "Being actively involved in community issues is my responsibility." Higher scores are indicative of a greater sense of civic accountability. Chronbach's α was .77.

Next, participants completed the Public Voice Scale, which assesses citizen participation in political and civic activities related to expressing one's opinion about issues. It is a nine-item scale modified from Zukin et al. (2006) and measures both civic and political engagement by asking respondents to indicate which activities they have participated in during the last 12 months. Sample items include signing an e-mail petition and boycotting products. A composite score was taken where one point was awarded to each "yes" response. Higher scores are indicative of a more active public voice. Since this scale assesses a level of participation using items with dyadic responses, it is unnecessary to conduct a reliability analysis for the measure. Reliability analysis is based on correlations, and correlations cannot generally be run for dichotomous items.

Next, participants completed the Competence for Civic Action Scale, which assesses a respondent's "perceived ability to engage in civic action" (Flanagan, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2007, p. 5). It is a nine-item scale modified from Kahne, Middaugh, & Schutjer-Mance (2005) and Keeter et al. (2002) and is scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = "I definitely can't" to 5 = "I definitely can." Respondents are told to consider how well they could do a list of activities if they wanted to do something about a problem in their community. Sample items include: "Create a plan to address the problem" and "Identify individuals or groups who could

help you with the problem." Higher scores are indicative of greater competence for civic action. Chronbach's α was .92.

Finally, participants completed the Civic Participation Scale, which assesses the amount of citizen participation in civic activities. It is an eleven-item scale modified from Zukin et al. (2006) and uses a composite score where one point is awarded to each "yes" response or more points are awarded for greater levels of participation. Sample items include: "In the last 12 months, have you spent time participating in any community service or volunteer activity?" and "Thinking about the volunteer work for that organization over the last 12 months, how often do you participate in volunteering?" Higher scores are indicative of more civic participation. Since this scale assesses a level of participation using items with dichotomous responses, it is unnecessary to conduct a reliability analysis for the measure.

Political Engagement was assessed with 5 scales, including the Public Voice Scale already described. Individual items about voting behavior in the last election or future likelihood of voting were also included on the survey to assess political engagement.

First, participants completed the Citizen Duty Scale (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954), which assesses "the feeling that people ought to participate in the political process, regardless of whether such political activity is deemed as efficacious" (Robinson et al., 1999, p. 25). It has four items scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Sample items include: "It isn't important to vote when you know your party doesn't have a chance to win" and "So many other people vote in the national elections that it doesn't matter much to me whether I vote or not." Higher scores are indicative of a greater sense of citizen duty. Chronbach's α was .74. The item, "If a person doesn't care how an election comes out, s/he shouldn't vote in it" was removed for greater scale reliability. The item removed

may be less connected to the construct of citizen duty than the remaining three items, which is why the scale reliability increases when the item is removed.

Then participants completed the Political Efficacy Scale (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995), which assesses "how much attention a local and a national government official would pay if the respondent had a complaint and how much influence the respondent has over local or national government decisions" (Robinson et al., 1999, p. 427). It has four items scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = None at all to 4 = A lot. Sample items include: "If you had some complaint about a *national government* activity and took that complaint to a member of the national government, do you think that he or she would pay no attention at all or a lot of attention?" and "How much influence do you think someone like you can have over *local government* decisions?" Higher scores are indicative of a greater sense of political efficacy. Chronbach's α was .73.

Next, participants completed the Political Participation Scale modified from Verba and Nie's (1972) Political Participation in America Study, which assesses citizen participation in politics beyond the scope of electoral activities. It asks respondents to indicate the frequency of their participation in certain activities for the first three items, ranging from 1 = Never to 4 = Always/Often/Most elections. A sample item is: "During elections, do you ever try to show people why they should vote for one of the parties or candidates?" The remaining seven items ask respondents to indicate whether or not they have done a certain activity. Sample items include: "In the past three or four years, have you attended any political meetings or rallies?" and "Have you ever worked with others in this community to try to solve some community problems?" A composite score was taken where one point is awarded to each "yes" response and added to the scores for the first three items. Higher scores are indicative of more political

participation. Since this scale assesses a level of participation using mostly items with dichotomous responses, it is unnecessary to conduct a reliability analysis for the measure.

Next, participants completed the Interest and Understanding Scale modified from Metz and Youniss (2005), which assesses interest and understanding of politics. It is a six-item scale where the first four items ask respondents to indicate the frequency of an activity, ranging from 1 = Never to 5 = Daily, and the last two items are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Sample items include: "How often do you discuss politics with parents?" and "Politics are too confusing to understand." The latter item was reversed-scored so that higher scores are indicative of a greater interest and understanding in politics. Chronbach's α was .82.

Political Alienation was assessed using a modification of Davis & Smith's (1996) Political Alienation Scale, which assesses "various sentiments related to feeling a lack of power in social and political relations" (Robinson et al., 1999, p. 434). The six-item scale is scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Sample items include: "The people running the country don't really care what happens to you" and "You're left out of the things going on around you." Higher scores are indicative of a greater sense of political alienation. Chronbach's α was .73.

Environmental Concern was assessed using a three-item scale for Protecting the Environment, which assesses the amount of importance respondents place on protecting the environment (Flanagan, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2007). This measure was included in the surveys for high school students to see if the "Go Green" theme of Youth Congress had an impact on the importance participants placed on protecting the environment. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = Not at all important to 5 = Very important. A sample

question is: "It is important for me to do something to stop pollution." Higher scores are indicative of a greater concern for protecting the environment. Chronbach's α was .83.

Items Directly Assessing Youth Congress were measured in the last section of the survey, which asked participants to respond to questions about how they became involved with Youth Congress, reasons for participation, enjoyment of the program, perceived areas for improvement, perceived educational value of the program, ways to increase access to and participation in the program, and non-program participant familiarity with the program. Participants in the YCA group were also asked to indicate their perceived impact of the program on their current civic and political habits.

In addition to these scales, participants completed a number of demographic items such as gender, ethnicity, citizenship status, high school, family structure, government class credit, GPA, religious service attendance, number of friends, enjoyment of high school, participation in activities while in high school, and home life activities. Post-high school students provided information about their post-high school activities.

Procedures

The Human Subjects Committee determined that the current study provided no more discomfort than an individual would experience in his or her every day life, so the researcher was permitted to use Information Statements and Internet Information Statements rather than signed informed consent forms.

The SDD staff and high school activity directors coordinated the distribution of Parental Information Statements (i.e., the informed consent document) to all high school students under the age of 18 who participated in the study and who did not participate in Youth Congress (see Appendix A for consent documents). Students whose parents received a Parental Information

Statement or students who were over the age of 18 and read the Information Statement, were able to volunteer to complete an online survey taking no longer than 20 minutes during a computer class. Survey items unique to OS respondents appear on pp. 83-85 in Appendix B. An Internet Information Statement appeared as the first page of the survey and asked students to confirm that their parents had received the Information Statement or that the student was over 18. Any student who did not respond in the affirmative to one of these two questions was automatically skipped to the end of the survey.

Parents of OSYC students received parental information statements from the SDD as a part of a pre-session informational letter. On the day of the Youth Congress General Assembly, surveys were distributed to participants, who were given approximately 20 minutes to complete it. Participants were asked to volunteer to complete the survey, and the verbal assent procedure or over-18 Information Statements were used to obtain voluntary consent. Survey items unique to OSYC respondents appear on pp. 81-83 in Appendix B.

COMS students who elected to participate were provided with a link to the online survey through the departmental Blackboard site for research participation. Survey items unique to COMS respondents appear on p. 87 in Appendix B. An Internet Information Statement was used to obtain voluntary consent.

E-mails to participants in the YCA group included a link to the online survey. Survey items unique to YCA respondents appear on pp. 85-87 in Appendix B. An Internet Information Statement was again used to obtain voluntary consent.

Analytical Strategy

Means and standard deviations of all test variables are reported in tables in Appendix C. Hypotheses 1-4 and Research Question 6 were analyzed using independent samples *t*-tests to

examine whether there are significant differences between each of the two groups being compared on measures of engagement, political alienation, and environmental concern.

Research Question 1 was analyzed using multiple regression. A categorical variable indicating whether the respondent participated in Youth Congress was entered in the first block of the regression. Demographic variables were entered in the second block as control variables and measures of civic and political attitudes (social responsibility, citizen duty, civic accountability, political efficacy, political alienation, interest and understanding, and competence for civic action) were entered into the third block. A regression analysis was run for each of the three scales measuring citizen participation (political participation, public voice, and civic participation). The regression analysis showed which factors account for the most variance in citizen participation. A table of coefficients appears in Appendix C.

Research Questions 2-5 were analyzed using frequencies. The purpose of these questions is to provide the SDD with information on how they can improve their program and increase access to the program.

The following chapter presents the results of the statistical tests.

Chapter 4: Results

Independent samples *t*-tests were used to analyze the data for Hypothesis 1, which stated that current participants in the Olathe Youth Congress program will score higher on measures of political and civic engagement than current high school students who are not program participants. Results partially support the hypothesis. Current participants of Youth Congress scored significantly higher than high school non-participants on measures of social responsibility, civic accountability, political efficacy, political participation, public voice, interest and understanding, competence for civic action, and civic participation (see Appendix C, Table 1 for means, standard deviations and *t*-values). Current Youth Congress participants did not score significantly higher on the measure of citizen duty. These results support the notion that current Youth Congress participants are more politically and civically engaged than high school students who do not participate in the program.

Independent samples *t*-tests were used to analyze the data for Hypothesis 2, which stated that alumni of Youth Congress will score higher on measures of political and civic engagement than college students who did not participate in the program. Results partially support the hypothesis. Alumni of Youth Congress scored significantly higher than college-age non-participants on measures of social responsibility, political efficacy, political participation, public voice, interest and understanding, competence for civic action, and civic participation (see Appendix C, Table 2 for means, standard deviations and *t*-values). The *t*-test for the measure of civic accountability was approaching significance, indicating that alumni were also more likely than non-participants to score higher on this measure as well. Alumni, just as current participants, did not score significantly higher on the measure of citizen duty. These results

support the notion that alumni of Youth Congress are more politically and civically engaged than college-age individuals who did not participate in the program during high school.

