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Millennials' Civics Inclinations: A Study of Civics Education's Impact on Millennials' Political Knowledge and Political Participation

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MILLENNIALS’ CIVICS INCLINATIONS: A STUDY OF CIVICS EDUCATION’S IMPACT ON MILLENNIALS’ POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

by

Hannah Aylene Haley

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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“Since the founding of this Nation, education and democracy have gone hand in hand. The Founders believed a nation that governs itself, like ours, must rely upon an informed and engaged electorate. Their purpose was not only to teach all Americans how to read and write but to instill the self-evident truths that are the anchors of our political system.” -President Ronald Reagan

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1 As cited in The Civic Mission of Schools, page 10.
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“So don’t fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” - Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)
ABSTRACT

Hannah Aylene Haley: Millennials’ Civics Inclinations: A Study of Civics Education’s Impact on Millennials’ Political Knowledge and Political Participation

This thesis researches the impact civics education has on Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge levels. The focus is on civics education’s impact on Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge because civics education to the American governing system. Two political socialization agents, parents and teachers, represented the actors teaching civics education. Thus, this thesis provides insight into the role of civics education, as taught by parents and schools, on the newest generation of American voters. In order to understand civics education’s impact on this new generation, prior background research on Millennials, importance of civics education, parents, and schools is included. Civics education is understood to be a component in life that may be obtained in variety of settings or by multiple actors. Thus, a survey was conducted to learn more about how civics education, through the agents of parents and schools, impacts Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge levels. The results reveal that civics education impacts Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge.
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Introduction:

Section 1 of the 26th Amendment of the United States Constitution starts, “The right of citizens of the United States, who are 18 years of age or older, to vote, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of age.” The eligibility for younger American citizens to vote fundamentally restructured the American electorate. This amendment extended voting rights to 18 year-olds, which allowed for younger Americans to have a direct role in electing officials and passing particular ordinances. While this amendment is incredibly important for those wanting to vote, how many current and future voting eligible citizens know this amendment? Furthermore, how many voters coming of age politically had some type of government or civics class in high school? Is this new cohort prepared to enter into its role in this democratic republic? The makeup of the electorate continues to transform as new and different American citizens become eligible to vote. The newest generation of voters, individuals age 18-36 or, Millennials, are an important part of the electorate.

Agents of political socialization, ranging from school to personal experience to parent-child discussions cause differences in political behavior and ideology between members within the same generation and among different generations (Pacheco, 2008). Since the electorate is not constant, it is worthwhile to understand how different agents of political socialization influence the political behaviors of each new voting eligible generation. The members of this newest voting generation will serve as the focus of this thesis.

Millennials are defined as “those born in the 1980’s and 1990’s” (Anderson, 2015). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), Millennials account for more than
“one quarter of the nation’s population” (“Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers and Are Far More Diverse Census Bureau Reports”). They are also more ethnically and racially diverse than previous generations and potentially the most educated generation (“Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change,” 2010). These are just a few of the characteristics researchers use when describing America’s newest voting-age cohort. By studying this generation, we gain a better understanding of what distinguishes Millennials from previous generations of voters.

This generation has come of age politically during unique times in United States’ history. For instance, Millennials have grown up in time marked by significant presidential elections and Supreme Court decisions. These significant events affect how this cohort of voters views the American government and the political process. These impressionable years represent the time in one’s early adult years when “political opinions, beliefs, and predispositions are challenged, amended, and eventually crystalized” (Dinas, 2013, 868). The time during which this cohort has come of age politically is important.

Political socialization provides us with important insights into why America’s newest voting cohort behaves the way they do and knows the information they do. This sub-field of political science allows for researchers to better understand the attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and beliefs of people. Political socialization will help explain Millennial’s political participation and knowledge levels. Specifically, this thesis will focus on a particular element of political socialization, civics education. By focusing on civics education as an influential force, this thesis will inform readers on the impact civics has for Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge. I have decided
to focus on civics education because of I think it represents a knowledge that agents of political socialization transmit. In order to understand the function of political socialization agents on civics education, I will focus on the influence of schools and family on civics education.

Most political socialization researchers continue to agree that the school and family are the two influential sources of political socialization (Strate, Parrish, Elder, and Ford, 1989, 445; Clawson and Oxley, 2013, Kindle Loc; Dennis, 1968, 108). Knowing this, I will focus primarily on these two agents of socialization within the overall study of the impact of civics education on Millennials. What children and young adults learn in the home is reinforced by the lessons they learn in the school and subsequently what they learn in school is reinforced in the home (Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, and Keeter, 2003, 277). While schools represent a link between education and citizenship (as cited in Gimpel, Lay, and Schuknecht, 2003, 145), parents are “first and best civics teachers.” (Civic Mission of Schools, 2003,8). Thus, it seems important to understand the impact both of these socialization agents have on the civics education of Millennials.

Margaret Stimman Branson, Associate Director for the Center for Civic Education, and Charles N. Quigley, Executive Director for the Center for Civic Education (1998) write, “Civic Education in a democracy is education in self government” (np). If learning how to participate in self- government represents the basic function civic education and researchers remain interested in understanding behaviors and knowledge levels of citizens, there seems to be a critical link between civics education and political socialization. Branson and Quigley’s definition of civic education helps explain the broaden definition of civic education used for this thesis. For
the purpose of this thesis, civic education will be thought of as knowledge about
American government, history, and duties as a citizen. Civics education can be taught
and acquired both inside and outside of the classroom.

By expanding the definition of civics education to include more than just standard
civics classroom courses, it will show how influential civics education is to shaping
political behavior. Moreover, it will show how essential the roles of both parents and
schools are to the process of political socialization. For example, while government
classes may teach students the three branches of government, school, and or, educational
related organizations such as the YMCA’s Youth and Government give students a first
hand experience in understanding the functions of the branches of government through
mock government conferences. In word’s of the YMCAS’s Youth and Government
website, “Students from every corner of the U.S. have the opportunity to immerse
themselves in experiential civic engagement and to, quite literally, practice democracy”
(np). Additionally, while government based classes may teach students about voting,
parents have the opportunity to actually demonstrate the act of voting to their children to
voting by taking their children with them to polls. By expanding the definition of civics
education to include both inside and outside the classroom, and by studying how these
agents of political socialization relate to civic education, a clearer understanding of the
political knowledge and participation levels of the Millennial generation will be achieved.
An important implication from this study will include understanding the future of
American policymaking in terms of policies related to civics education as well as a
general understanding of a citizen’s obligations and duties.
Have Millennials been taught government in a way that impacts their political participation? What impact, then, does civics education have on Millennials’ political participation? Will Millennials with a higher level of civics education exposure have higher levels of political knowledge? Will Millennials’ political behavior be different for those with more civics education exposure? Does civics education attribute to increased socialization gains for Millennials? And finally, why does civics education matter for an informed and active cohort?
Purpose:

The purpose of this thesis is to study the impact civics education has on Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge. By expanding the definition of civics education to include more than just standard civics courses which take place in school, it will show how substantial or insubstantial civic education, truly is on the political socialization process for Millennials. Understanding this newest generation of voters and citizens is important to political scientists, campaigns, and other groups and institutions in the country. Utilizing civics education to study participation and knowledge levels of citizens is immensely beneficial to the underlying principle that citizens must be prepared to take on their roles as citizens in this country.

The functioning of this American political system depends on informed and engaged citizens. Thus, it is practical to understand how civics education influenced this new cohort. If civics education is supposed to prepare the next generation of Americans to be citizens and educate them about America, it seems necessary, then, to study the political knowledge and political participation trends of this new cohort. Furthermore, with an important presidential election occurring in 2016 it is timely to focus on Millennials civics education and political participation. The Millennials Civic Health Index report (2012) notes that “the Millennial generation represents a critical civic asset for the nation…” (5). So in order to understand this cohort’s political knowledge and participation, Millennials experience with civics education will be reviewed and studied.

The purpose of this thesis is strictly to study the relationship between agents of political socialization on Millennials’ political knowledge and political participation. This thesis seeks to understand the impact of civics education, by looking at parents and
teachers, on Millennials. Scholars recognize the need for an informed and educated American electorate (Hochschild, 2010). Furthermore, Thomas Jefferson believed in an informed society. This thesis, however, does not contribute to the debate of the normative implications of civics education and its role in creating and sustaining informed and educated voting cohorts. In order to make such decisions about standards for civics education, a better understanding of knowledge of politics and if such knowledge influences civic engagement, must be achieved (Dudley and Gitelson, 2003, 266).

Additionally, while this thesis explains the importance of civics education, it does not seek to make normative assumptions concerning civics education policy. Instead, it seeks to inform the reader about the impact of civics education, as taught by parents and teachers, on Millennials political participation and political knowledge. Though, this thesis does not research such normative statements or research civics education policy, itself, further research on such topics could occur based on the research presented here in this thesis.

First, a brief introduction to the newest generation, the Millennial generation, will be provided. After this, the importance of civics education will be explained. Building off of this, I will review previous literature on political socialization and on the two agents of socialization. These two agents of political socialization are the home and school. Based on this literature review and my original research questions, I will introduce my hypotheses and research design. Along with providing my research design, I will also include the results from my research. After this, I will explain the limitations to my research. Before concluding, I will discuss the implications from my findings on the affects of civics education on Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge.
I will also include recommendations for future research on the civics education and for those involved in civics education.
The Newest Generation of Voters:

Millennials are the newest generation entering the American electorate. A study by Goldman Sachs (2015) concluded that, Millennials have different behaviors and experiences, separating them from their parents because they have grown up in a time marked by technological changes, increased globalization, and economic issues (n.p.), among other things. Studying this generation is a goal for many political scientists and researchers, making Millennials the “most studied generation to date” ("The Millennial Generation Research Review," 2015, 3). While the term “millennial” cannot always be equated with “young” or “the youth cohort,” they are presently the newest cohort.


It is interesting that there are various definitions for this generation. A report by Pew Research, “The Whys and Hows of Generations Research,” explains how age helps explain cohorts in terms of attitude and knowledge research. Age is a good measure for studying “differences in attitudes and behaviors” (“The Whys and Hows.., “2015, 1). This Pew Research report says that a person’s age represents two important attributes: where they fall in the life cycle and their association to a group of individuals born around the same time (“The Whys and Hows..,” 2015, 1). Generations, then, are good way to group people and to better study them. These researchers give some clarification about generations by writing, “a generation typically refers to groups of people born over a 15- 20 year span.” (“The Whys and Hows.., “2015, 1). Additionally, this report also considers Millennial’s to be the youngest generation (“The Whys and Hows..,” 2015, 1).

For the purpose of this research project Millennials will be defined as those born between the years 1980 and 2000. I define this cohort within these boundaries because this 20 year span adheres to other methods used by research groups, when defining generations (“The Whys and Hows.., “2015,). Also, between the 1980’s and 2000 there were many noteworthy events that occurred in America and abroad, influencing how those born between these years would grow up. Like all generations particular events will distinguish generations and help define how a cohort acts. Understanding this newest generation’s political participation trends and political knowledge levels is important for elections, campaigns, and political science research. Moreover, understanding the impact of civics education on Millennials’ political participation and knowledge is important to
the broader implications of the purpose of civics education in teaching new generations about American history and governance.

A generation cannot be accurately described with only one adjective or with a single label (Rintala, 1963, 510). The concept of a generation is significant because members of a generation share similar experiences and these experiences shape that generation. Kawske, Rasch, and Wiley (2010), claim “shared experiences at key developmental points contribute to the unique characteristics (e.g., values, attitudes, personality) that define and differentiate one generation from another,” (266). Similarly, the social, technological, and political changes are often associated as an important factor for a generation. The concept of generational effects helps better explain these generational differences. A generational effect occurs when political event impacts an entire age group’s political socialization, making them different than generations that came before them and after them (Clawson and Oxley, 2013, Loc. 1611).