An independent samples *t*-test was used to analyze the data for Hypothesis 3, which stated that current Youth Congress participants will score lower on a measure of political alienation than current high school students who are not program participants. Results supported the hypothesis. Current participants of Youth Congress scored significantly lower than high school non-participants on a measure of political alienation, $t(373) = 2.33, p = .02$ (see also Appendix C, Table 1). This result supports the hypothesis that current Youth Congress participants are less politically alienated than high school students who did not participate in the program.

An independent samples *t*-test was used to analyze the data for Hypothesis 4, which stated that alumni of Youth Congress will score lower on a measure of political alienation than college students who did not participate in the program. Results did not support the hypothesis. There was no significant difference between Youth Congress alumni and college-age non-participants in scores on the measure of political alienation, $t(386) = .31, p = .755$ (see also Appendix C, Table 2).

Research Question 1 asked what factors will predict higher levels of citizen participation. Three separate multiple regression models were used to examine demographic variables and political and civic attitude measures as predictors of citizen participation. Each regression model included the same predictor variables but a different dependent variable: civic participation, political participation or public voice. Participation in Youth Congress was entered in the first block to look at its individual contribution to the regression model. Demographic variables (high school government credit, GPA, friends, volunteers in the family, enjoyment of high school

academics, enjoyment of high school social life, enjoyment of high school extra curricular activities, discussion of politics with family, and participation in high school and non-school activities) were entered in the second block as control variables and measures of political and civic attitudes (social responsibility, citizen duty, civic accountability, political efficacy, political alienation, interest and understanding and competence for civic action) were entered in the third block. The independent variables accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in all three measures of citizen participation (see Appendix C, Tables 3-5 for R^2, the regression coefficients, and the part and partial correlations).

In the first regression model political participation was the dependent variable. Youth Congress participation, GPA, discussion of politics with family, participation in high school debate, being a political volunteer, participation in a non-school political group, participation in a non-school youth group, political efficacy, interest and understanding, and competency for civic action were positive significant predictors of political participation, $R^2 = .45, p < .01$. Credit for a high school government class and participation in a non-school sport were significant negative predictors of political participation (see Appendix C, Table 3 for significant standardized coefficients, part and partial correlations).

In the second regression model public voice was the dependent variable. Credit for a high school government class, participation in a high school sport, participation in high school debate, participation in a non-school environmental group, participation in a non-school music group, political alienation, interest and understanding, and competency for civic action were positive significant predictors of public voice, $R^2 = .35, p < .01$. Participation in student council and participation in a non-school sport were significant negative predictors of public voice. (See Appendix C, Table 4 for significant standardized coefficients, part and partial correlations.)

In the third regression model civic participation was the dependent variable. Participation in Youth Congress, GPA, participation in a high school service group, participation in a non-school service group, participation in a non-school environmental group, participation in a non-school youth group, social responsibility, and competency for civic action were positive significant predictors of civic participation, $R^2 = .41$, $p < .01$. Credit for a high school government class was a negative significant predictor of civic participation. (See Appendix C, Table 5 for significant standardized coefficients, part and partial correlations.)

Frequencies were used to analyze the data for Research Question 2, which asked how familiar current Olathe high school student non-participants are with Youth Congress. Results showed that 19% of Olathe high school students who have not participated in Youth Congress have heard of the program and know what it is. An additional 46% have heard of Youth Congress but do not know what it is, and 34% of non-participants have not heard of the program. A complete list of frequencies for Research Questions 2 - 5 can be found on Tables 6-15 in Appendix C.

Frequencies were used to analyze the data for Research Question 3, which asked what the most effective methods of information distribution are in Olathe high schools. Results showed that the top three ways Youth Congress participants heard about the program were from an instructor (60%), from a representative of the program who provided information on Youth Congress (35%), and from a school administrator or other school staff member who talked to the student about the program (34%). The top three ways non-participants heard about the program were from an instructor (68%), from a friend (50%), and from daily school announcements (42%). High school non-participants said that the best ways to get information about a program

like this to students were through an instructor (66%), from a flyer or poster in the school (64%), and through a friend (63%). Respondents could mark multiple options.

Frequencies were used to analyze the data for Research Question 4, which asked what reasons individuals have for participating in a co-curricular program, such as Youth Congress. Results showed that the top three reasons high school non-participants who knew about the program did not participate were lack of time (71%), lack of interest (67%), and because they did not know anyone else participating (62%). High school non-participants who knew about the program said the top three things the Student Development Department could do to get them to participate were to have an instructor provide extra credit in class for participating (62%), to better explain the benefits of participation (50%), and to have more publicity about Youth Congress (48%). High school non-participants said the top three reasons they participate in co-curricular activities are because the activity falls in line with their interests (80%), because the activity seems fun (80%), and to be able to list it on resumes and college applications (71%). Current Youth Congress participants said the top three reasons they decided to participate in the program were to get leadership experience (67%), to be able to list it on resumes and college applications (55%), and to become more involved in their community (55%). Current Youth Congress participants thought the top three things the Student Development Department could do to get other students to participate were to have more publicity about Youth Congress (56%), to better explain the benefits of participation (49%), and to have an instructor offer extra credit in class for participating (47%). Youth Congress alumni said the top three reasons they participated in the program were to gain leadership experience (94%), to see what Youth Congress was about (94%), and because Youth Congress seemed like it would be interesting or fun (92%). Respondents could mark multiple options.

Frequencies and single-item scale averages were used to analyze the data for Research Question 5, which asked what areas for improvement current and past Youth Congress participants recommend to increase the effectiveness of the program. Results showed that current participants rated their average enjoyment of the program at 3.68 ($SD = 1.13$) on a scale of 1-5, with higher scores indicating more enjoyment. Current participants rated the average amount they learned at 3.59 ($SD = 1.16$) on a scale of 1-5, with higher scores indicating a greater amount learned. Youth Congress alumni rated their average enjoyment of the program at 3.95 ($SD = .97$) on a scale of 1-5, with higher scores indicating more enjoyment. Alumni rated the average amount they learned at 3.73 ($SD = 1.09$) on a scale of 1-5, with higher scores indicating a greater amount learned. Alumni rated their average overall satisfaction with the program at 3.95 ($SD = 1.05$) on a scale of 1-5, with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction. When alumni of the program were asked to consider the impact of Youth Congress on their current civic engagement level, the mean response was 3.67 ($SD = .84$), where 1 = less engaged, 3 = the same, and 5 = more engaged. When alumni were asked to consider the impact of Youth Congress on their current political engagement level, the mean response was 3.52 ($SD = .80$), where 1 = less engaged, 3 = the same, and 5 = more engaged.

Current Youth Congress participants said that the top three things they enjoyed most about participating were debating resolutions (58%), meeting new people (50%), and getting leadership experience (46%). Current Youth Congress participants said the top four things they would improve for the future were that they did not feel like it made a difference if they were at the General Assembly (33%), the disorganization of the small group leaders (25%), that the day was too structured (23%), and that the process for debating did not work (23%). Current Youth Congress participants said that the top three things they learned through their participation were

how Congress works (72%), how to put a plan together to solve a problem in the community (54%), and how to debate legislation (52%). Youth Congress alumni said that the top three things they enjoyed most about participating were getting leadership experience (86%), working in small groups on legislation (67%), and brainstorming ideas (67%). Alumni said the top five things they learned through their participation were how to put a plan together to solve a problem in the community (77%), how to work effectively in groups (72%), how Congress works (70%), the importance of being involved in the community (70%), and a better understanding of problems affecting the community (70%).

An independent samples *t*-test was used to analyze data for Research Question 6, which asked if current Youth Congress participants will indicate an increased sense of importance for protecting the environment compared to high school non-participants. Results showed that there was no significant difference between current Youth Congress participants and high school non-participants on a measure for importance of protecting the environment, $t(373) = -.21$, $p = .832$ (see also Appendix C, Table 1).

The findings of the study provide insight into the effects of civic education as well as some areas of improvement for Youth Congress. The following chapter discusses those insights in detail and offers recommendations for the Student Development Department to take when considering ways to strengthen their program.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The goals of this study were to assess the effectiveness of the Olathe, Kansas Student Development Department (SDD) Youth Congress program in achieving the goals of civic education and to apply those findings in the development of quality civic education programs. Findings from the study provide useful information to help in responding to these goals, and offer support for the idea that a quality civic education program can facilitate increased levels of citizen engagement.

Youth Congress Participants Demonstrate Higher Levels of Citizen Engagement

On measures of social responsibility, civic accountability, political efficacy, political participation, public voice, interest and understanding, competence for civic action, and civic participation, current and past participants of Youth Congress scored higher than non-participants of the program. Citizen duty was the only measure of engagement on which current and past participants did not score significantly higher than non-participants (civic accountability was approaching significance for Youth Congress alumni). Furthermore, Hypotheses 3 and 4 stated that current and past Youth Congress participants would score lower on political alienation, a negative indicator of citizen engagement (Robinson, Shaver & Wrightsman, 1999). While this was not the case for Youth Congress alumni, current Youth Congress participants did score lower on political alienation.

These results provide clear evidence of the differences between citizen engagement levels of those who participate in Youth Congress and those who do not. Not only do participants have greater knowledge and competency about participation, but they are also more likely to be active civic and political participants. The implications of these findings are significant. It provides a stronger argument for developing and expanding civic education to reach more students across

the country. Additionally, the hands-on nature of a program such as Youth Congress provides students the opportunity to practice citizen engagement in a structured learning environment so that students are more competent to continue these practices on their own outside their program participation.

While citizen duty did not result in significant differences between participants and non-participants, overall the variable was positively related to political participation, consistent with the findings of the original researchers (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954). Additionally, the mean scores on citizen duty were relatively high for both high school and college age students, so the particular samples selected for this study may reflect cultures that already have a high sense of citizen duty. However, even though Youth Congress participants do not demonstrate greater levels of citizen duty than non-participants, encouraging a sense of citizen duty through civic education is still important for increasing an individual's political participation.

One probable explanation for why political alienation was significant for high school students but not college-age students may simply be age. Political alienation measured "various sentiments related to feeling a lack of power in social and political relations" with items such as, "The people running the country don't really care what happens to you" and "Most people with power try to take advantage of others" (Robinson, Shaver & Wrightsman, 1999, pp. 434, 436). Younger people may feel more alienated because they do not have the same legal rights as adults. In fact, a post hoc regression analysis demonstrates that an increase in age is a significant predictor for a decrease in political alienation, $\beta = -.07$, $t = -2.04$, $p = .042$. Even though as minors, high school students do not have all the legal rights of adults, a program such as Youth Congress can serve to help them understand all the ways in which they do have the power to make a difference, thereby lessening the degree of alienation youth might feel.

Youth Congress is a Significant Predictor of Citizen Participation

Some may quickly point out a counterargument to the results found in Hypotheses 1-4: These results do not take into account potential self-selecting biases. In other words, those participating in Youth Congress may already be more inclined toward citizen engagement, which is why they elected to take part in the program. It is in response to this argument that the results of the three regression analyses may provide some of the more interesting results found in this study. Even while controlling for demographic variables and prior attitudes toward civic and political engagement that could contribute to the self-selecting bias, Youth Congress remained a significant, positive predictor of higher levels of both civic and political participation. An additional consideration for the counterargument is that Youth Congress was not a significant predictor in all three measures of participation. For example, Youth Congress participation was not a significant predictor of public voice, the third measure of citizen participation, but this may be due to the admission made by the original researchers that public voice represents some of the overlap between civic and political participation (Zukin et al., 2006). If the correlations are high between Youth Congress participation and other predictor variables, then Youth Congress participation is responsible for less unique variance in public voice.

High School and Non-School Activities that Predict Citizen Engagement

The rest of the results from the regression analysis provide some expected findings as well as some interesting unexpected findings. McFarland and Thomas (2006) as well as Zukin et al. (2006) found a number of variables to be significant predictors of political and civic participation, including involvement in certain school and non-school activities, grade achievement, parental involvement, and civic and political engagement attitudes. Several of their

findings were replicated with political participation, civic participation and public voice; however, some of their findings were not present or were reversed in the present study.

Participation in the following school and non-school activities were positive predictors of political participation: high school debate, political volunteer work, a non-school political group, and a non-school youth group. Participation in the following school and non-school activities were positive predictors of public voice: high school debate, a non-school environmental group, and a non-school music group. Participation in the following school and non-school activities were positive predictors of civic participation: a high school service group, a non-school service group, a non-school environmental group, and a non-school youth group. Participation in a non-school sport was a significant negative predictor of political participation and public voice, and participation in student council was a significant negative predictor of public voice. The fact that politically-oriented activities lead to increased political participation and that service-oriented activities lead to increased civic participation is not surprising, but does offer further evidence of Zukin et al.'s (2006) argument for distinguishing between political and civic engagement. Additionally, McFarland and Thomas (2006) found that football and track were positive predictors of political participation, so it is not entirely surprising to see that participation in school sports is a predictor for increased public voice, especially since these two sports often have larger numbers of student-athletes involved than other sports. On the other hand, McFarland and Thomas (2006) also found that sports such as volleyball, swimming, field hockey and cheerleading are negative predictors for political participation. The Olathe School District offers all of these sports, except field hockey, but there are numerous opportunities for Olathe students to participate in sports outside of school (Johnson County Park and Recreation District, 2010; Olathe School District, 2010). Depending on what sports students participate in outside of

school, the results in the present study may not be all that different from those found by McFarland and Thomas (2006). The summarizing conclusion about participation in school or non-school activities is that more opportunities for students to become involved, especially with organizations geared toward problem solving, will encourage higher levels of citizen engagement in students.

<p style="text-align:center">*Demographic Variables that Predict Citizen Engagement*</p>

Of the demographic variables tested in this study, GPA was a positive predictor of political participation and civic participation. Discussion of politics with family was also a positive predictor of political participation, and credit for a high school government class was a positive predictor for public voice. However, credit for a high school government class was a significant negative predictor of political participation and civic participation. Grade achievement and family involvement are both consistent with the findings of McFarland and Thomas' (2006) study and Zukin et al.'s (2006) study, but the disparity with high school government credit is unexpected and difficult to make any postulations about why this occurred. McFarland and Thomas (2006) and Zukin et al. (2006) found that government class credit was not a significant predictor of participation. A study by Kahne et al. (2000) of Chicago social studies classes found that most of these classes encouraged low-level thinking and provided a superficial and fragmented education of civics. Furthermore, teachers rarely provided hands-on or experiential learning opportunities for students to apply the knowledge. A government class is required for all students in Olathe, and it may be that this class tends toward the same problems Kahne and colleagues (2000) found in their study, which may explain the negative impact the course is having on civic and political participation. This gives a program like Youth Congress

even greater importance as a co-curricular opportunity for students as a way to help promote citizen engagement.

<p style="text-align:center">Political and Civic Attitudes that Predict Citizen Engagement</p>

The following measures of political and civic engagement attitudes were positive significant predictors of political participation: political efficacy, interest and understanding, and competency for civic action. The following measures of political and civic engagement attitudes were positive significant predictors of public voice: political alienation, interest and understanding, and competency for civic action. The following measures of civic engagement attitudes were positive significant predictors of civic participation: social responsibility and competency for civic action. It is interesting to note that political alienation is a positive predictor of public voice since the original researchers found it to be negatively related to political activity (Robinson, Shaver & Wrightsman, 1999). However, it has already been noted that while public voice may have a high correlation with both political and civic participation, it is still a distinct variable (Zukin et al., 2006). One reason political alienation might be a positive predictor of public voice is that those individuals who feel powerless attempt to regain power through some of the means attributed to public voice (e.g., contacting a public official, signing a petition or boycotting a company). Carlin et al. (2009) found evidence in focus groups with non-voters that was consistent with this reason for alienation as a positive predictor. While non-voters said dissatisfaction with candidates and the electoral and political systems were primary reasons for not voting, they also said that they used their choice not to vote as well as other methods consistent with those measured by the public voice scale to send a message to government officials about their dissatisfaction (Carlin et al., 2009). Much previous research has focused on voting as a primary measure for engagement, whereas this study takes a broader approach. Public

voice measures a variety of ways to be engaged without voting, so the original research that found political alienation to be negatively correlated with political participation (more traditional forms of engagement), is not necessarily contradictory to the results found here.

Another result to note is that the measures for competency (interest and understanding and competency for civic action) play a large and consistent role in predicting participation. Once again, the results of the study strengthen the argument for quality civic education programs; those who have a better understanding of *how* to participate are more likely to *actually* participate.

Assessment of Youth Congress and Recommendations for Improving the Program

Research Questions 2-5 addressed the effectiveness of the SDD's recruitment and how to increase access to and awareness of Youth Congress. Since more than a third of high school non-participants had never heard of the program and nearly half of high school non-participants had heard of it but did not know what it was, one way to increase involvement might be better promotion of the program in the schools. In the case of both participants and non-participants the number one way students heard about the program was from an instructor, and non-participants agreed that this would also be the best was to get information about the program to the most students. The SDD has a close working relationship with the schools, so having more instructors, particularly all of the social studies instructors, talk about the program during class more often would be a simple way to better distribute information about Youth Congress. Additionally, non-participants reported that another common way they heard about the program was from a friend, and they reported that having a friend tell them about Youth Congress would be one of the best ways to get information about the program out to students. The SDD may want to consider starting a campaign to encourage current participants to tell more of their friends about the

program, and challenge participants to get at least one additional person to participate in Youth Congress. This recommendation is consistent with findings by Zukin et al. (2006) that being asked to participate civically or politically makes the person significantly more likely to do the activity than those who have not been asked. The other two ways that topped the list for how students heard about Youth Congress or thought information should be distributed about Youth Congress were through daily school announcements and posters and flyers in the school, respectively. Since the SDD already uses both of these methods for promoting Youth Congress, the only recommendation here is to continue the practice.

Once the SDD has the attention of students, the next step is to provide an argument persuasive enough to prompt action. Since persuasive messages are most effective when they address the motivations of the specific audience, Research Questions 4 and 5 provide the insight to know more specifically how to construct effective messages (Zarefsky, 2007). High school participants and non-participants both thought the SDD could get more students to participate if they better explained the benefits of participation. More than two-thirds of high school non-participants said one thing that gets them to participate in a co-curricular activity is being able to list it on a resume or college application, and 55% of current participants as well as 75% of past participants said one of the reasons they participated in the program was to do just that. When promoting Youth Congress to students, the SDD should highlight what the program offers that students can talk about with potential employers or colleges. They should also expand on how the skills learned in Youth Congress will benefit students in other areas of life, such as work or college. The other top two reasons current participants said they participated was for leadership experience and to become more involved in their community. Youth Congress Alumni also

named leadership experience as the top reason for participation. These would be two great aspects of the program to emphasize when talking about the benefits of participation.

Since the top reason students listed for not participating was a lack of time, the SDD should make the various levels of participation clear along with the time commitments for each level. Promoting the program through word of mouth will help address another primary reason students had for not participating: not knowing anyone else taking part in Youth Congress.

Messages promoting Youth Congress might also consider addressing what the participants enjoy most about their involvement. Current and past Youth Congress participants ranked the leadership experience they gained among the top aspects of the program that they enjoyed. Current participants also thought that debating the resolutions and meeting new people were some of the most enjoyable parts about participating. Alumni said working in small groups on legislation and brainstorming ideas ranked high on the list of what they enjoyed most. Most of these relate to the students' direct involvement and say in crafting legislation, so it will be important to talk in terms of empowerment for student participants and to explain how the program provides an opportunity for students to have a real voice in making changes in their community.

The overarching theme for crafting effective persuasive messages is to promote the aspects of the program that are most motivating for potential student participants. Current Youth Congress literature is fairly objective in providing information about participation, so the SDD should consider revising promotional materials to reflect some of the recommendations for making a persuasive argument in favor of participation.