Researchers Howe and Strauss characterize Millennials as the following: special, sheltered, confident, team oriented, achieving, pressured, and conventional (as cited in Keeling, 2003, 31). They are the most racially diverse generation in America’s history (Pew Research Center 2014). Another article poses the question if the Millennial generation are today’s Victorian generation. Barone (2015) explains that Millennials’ are exhibiting good behavior and this can be seen in the decline in violent crime, forcible rape, and robbery rate, among other things, as compared to prior cohorts (np). These examples demonstrate how one label cannot solely define Millennials. This is because like a person, a cohort, has numerous characteristics and attributes that are notable or important to highlight. Through researching these different characteristics and statistics,
people are able to better understand the more than 80 million Millennials currently living in the United States (“Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers and Are Far More Diverse Census Bureau Reports,” 2015; Kessler, 2015).

To understand more about this newest generation, researchers have conducted studies from different angles. There are studies about Millennials’ behavior ranging from the workforce to politics. There are even studies related to wine consumption and different generations (as cited in O’Donnel, 2016; Hafner 2016). A study conducted by the Wine Market found that in 2015 Millennials “consumed 159.6 million cases of wine,” meaning “millennials drank 42 percent of all wine in the U.S. last year, more than any other generation,” (as cited in O’Donnel, 2016; Hafner 2016). A 2014 report conducted by Pew Research Center titled “ Millennials in Adulthood Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends” explored various characteristics of Millennials and complied findings into one report, as a way to further explain this cohort. The different focuses of these studies on Millennials further supports the belief that this generation is the most studied generation to date.

Many studies related to Millennials concern their future impact in American society and politics, based on their large size. Madland and Teixeira (2009) report that the 2020 presidential election will be the first election where all Millennials will have reached the voting age representing 90 million eligible voters or 40% of the electorate². Winograd and Hais (2014) claim that, “by 2020, Millennials will comprise more than one of three adult Americans,” and that “it is estimated by 2025 they will make up as much as

² However, for the purpose of this thesis, 2018 will mark the year that all Millennials will be eligible to vote.
75 percent of the workforce” (2). The large numbers of Millennials, alone, will transform the American workforce and electorate.

The Millennial generation has been marked by significant events that shape the generation as whole. Events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, 9/11, the introduction to the World Wide Web, and the Great Recession represent important dates for this generation. Since “socio-political events are more likely to be remembered and judged important, to be cited as influential to one’s political development, and to provoke attitude change experienced in young adulthood,” (Stoker, 2009) this means recent substantial events, such as those listed above, have influenced Millennials in ways that shape their political behaviors and participation.

Some research highlights that Millennials are much more optimistic about the future of America, compared to the prior generation (Pew Research Center, “Millennials in Adulthood, 2014; Howe and Strauss, 2000, 7). Millennials believe that the American Dream is still possible (Page and Ung, 2016). Further, Millennials are also considered to be the entrepreneurial generation (Asghar, 2014; “The Millennial Generation Research Review”, 2012, 11.; “The Millennial Mind Goes to Work How Millennial Preferences Will Shape the Future of the Modern Workplace”, 2014, 13-14; O’Brien, 2014). It is recorded that “Millennial entrepreneurs have launched about twice as many businesses as boomers,” (Pertilla, 2016). Additionally, Millennials’ entrepreneurial spirit and optimism for America’s future is seen in Millennial start-ups, that are related to politics or policy. This is why a foundation in civics is crucial to the future of engaged and informed citizens.
Researchers consider this generation to be “more civically engaged in their communities” than the generation before Millennials (as cited in Matto and Vercellotti 728). Supporting this idea that Millennials are civically engaged, Greenberg and Weber (2008) refer to this cohort as “Generation We,” labeling them as “highly politically engaged” (32). Millennials represent a significant portion of the American population and will potentially have a substantial political impact. In the 2008 election, there was the “third highest turnout rate among young people since the voting age was lowered to 18” (Kirby, Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2009, 2). Reports consider that the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential election show that the voter turnout for Millennials is a “‘new normal,’” (as cited in Robillard, 2012). This idea of Millennials’ current voting trends as representing a “new normal” have led others to postulate that if this cohort’s trends continue, its overall voting participation levels will only increase (Pew Research Center, “Six Take-Aways from the Census Bureau’s voting report,” 2013).

While presidential elections seem to have a high percentage of young voters, local elections and midterm elections do not seem to gather as much youth voter turnout. For instance, some reports indicate that the Millennials’ voter turnout in the 2014 midterm election was lower than the 2012 presidential election (De Pinto, 2014), while other reports said that the youth vote in the 2014 midterm was similar to previous midterm elections (“Update-21.5% Youth Turnout: Two-Day Estimate Comparable to Recent Midterm Years,” 2014). Regardless on national voter turnout, there is a push to motivate Millennials’ civic engagement and political participation at the local level. Researchers, such as those from the Knight Foundation, have focused on trying to increase local election voter turnout. In the report “Why Millennials Don’t Vote for Mayor” produced
by the Knight Foundation (2015), researchers found that Millennials need to better understand and distinguish the ways local governments directly affect their lives (20). If Millennials care more about their communities than other generations, researches should continue to study methods to help mobilize this cohort. If Millennials understand the impact of local governments, it may prompt them to turnout for midterm elections for Congress, because they may understand the connection between local policy and their representatives.

Millennials are also less likely to rely on their local TV for political and government related news (Mitchell, Gottfried, and Matsa, 2015, 2). Gilman and Stokes (2014) stress the power “community-driven initiatives” may have in terms of increasing local civic engagement for Millennials (60). A way to express the connection between local policy incentives and local elections is by appealing to Millennials. Researchers conclude political messaging matters for Millennials’ voting behavior (“Why Millennials Don’t Vote for Mayor,” 2015).

The ability to message to voters, particular Millennials, has only increased because of technology. This technological generation has (Tanenhaus, 2014) implications for understanding this cohort’s political consumption and outlook on participation. Millennials are called “digital natives” because they are “the only generation for which new technologies are not something they’ve had to adapt to,” (Pew Research Center, 2014, 5). Since Millennials are more digitally connected, they are exposed to political messages through a variety of mediums like no other generation before them. The greater digital connectivity allows for more exposure to civics education. In 2008, the Obama campaign relied heavily on social media, such as the use of text messages, to market their
message and connect with voters, especially the youth voters (Jackson, Dorton, and Heindl, 2010, 44). Millennials respond to political based messages that encourage them to vote (Teresi and Michelson, 2015). Millennials are encouraged by messages that are positive, highlight pride in their city, and explain the direct impact of voting (“Why Millennials Don’t Vote for Mayor,” 2015, 18).

Engaging Millennials through social media is useful since this is a generation “spearheading civic uses of social media” (as cited in Gilman and Stokes, 2014, 58) and this cohort’s use of technology accounts as one of its “defining traits” (Jones, Cox, Banchoff, 2012, 11). Millennials political party identification determines how Millennials learn about elections via social media. A report conducted by Pew Research concluded that among the Democrat and Democrat- leaning Millennials, claiming to be involved in the 2016 presidential primaries and caucuses, 74 percent learned about the election from social media (Gottfried and Barthel, 2016). Similarly, for the Republican and Republican- leaning Millennials, claiming to be involved in 2016 presidential primaries and caucuses, the report found that 50 percent reported using social media to learn about the upcoming election (Gottfried and Barthel, 2016). The strong presence of social media and the overwhelming use of it by Millennials, makes it a strong platform to transmit civic education.

Millennials’ “disinterested” political habits are notable. For instance, half of all members of this generation do not identify with either party, instead, choosing the label of politically independents (Pew Research Center, 2015). This generation has an apparent disinterest in the labeling and actively associating themselves with either the Democrat or Republican Parties. It is interesting that though the largest voting cohort chooses to
identify as politically independent, Millennials are still called “The most Democratic age cohort,” (Pew Research Center, 2015). This is because while more Millennials are labeling themselves as political independents, they still more often support the Democrat Party (Pew Research Center, 2015; Jones, Cox, Banchoff, 2012, 1).

Millennials are seen as lacking of interest in politics, as compared to older generations. A study conducted by Pew Research Center found that only 26 percent of Millennials considered politics and government as a “top-three interest,” and only 35 percent claimed to discuss politics “At least a few times a week” ( “Millennials & Political News, 2015, 6). Despite being seen by some as more civically engage (Matto and Vercellotti 728), Millenials do not posses the same desire as previous generations to consume political news or discuss politics (“Millennials & Political News”, 2015, 6). While it seem like it is a condtradition for Millennials to be both “more civically engaged” than prior generations and “less politically interested” than prior generation, maybe it is not. Maybe it is the perception of politics and civics driving Millennials to be more engaged with civics, but less interested in the politics. Perhaps Millennials view civic engagement as something that is desired, while Millennials may hold more negative thoughts about politics.

Millennial’s civics foundation is important to the overall understanding of this group’s political behavior and political knowledge levels. And as every generation “must become active, informed, responsible, and effective citizens,” (All Together Now, 2013, 5) Millennials, too, must become prepared to live and act as citizens in this country. Similarly as Millennials represent America’s new voting generation, the notion of
preparing generations for citizen-duties relates to civics education. And understanding civics education serves as the next section of this thesis.
Importance of Civics Education:

Why does education, namely civics education, serve as the relevant factor for Millennials’ political participation and knowledge? Well by its very definition, the word “civics” directly relates to the functioning of a democratic society. The word “civic” is derived from the Latin word *civicus*, which is from *civis*, meaning “citizen” (Merriam-Webster). Additionally, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “civic” as “of or relating to a citizen, a city, citizenship, or community affairs.” If civics is related to citizenship, civics education must relate to teaching citizenship lessons. Civics education, therefore, can be thought of as a process of learning about the role as a citizen and related subjects.

Overall, this means that the “how’s and why’s of citizenship” must be taught and learned. According to Ceaser, (2013) “civic learning is a lifelong venture” (8). This “lifelong venture” means that one’s process of achieving civic knowledge does not begin nor end in the classroom; rather it occurs in throughout life. Civics education is much more than a high school government class, rather it is a knowledge gained throughout life and in a variety of environments.

Civic education is thought of as having “deep roots in America” (From Classroom to Citizen, 2004, 3). In a country whose constitution begins with the words “We the People...” the citizen is vital to the success of political and governing systems of the country. Furthermore, since the Millennial cohort is referred to as “Generation We,” (Greenberg and Weber, 2011), it seems vital to understand how Millennials obtain the knowledge and skills to live and act as citizens in this democratic republic.

From the founding of this nation the role of the citizen was extremely crucial. America was founded on principles such as liberty and freedom, with the intention of
creating and sustaining a limited government. But in order for citizens to understand their role in this democracy, they must be taught. The writers of the Constitution viewed education as a way “to teach young people how to be good citizens and instill within them civic virtue and a sense of moral responsibility so they could lead their communities later on,” (Schweikart, 2011, 38). They saw this type of instruction essential to the country. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison (1818) believed that education was supposed to teach individuals what it means to be a citizen (Securing the Republic). The writers of the Constitution believed in educating the younger members of society because they wanted to secure the freedoms that this country protected. John Adams, the Second U.S. President wrote that “liberty cannot be preserved without general knowledge among the people,” (as cited in Schweikart, 2011, 35). Thus, democracy and self-government requires informed citizens (Burgess, 2015, 5; Guardian of Democracy, 2003, 6). To be informed citizens, Americans must be educated.