Research Question 5 also sought to find out what improvements or changes would make Youth Congress a stronger program. One-third of current participants felt that it did not make a

difference whether or not they were at the General Assembly; this was the top concern expressed by current participants. Since so many participants named their direct involvement in creating legislation as the most enjoyable part of the experience, it should be a priority of the SDD to structure the program and train student leaders in a way that encourages the participation of every person at the General Assembly. Perhaps rather than having small group brainstorming sessions where people volunteer information off the top of their heads, group leaders could have participants take a few minutes to write down their thoughts before asking for input. McKeachie and Svinicki (2006) offer this as a strategy for instructors to use in discussion-based classes because it encourages participation among more students, so it could also be a helpful strategy to employ during the General Assembly.

Learning how Congress works and learning how to put a plan together to solve a problem in the community topped the lists of current and past Youth Congress participants for what they learned during their involvement. Since Youth Congress is only loosely modeled after the United States Congress, it is important for the SDD to either make slight alterations to the program's structure that it more closely resembles Congress, or to explicitly note when something is different from how Congress would accomplish the task. By doing this, students will learn correct information about the way Congress functions on a day-to-day basis. A relatively simple change the SDD could make to more closely model Congress would be to provide all Youth Congress participants in addition to the student leaders with a simple lesson in correct parliamentary procedure according to Robert's Rules of Order. While the House and the Senate each have their own set of parliamentary rules, Robert's Rules would be a good alternative to teach since it is one of the most widely used set of parliamentary rules and since the general principles of parliamentary procedure are the same (K.S. Alberts, personal communication,

March 25, 2010). Another possibility for addressing this issue would be to have student leaders prepare a handout with side-by-side comparisons of how Youth Congress will accomplish a task next to how the United States Congress would accomplish a task.

Since participants also felt they learned a lot about how to put a plan together to solve a problem in their community and current participants named debating legislation as one of the top things they learned, it will once again be important to make sure what students are learning is quality, accurate information. The researcher observed several instances during the General Assembly debate where students would state false information as fact, and even instances where other students would accept that information as true and perpetuate the incorrect information in their own arguments during the debate. The SDD has adopted a policy that any adults present at Youth Congress take a hands-off approach to let the day play out according to the work of the students. While this is a good strategy for allowing students to get the hands-on experience necessary for a quality civic education, it can prove problematic at times, as described. At the first annual Youth Congress General Assembly held in 1999, local experts were invited to be available to students who had questions about the specifics of the resolutions being discussed and debated. Because Youth Congress has so much support from the community, and many adults who would be considered experts on the types of resolutions under consideration at the General Assembly attend some portion of the day, the SDD may want to consider reinstituting the practice. Doing this allows adults to remain observers, but also be available to offer their valuable knowledge and experience to participants, ensuring the quality of both the resolutions and the debate surrounding the resolutions. An alternative recommendation would be to provide "research stations" with laptop computers connected to the Internet and an adult volunteer available to help students conduct quick computer research on questions they may have. The web

browser in use could have helpful sites bookmarked to make the research as simple as possible so students can quickly find the information they need.

Environmental Concern is High for High School Students

The final research question asked whether the theme for the 2009 General Assembly would have an impact on participants' sense of importance for protecting the environment. The mean responses for both groups were relatively high on the measure for protecting the environment (approximately 12 out of a possible 15, where higher scores reflect a greater sense of importance for protecting the environment). Since environmental issues frequent the news cycle, it is probable that most all students are aware of the problems and recognize the importance of working to address those problems.

The results of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of Youth Congress and provide some direction for improving the program and developing civic education programs elsewhere in the country; however, there is always more research that can be done to further the understanding of what contributes to successful civic education.

Limitations and Future Research

As a whole, the present study was both successful and greatly informative; however, every study has challenges and opportunities for improvement. The most significant limitation to this study was working with minors to collect data. The main problem began with gaining approval from the Olathe School District to conduct the study. The Olathe School District requested a number of changes to the original draft of the survey, including, but not limited to, taking out any reference to citizenship, references to "America" or "my country," references to religion and references to family structure. The primary reasons given for requesting these changes were that they did not want students to feel uncomfortable and they did not want parents

to be upset about the content of the survey (B. Graham, personal communication, October 13, 2009). As Harwood and Hahn (1990) point out, studies have shown that having teachers who incorporate discussion of controversial issues in the classroom "is an integral part of training young citizens" (p. 1). So, students should not only be able to handle being asked questions that touch on potentially delicate issues, but they should be exposed to them frequently and in a manner that will help develop critical thinking and interpersonal skills (Harwood & Hahn, 1990). For future research to get a more complete dataset that includes important questions about religion, citizenship and family structure, the researcher should try to find out about the school district's policy regarding research in advance and try to work with a district that will be more open to including potentially "uncomfortable" questions.

A second limitation that arose from working with minors was during the administration of the survey. Students at the General Assembly were grouped closely together with many people at each small table. While this setup is conducive to lively interactions and discussions amongst students during the day, it was problematic for having students take a 20-minute survey. Some students discussed the survey and the responses they were making with one another, and a number of surveys were rushed through or left incomplete so that students could finish more quickly and continue socializing with friends. Future research should send participants the survey a week after the General Assembly so that time is not an issue and so that students can complete the survey on their own.

A third limitation to the survey was access to and participation of Youth Congress Alumni. The SDD was extremely helpful in providing lists of students who participated in the General Assembly over the last several years; however, the contact information provided was the student's high school information. Thus, nearly all email addresses were incorrect and home

contact information was for parents of the students. Because of a lack of funds it was not possible to send letters to parents for the purpose of obtaining alumni contact information. This strategy should be pursued in the future. With no way to obtain additional contact information, the number of survey responses received was lower than the researcher wanted for the analysis. There is little that can be done to address this for future research, but the researcher does encourage the SDD to continue to keep thorough records of participant contact information in the event that additional research opportunities come up and need access to that information. Future studies with access to more funding resources could use these records to send letters to parents requesting contact information for their children.

With these limitations in mind, some directions for future research can be considered. Additional research should be conducted to examine the inconsistent findings in more detail, particularly looking at how political alienation may actually contribute positively to certain types of engagement. Also, the question about the influence of required government classes should explore how certain class requirements contribute positively or negatively to levels of engagement. Another finding that should be explored in more detail is the role of high school activities, especially sports, in influencing engagement. Since previous studies, as well as this one, have found athletic participation to be both a positive and negative predictor engagement, it would be interesting to have more information about how different sports impact engagement.

There are also two methodological approaches to this type of research that should be explored. First, researchers should look at civic education programs that are required for students, rather than on a volunteer basis, to see if the significant findings can be supported. Additionally, a longitudinal study should be conducted to see if the effects of participation are

consistent across time. Further research is needed to continue to find ways to strengthen and expand civic education programs across the country.

Implications

In addition to the many implications these results have for the SDD and the Youth Congress program, these results also have a number of practical implications for civic education programs in general. As mentioned previously, Youth Congress can, and should, serve as a model for civic education programs across the country. The program incorporates the principles that scholars and practitioners believe a quality civic education program should have, but more than that, this research shows that those principles in practice do produce an effective civic education program.

Throughout this research, experiential learning has been emphasized as a key component of civic education. Youth Congress provides a unique opportunity for students to *live* citizen engagement, rather than just read or hear about it in a classroom. Students are intimately connected to the process of engagement, from first identifying problems or needs in their community, to developing a plan of action to solve the problem, to actually putting the plan into action. The results of this study continue to support the previous research emphasizing active learning opportunities, so unless classroom courses teaching citizen engagement can begin to offer this kind of learning environment, co-curricular programs such as Youth Congress will become increasingly necessary to supplement classroom teachings.

These active learning opportunities may also serve to address another issue that developed during the course of this research: younger individuals feel more politically alienated than older individuals. Even though high school students do not have all the legal rights of

adults, programs like Youth Congress can help young people see the numerous ways they still have to make a difference as engaged citizens.

However, to ensure the greatest possible impact of youth engagement, youth discussion and action should reflect a knowledgeable background on the issues they are tackling. Evidence showing a lack of this kind of background research became clear during the Youth Congress debates, but a "silent observer" policy kept the adults present from stepping in to correct misinformation. Because much anecdotal and statistical evidence shows that many times adults engage in discussion and action without being fully informed on the issues, it is even more important to teach young people the importance of good background research before taking action. One suggestion that was offered to Youth Congress was to introduce "experts" back into the General Assembly to serve as resources for the students. As Schudson (2006) explains, "The best democracy does not seek to minimize the role of expertise. A democracy without experts will either fail to get things done or fail to get things done well enough to satisfy citizens" (pp. 504-505). Modeling this in youth civic education programs will not only make them stronger, but it will also help make it easier to bring this idea to adult citizen engagement to strengthen U.S. democracy.

Finally, the issue of "resume-building" should be addressed since this was listed as one of the main reasons students became involved with Youth Congress, and since non-participants described it as one of the main motivators for participating in an activity. While some may criticize the motivations for involvements, the fact remains that regardless of motivations, Youth Congress is still a significant predictor of citizen engagement, and Youth Congress participants still demonstrate higher levels of engagement than non-participants. The goal should be that if

students can be motivated to participate in a quality civic education program, for whatever reasons, then that program will be influential in developing habits of citizen engagement.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of Olathe Youth Congress as a civic education program, provide recommendations for improving the quality of the program, and determine implications for developing other civic education programs. The findings have allowed all of these purposes to be accomplished. This study approached the issue of citizen engagement by going beyond voter participation, a more common way to assess engagement, to look at the multitude of ways young people can be, and are, engaged in the civic and political world around them. The research has validated many previous findings about citizen engagement but has also raised some new questions about the effects of a quality civic education. Youth Congress is clearly an effective means for promoting citizen engagement among youth and demonstrates signs of a long-term impact on participants. Youth Congress should serve as a model to other districts in need of creating a quality civic education program to help prepare our nation's youth for active, informed citizenship.

Appendix A: Consent Documents

Parental Information Statement

The Student Development Department of Olathe District Schools and the Department of Communication at the University of Kansas support the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish your student to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to your student's participation, you are free to withdraw your student at any time without penalty or negative consequences.

We are conducting this study to better understand the strengths and areas for improvement in the Student Development Department's civic education programs and to apply these findings to the greater context of developing quality civic education programs in the state and nation. This will entail your student's completion of a questionnaire. The questionnaire is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete during the 2009 General Assembly of Olathe Youth Congress on Tuesday, October 27, 2009.