The idea of teaching citizenship and citizen-related duties was a major reason for the U.S. public school system (Galston, 2001, 231). There was a push for public education because people saw the need for informed citizens in a representative democracy (Classroom to Citizen, 2006, 10). Westbrook (1996) asserts that the idea of “democratic ‘public’ education” shows that while schools are maintained by public funds, they are the designed to instruct the youngest members of this public society (125). A report complied by leading individuals promoting better civics education, considers schools to be “important venues for civic education” (The Civic Missions of Schools, 2003, 5). In order to continue to strengthen this American democracy, sustaining and improving civic learning must occur (Guardian of Democracy, 2003, 6). Additionally,
this same report refers to schools as “the guardians of democracy” (Guardian of Democracy, 2003, 6).

Civics education does not just take place inside of the classroom. American citizens learn about citizenship in an assortment of settings. For example, students may learn how a bill becomes a law while sitting in their government class, but students are able to directly participate in this process through mock legislative programs such as the YMCA’S Youth in Government program. This “lifelong venture,” which Caeser (2013, 8) means is that one’s process of achieving civic knowledge does not begin nor end in the classroom; rather it occurs throughout life. Thus, what a student learns in the classroom can be reinforced and applied outside of the classroom.

Promoting civics education encourages citizens to engage in the political system and will expose citizens to the foundational aspects of the American democracy and political system. Civics classes present an opportunity for teachers and professors to discuss current events and important issues in a unique environment. Some findings suggest that discussion of “controversial political issues” will allow for more authentic learning to take place (Guardian of Democracy, 2003, 27). Other reports suggest that a more open classroom environment will set a foundation for civic behavior to begin (Andolina, et al., 2003, 278) and will promote civic engagement (Campbell, 2008). America’s youth learn civics education and the democratic process in other environments besides the school. People are exposed to civics education through vehicles such as families, associations, the media, and religious organizations (Civic Mission of Schools, 2003, 11).
How does civics education relate to political socialization? Greenstein viewed political socialization studies as “very narrowly-meaning civics classes in high school—or broadly-meaning all political learning (as cited in Niemi and Sobieszek, 1977, 209). Additionally, Galston (2001) asserts that those studying political socialization must look at “the impact of formal civic education and related school-based experiences on the formation of the civic outlook of young adults” (232). Evidence supports the notion that civics instruction during adolescent years will impact behavior later on in life (Andolina et al., 2003, 275). Civics instruction may be taught through many different mechanisms. Besides school, these mediums are families, associations, the media, and religious organizations (Civic Mission of Schools, 2003, 11; Civic Youth, 2012, 5). Activities such as classroom discussion related to civics, family discussion related to civics, government simulations programs, and mock elections represent times when civics instruction occurs.

Civics education is a key component to the process of political socialization if the following are true. First, if the purpose of socialization is, as Gimpel et al., (2003) believed, to maintain values consistent with America’s government (11). Second, if the purpose of civics education in a democracy is to educate citizens and prepare citizens for self-government (Branson and Quigley, 1998; The Civic Missions of Schools, 2003, The Guardian of Democracy, 2006; All Together Now, 2012; etc). And third, continuing point two, if democratic self-government requires informed citizens who desire to participate in this government (The Civic Missions of Schools, 2003, 5; Branson and Quigley, 1998). Thus, I decided to expand the definition of civics education because I believe that there are various ways to gain civic knowledge outside the classroom. Political socialization studies focus on how political behaviors, attitudes, participation, and knowledge levels
are transmitted. As I present literature related to political socialization, I will show how various actors, or agents of socialization, in this process, contribute to civics education.
Overview of Political Socialization

Herbert Hyman’s book *Political Socialization*, is usually credited as the first literature directly focused on an important field of political science research (Merelman, 1977, 135; Niemi and Sobieszec, 1977, 210; Dudley and Gitelson, and Dudley, 2003, 2). Clawson and Oxley (2013) propose the following as a definition for political socialization “the process by which people acquire relatively enduring orientations toward politics in general and toward their own particular political systems” (Kindle Loc 1268). By learning more about political socialization, we also learn more about an individual’s political behavior, political attitudes, political participation, and political knowledge. Furthermore, by understanding political socialization researchers will be better equipped to understand political outcomes, such as elections (Searing, Schwartz, and Lind, 1973, 429).

The history of the research on political socialization dates back to the late 1950’s, at a time when political behavior became a main focus of political science research (Niemi and Hepburn, 1995, 1). Political scientists at this time started to view political behavior as a “learned behavior,” (Niemi and Hepburn, 1995, 1). Political behavior, therefore, symbolized what one obtains as a result of a process- rather than something acquired in a singular experience. This new area of research shifted how political scientists’ viewed political behavior. Political socialization research remains a key facet in the overall study of political science.

Political socialization scholars focus on understanding the impact of the sources, or agents, of political socialization. Literature on this subject usually considers the main agents of political socialization to be schools (or education), peers, family (or parents),
and news media (Clawson and Oxley, 2013, Kindle Loc 1268; Froman, 1961, 343; Gimpel et al., 2003, 7). These socializing agents are crucial in terms of their impact on citizens’ development of political behaviors and knowledge (Dennis, 1968, 108); Studies on political socialization have focused on the ways these agents impact areas of civic and everyday life. Gimpel et al., (2003) find that these political socialization agents impact citizens’ relationships with their government and political leaders (11). Most political socialization researchers continue to agree that the family and school are the two fundamentally influential sources of political socialization (Strate, Parrish, Elder, and Ford, 1989, 445; Clawson and Oxley, 2013, Kindle Loc; Dennis, 1968, 108).

Research on this subject continues to highlight the ways agents of socialization impact or do not impact people’s political attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and participation. For instance, some researchers focused on the relationship between political socialization and high school civics showing that there is not a direct connection between civics and socialization (Langton and Jennings, 1968). Some studies that were conducted discovered the impact that the role the news media has on a child’s political socialization, showing that the news media is significant in terms of a child’s political socialization process (Conway, Wyckoff, Feldbaum, and Ahern, 1981). Other studies focus on the family’s role as an influence for political learning, finding that “…parents can have an enormous degree of influence on the political learning that takes place in pre-adulthood (Jennings, Stocker, and Bowers, 2009, 12). And other studies focus on how various political climates impact the process of political socialization on individuals (Pacheco, 2012; Gimpel et al, 2003; Jennings, Stocker, and Bowers, 2009). Through studying these
agents, researchers are better equipped to understand the process of political socialization and its implications on citizens and political systems.

At the beginning of studying political socialization, researchers focused on the formation of political ideas and beliefs during the adolescence years (Niemi and Hepburn, 1995, 1; Niemi and Sobieszek, 1977, 209). But in the 1990’s, Niemi and Hepburn (1995) called for a “rebirth of political socialization.” They called for a “focus on political learning in the years of most rapid change to adult like learning capacities and adult attitudes.” (1). During this time, researchers became interested in political socialization again, this time more focused on civic engagement (Dudley and Gitelson, 2003, 263). Political socialization research, at this time, aimed to understand more about political participation. The shift in political socialization research provides supportive evidence for the overall focus of this research thesis.

Dudley and Gitelson (2003) explored the connection between political socialization studies and civic engagement, citing different studies that did provide understanding to “political literacy and civic engagement” (266). They find there is still little evidence about what is required of “...an informed and active citizenry” (266). Dudley and Gitelson, then, express the need “...for a clearer, developmental understanding of what we know about politics and how, if at all, we link that knowledge to civic engagement” (266). Ultimately, they find that it is important to know the influences of political knowledge and engagement. Dudley and Gitelson conclude by stating,

“It is also clear to us that for political socialization research to thrive and address the important questions of civic education and engagement for young people, future
research needs to integrate the effect of the full range of agents. Political scientists have long been interested in the impact of the family, the education system, the media, and political campaigns on the socialization process. Scholars need to undertake future work regarding the implicit connections among these various agents in the development or lack of development of political awareness.”

Based on this statement, it is inferred that political socialization studies need to focus on the impact of various agents of socialization. Dudley and Gitelson ushered in the idea that civics education relates to political socialization. This research suggestion aligned with previous researchers, who concluded that political socialization, in some function, encompasses civics education (as cited in Niemi and Sobieszek, 1977), and that such research should focus more on civics education (Galston, 2001). Dudley and Gitelson aided political socialization research by advocating for political socialization scholars to understand the “implicit connections among various agents” as it relates to civics education. These agents of socialization are important to the political development of citizens.

Knowledge about politics is what people will use when they decide if and when to participate in politics (Ondercin and Jones-White, 2011, 676). Ondercin and Jones-White (2011) explain that “knowledge about politics lowers the cost of political participation in two different but not necessarily unrelated ways” (676). It gives people a foundation to make decisions and acts, and knowledge mirrors a “psychological orientation” towards politics (Ondercin and Jones- White, 2011, 676). Therefore, political knowledge is important to one’s participation in politics. By applying the importance of political knowledge to Millennials and the case of civics education, it is essential to understand
how the socialization process aids in knowledge, thereby aiding in Millennials’ participation. Political socialization research, therefore, not only focuses on who and what transmits important content, but how this content is transmitted. This transmitted content “is of critical importance since the goal of socialization is the perpetuation of values consistent with the governance of the nation,” (Gimpel et al., 2003, 11).

Civic education is not solely the responsibility of the schools, as other forces, such as families and organizations, share a role in encouraging and teaching civics (All Together, 2013, 5; as cited in Hoback, 2015, 24). In some capacity civic education is communicated via socialization agents, making it an important component of the overall study of political socialization. It is necessary to understand the agents of the political socialization process since these agents are teaching forms of civic education. Two important agents, which researchers commonly agree on as important socialization agents, are the school and family (Strate, Parrish, Elder, and Ford, 1989, 445; Clawson and Oxley, 2013, Kindle Loc; Dennis, 1968, 108). For this thesis these two agents will be reviewed and studied. The following sections review how and if these agents transmit civics education to Millennials.
Political Socialization Agent: The School

The school system is an institution that is important to democracy (Westbrook, 1996, 125), which connects education and citizenship (as cited in Gimpel et al, 2003, 145). Schools represent a community for students to develop important aspects of citizenship. Schools are an institution that reaches just about every single person in America (The Civic Missions of Schools, 2003, 5). The American school system is important because it is during the school years America’s youth learn about American history and politics. In terms of political socialization, political scientists view the school as an important component to the development of political tendencies and political knowledge. Specifically, the high school years are important to the study of political socialization because it is during this time that teaching political knowledge and civic values are the focus of teachers and administrators (Niemi and Hepburn, 1995, 6).

Democratic countries use schools “to prepare children for democratic citizenship” (Westbrook, 125, 1996). Literature suggests that the school is an essential political socialization agent. It is disputed, however, which type of school is best for civic education. There are studies conducted to determine which school settings promote a better civics education. Some researchers highlight the idea of teaching citizenship and citizen-related duties was a major reason for the U.S. public school system (Galston, 2001, 231). There was a push for public education because people saw the need for informed citizens in a representative democracy (Classroom to Citizen, 2006, 10). Westbrook (1996) asserts that the idea of “democratic ‘public’ education” shows that while schools are maintained by public funds, they are the designed to instruct the youngest members of this public society (125). Conversely, proponents of greater school
choice believe that public schools are not always the greatest for teaching civics. One study discovered that “schools of choice generally equal or surpass traditional public schools in the teaching of seven fundamental civic values: political tolerance, voluntarism, political knowledge, political participation, social capital civic skills, and patriotism” (as cited in Lips, 2007). Wolf assets from his findings that “the statistical record suggest that private schooling and school choice often enhance the realization of the civic values that are central to a well-functioning democracy,” (as cited in Lips, 2007). Two scholars note that “…one of the most responsible and indispensable missions of schools-public, private, and home-based-is educating young people about their rights and responsibilities as American citizens” (Spalding and Bobb, 2005). Although researchers may differ in beliefs regarding which school setting promotes better civics education, it is certain that the mission of schools must be to teach civics and citizenship education.

Political scientists find that education relates the likelihood of someone voting and engaging in other forms of political participation (as cited in Dudley, Gitelson 264). A 2012 survey conducted by Circle found that there is a positive relationship between those who studied voting in high school and their participation later on in life (6). Also, Saha, who conducted an Australian study on civics courses, found that the number of civics courses taken, the number of years taking civics courses, and taking civics courses, in general, related to politic activities such as signing a petition (as cited in Manning and Edwards, 2014, 40). Gimple et al, (2003) found that having more than a year of exposure to government-related coursework had a 5 percent increase in weekly political discussion, a 3 percent increase in level of political knowledge, and 2 percent increase in internal
efficacy (149). Another survey found that those who study voting in high school scored higher on the kinds of knowledge questions asked during the survey (Circle, 2012, 6).

A report by the Civic Mission of Schools (2003) cites that a goal of civic education is to promote competent and responsible citizens that “..have a grasp and an appreciation of history and the fundamental processes of American democracy…” (4). This goal may be achieved through exposure to government courses. However, exposure to civics courses can only achieve so much when hoping to encourage and stimulate political behavior and knowledge. Researchers have found two other key components related to the exposure to government coursework on the process of political socialization. First, exposure to government courses is not as influential on the political socialization process as an appreciation for government courses is for this process of political socialization (Gimple et al, 2003). The second component is that exposure to government courses is that classroom discussion influences the political socialization process (Zukin et al., 2006)

Gimpel et al., (2003) found in their study that “developing an appreciation for social studies subject matter was far more critical to the political socialization process than exposure to the coursework itself” (152). Those who were interested in civics were more likely to carry this interest to areas outside of the classroom by participating in government activities (149). An appreciation for civics, as Gimpel et al (2003) claim, spurred civic engagement and formation of coherent issue positions (154). These researchers also show how dislike for civics impacts political behavior, attitudes, and knowledge. Respondents who disliked their “government-related courses” were less engaged into political discussions, were more than half a letter grade lower in their
political knowledge levels, and not as efficacious as those respondents who had “a minimum of appreciation for civics coursework” (Gimpel et al., 2003, 152). They also found that dislike for civics was linked to more opposition to diversity, less patriotic feelings, and dislike for police and law enforcement. This literature presents supportive evidence for the theory that appreciation for civics courses is crucial to the political socialization process as a whole.

Zukin et al (2006) also explains that requiring high school students to pay attention to politics and government does not yield increased involvement for these students (142). Similarly, as appreciation for civic education aids in fostering political knowledge and participation, classroom debate and discussion, too, aids in the process of political socialization. Researchers discovered that civic behavior surges for students who claimed their teachers allowed for discussion to occur, concerning politics and government (Zukin et al, 2006, 142). Zukin et al’s findings indicate that teachers do not only encourage classroom participation when they call for discussions to take place, but they also encourage students to get involved outside of the classroom (143). Related to classroom discussion, as noted by Zukin et al, is teaching civic skills. Zukin et al (2006) found that students who were instructed certain civic skills, notably learning to write letters and debate, were more likely to be involved in “..participatory acts inside and outside the school environment…” (144).

Political socialization scholars also found that the types of outside organization students are part of influences civic learning in different respects. Civic learning may be acquired through outside participation. Zukin et al (2006) also found “…that simply being involved in high school organizations does not lead to greater involvement after
graduation, but involvement in political groups does” (145). Students who participate in political groups while in high school are much more civically and politically involved post-high school (Zukin et al, 2006, 145). This supports the idea that civic education occurs outside of the classroom as well. Moreover, this assists the notion that political socialization researchers ought to look at both formal and school-related civic education experiences (Galston, 2001, 232).

Conversely, there are other studies that do not support the notion that civics education directly and positively impacts political behavior. Langton and Jennings point out that while studies infer that education is crucial “in determining political attitudes and behavior” there is other evidence that shows that the impact of high school and college courses on behaviors and political beliefs “is scarce and generally inconclusive” (865). Additionally, researchers Manning and Edwards found that civics education has little direct effect on voting or voter registration (2012). Finally, another report questions the emphasized role placed on civics education (Litt, 1963). This shows that there are some researchers do not think that civics education has little to any effect on political participation.
Political Socialization Agent: The Family

Early research in the field of socialization focused on the impact of parents and spreading political beliefs to their children (as cited in Gimple et al., 2003, 36). While some researchers have highlighted how the American family has altered in major ways, resulting in reexamining the socialization process (Gimpel et al., 2003; Dolan 1995); the family unit continues to remain an important agent of political socialization. Family members represent substantial actors for the fostering of civic behavior (Andolina et al., 2003, 277; Zukin et al., 2006, 141-142); thus, children learn many lessons about civic engagement in the home (Zukin et al., 2006, 141). Also, political socialization scholars have found that a child’s political party choice is the same as his or her parents’ party choice (as cited in Levin, 1961, 596). Parents and the family unit, as a whole, are on the frontlines in the duty of exposing America’s youth to civics.

Pacheco (2012) conducted a study regarding political socialization and the impact of political competition on turnout for youth voters. Pacheco concluded that while political contexts at the state and local levels matter, the home political environment is still a stronger predictor for youth voter turnout (426). Pacheco contends, “the political contexts experienced during adolescence exert a positive influence on a youth’s political socialization that translates into increased turnout levels years later,” (431).

Political discussion is not an activity that is reserved solely for the classroom. Political discussions occur in the home as well and often times before such discussions take place in school. Discussions about politics are fundamental to a child’s exposure to politics and ultimately influence his or her political socialization (Zukin et al., 2006). Zukin et al. (2006) writes, “by talking about politics, families teach their children that it is
important to pay attention to the world around them- and to take the next step of doing something” (141). Additionally, those who grew up in homes with someone who volunteered regularly and where political discussions took place were more likely to be civically engaged (Zukin et al., 2006, 127). Those who are raised in homes that have political discussions are much more likely to be involved in politics (Civic Mission of Schools, 2003, 11). Furthermore, those who grew up in homes with someone who volunteered regularly and where political discussions took place were more likely to be civically engaged (Zukin et al., 2006, 127). Political discussions, therefore, are an important part to the political socialization of youth.

Regular political events such as campaigns and elections provide socialization opportunities for parents and family members (as cited in Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers, 2009, 12). These events allow for parents to teach children about politics and government, similar to teachers teaching civic skills in the classroom (Zukin et al, 2006). Additionally, it is critical that during the youth years, people are exposed to engaged role models because such exposure aids in increased attention to political and governmental news (Zukin et al, 2006, 142). Parents who take their children with them to the vote are showing their kids a direct form of political participation. Furthermore, by showing their kids a form of political participation, they are also instructing them on how to partake in the political process. Parents teach civics education as well. As stated in one report, “parents are the first and best civics teachers,” (Guardian of Democracy, 2003, 8). This means that in terms of civics education, parents contribute greatly. This also impacts their success as an agent of political socialization.
Hypotheses:

This thesis explores the effect of civics education on Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge. As the above literature review revealed, parents and schools are extremely important agents of political socialization (Strate, Parrish, Elder, and Ford, 1989, 445; Clawson and Oxley, 2013, Kindle Loc; Dennis, 1968, 108). Additionally, schools and parents both have a role in teaching civics education (as cited in Hoback, 24, 2015). Keeping in mind the importance of schools and parents to the socialization process and understanding of civics education, it is important to understand these agents with respect to civics education. There seems to be a relationship present between these agents teaching civics education to Millennials and Millennials’ levels of political participation and knowledge. In order to better understand the effect of civics education, taught by these two agents, on Millennials, two hypotheses were tested:

H1: Respondents with more exposure to civics education will have a significant increase in political participation and political knowledge levels, compared to respondents with little to no civics education exposure.

This hypothesis seeks to understand how the mere exposure to civics education impacts political participation and knowledge levels for Millennials. Gimpel, et al (2003) found that exposure to civics positively impacted students’ political discussion interactions and political knowledge levels, leading to increased amount of discussions and higher levels of knowledge. This hypothesis also follows the idea that civics education is supposed to prepare Americans for their duties and roles as citizens (Guardian of Democracy, 2003; Civic Mission of Schools, 2006; Caeser 2013; etc.) If some Millennials have been exposed to civics education, achievable by those various
vehicles, will they act differently and have different levels of knowledge compared to other Millennials who have not been exposed to as much civics education?

**H2:** (A) **Millennials who were raised in highly political homes will be much more likely to participate politically and will have much higher levels of political knowledge.** (B) **Civics teachers and civics instruction matter for the purpose of generating politically active and politically knowledgeable Millennials.**

Families and the school are significant agents for the socialization process for members of newer generations. (Gimpel et al, 2003; Zukin et al, 2006; Andolina et al., 2003; etc.). For instance, Zukin et al., (2006) explain the positive impact both family and classroom political discussion has on participation levels for students (141-143). Furthermore, Zukin et al (2006) consider the school and family to be the best forecasters for engagement among college students. A positive civics education, therefore, seems to matter for political participation and knowledge levels. Ondercin and Jones-White (2011) report lacking a “positive psychological orientation towards politics” reduces individuals political knowledge, making these individuals “less likely to participate in politics” (676). This supports my hypothesis, advancing the notion that positive attitudes help political knowledge, which in this case is obtained by civics education. The encouragement by parents or family members to be politically active could be reinforced in the classroom, showing that exposure to civics is much more expansive than it is often times limited to in the classroom.
Research Design:

I conducted an original survey to study the relationships between civics education and political participation and knowledge among Millennials. Each of my hypotheses dealt with some aspect of civics education as it relates to Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge. I used Qualtrics to design my survey. The survey was open between January 28 and March 10. The survey lasted between 10 and 15 minutes. The University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my survey.

The survey’s purpose was to provide information about current eligible Millennials’ civic education experience, both in the classroom and outside of the classroom as it relates to their political participation and political knowledge. Moreover, this survey served the purpose of assisting in providing a better understanding of Millennials’ political socialization and its implications for this generation.
Population of Interest and Sample Size:

My population of interest were Millennials, or individuals ages 18-34. I wanted to try to account for the common characteristics of my population of interest, as best as possible. This meant that I needed to account for the known attributes that this cohort holds- such as this generation’s racial diversity (Howe and Strauss, 2000, 15; “Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change,” 2010; US Census Bureau, 2015, etc.); this cohort’s great use of social media to obtain political and government-related news (Mitchell, Gottfried, Matsa, 2015, 2); and the percentage of Millennials labeling themselves as politically independent (Millennials in Adulthood, 2014; as cited in Gilmore and Stokes, 2014).

I distributed my survey by providing a link to Qualtrics that took participants directly to the survey. I distributed this survey through a variety of mediums of, social media, email, and text messaging. In order to conduct a survey to account for the various and notable characteristics of Millennials, I made this survey available to University of Mississippi students, non-University of Mississippi students, as well as non-students, including those not in college and those working. By doing this, I hoped to obtain a more accurate sample of my population of interest.