The content of the questionnaire should cause no more discomfort than your student would experience in his or her everyday life. Although participation may not benefit you or your student directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of the role of civic education programs in schools, and how to improve and increase access to the Student Development Department's programs. Your student's participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. Your student's name will not be associated in any way with the research findings.

If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone, email or mail.

If you have any additional questions about your student's rights as a research participant, you may call Kory Norris at (913) 780-7047; write to the Student Development Department, 315 N. Lindenwood, Olathe, KS 66062; or email norrisk@olatheschools.com; call (785) 864-7429; write to the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563; or email mdenning@ku.edu.

Thank you for your time and help.

Kory Norris   Angela Crawford   Diana Carlin, Ph.D.
Director   Principal Investigator   Faculty Supervisor
Student Development Dept.   Communication Studies Dept.   Comm. Studies Dept.
NLSC   Bailey Hall   Bailey Hall
315 N. Lindenwood   1440 Jayhawk Blvd.   1440 Jayhawk Blvd.
Olathe District Schools   University of Kansas   University of Kansas
Olathe, KS 66062   Lawrence, KS 66045   Lawrence, KS 66045
913 780 7047   785 864 1086   785 864 9875

Information Statement

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Internet Information Statement

The Olathe, Kansas, Student Development Department and the Department of Communication at the University of Kansas support the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

We are conducting this study to better understand the strengths and areas for improvement in the Student Development Department's civic education programs and to apply these findings to the greater context of developing quality civic education programs in the state and nation. This will entail your completion of a questionnaire. The questionnaire is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The content of the questionnaires should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of the role of civic education programs in schools, and how to improve and increase access to the Student Development Department's programs. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. It is possible, however, with internet communications, that through intent or accident someone other than the intended recipient may see your response.

If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone or mail.

Completion of the survey indicates your willingness to participate in this project and that you are at least age eighteen. If you have any additional questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call (913) 780-7047, write to the Student Development Department, 315 N. Lindenwood, Olathe, KS 66062, call (785) 864-7429, write to the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, or email mdenning@ku.edu.

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Verbal Assent for Minors

I am interested in finding out about the strengths and areas for improvement in the Student Development Department's civic education programs and to apply these findings to developing quality civic education programs in the state and nation. I am conducting this research for the Student Development Department to help them better understand the effects of their programs. To do this I will be asking students at the Olathe high schools to participate in a survey that shouldn't take more than 20 minutes. All the information you provide will be completely confidential; your name will never be associated with your survey responses. If you don't want to participate in this study, you don't have to. Would you like to take part in this survey?

Appendix B: Surveys

Four different versions of the survey were administered; one for each group of subjects. The final section of questions indicates which group received a particular set of items. Aside from the final section of the survey, the only major differences in questions were a few demographic items, the environmental importance measure and voting behavior items. Demographic items appearing on select surveys are marked with the group abbreviation, indicating which groups saw the items. High school students responded to the items concerning importance of protecting the environment, but college students did not. Additionally, High school students responded to the item about voting behavior included in this reproduction of the survey, but college students responded to the following items:

2a. Are you currently registered to vote?   ____Yes   ____No   ____Unsure

2b. Were you registered to vote prior to the   ____Yes   ____No   ____Unsure
November 2008 election?   ____ I was not 18 prior to the 2008 election

2c. If you were 18 by the November 2008   ____Yes   ____No   ____Unsure
presidential election, did you vote in the
election?

2d. What is your political affiliation?   ____ Democrat   ____ Republican
                                                           ____ Independent ____ Other (list): _____

Please respond to the following demographic questions.

1a. Age: _____

1b. Gender (mark one):   ____Male   ____Female

1c. From which Olathe high school did you graduate? (YCA)

___Olathe East   ___Olathe North   ___Olathe Northwest   ___Olathe South   ___St. Thomas Aquinas

___I did not graduate from an Olathe high school (list high school, city and state) _____

1c. Where did you attend high school? (COMS)
(city, state) _____

1c. Which Olathe high school do you attend? (OS)

___Olathe East   ___Olathe North   ___Olathe Northwest   ___Olathe South

1d. What year did you graduate high school? (YCA, COMS)

___2000   ___2001   ___2002   ___2003   ___2004   ___2005

___2006   ___2007   ___2008   ___2009   ___Other (list): _____

1e. What did you do (or what are you doing) the year following high school? (YCA, COMS)

___Full-time work   ___Military   ___Community College   ___4-year college or university

___Vocational school   ___Part-time work   ___Other (list): _____

1f. What is the highest level of education after high school that you have achieved? (YCA)

___Degree in progress (list): _____   ___Associates Degree   ___Bachelors Degree

___Graduate degree (of any kind)   ___Other (list):_____   ___None

1g. Which of the following best represents your background (mark one):

____Asian or Pacific Islander   ____Non-Hispanic White (Caucasian)   ____African-American

____Spanish or Hispanic Origin   ____Multi-racial or mixed race   ____Native American

1h. Are you a citizen of the United States? (YCA, COMS)   ____Yes   ____No

1i. Growing up, did you live with a maternal guardian? (YCA, COMS)   ____Yes   ____No

1j. Growing up, did you live with a paternal guardian? (YCA, COMS)   ____Yes   ____No

1k. Did you receive high school credit for a government class?   ____Yes   ____No

1l. What is your approximate college GPA (or what was it if you are no longer in school)? (write n/a if you did not attend college)   _____ / _____

1m. Do you regularly attend religious services (more than once a month)? (YCA, COMS)   ____Yes   ____No

1n. Approximately how many people do you consider to be your close friends?   Approx. _____

1o. Growing up, was there anyone in your household, other than yourself, who volunteered?   ____Yes   ____No

1p. If yes, what is their relationship to you? (check all that apply)

____ *Maternal guardian*   ____ *Paternal guardian*   ____ *Sister*   ____ *Brother*   ____ *Other*

1q. Which of the following best describes your family structure while growing up? (YCA, COMS)

____ *Two biological parents*   ____*One biological parent*   ____*At least one stepparent*

____*At least one adoptive parent*   ____*At least one non-biological parent who was a relative*

____*Other*

1r. Use the following scale to rank your enjoyment of the *academic* side of high school.

Do not enjoy at all   1   2   3   4   5   Enjoy very much

1s. Use the following scale to rank your enjoyment of the *social* side of high school.

Do not enjoy at all   1   2   3   4   5   Enjoy very much

1t. Use the following scale to rank your enjoyment of the *extra-curricular* side of high school.

Do not enjoy at all   1   2   3   4   5   Enjoy very much

1u. How frequently did your family discuss politics while you were growing up?

Not at all   Once or twice a year   Monthly   Weekly   Daily

The following question asks you to provide information about your voting behavior.

2a. What is the likelihood that you will vote after graduating from high school? (circle one)

No chance   1   2   3   4   5   Definitely

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements by circling your response.

3a. It is no use worrying about current events or public affairs; I can't do anything about them anyway.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

3b. Every person should give some of his/her time for the good of his/her town or country.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

3c. The United States would be a lot better off if there weren't so many elections and people didn't have to vote so often.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

3d. Letting your friends down is not so bad because you can't do good all the time for everybody.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

3e. It is the duty of each person to do his/her job the very best s/he can.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

3f. People would be a lot better off if they could live far away from other people and never have to do anything for them.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

3g. At school I usually volunteer for special projects.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

3h. I feel very bad when I have failed to finish a job I promised I would do.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

70

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements by circling your response.

4a. It isn't so important to vote when you know your party doesn't have a chance to win.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

4b. Many local elections aren't important enough to bother with.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

4c. So many other people vote in the national elections that it doesn't matter much to me whether I vote or not.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

4d. If a person doesn't care how an election comes out, s/he shouldn't vote in it.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

5a. If you love your community, you should notice its problems and work to correct them.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

5b. I oppose some governmental policies because I care about my community and I want to improve it.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

5c. Being actively involved in community issues is my responsibility.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

5d. Being concerned about state and local issues is an important responsibility for everybody.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

Please indicate your opinion for each of the following statements by circling your response.

6a. If you had some complaint about a *local government* activity and took that complaint to a member of the local government council, do you think that he or she would pay:

No attention at all   Very little attention   Some attention   A lot of attention

6b. If you had some complaint about a *national government* activity and took that complaint to a member of the national government, do you think that he or she would pay:

No attention at all   Very little attention   Some attention   A lot of attention

6c. How much influence do you think someone like you can have over *local government* decisions?

None at all   Very little   Some   A lot

6d. How much influence do you think someone like you can have over *national government* decisions?

None at all   Very little   Some   A lot

Answer the following with the government and political system of the United States in mind. Please circle to indicate how much you disagree or agree with each statement.

7a. The people running the country don't really care what happens to you.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

7b. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

7c. What you feel doesn't count very much anymore.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

7d. You're left out of the things going on around you.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

7e. Most people with power try to take advantage of others.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

7f. The people in Washington, D.C., are out of touch with the rest of the country.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

Please indicate the frequency with which you do or will do each of the following activities.

8a. Thinking about your life after high school, will you vote in local elections?

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Always

8b. During elections, do you ever try to show people why they should vote for one of the parties or candidates?

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often

8c. Have you done work for one of the parties or candidates in elections?

Never   A few   Some   Most elections

Please indicate "yes" or "no" for each of the following activities.

8d. In the past three or four years, have you attended any political meetings or rallies?   ____Yes   ____No

8e. Thinking about your life after high school, will you contribute money to a political party or candidate or to any other political cause?   ____Yes   ____No

8f. Thinking about your life after high school, will you become a member of a political group or organization?   ____Yes   ____No

8g. Have you ever personally gone to see, or spoken to, or written to some member of local government or some other person of influence in the community about some needs or problems?   ____Yes   ____No

8h. What about some representatives or government officials outside of the local community—on the county, state, or national level? Have you ever contacted or written to such a person on some need or problem?   ____Yes   ____No

8i. Have you ever worked with others in your community to try to solve some community problems?   ____Yes   ____No

8j. Have you ever taken part in forming a new group or a new organization to try to solve some community problems?   ____Yes   ____No

The following is a list of things that some people have done to express their views. For each one, please indicate whether you have ever done this or not.

9a. Contacted or visited a public official—at any level of government—to ask for assistance or to express your opinion?   ____Yes   ____No
    If yes, have you done this in the last 12 months?   ____*Yes*   ____*No*

9b. Contacted a newspaper or magazine to express your opinion on an issue?   ____Yes   ____No
    If yes, have you done this in the last 12 months?   ____*Yes*   ____*No*

9c. Called in to a radio or television talk show to express your opinion on a political issue, even if you did not get on the air?   ____Yes   ____No
    If yes, have you done this in the last 12 months?   ____*Yes*   ____*No*

9d. Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration?   ____Yes   ____No
    If yes, have you done this in the last 12 months?   ____*Yes*   ____*No*

9e. Signed an e-mail petition?   ____Yes   ____No
    If yes, have you done this in the last 12 months?   ____*Yes*   ____*No*

9f. Signed a written petition about a political or social issue?   ____Yes   ____No
    If yes, have you done this in the last 12 months?   ____*Yes*   ____*No*

9g. NOT bought something because of conditions under which the product is made, or because you dislike the conduct of the company that produces it?   ____Yes   ____No
    If yes, have you done this in the last 12 months?   ____*Yes*   ____*No*

9h. Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it?   ____Yes   ____No
    If yes, have you done this in the last 12 months?   ____*Yes*   ____*No*

9i. Have you worked as a canvasser—having gone door-to-door for a political or social group or candidate?   ____Yes   ____No
    If yes, have you done this in the last 12 months?   ____*Yes*   ____*No*

Respond to the following statements concerning politics.

10a. How often do you discuss politics with parents?

Never   Once or twice a year   Monthly   Weekly   Daily

10b. How often do you discuss politics with friends?

Never   Once or twice a year   Monthly   Weekly   Daily

10c. How often do you read about national politics in print media (i.e., newspapers or magazines)?

Never   Once or twice a year   Monthly   Weekly   Daily

10d. How often do you read/hear about national politics in electronic media (i.e., television or Internet)?

Never   Once or twice a year   Monthly   Weekly   Daily

10e. Consider the following statement and circle the degree to which you disagree or agree: Politics are too confusing to understand.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

10f. Consider the following statement and circle the degree to which you disagree or agree: Teens should try to understand politics even though they are too young to vote.

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Have No Opinion   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree

If you found out about a problem in your community that you wanted to do something about (for example, illegal drugs were being sold in your neighborhood, or high levels of lead were discovered in the local drinking water), how well do you think you would be able to do each of the following? (please circle your response; 1 = I definitely can't, 5 = I definitely can)

11a. Create a plan to address the problem.

I definitely can't   1   2   3   4   5   I definitely can

11b. Get other people to care about the problem.

I definitely can't   1   2   3   4   5   I definitely can

11c. Organize and run a meeting.

I definitely can't   1   2   3   4   5   I definitely can

If you found out about a problem in your community that you wanted to do something about (for example, illegal drugs were being sold in your neighborhood, or high levels of lead were discovered in the local drinking water), how well do you think you would be able to do each of the following? (please circle your response; 1 = I definitely can't, 5 = I definitely can)

11d. Express your views in front of a group of people.

I definitely can't   1   2   3   4   5   *I definitely can*

11e. Identify individuals or groups who could help you with the problem.

I definitely can't   1   2   3   4   5   *I definitely can*

11f. Write an opinion letter to a local newspaper.

I definitely can't   1   2   3   4   5   *I definitely can*

11g. Call someone on the phone that you had never met before to get their help with the problem.

I definitely can't   1   2   3   4   5   *I definitely can*

11h. Contact an elected official about the problem.

I definitely can't   1   2   3   4   5   *I definitely can*

11i. Organize a petition.

I definitely can't   1   2   3   4   5   *I definitely can*

When you think about your life and your future, how important are the following? (please circle your response)

It is important for me to…

12a. …do something to stop pollution.

Not at all important   Somewhat unimportant   Undecided   Somewhat important   Very important

12b. …help protect animals.

Not at all important   Somewhat unimportant   Undecided   Somewhat important   Very important

12c. …preserve the earth for future generations.

Not at all important   Somewhat unimportant   Undecided   Somewhat important   Very important

Please indicate "yes" or "no" for each of the following activities.

13a. In the last 12 months, have you worked together informally with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live?   ____Yes   ____No

13b. In the last 12 months, have you spent time participating in any community service or volunteer activity? (Volunteer activity is when you work in some way to help others for no pay.)   ____Yes   ____No
(If no, skip to 13c)

    If yes, the following are different groups that people sometimes volunteer for. Please indicate for each one if you have volunteered for this type of group or organization *in the last 12 months*.

    An environmental organization   ____Yes   ____No

    A civic or community organization involved in health or social services – this could be an organization to help the poor, elderly, homeless, or a hospital   ____Yes   ____No

    An organization involved with youth, children, or education   ____Yes   ____No

    Any other type of group   ____Yes   ____No

    Thinking about the volunteer work for that organization over the last 12 months, how often do you participate in volunteering?

    Only once in the last year   Once in a while   Once a month   Weekly   More than once a week

13c. Do you belong to any groups or associations, either locally or nationally?   ____Yes   ____No

    If yes, how would you describe your membership with this group (if you belong to multiple groups, describe your most active membership status)?

    ____Active member   ____Member but not active   ____Given money only

13d. Do you donate money to any groups or associations (of which you are not a member), either locally or nationally?   ____Yes   ____No

13e. In the last 12 months, have you personally walked, ran, or bicycled for a charitable cause (this is separate from sponsoring or giving money to this type of event)?   ____Yes   ____No

13f. In the last 12 months, have you done anything else to help raise money for a charitable cause?   ____Yes   ____No

Please indicate if you participate in any of the following high school activities. (check all that apply)

14a. ____Organized sports team (including dance/cheerleading teams)

14b. ____Service club

14c. ____Academic honors organization

14d. ____Student council

14e. ____Drama organization

14f. ____Music group (band, orchestra, chorus)

14g. ____Journalism group (newspaper, yearbook)

14h. ____Debate

14i. ____ Forensics

14j. ____Academic club (science, foreign language, math, etc.)

14k. ____Vocational club

14l. ____Other (list): _____

Please indicate if you participate in any of the following non-school activities. (check all that apply)

15a. ____Non-school sports/athletics (including dance/cheerleading/martial arts)

15b. ____Any type of youth group (YCA, COMS specified religious or non-religious)

15c. ____Community service

15d. ____Political volunteer

15e. ____Political group/organization

15f. ____Environmental group/organization

15g. ____Music group

15h. ____Other (list): _____

Please respond to the following questions about Youth Congress. *(The following questions are unique to the OSYC group of respondents.)*

16a. How long have you been participating in Youth Congress? _____ years and _____ months

16b. How did you hear about Youth Congress? (check all that apply)
_____An instructor announced it in class
_____An ad in the school paper
_____An article in the school paper
_____The daily announcements
_____Flyers or posters around the school
_____Through a friend
_____A representative came to the school to talk about it and passed out information
_____Other (list): _____

16c. Why did you decide to participate? (check all that apply)
_____To get a day off school
_____To be able to list it on college applications/resumes
_____Because of the topic/focus for this year's Congress (the environment)
_____To network and meet people
_____To get leadership experience
_____To become more involved in my community
_____To work to solve problems I see in my community
_____Because I wanted to see what it was about
_____Because it seemed interesting/fun
_____Because a friend asked me to participate
_____Because my parents made me/suggested I participate
_____Because my school/teacher suggested I participate
_____Other (list): _____

16d. Use the following scale to rank your enjoyment of this year's Youth Congress.

I did not enjoy it at all   1____:____:____:____:____5   *I enjoyed it very much*

16e. What did you enjoy most about participating in this year's Youth Congress? (check up to 3)
_____The topic of the legislation
_____Working in small groups on legislation
_____Working in large groups on legislation
_____Meeting new people
_____Getting leadership experience
_____Leading discussions
_____Working to solve problems in the community
_____Brainstorming ideas
_____Writing legislation
_____The preparation meetings
_____Other (list): _____

16f. What would you improve for the future of Youth Congress? (check all that apply)
____The day wasn't structured enough
____The day was too structured
____There are too many preparation meetings
____There aren't enough preparation meetings
____The topic of the legislation was too restrictive
____The topic of the legislation was not narrow enough
____The people in charge seemed disorganized
____I didn't feel like my being here made much of a difference
____Other (list): _____

16g. Use the following scale to rank how much you feel you learned by participating in Youth Congress.

I did not learn anything   1____:____:____:____:____5   *I learned a great deal*

16h. What did you learn through your participation in Youth Congress? (check all that apply)
____A better understanding of how Congress works
____A better understanding of how to write legislation
____A better understanding of how to put a plan together to solve a problem in my community
____A better understanding of how to work effectively in groups
____A better understanding of the importance of my involvement in the community
____A better understanding of the environmental problems affecting the community
____A better understanding of how to debate legislation
____Other (list): _____

16i. Thinking of your peers who did not participate, what could the Student Development Department do to get more people to participate in Youth Congress? (check all that apply)
____Hold the session during a different time of the year
____Provide transportation to the preparation meetings
____Have the preparation meetings at different times
____Better explain the benefits of participation
____Have more publicity about Youth Congress
____Have instructors offer extra credit for participation
____Have instructors require participation as part of a grade
____Promote Youth Congress more in other Student Development Department programs
____Other (list):_____

16j. Do you now or have you ever participated in any other programs sponsored by the Student Development Department? (check all that apply)
____Youth Court
____Youth Council
____A.B.L.E. (Assets to Build Leaders and Entrepreneurs)
____The Mirror
____SIS (Students Invest in Success)
____Youth Fund

16k. Would you be interested in having more information about any or all of these programs made available to you?