Conducting the sampling process correctly is important because it allows for researchers to gain a true depiction of the population of interest (Asher, 2007, 78). Therefore, I attempted to do such a process, given resources and time-constraints. I expanded my survey sample size to include Millennials from various schools, states, educational backgrounds, and work experiences because I wanted my sample population to reflect this generation as much as possible. Additionally, since I am focusing on the
impact of civics-based education on the political participation of Millennials, it will be beneficial to survey students from various areas, universities, states, ages, and educational levels, etc. For instance, not every Millennial attends the University of Mississippi, or even attends college, nonetheless. Nor does every Millennial share the same experiences at the same time as all other Millennials.

I used a nonprobability sampling process to obtain my sample and survey results. I contacted various professors, fellow students, coworkers, friends, and family members to either take the survey or aid in distributing the survey. I believe that while I used a non-probability sampling process, that by studying a sample population that includes various Millennials, not just Millennials attending the University of Mississippi, will provide a large, diverse sample of Millennials. My sample size consisted of 359 Millennials.

While the definition of Millennials used for this thesis are those born between 1980 and 2000, this survey only allowed for Millennials born between the years 1980 and 1998 to participate. This is because I wanted to survey voting eligible Millennials, and the youngest voting eligible Millennials this year were born in 1998. So, the oldest qualified participant will be 36 in 3026, while the youngest surveyed Millennial will be 18 this year- 2016.

In order to understand just how my sample of Millennials compared to other samples of Millennials, I gathered Millennials’ sample sizes from other surveys. Table 1 has different comparison of various characteristics and demographics of Millennials. I used data provided by Pew Research Center\(^3\) as my comparison.

\(^3\) Source used was Pew Research Center’s “Comparing Millennials to Other Generations”
Table 1. Comparative Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>My Survey</th>
<th>Pew</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education-At Least a Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Respondents</td>
<td>1.78%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My sample size was made up of 61 percent women and 39 percent men. My sample size does have a high percentage of women. The diversity of Millennials was not as well reflected with my sample size. For instance, while Millennials still have the largest percentage of white voters, my population had an overwhelming percentage of white participants.

I did find that my education demographic was quite similar to a study conducted by Pew. I selected Pew because it is a well-known and respected research institute. For instance, Pew’s study found 21% of women had at least a bachelor’s degree, and my survey found this same number. My percentage of men who had at least a bachelor’s degree was also quite similar to the same study conducted by Pew. My interest in politics was also similar, however, I had many more respondents say that they were interested in politics. The starkest difference between my survey and the study conducted by Pew, is that that my survey shows that Millennials are mostly Republicans. This is opposite of
Pew’s, which found that more than half of respondents consider themselves to be Democrats.

It is important to note the age distribution of my sample. Many more younger Millennials toke the survey, compared to older Millennials. Most of the respondents were born between the years 1994 and 1997. For instance, there were 53 (16.01%) respondents who were born in 1997, 63 (19.03%) respondents who were born in 1996, 52 (15.71%) respondents were born in 1995, and 41 (12.39%) respondents born in 1994. There were far fewer older Millennials. Only 11 (3.32%) respondents were born in 1980, 8 (1.42%) were respondents born in 1981, and only 12 (3.62%) respondents were born in 1982 and 1983. This shows that there is a vast difference in the number or respondents born in the later years of this generation timeframe, compared to those born in the earlier years of the this generation timeframe. This could affect the results presented because younger Millennials are likely influenced by different events in their impressionable years compared to older Millennials. Additionally, younger Millennials have not had as many opportunities to participate. For example, someone born in 1997 or 1998 may not have been eligible to vote in the last election cycle.

In order to account for these differences and others, I will have a section dedicated to the limitations and differences of my study. Later in my thesis, I will go over these differences to show that my survey, like all other surveys, has limitations.
Survey Methodology:

I obtained original research for this portion of this thesis. This original research was from survey results. As explained in my previous section, this survey was distributed to various Millennials via email, text, and social media. The survey was open between January 28 and March 10. The survey lasted between 10 and 15 minutes. The University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my survey. This survey designed and generated, using the online resource: Qualtrics. This helped to randomize my sample size.

To ensure that only Millennials, born between the years 1980 and 1998, were being surveyed, a skip logic tool was used at the start of the survey. This worked by requiring respondents to select their birth year, ranging from the years 1980 to 1998, prior to beginning the actual survey. If a respondent’s birthdate was not listed, he or she also had the option to select “Birth Year Not Listed.” Respondents who selected “Birth Year Not Listed,” would not continue to the survey, but would instead be thanked for their time and would be forced to exit the survey. This skip logic tool helped to ensure that only respondents 18 and over participated, as well as served as a safeguard to ensure that only Millennial respondents, fitting the timespan given, were participating.

I utilized both qualitative and quantitative approaches for my survey. The text of the survey is located in the appendix. This survey consisted of 33 multiple-choice questions and one free response question. Appendix A has the survey listed in its entirety. There are 36 questions because one question is considered to be the opening introduction and another question is the thank you page at the end. The text of the survey is located in the appendix. I decided to include one open-ended question because I wanted
respondents to have a chance to provide a sentence or two – in their own words - their attitudes towards civics education. I believed this would be beneficial as I sought to discover the impact of civics education on Millennials’ political knowledge and political participation.
Results:

The survey questions were designed to better understand the impact of civics education, as transmitted by schools and families, on Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge levels. I looked at how families and schools teach civics education. Additionally, I looked at different forms of political participation. I did this by using various forms of political participation as my dependent variables. To account for the expansion of my definition of civics education, I included civics-related degrees and civics-related outside of classroom activity as additional measures of political participation. I was fascinated by knowledge of the 26th Amendment, therefore, this served as my political knowledge dependent variable.

![Figure 1 a. Millennials' Knowledge of the 26th Amendment](chart.png)

Figure 1 a. shows the results of all respondents, who answered, for the question concerning the 26th Amendment. This political knowledge measure was selected because the purpose of this thesis was to understand this voting

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4 For the purpose of this results section “schools” will include what is tested in H1 and H2. H1 looks at the effect of classroom civics education and classroom-related civics education, and H2 looks at the effect of teachers.
cohort. At the start of this thesis the question, “how many Millennials know the 26th Amendment” was posed. In order to understand just how many Millennials know this amendment, this question was asked to survey participants. Specifically, this figure shows the percentages of respondents who correctly or incorrectly knew the 26th Amendment. When no other variables are accounted for, the results show that more respondents incorrectly identified the 26th Amendment than correctly identified this amendment. Over half of the respondents did not correctly identify the 26th Amendment, while a little over 45 percent of respondents did correctly identify which Amendment granted 18-year-olds and older the right to vote.

The actual question gave respondents six different options of amendments to choose from. Figure 1a only shows the percentage of those who either correctly answered the 26th Amendment or did not. The incorrect percentage is the combination of all of the incorrect answers. To see the complete question wording of this question, as well as all of the questions asked, please refer to Appendix A.

Figure 1b. Millennials’ Political Participation
Figure 1 b. depicts how politically active participants were in the past year. Specifically, it shows the different forms of political participation and how active respondents have been. This graph shows the results from all respondents who answered this particular survey question. For example, 79.03 percent of respondents reported having had a face-to-face political conversation with someone in the past year. Out of the 14 forms of political participation listed for this question, this category had the highest percentage of responses. This means that the form of political participation that had the highest amount of participation was face-to-face political discussions.

Hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 1 sought to address the correlation on Millennials attaining a positive civics education experience and their participation levels and positive attitudes towards civics. Specifically, H1 stated, respondents with more exposure to civics education will have a significant increase in political participation and political knowledge levels, compared to respondents with little to no civics education exposure. In order to test this hypothesis, I looked at different political knowledge and political participation questions. For the purpose of this hypothesis, “civics education” will include both traditional, classroom, related civics education, and classroom-related civics education.
Table 2. Forms of Political Participation by Years of Civics Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Button</th>
<th>Yard Sign</th>
<th>Bumper Sticker</th>
<th>Protest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>27.78%</td>
<td>20.83%</td>
<td>19.44%</td>
<td>23.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>29.33%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>28.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>43.24%</td>
<td>18.92%</td>
<td>21.62%</td>
<td>32.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wrote/Email</th>
<th>Donated</th>
<th>Shot</th>
<th>Volunteered Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>30.56%</td>
<td>18.06%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>31.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>26.67%</td>
<td>17.33%</td>
<td>10.67%</td>
<td>22.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>32.43%</td>
<td>21.62%</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
<td>29.73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Volunteered Political Cause</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Posted Opinion</th>
<th>Shared Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>65.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>29.17%</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
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<td>61.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>24.00%</td>
<td>44.00%</td>
<td>58.67%</td>
<td>77.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>21.62%</td>
<td>37.84%</td>
<td>62.16%</td>
<td>67.57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Face to Face Discussion</th>
<th>Social Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>81.94%</td>
<td>62.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>85.33%</td>
<td>45.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>65.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>75.68%</td>
<td>62.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 224

Table 3 shows the relationship between the amount of formal civics education, meaning classroom civics education, Millennials received and their political participation. The independent variable is how much civics education the participant had,
received. The amount of civics education, as used here, is based on the number of years participants took a civics course. A “civics course” could be American history, a government course, economics course, etc. The dependent variable is political participation. There were 14 different types of political participation that respondents could mark that they had performed in the past year. Respondents were able to select multiple categories.

As the table indicates there is a positive relationship present between respondents who have had more years of civics education courses and wearing a political button. 43.24 percent of participants who had four years of civics education indicated that they have worn some type of political button in the past year; however, only 35 percent participants who had less than one year of civics have worn a political button in the past year. Additionally, this table expresses the correlation between Millennials taking civics classes over multiple years and posting a political opinion on social media. There is a positive increase in the percentage of respondents who have posted a political opinion on social media and the amount of years they were exposed to civics education. Specifically, there is a 12 percent difference between respondents who had less than a year of civics education and who posted a political opinion, and respondents who had four years of civics education and posted a political opinion. This finding indicates as Millennials are exposed to more civics education over the course of four years, their potential to post a political opinion on social media increases as well.

Conversely, there is not a positive correlation between increased number of years exposed to civics education and each category of political participation. For example, the increased number of years a Millennial is exposed to civics education does not seem to
effect his or her likelihood of placing a political yard sign out. While 30 percent of respondents who had less than a year of civics education said that they had placed a political yard sign in their yard, only 18.92 percent of respondents with four years of civics education had placed a yard sign out in the past year. There may be other factors that may help explain why number of years does not impact placing a yard sign out. For example, respondents might have moved to a home without a yard, however, this study does not explore such factors.

Table 3. Outside Civics Education Programs Based by Years of Civics Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Civics Education</th>
<th>Mock Trial</th>
<th>Model UN</th>
<th>Youth in Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>35.29%</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>28.85%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>13.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>13.46%</td>
<td>5.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>41.67%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
<td>14.81%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Civics Education</th>
<th>Student Government</th>
<th>Youth Legislature</th>
<th>Simulated Elections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>62.26%</td>
<td>13.21%</td>
<td>18.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>59.62%</td>
<td>11.54%</td>
<td>19.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>59.26%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>18.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td>We the People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>9.43%</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
<td>11.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>21.15%</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>41.67%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>7.41%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 1 year</th>
<th>Model Congress</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>9.43%</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>14.81%</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 161

The above table shows the correlation between exposure to high school civics education and another measure of political participation. The independent variable is once again the years of high school civics education. The dependent variable is participation in government-related activities outside of the classroom. As seen in the table, forms of participation included activities such as participation in mock trial, Model United Nations, We the People, and student government. Respondents were able to
select multiple categories. While the results vary based on form of outside classroom political participation, there are some correlations present.