____Yes   ____No

Please respond to the following questions about Youth Congress. *(The following questions are unique to the OS group of respondents.)*

16a. Before today, were you familiar with the Olathe Student Development Department's Youth Congress program?
____Yes, I know what it is
____Yes, I've heard of it, but don't really know anything about it
____No, I've never heard of it (if no, skip to question 16e)

16b. If yes, how did you hear about it? (check all that apply)
____An instructor announced it in class
____An ad in the school paper
____An article in the school paper
____The daily announcements
____Flyers or posters around the school
____Through a friend
____A representative came to the school to talk about it and passed out information
____An administrator or other school staff member talked to me about it
____Other (list): _____

16c. If yes, why did you decide not to participate? (check all that apply)
____I don't have time
____It's not something I'm interested in
____The topic of this year's Congress didn't appeal to me
____I don't really know anyone else participating
____I can't afford to miss a day of school to attend
____I can't make it to the after-school meetings
____I didn't get a permission slip turned in on time
____I didn't know about it until it was too late to participate
____Other (list): _____

16d. If yes, what could the Student Development Department do to get you to participate? (check all that apply)
____Hold the session during a different time of the year
____Provide transportation to the preparation meetings
____Have the preparation meetings at different times
____Better explain the benefits of participation
____Have more publicity about Youth Congress
____Have instructors offer extra credit for participation
____Have instructors require participation as part of a grade
____Promote Youth Congress more in other Student Development Department programs
____Other (list):_____

16e. If yes **or no**, what is the best way for someone to get information about co-curricular opportunities to the students at your school? (check all that apply)
____Have instructors announce it in class
____Have a friend tell me about it
____Put an ad in the school paper
____Have the school paper write an article about it
____Put it in the daily announcements
____Post flyers or posters around the school
____Have a representative come to the school to talk about it and pass out information
____Other (list): _____

16f. If yes **or no**, what gets you to participate in a co-curricular activity? (check all that apply)
____An activity that will get me out of school/class
____Being able to list it on college applications/resumes
____An activity that falls in line with my interests
____Being able to network and meet people
____Getting leadership experience
____Becoming more involved in my community/school
____Working to solve problems I see in my community/school
____An activity that seems interesting/fun
____Having a friend ask me to participate
____Having my parents make me/suggest I participate
____Having my school/a teacher suggest I participate
____Other (list): _____

16g. Do you now or have you ever participated in any other programs sponsored by the Student Development Department? (check all that apply)

____Youth Court

____Teen Council

____A.B.L.E. (Assets to Build Leaders and Entrepreneurs)

____The Mirror (a.k.a. Reflections)

____SIS (Students Invest in Success)

____Youth Fund

16h. Would you be interested in having more information about any or all of these programs made available to you?

____Yes   ____No

Please think back to your participation in Olathe Youth Congress and respond to the following questions about Youth Congress. *(The following questions are unique to the YCA group of respondents.)*

15a. How long did you participating in Youth Congress?   ____ years and ____ months

15b. Why did you decide to participate? (check all that apply)

____To get a day off school

____To be able to list it on college applications/resumes

____Because of the topic/focus for that year's Congress

____To network and meet people

____To get leadership experience

____To become more involved in my community

____To work to solve problems I saw in my community

____Because I wanted to see what it was about

____Because it seemed interesting/fun

____Because a friend asked me to participate

____Because my parents made me/suggested I participate

____Because my school/teacher suggested I participate

____Other (list): _____

15c. Use the following scale to rank your enjoyment of your participation in Youth Congress.

I did not enjoy it at all   *1____:____:____:____:____5*   *I enjoyed it very much*

15d. What did you enjoy most about participating in Youth Congress? (check up to 3)
____The topic of the legislation
____Working in small groups on legislation
____Working in large groups on legislation
____Meeting new people
____Getting leadership experience
____Leading discussions
____Working to solve problems in the community
____Brainstorming ideas
____Writing legislation
____Guest speakers
____Debating resolutions
____Voting on resolutions
____The preparation meetings
____Implementing resolutions
____Other (list): _____

15e. Use the following scale to rank how much you feel you learned by participating in Youth Congress.

I did not learn anything   *1*____:____:____:____:____*5*   *I learned a great deal*

15f. What did you learn through your participation in Youth Congress? (check all that apply)
____A better understanding of how Congress works
____A better understanding of how to write legislation
____A better understanding of how to put a plan together to solve a problem in my community
____A better understanding of how to implement and follow up on legislation
____A better understanding of how to work effectively in groups
____A better understanding of the importance of my involvement in the community
____A better understanding of the problems affecting the community
____A better understanding of how to debate legislation
____Other (list): _____

15g. Did you ever participate in any other programs sponsored by the Student Development Department? (check all that apply)
____Youth Court
____Teen Council
____A.B.L.E. (Assets to Build Leaders and Entrepreneurs)
____The Mirror (a.k.a. Reflections)
____SIS (Students Invest in Success)
____Youth Fund

15h. Use the following scale to rate your satisfaction with the Youth Congress program.

Very dissatisfied   Somewhat dissatisfied   Neutral   Somewhat satisfied   Very satisfied

Consider the following definitions and then respond to the question.
Civic Engagement: Organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others

Political Engagement: Activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action—either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies

15i. With these definitions in mind, and thinking about Youth Congress, how would you say your participation in the program affected your current civic engagement level?

1	2	3	4	5
Less engaged		The same		More engaged

15j. With these definitions in mind, and thinking about Youth Congress, how would you say your participation in the program affected your current political engagement level?

1	2	3	4	5
Less engaged		The same		More engaged

15k. Do you have any additional comments about Youth Congress, the General Assembly, or the Student Development Department?

Please respond to the questions with the following definition in mind. *(The following questions are unique to the COMS group of respondents.)*

Civic education: A structured learning situation that promoted *civic engagement* (organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others) and *political engagement* (activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action—either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies).

15a. In high school, did you have the opportunity to participate in any extracurricular (outside of regular class time) civic education programs?

____Yes   ____No   ____Unsure

15b. If yes, did you participate in the program?

____Yes (Please name and briefly describe)
____No

15c. If no, would you have participated in such a program if the opportunity had been available?

____Yes   ____No

Appendix C: Tables

Table 1. *Means, Standard Deviations, and t-values for Hypotheses 1 and 3 and Research Question 6: High School Students*

Group	OS		OSYC		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*t*-value
Social Responsibility	30.57	4.29	32.01	5.01	-2.96**
Citizen Duty	11.13	2.79	11.59	2.82	-1.59
Civic Accountability	14.78	2.71	15.43	3.12	-2.12*
Political Efficacy	8.84	2.43	10.02	2.36	-4.77**
Political Alienation	19.71	4.57	18.59	4.64	2.33*
Political Participation	7.70	2.65	9.97	3.18	-7.37**
Public Voice	1.58	1.54	2.11	1.95	-2.87**
Interest and Understanding	16.78	5.17	18.47	5.44	-3.04**
Competency for Civic Action	25.27	8.72	29.90	8.65	-5.14**
Civic Participation	4.89	3.76	6.61	4.19	-4.14**
Environmental Concern	11.86	2.99	11.92	2.65	-.21

Note: $N(OS) = 166$, $N(OSYC) = 209$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. OS = Olathe Students, OSYC = Olathe Students who participated in Youth Congress.

Table 2. *Means, Standard Deviations, and t-values for Hypotheses 2 and 4: Alumni and College Students*

Group	COMS		YCA		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*t*-value
Social Responsibility	32.92	4.05	35.03	3.76	-3.85**
Citizen Duty	12.22	2.47	12.53	2.34	-.92
Civic Accountability	15.52	2.51	16.16	2.73	-1.84^
Political Efficacy	9.03	2.21	9.75	1.72	-2.47*
Political Alienation	17.68	4.13	17.5	4.45	.31
Political Participation	6.44	3.05	8.5	3.58	-4.81**
Public Voice	2.35	1.80	3.03	1.93	-2.71**
Interest and Understanding	19.62	4.61	23.20	4.04	-5.80**
Competency for Civic Action	30.04	7.85	34.31	6.69	-4.07**
Civic Participation	5.17	3.84	6.86	3.58	-3.25**

Note: N(COMS) = 324, N(YCA) = 64. ^ p = approaching significance; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

COMS = Students from the Communication Studies Research Pool, YCA = Youth Congress Alumni.

Table 3. *Standardized Regression Coefficients, Significance Levels, Partial and Part Correlation for Regression Model with Dependent Variable Political Participation*

Variable	Beta	Sig. Level	Partial Correlation	Part Correlation
Youth Congress	.20**	.000	.22	.17
High School Government Credit	-.12**	.000	-.14	-.10
Number of Friends	.00	.929	.00	.00
Family Volunteers	-.03	.44	-.03	-.02
GPA	.09**	.009	.10	.08
Enjoyment of HS Academics	-.03	.339	-.04	-.03
Enjoyment of HS Social Side	.02	.59	.02	.02
Enjoyment of HS Co-Curriculars	-.01	.824	-.01	-.01
Family Discussion of Politics	.119**	.003	.12	.09
HS Sports	.05	.144	.06	.04
HS Service Group	-.00	.942	.00	.00
HS Honors Group	.01	.880	.01	.00
HS Student Council	.01	.868	.01	.01
HS Drama	.01	.700	.02	.01
HS Music Group	.01	.712	.01	.01

HS Journalism	-.03	.281	-.04	-.03
HS Debate	.08*	.017	.09	.07
HS Forensics	-.01	.783	-.01	-.01
HS Academic Group	-.04	.188	-.05	-.04
HS Vocational Group	.04	.169	.05	.04
HS Other Group	.04	.241	.05	.03
Non School (NS) Sports	-.06*	.046	-.08	-.06
NS Service Group	.02	.463	.03	.02
NS Political Volunteer	.14**	.000	.15	.11
NS Political Group	.09*	.015	.10	.07
NS Environmental Group	.06	.065	.07	.05
NS Music Group	-.01	.796	-.01	-.01
NS Youth Group	.07*	.023	.09	.07
NS Other Group	.02	.617	.02	.02
Social Responsibility	-.06	.195	-.05	-.04
Citizen Duty	.07	.058	.07	.06
Civic Accountability	.07	.079	.07	.05
Political Efficacy	.10**	.003	.12	.09
Political Alienation	.02	.569	.02	.02
Interest & Understanding	.18**	.000	.14	.10
Competence for Civic Action	.11**	.003	.12	.09