For instance, 56 percent of respondents who had four years of civics education in high school also participated in mock trial, compared to only 35.29 percent of respondents who participated in mock trial and had less than one year of high school civics education. There is also a positive correlation between respondents who had four years of civics education and participated in Model United Nations and Youth in Government. Interestingly, for participation in student government, regardless of the amount of years, each category\(^5\) still had over 50 percent of respondents participating in student government. This shows that even minimal high school civics education may impact future participation in different political activities.

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\(^5\) Category here refers to the amount of civics education in school based on the following time frames: less than one year, one year, two years, three years, 4 years, or other.
I also wanted to understand the role exposure to classroom civics education in high school has on Millennials’ political knowledge. Figure 2 expresses the relationship between high school civics courses and political knowledge. The independent variable is if the respondent had a civics course in high school. The dependent variable of political knowledge, for this figure, was knowledge of the 26th Amendment. What I found is that there is a significant difference in political knowledge levels between Millennials who had a civics course in high school and Millennials who did not. Specifically, there is a 26.97 percent difference in knowledge of the 26th Amendment when comparing respondents who did had a high school civics education and respondents who did not have any form of high school civics education. It is important to note, however, that out of the 14 total respondents who indicated that they had not taken a civics, only three of these respondents correctly knew the 26th Amendment.

This figure was created by using creating a cross tabulation between civics in high school and knowledge of the 26th Amendment. The above figure only shows the response percentages between civics in high school and correct knowledge of this amendment. Responses for the other answer options were not included in the final figure presented above.
I wanted to further explore the impact exposure to civics courses had on Millennial’s political knowledge. In order to do this, I looked at knowledge of the 26\textsuperscript{th} Amendment based on years of civics education in high school. This figure was created in the same way Figure 2 was, meaning only the responses for the answer option “26\textsuperscript{th} Amendment” were included. The independent variable was still exposure to civics education, but this time it was specifically, the number of years a participant had taken civics courses in high school. The dependent variable remained Millennial’s knowledge of the 26\textsuperscript{th} Amendment. What I found was that there was about a 10 percent increase in Millennials’ knowledge of the 26\textsuperscript{th} Amendment from having less than a year of civics education to having four years of civics education in high school. However, I found the highest percentage of respondents knowing the 26\textsuperscript{th} Amendment were those who had only one year of civics education.
Additionally, it is important to note that there is a significant decrease in respondents knowing the 26th Amendment, when comparing one year of civics education and two years of civics education. Specifically, 56.79 percent of Millennials who had one year of civics education accurately selected the 26th Amendment. However, this number dropped to 38.96 percent when looking at respondents who had two years of civics education.

This percentage difference may be a result of the small sample size obtained. It may also be because there is some aspect of knowing the 26th Amendment that may not always carry over from year to year. However, there is not a negative decline in Millennial respondents having civics courses for multiple years and knowing the 26th Amendment. While there is sharp decline between one year and two years, between two years and three years there a slight increase. Also, between three years and four years, there is another increase. So while this result may be inconclusive, the underlying theory that increased civics education exposure increases political knowledge is still valid, when looking at respondents with less than a year high school civics education and respondents with more than a year of high school civics education. Similarly, this is the case when looking at respondents with less than a year of high school civics education and respondents with four years of high school civics education. In the end, the claim that increasing the amount of years a Millennial has civics course, in most cases, will positively increase the level of political knowledge that Millennial will have.

**Hypothesis 2:**
The second hypothesis looked at the effect of parents and teachers on the Millennials’ levels of political participation and political knowledge. As the literature review explained schools and parents are central to the formation of political behavior, so I thought it would be beneficial to study this relationship. This hypothesis sought to better understand the impact these two agents have on the process as a whole. I decided to break this thesis down into two parts because I felt that each actor, parents and teachers, ought to be discussed together but from two different angles. Both of these actors have a significant role to Millennials’ development of political participation and political knowledge.

The results of part A of this hypothesis will presented first. Specifically, part A claimed that Millennials who were raised in highly political homes will be much more likely to participate politically and will have much higher levels of political knowledge. For the purpose of part A of this hypothesis “highly political homes” will include different measures of politics and family, which will be discussed more in depth throughout this section. Part A of this hypothesis wanted to better understand parents as political socialization agents.

I used four different parent/family measures to study the outcome on Millennials’ political knowledge. These measures were to help better understand the role of the family political involvement on Millennials’ political knowledge. The four measures I used for this were parental interest in politics, parental encouragement for respondents to be politically active, frequency of discussions about politics with family, and if parents ever took respondents to vote or campaign. These four measures come together to form overall family impact, meaning “highly political homes.” The political knowledge
measure I used for Millennials was their likelihood of correctly identifying the 26th Amendment.

**Figure 4. Parental Encouragement and Knowledge of the 26th Amendment**

![Figure 4. Parental Encouragement and Knowledge of the 26th Amendment](image)

Total: 243

Figure 4 above shows the relationship between the measure of parents encouraging their children to participate politically and those respondents knowledge of the 26th Amendment. The independent variable is parental encouragement of political activities. The dependent variable is knowledge of the 26th Amendment. Of the three categories respondents could select as best representing how much their parents encouraged them to be politically active, only one category resulted in more respondents correctly knowing the 26th Amendment. Out of the respondents who correctly identified the 26th Amendment, 38.6 percent also believed that their parents had “very much” encouraged them to participate politically. There is a 9 percent difference between respondents who correctly knew the 26th Amendment and who also marked “very much” compared to the respondents who correctly knew the amendment and who also marked...
the “not much” category. Further, as parental encouragement of political participation declines, respondents who correctly identify the 26th Amendment also decreases. This result shows that parental encouragement influences Millennials’ political knowledge.

Figure 5 above reveals a relationship between an aspect of parental involvement and Millennials’ political knowledge. Specifically, this figure shows the relationship between parents who took their children to vote with them or campaign with them and Millennials knowledge of the 26th Amendment. The independent variable is parental involvement, namely taking children to vote or campaign. The dependent variable is once again knowledge of the 26th Amendment. Similar to my previous findings concerning parental encouragement, only one category had more respondents correctly identifying the 26th Amendment. This means that of the respondents who correctly knew the 26th Amendment, 61.95% of them had also indicated that their parents had taken them to vote or campaign. The highest percentage of correct responses, identifying the 26th were of
those respondents who said that heir parents had taken them to vote or campaign. The relationship between parents taking their children to vote or campaign with them and their political knowledge is the strongest individual indicator of the four different family/parent measures. This shows that taking Millennials to vote and or campaign is crucial to Millennials’ development of political knowledge. Furthermore, this supports the notion that civic learning occurs outside of the classroom. This finding also supports the idea that parents can teach civic skills by model civic behavior and exposing kids to civic aspects (Pfaff, 2012).

![Figure 6. Sum of Family Impact on Millennials' Knowledge of The 26th Amendment](image)

Total: 240

Figure 6 shows the relationship between the sum of parental and family measures and knowledge of the 26th Amendment. The sum of the parental and family involvement was four different measures. The four measures used for this were parental encouragement of political activities, parental performance of political activities, parental
interest in politics, and family political discussion. By taking these four measures, I was able to determine if there were any stronger correlations between all four of these family and parent political measures and Millennials’ political knowledge. The measure of political knowledge was the 26th Amendment.

The results show that there is a relationship between the sum of all family and parent measures and Millennials’ levels of political knowledge. While measures such as parental encouragement of political activity and parents taking children to vote or campaign increases the levels of knowledge for Millennials, when all four of these various measures are added together the results are even stronger. There is a direct correlation between family impact and political knowledge. As family impact increases, so does political knowledge. This means that the findings show that out of the respondents who correctly knew the 26th Amendment, over 50 percent also had the most political activity, based on those family and parent measures. This finding supports the idea that parents are crucial to teaching civics (Pfaff, 2012; Andolina et al., 2003; Zukin et al., 2006).

To understand the impact of “highly political homes” on Millennials’ political participation, I further explored the survey results. The impact of “highly political homes” included parental encouragement of political participation and the influence of parents on respondents’ political participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>Not in School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Much</td>
<td>34.48%</td>
<td>36.78%</td>
<td>12.64%</td>
<td>16.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>35.63%</td>
<td>45.98%</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
<td>14.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Much</td>
<td>25.64%</td>
<td>43.59%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 252
Table 4 shows the effect of parental encouragement of political participation on Millennials’ pursing a civics-related degree. The independent variable was parental encouragement. The dependent variable was political participation, represented by pursuing a degree with a civics focus\(^6\). I found that for those in school, there was a positive correlation between parents encouraging political participation, Millennials pursing an education with a civics focus. Specifically, over 30% of respondents who answered either “somewhat” or “very much” indicate that they are pursing a civics based education, while only a little over of 20 percent of respondents who answered “not much” are pursing a civics based education. This shows that there is a positive effect between parents encouraging Millennials to be politically active, and Millennials pursing a civics based education. There is a difference between Millennials who are pursing a civics related education, based on if their parents encouraged them to be politically active.

It is important to note that respondents who said their parents had “somewhat” encouraged participation represented the highest percentage of those who said that they are pursing a civics related education; however this “somewhat” category also represents the highest percentage of those claiming not to be pursing a civics related education. This may have resulted this way because of differences in thoughts of what a “civics-related” degree is. However, it is still valid to say

\[\text{Table 5. Forms of Political Participation by Parental Encouragement of Political Activities}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Button</th>
<th>Yard Sign</th>
<th>Bumper Sticker</th>
<th>Protest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\(^6\) A civics based degree was included as a part of political participation. This is because a career or education pursuing politics, government, or civics-related activities expresses a desire to be politically active or in the very least interested in such activities and relations.
Table 5 shows the relationship between parental encouragement to be politically active and Millennials’ political participation in the past year. The independent variable is parental encouragement of political activities. The “very much” category represents the greatest amount of parental encouragement, and the “not much” category represents the least amount of parental encouragement. The dependent variable is Millennials’ political participation. For this table, 14 different types of political participation are examined.

The results suggest that Millennials will participate politically in much higher numbers, if their parents encourage them to be politically active. The most notable finding from this table is the effect of parents encouraging Millennials to be politically active and Millennials’ volunteering for a political cause. While there is almost no

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7 The measure of political participation used here is the same question used in results section for H1.
percentage difference between survey participants who indicated “very much” or “somewhat” and have volunteered for a political cause, there is noticeable difference for those respondents who said “not much” when it comes to volunteering for a political cause. Just about 25.93 percent of Millennials who said that their parents had encouraged them a great a amount\(^8\) to be politically active, have also volunteered for a specific political cause. Twenty-five percent of Millennials who said their parents had somewhat encouraged them to be politically active have also volunteered for a specific political cause. Conversely, only 10.67 percent of Millennials who said that heir parents had encouraged them to be active a minimal amount\(^9\) have volunteered for a specific political cause in the past year. When accounting for parental encouragement of political participation, Millennials’ political participation is effected.

What is interesting is the high level of online and social media political activity by all respondents, across all three levels of parental encouragement. For example, over 60 percent of respondents said that they have shared a link to a political story or opinion in the past year, regardless of the amount of parental encouragement they had received. While I did not explore the impact of the media or the internet, these findings suggest that the media and the internet may be important to understanding the impact of civics education. Further, these results support the idea that this is a generation “spearheading civic uses of social media” (as cited in Gilman and Stokes, 2014, 58).

Additionally, respondents who answered “not much” to best describe how their parents encouraged them to participate politically, were more likely to share a political link or have face to face discussion about politics. This indicates that parental

\(^8\) Great amount here refers to the “very much” response category
\(^9\) Minimal amount here refers to the “not much” response category
encouragement does not always mean that more participation will occur. However, sharing a political link and having a face to face political discussion are the only forms of political participation that respondents who said their parents did very little to encourage political participation actually had the highest percentage of activity. For all other forms of participation, the highest percentage of activity was by participants who had a lot of parental encouragement.

A particular interesting free response answer, expresses the impact the home environment has on Millennials' political behavior,

“the environment I was raised in was more responsible for my knowledge and governmental involvement than my civics course. I think civics courses are crucial, but ultimately it's the home environment that played the biggest role for me. My mom actively discussed politics and encouraged my sibilants and me to be involved.”

This free response answer is particularly interesting because he or she is saying that the home environment is what laid his or her political knowledge foundation. This respondent’s answer supports the notion that parents have a role in teaching civics education. Moreover, such a response supports the idea that “parents are the first and best civics teachers” (Guardian of Democracy, 8, 2006). This shows, from an individual respondent’s perspective, attitudes that agree that the family and home are extremely influential when it comes to the development of political attitudes and political knowledge. This response also supports findings from other studies that label parents as crucial agents of socialization (Zukin et al, 2006; Civic Mission of Schools, 2003; Andolina et al., 2003). This question was broad in that it asked about civics education, in general, it did not explicitly define civics education as something obtained from home.
However, this respondent, described his or her own personal experience as one that involved the home.

Part B of my second hypothesis, stated that civics teachers and civics instruction matter for the purpose of generating politically active and politically knowledgeable Millennials.

**Figure 7. Importance of Political Participation and Knowledge of The 26th Amendment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>47.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>50.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>47.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 263

Figure 7 shows the relationship between Millennials’ response to the statement, “my civics teacher(s) explained the importance of political participation,” and Millennials’ knowledge of the 26th Amendment. The independent variable is civics teachers who taught the importance of political participation. The dependent variable is Millennials’ correctly selecting the 26th Amendment. The bottom three categories, which are “neither agree or disagree,” “agree” or “strongly agree” had much higher percentages of respondents correctly identifying the 26th Amendment. However, the percentages of
Millennials correctly knowing the 26\textsuperscript{th} Amendment were much lower for the “disagree” and “strongly disagree” categories. This means that there is a correlation between Millennials’ believing that their civics teacher explained the importance of political participation and then Millennials’ retaining political knowledge.

Figure 8 represents the relationship between respondents’ attitudes towards the statement, “my civics teacher(s) explained the importance of political participation” and respondents’ opinions on their ability to influence the government. The independent variable is the response to the statement, “my civics teacher(s) explained the importance

\[\text{Figure 8. Political Impact Based on Importance of Political Participation}\]

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure8.png}
\caption{Political Impact Based on Importance of Political Participation}
\end{figure}

Total: 267

Figure 8\textsuperscript{10} represents the relationship between respondents’ attitudes towards the statement, “my civics teacher(s) explained the importance of political participation” and respondents’ opinions on their ability to influence the government. The independent variable is the response to the statement, “my civics teacher(s) explained the importance

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\textsuperscript{10} How this figure was created was by adding the percentage values of the “great deal” and “a lot” responses and “a little” and “not at all” responses. The “a moderate amount” response category was not combined with other response categories, however, for the purpose of the figure, it was relabeled “neutral.” I combined the “great deal” and “a lot” responses in order to better highlight the positive trends, while I combined the “a little” and “not at all” responses to better highlight the negative trends.
of political participation.” The dependent variable is the attitude that Millennials can influence government.

Across the five different levels respondents could select to describe their attitudes towards the statement, “my civics teacher(s) explained the importance of political participation,” it appears that a significant portion of respondents said that they could moderately affect what the government does. However, respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with the above statement believed that they could affect the government “a great deal” or “a lot” by a much higher percentage than those respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above statement. Specifically, 60.23% of respondents who strongly agreed with the statement, “my civics teacher(s) explained the importance of political participation,” also believe that they could influence the government a great deal or a lot.

There is a positive trend present between respondent’s agreeing or strongly agreeing that their civics teacher explained the importance of political participation and respondent’s personal political efficacy. There is a negative trend present between respondent’s disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement, “my civics teacher(s) explained the importance of political participation,” and those respondent’s belief in their ability to participate in the government. This means that Millennials who believe that their civics teacher taught the importance of political participation will view their role in influencing the government much more positively.

It can be inferred, therefore, that those who believe they can affect the government will likely be willing to participate politically. This shows that civics teachers do impact Millennials’ political participation. Further, Figure 8 shows the
relationship between teaching the importance of political participation and political efficacy, which influences other participation in political activities.

Additionally, certain free response answers provide further support for the impact teachers and civic instruction has on Millennials. Specific free responses answers focus on the impact civics teachers have on the attainment of political knowledge and political participation behaviors.

One respondent wrote,

“My civics teacher in high school was one of my greatest influences in my young life. He stressed the importance of reading the news and being educated about events all around the world. He was very passionate about teaching us how the US government works and what it is founded on. We discussed the news and applied to what we were learning on a daily basis. My civics class is what led me to eventually pursue a career in law.”

This free response answer is telling of the importance of civics teachers. Civics teachers can influence future career plans and interests of students. A civics teacher did just this for this respondent. This respondent used the word “passion” to describe his teacher’s teaching method. Thus, civics teachers are important to generating politically involved students. This respondent also highlighted the importance of the civics class. This shows that civics teacher and civics instruction often times are related. While Zukin et al., (2003) explained the importance of teachers encouraging open classroom in order to positively impact outside political involvement (142). These researchers said that requiring students to “pay attention to politics and government” is not enough to really
spur involvement (142). So, for this respondent his or her experience definitely was one that did not encourage outside participation.

Another respondent wrote about his or civic experience by writing the following,

“I had an incredible government teacher in high school. He made the complicated political process easy to understand, and he encouraged us to discuss issues. He gave insight that we wouldn't have gotten anywhere else in our rural community and made us better citizens by showing us the many ways we could make a difference as individuals. He taught us to recite the constitution, and about the different checks and balances that went into law making, and so much more. I remember him insisting we vote in every election possible, especially local ones.”

This respondent also mentioned a positive feeling towards his or her civics teacher. This respondent also mentioned aspects of the government class that he or she remembered. This further supports the idea that civics instructors and instruction influence political knowledge. Moreover, this response shows that civics instructors do highlight the importance of political participation.

Conversely, one response explained that the civics teacher and instruction did not positively influence his or her political participation and knowledge. This respondent wrote the following,

“My civics classes were taught by the softball and basketball coaches at my school, so not many students took the classes seriously. I remember that the coaches made it very easy for us to pass the class, and we often watched movies during class. I wish I had learned more from these classes and wish they would've been considered more
important at my school. I definitely don't have a good background from these classes and feel very ignorant about politics because of my poor background in them.”

This response shows that while Millennials may want to learn about civics, they might not be able to if the teacher does not teach it properly. This respondent does not remember gaining knowledge about politics, but remembers watching movies in class. This respondent also mentions that he or she feels “ignorant about politics” because of his or her civics education experience. This shows that for Millennials who did not view their civics teachers as teaching important functions of the U.S. government, they will mostly likely not feel like they are prepared to participate in politics or government.

Millennials’ perception of civics teachers and its impact on their political knowledge and participation was not tested. Based on these responses, perception of civics teachers plays an important role in establishing and cultivating students’ political knowledge and political participation levels.
Limitations:

Like other survey research, limitations are inevitable. Every study has its own limitations, similar to how there are limitations present in my survey research. Limitations are important to note because they impact findings; they also impact how results ought to be critiqued and accepted. Acknowledging research limitations will help to improve future studies and better understand the results. In this section, particular limitations will be discussed.

The first limitation is the small sample size. Also, my small sample did not truly reflect the Millennial generation, in the same way other researchers’ sample did. Overall my sample size is 331 Millennials. This number is based off of the number of respondents who participated in my survey. This is a small sample size, which may distort the impact and influence of my results. A small sample size limits my results. To better understand how my sample size compares to other surveys on Millennials, I will highlight a sample size Pew Research Center used. Pew Research Center’s report “Millennials in Adulthood,” (2014) had a sample size of 617 Millennials (18-33).

Another limitation is that not all of the participants answered every question. Thus, the completion rate for my survey is not 100 percent. Respondents were able to skip questions, if they so wished, and as the various tables and figures show, participants did just this. The total number of responses for different questions fluctuated. Since respondents were not forced to answer every question, this means that not every person’s answer or opinion was included for different questions. This means that those responses are not included in the overall presentation of the survey results. What may explain this limitation might be due to the question wording, or response category options.
Respondents may not have agreed with any of the different responses, which is possibly why they refrained from answering them. Additionally, they may not have understood the question or agreed with the question wording.

A third limitation is that my survey was not distributed nationwide. This means that not every Millennial had the opportunity to take this survey. This limited the amount of responses for the survey. This means that due to the lack of randomized distribution of the survey, this survey was not distributed completely randomly. How a survey is distributed is important to the overall success of its findings. It is necessary to explain this because such knowledge is important when analyzing data results.
Discussion and Recommendations

Why is civics education vital to understanding the newest voting cohort in the American electorate, Millennials? Scholars acknowledge that studying political socialization requires looking at facets of civics education, (Galston, 2001; as cited in Niemi and Sobieszek, 1977). There is a direct connection between the goals of political socialization and civics education. This is the case because while it is concluded that political socialization transmits values and orientations towards American government and politics to new generations (Gimpel et al., (2003), it is also determined that the function of civics education is to teach, or transmit, to new generations, the necessary values citizens must have in a self-government (Branson and Quigley, 1998; The Civic Missions of Schools, 2003, The Guardian of Democracy, 2006; All Together Now, 2012; etc). At the heart of both political socialization and civics education is teaching and aspects of political and civic life.

Research by Dennis (1968) posed the question, “who teaches the political lessons learned” (108), saying that served as the main question for his research. Similarly, this research looked at this question. This research presents findings related to two agents of political socialization and how these agents teach civics education. From there, this thesis sought to understand civics education’s impact on Millennials’ political knowledge and political participation.

Political socialization aids civics education. This thesis examined what the function of civics education is on influencing Millennials’ political participation and knowledge. What remains is that there is an incredibly pertinent function of civics education in America. Justice Sandra Day O’Connor explains that American history,
knowledge, understanding of processes and participation, and values are not inherent in nature, but must be taught to each generation. Justice O’Connor said\footnote{As cited in The Civic Mission of Schools, page 14.},

“The better educated our citizens are, the better equipped they will be to preserve the system of government we have. And we have to start with the education of our nation’s young people. Knowledge about our government is not handed down there the gene pool. Every generation has to learn it, and we have some work to do.”

Justice O’Connor explains the importance of teaching every generation about the functions of the government and American values by reaffirming that educated citizens will be able to help maintain our democratic republic. Further, her statement directly relates to what the central premise of this thesis, which is to understand how civics education impacts the political participation and political knowledge levels of America’s newest and largest voting cohort- the Millennial generation. If every generation must learn about the government, it seems reasonable to study the newest generation that will be able to vote. The previous literature and the original research helps us understand civics education and this new generation of voters. This is what contributes to the broader importance of this thesis.