Note: N = 691. $R^2 = .45$, $p < .01$. Significant Betas * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 4. *Standardized Regression Coefficients, Significance Levels, Partial and Part Correlation*

for Regression Model with Dependent Variable Public Voice

Variable	Beta	Sig. Level	Partial Correlation	Part Correlation
Youth Congress	.01	.839	.01	.00
High School Government Credit	.11**	.004	.11	.09
Number of Friends	-.01	.822	-.01	-.01
Family Volunteers	.02	.504	.03	.02
GPA	.06	.090	.07	.05
Enjoyment of HS Academics	-.07	.068	-.07	-.06
Enjoyment of HS Social Side	-.01	.821	-.01	-.01
Enjoyment of HS Co-Curriculars	-.05	.175	-.05	-.04
Family Discussion of Politics	.00	.958	.00	.00
HS Sports	.09*	.015	.10	.08
HS Service Group	.03	.432	.03	.03
HS Honors Group	.02	.592	.02	.02
HS Student Council	-.07*	.047	-.08	-.06
HS Drama	.04	.299	.04	.03
HS Music Group	.00	.948	.00	.00

HS Journalism	.04	.231	.05	.04
HS Debate	.07*	.050	.08	.06
HS Forensics	.03	.447	.03	.02
HS Academic Group	.01	.697	.02	.01
HS Vocational Group	.01	.808	.01	.01
HS Other Group	.00	.983	.00	.00
Non School (NS) Sports	-.07*	.050	-.08	-.06
NS Service Group	.00	.996	.00	.00
NS Political Volunteer	.06	.110	.06	.05
NS Political Group	.03	.459	.03	.02
NS Environmental Group	.08*	.014	.10	.08
NS Music Group	.09*	.016	.09	.08
NS Youth Group	.05	.178	.05	.04
NS Other Group	.02	.521	.03	.02
Social Responsibility	-.02	.730	-.01	-.01
Citizen Duty	.01	.883	.04	.03
Civic Accountability	.05	.280	.04	.03
Political Efficacy	.01	.750	.01	.01
Political Alienation	.09**	.010	.10	.08
Interest & Understanding	.29**	.000	.21	.17
Competence for Civic Action	.21**	.000	.20	.16

Note: N = 691. R^2 = .35, $p < .01$. Significant Betas * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 5. *Standardized Regression Coefficients, Significance Levels, Partial and Part Correlation*

for Regression Model with Dependent Variable Civic Participation

Variable	Beta	Sig. Level	Partial Correlation	Part Correlation
Youth Congress	.07*	.043	.08	.06
High School Government Credit	-.12**	.001	-.13	-.10
Number of Friends	-.02	.581	-.02	-.02
Family Volunteers	.06	.064	.07	.06
GPA	.16**	.000	.17	.13
Enjoyment of HS Academics	-.04	.325	-.04	-.03
Enjoyment of HS Social Side	.02	.490	.03	.02
Enjoyment of HS Co-Curriculars	.04	.260	.04	.03
Family Discussion of Politics	.04	.282	.04	.03
HS Sports	.00	.897	-.01	.00
HS Service Group	.18**	.000	.19	.15
HS Honors Group	.04	.284	.04	.03
HS Student Council	-.01	.777	-.01	-.01
HS Drama	.04	.190	.05	.04
HS Music Group	-.06	.091	-.07	-.05

HS Journalism	.04	.214	.05	.04
HS Debate	-.05	.143	-.06	-.04
HS Forensics	.03	.368	.04	.03
HS Academic Group	.02	.570	.02	.02
HS Vocational Group	.00	.888	-.01	.00
HS Other Group	.01	.666	.02	.01
Non School (NS) Sports	-.01	.703	-.02	-.01
NS Service Group	.16**	.000	.18	.14
NS Political Volunteer	.01	.873	.01	.01
NS Political Group	-.04	.258	-.04	-.03
NS Environmental Group	.06*	.051	.08	.06
NS Music Group	.00	.940	.00	.00
NS Youth Group	.07*	.054	.08	.06
NS Other Group	.01	.855	.01	.01
Social Responsibility	.14**	.003	.12	.09
Citizen Duty	.00	.932	.00	.00
Civic Accountability	.07	.091	.07	.05
Political Efficacy	-.02	.611	-.02	-.02
Political Alienation	-.02	.504	-.03	-.02
Interest & Understanding	.02	.698	.02	.01
Competence for Civic Action	.12**	.003	.12	.09

Note: $N = 691$. $R^2 = .41$, $p < .01$. Significant Betas * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 6. *Frequencies for Question, "Before today, were you familiar with the Olathe Student Development's Youth Congress program?"*

Group:	OS
Yes, I know what it is	19%
Yes, I've heard of it, but don't really know anything about it	46%
No, I've never heard of it	34%

Note: Frequencies are rounded to nearest whole number.

Table 7. *Frequencies for Question, "How did you hear about Youth Congress?"*

Group:	OS	OSYC
An instructor announced it in class	68%	60%
An ad in the school paper	17%	5%
An article in the school paper	28%	6%
The daily announcements	42%	18%
Flyers or posters around the school	32%	18%
Through a friend	50%	23%
A representative came to the school to talk about it and passed out information	15%	35%
An administrator or other school staff member talked to me about it	26%	34%
Other	4%	0%

Note: Frequencies are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 8. *Frequencies for Question, "What is the best way for someone to get information about co-curricular opportunities to students at your school?"*

Group:	OS
Have instructors announce it in class	66%
Have a friend tell me about it	63%
Put an ad in the school paper	42%
Have the school paper write an article about it	45%
Put it in the daily announcements	60%
Post flyers or posters around the school	64%
Have a representative come to the school to talk about it and pass out information	55%
Other	2%

Note: Frequencies are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 9. *Frequencies for Question, "Why did you decide not to participate [in Youth*

Congress]?"

Group:	OS
I don't have time	71%
It's not something I'm interested in	67%
The topic of this year's Congress didn't appeal to me	30%
I don't really know anyone else participating	62%
I can't afford to miss a day of school to attend	44%
I can't make it to the after-school meetings	60%
I didn't get a permission slip turned in on time	8%
I didn't know about it until it was too late to participate	20%
Other	6%

Note: Frequencies are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 10. *Frequencies for Question, "What could the Student Development Department do to get more people to participate in Youth Congress?"*

Group:	OS	OSYC
Hold the session during a different time of the year	20%	16%
Provide transportation to the preparation meetings	23%	27%
Have the preparation meetings at different times	27%	25%
Better explain the benefits of participation	50%	49%
Have more publicity about Youth Congress	48%	56%
Have instructors offer extra credit for participation	62%	47%
Have instructors require participation as part of a grade	28%	25%
Promote Youth Congress more in other Student Development Department programs	33%	39%
Other	1%	0%

Note: Frequencies are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 11. *Frequencies for Question, "What gets you to participate in a co-curricular activity?"*

Group:	OS
An activity that will get me out of school/class	52%
Being able to list it on college applications/resumes	71%
An activity that falls in line with my interests	80%
Being able to network and meet people	54%
Getting leadership experience	51%
Becoming more involved in my community/school	45%
Working to solve problems I see in my community/school	40%
An activity that seems interesting/fun	80%
Having a friend ask me to participate	60%
Having my parents make me/suggest I participate	32%
Having my school/a teacher suggest I participate	35%
Other	2%

Note: Frequencies are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 12. *Frequencies for Question, "Why did you decide to participate in Youth Congress?"*

Group:	OSYC	YCA
To get a day off school	48%	33%
To be able to list it on college applications/resumes	55%	75%
Because of the topic/focus for the General Assembly	32%	48%
To network and meet people	38%	73%
To get leadership experience	67%	94%
To become more involved in my community	55%	77%
To work to solve problems I see in my community	43%	61%
Because I wanted to see what it was about	49%	94%
Because it seemed interesting/fun	47%	92%
Because a friend asked me to participate	17%	48%
Because my parents made me/suggested I participate	14%	11%
Because my school/teacher suggested I participate	50%	50%
Other	0%	11%

Note: Frequencies are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 13. *Frequencies for Question, "What did you enjoy most about participating in Youth Congress?"*

Group:	OSYC	YCA
The topic of the legislation	22%	56%
Working in small groups on legislation	29%	67%
Working in large groups on legislation	25%	39%
Meeting new people	50%	66%
Getting leadership experience	46%	86%
Leading discussions	25%	58%
Working to solve problems in the community	34%	66%
Brainstorming ideas	30%	67%
Writing legislation	8%	30%
The guest speakers	21%	44%
Debating the resolutions	58%	58%
Voting on a resolution	35%	64%
The preparation meetings	12%	33%
Implementing resolutions	N/A	55%
Other	0%	2%

Note: Frequencies are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 14. *Frequencies for Question, "What would you improve for the future of the General Assembly?"*

Group:	OSYC
The day wasn't structured enough	13%
The day was too structured	23%
There are too many preparation meetings	18%
There aren't enough preparation meetings	9%
The topic of the legislation was too restrictive	18%
The topic of the legislation was not narrow enough	9%
The presiding officers (large group leaders) seemed disorganized	17%
The sub-committee chairs (small group leaders) seemed disorganized	25%
The process for debating did not seem fair	19%
The process for debating did not work well	23%
The process for voting did not seem fair	3%
The process for voting did not work well	5%
I didn't feel like my being here made much of a difference	33%
Other	0%

Note: Frequencies are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 15. *Frequencies for Question, "What did you learn through your participation in Youth Congress?"*

Group:	OSYC	YCA
A better understanding of how Congress works	72%	70%
A better understanding of how to write legislation	30%	59%
A better understanding of how to put a plan together to solve a problem in my community	54%	77%
A better understanding of how to implement and follow up on legislation	33%	64%
A better understanding of how to work effectively in groups	48%	72%
A better understanding of the importance of my involvement in the community	38%	70%
A better understanding of the problems affecting the community ("environmental problems" for OSYC)	40%	70%
A better understanding of how to debate legislation	52%	56%
Other	0%	3%

Note: Frequencies are rounded to the nearest whole number.

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