Informed and engaged citizens are fundamental to the American governing system. Because such a citizenry is necessary, the teaching of what makes an active and educated citizenry is also required. In both prior research and original research, I sought to understand how civics impacted Millennials. Millennials will influence facets of civic and political life and educated and active citizens are the pillars on which our entire democratic republic rests.
The input of civics education should result in the output of an informed, prepared, and engaged citizen. Specifically this output ought to reveal substantial political knowledge and political participation levels. While, research can only understand how civics education impacts Millennials, greater research on the subject of civics may aid in forming what civics education reforms out to be instituted and what different actors, involved in civics education, need to do. That is what makes findings, such as Millennials who were taken to vote or campaign with their parents are much more likely to know the 26th Amendment. Millennials who believed that their civics teacher taught them the importance of political participation are more likely to believe that they are able to influence what the government. The findings in this thesis suggest that civic learning occurs from parents and schools. Civics education aims to prepare citizens for the role in society, but in order to have substantial participation and knowledge levels, a good civics education is necessary. Different actors, such as parents and schools, administer these lessons in civics. The tangible benefit associated with teaching citizens civics skills is that they will hopefully have higher levels of participation and knowledge.

Civics education should be oriented to the idea that citizens are actors in political life (Boyte, 1993, 765). It has been established that there are multiple actors contributing to civics education (Guardian of Democracy, 2003; Civic Mission of Schools, 2006; All Together, 2013, 5; as cited in Hoback, 2015, 24). It is key that parents are considered to be the “first and best civics teachers” (Guardian of Democracy, 2003, 8) and that schools are “important venues for civic education” (Civic Mission of Schools, 2006, 5). By acknowledging the belief that civics skills and civics knowledge may be acquired in
different settings, Caeser’s (2013) idea that “civic learning is a lifelong venture” (8) is strengthened.

Currently, civics education does not have a large enough pool of research to correctly show policymakers what helps civics in the classroom (Campbell, 2014). Campbell’s report, “Getting civics right: What it would take to learn what works and what doesn’t in citizenship education” explains how civics education research ought to be conducted. Campbell (2014) says that attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge are the three concepts that ought to be studied when researching civics education (5-6). I propose that in order to better understand the impact of civics education, future studies should be conducted to account for the impact learning about civics has on general knowledge of policies and the role of government and the branches of power. This research ought to be expanded, in order to continue to better civics education and to better understand the actors participating and contributing to civics education. While the Millennial generation is the currently the “most studied generation” (“The Millennial Generation Research Review,”2015, 3), researchers, educators, lawmakers, parents, and citizens ought to turn towards focusing on what civics education will mean more broadly.

**Educators**

For educators, I recommend that teachers and schools continue to teach civics courses. Teachers should also continue to encourage outside participation in political or government based extracurricular activities. Educators should look at such outside programs, for example Youth in Government, and view this has a way students can directly participate in the functions of the government. Educators should also try to make civics courses relatable and seem important, so that students understand why
participating in the government and voting is necessary for this society. Since 2016 is an election year, educators have a prime opportunity to explain an election year and have students take part in open discussion or mock elections. Research shows that it is not enough to teach a civics lesson, but accompanying lessons with open discussions is beneficial to the socialization process (Zukin et al., 2006). Additionally, such discussions or interactive activities may help cultivate an appreciation for civics. Appreciation for such courses is more influential for political socialization than just requiring students to pay attention in government class (Zukin et al., 2006; Gimpel et al., 2003).

A little over 50 percent of respondents thought that understanding American history and the political process is “extremely important.” Educators, then, should continue to make civics courses a positive experience and incorporate the important facets of this country’s government and history. Educators should do this by encouraging open discussion but also encouraging participation in outside civic learning programs.

Educators should incorporate tangible examples of the importance of political participation. For instance, if the class is talking taxing, civics teachers could have students submit their federal income “taxes” as way to show the practical component of a duty as citizen. Such an activity could also provide an opportunity talk about the 16th Amendment and why an income tax was first proposed. This would show students just how important it is to understand the political and policy process because by using an example just as income tax to illustrate the impact the government and policies have on all other parts of life. This could also serve as a time for students to talk about what they would suggest in terms of tax brackets, or if they think the tax code should remain the same or be reformed. Additionally, teachers could engage students in a discussion about
state income taxes. This would help students see the importance of state and local policies and officials as well. This is one example of taking a discussion on political participation a step more in depth. It would combine a deeper discussion about an issue with an in class activity to explain the practicality behind being an engaged and knowledgeable citizen.

**Policymakers and State Officials**

Policymakers and state officials ought to look into the impact of civics education assessment and testing on political knowledge. There should be state-by-state research conducted to understand why civics education may differ, if it does, depending on the state. Different state laws may cause different results. Mandating civics courses, testing, graduation requirements, and other policies impact civics education, which is important to understand when reviewing the impact of civics education on the newest and most recent incorporated generation into the American electorate. A state-by-state-project would aid in understanding civics education’s impact on political knowledge and political participation.

Similarly, policymakers and state officials should focus on understanding how different school environments aid in the teaching of civics education. While my thesis did not explore this explicitly, a study cited in my literature review found that “schools of choice” are better than “traditional public schools” for the teaching of certain civics skills (as cited in Lips, 2007). Does this mean that school settings impact the levels of knowledge and participation students may receive? It would be interesting for lawmakers to explore the results of school choice and compare different school environments and
settings. This may allow for a better understanding of the impact of schools on civics education.

Policymakers should determine if investing in outside civic organizations or conferences, such as Youth in Government or Mock Trial, is worthwhile. This research did not look at these organizations and conferences as the driving mechanism for increasing political knowledge and political participation, but this could lead states to research such programs. What makes these programs successful? Furthermore, does the success of such program differ based on the state? Policymakers could see if it is beneficial to invest educational funds to such programs.

Finally, policymakers and officials ought to reach out to schools and give students direct insight into the government. This could be through inviting school groups or classes to a congressman’s office or a major’s office, or by local leaders going and speaking to civics classes. Such incentives or programs may also address the seemingly low voter turnout for midterm and local elections for younger votes (De Pinto, 2014, The Knight Foundation, 2015). This may serve as a way to combat a trend of young voters not participating on the state and local levels. Students would be able see the impact of local and state policies, if they were introduced to some of the key actors.

Parents

Parents ought to continue to encourage Millennials to be politically active and continue to create supportive political environments for children. Specifically, parents should introduce children to ideas civics. A result from this survey shows just how important this is to the development of Millennials’ political knowledge. There is a positive correlation for Millennials going to vote or campaign with their parents and
knowing the 26th Amendment. Civic engagement lessons are taught in the home (Zukin et al., 2006, 141), and parents are the “first and best civics teachers” (Guardian of Democracy, 2003, 8). Schools and policies can only do so much to cultivate civic learning, but parents have a prime opportunity to introduce children to civics. Parents should be concerned with introducing their children to civics because by doing so, children’s political knowledge and participation is influenced. Parents have the power and ability to spur politically engaged and knowledgeable future voters, though discussion, encouragement of political participation, voting, and so many other ways.

**Millennials**

Millennials ought to continue to be involved in America’s political system. As the newest and largest voting cohort, this generation holds a lot of potential for impacting policy and elections. Additionally, the Millennial generation should continue to promote civics education. Millennials need to vote and be politically active. That means that in 2020, members of the then “newest” generation will start their movement into the American voting electorate. Millennials, thus, ought to work to increase civics education for future generation of voters.

Millennials are considered to be “digital natives,” (Pew Research Center, 2014, 5) and that they are “spearheading civic uses of social media” (as cited in Gilman and Stokes, 2014, 58). Not only this, but Millennials are considered to be the “true entrepreneur generation” (Asghar, 2014). Millennials should use social media to engage fellow citizens and future voters. If Millennials are using social media for civics uses and also are more willing to start companies, they have a great opportunity to combine both for the good of the democratic republic. Furthermore, my survey results indicate that
online and social media based political participation does not seem to be based as much on parental encouragement. There is may be another actor involved, which is not covered in this thesis.

*Political Scientists*

Political Scientists should look more in-depth as to why Millennials believe studying the American political process and American history is important. Just over 50 percent of survey participants said that studying the American process and American history is “extremely important,” but why? Researchers should study this, in order to better understand this cohort and possibly its political behavior. Additionally, Political Scientists who focus on political socialization should look at why civics education is so important to socialization. Is there a particular function of civics education, which makes it very essential, even the root, of socialization?

Additionally, socialization scholars should investigate the emergence of social media platforms and even campaigns as vehicles of transmitting civics education. As research in this thesis indicates, Millennials are “digital natives,” (Pew Research Center, 2014, 5). so more research should be conducted to learn how this Internet generation partakes in civics education online and through social media. This would also increase knowledge about Millennial’s online and social media political presence.

Political scientists should research political socialization within the context of civics education. For it is known the parents and schools are agents of political socialization, also teaching civics education. Political socialization looks at the values and beliefs and attitudes transmitted, but doesn’t civics education rely on transmitting certain values, beliefs, and attitudes? If actors who also contribute to the next
generation’s political viewpoints or bearings, are also exposing this generation to civics education, could this lead to discrepancies in the ideal civics education? Based on the research presented, the teaching of civics education and process of political socialization seem to connect. However, future research could be conducted to learn more about the connection between the two, and if civics education is distorted or altered depending on one’s political socialization process. This would be interesting because literature on the role of civics education and what the America’s Founders viewed civics as could be utilized.

Researchers should also focus on why parents transmit civics education to their children, often times, so successfully. For instance, why is it that taking children to vote increases the likelihood that those children will know the 26th Amendment? Is there a facet of the family that surpasses other agents in the socialization process or the process of teaching civics education?
Conclusion:

In conclusion, civics education impacts Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge levels. This thesis sought to understand one generation’s knowledge and participation as a result of civics education. This thesis explored two crucial issues that are important as American citizens in a self-governing society: political knowledge and political participation. This was achieved by looking at the roles of education, meaning teachers and civics instruction, and the family, including parents and home environment, in teaching civics education. Findings suggest that there is a correlation between parental influence and Millennials political knowledge. There is a relationship between teachers teaching the importance of political participation and Millennials’ view on their to ability influence the government. And there is a correlation between exposure to high school civics education and political participation and political knowledge.

This research shows how two political socialization agents, schools and family teach civics education, thereby impacting Millennials’ political participation and political knowledge levels. By expanding implications from just Millennials to a broader framework of civics education, the necessity of civics education is highlighted. Further, by expanding the definition of civics education, this thesis sought to study civics as a subject acquired in a variety of ways and settings. Senator John Kyl (2011) writes in Teaching America,

“Civic education is more than teaching US history or the intricacies of our government’s operations. It is about preparing Americans to be engaged citizens who can add to our nation’s story as prior generations did. That begins with protecting the liberty bequeathed to us.”
Senator Kyl is accurate in his statement concerning civic education. That is why civics education is vital to the wellbeing of this country and to the republic. People refer to the importance of teaching civics as a way to prepare a new generation. In this case, the new generation studied was Millennials; however, since there will be a new voting age generation after Millennials, the importance of civics education does not disappear. Further, parents and schools are agents of socialization that contribute to civics education, meaning that studies on these agents and their impact on generations will continue to be relevant. This why it is important to study political knowledge levels and political participation levels because they are impacted by civics education.

As a country, we ought to care about civics education. Civics education influences political participation and political knowledge. In order for our government to work, the people must have knowledge and must be willing to participate. In order to do this, lessons in civics must occur. That is why it is important to understand civics education’s impact on Millennials. Millennials are the new voters and present trends from their civics education experiences.

Ultimately, civics education is essential to American society, as are the actors that instill this education. In closing, I wish to draw on a famous response by Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was asked, at the close of Constitutional Convention of 1787, if America was a Republic or a Monarchy. Franklin’s response was the following, “A Republic, if you can keep it” (as cited in Dictionary of Quotations, 1989). Franklin meant that America would remain a republic, as long as citizens kept it. In order to maintain, American values and beliefs must be taught. Citizens must work together to preserve this country and this form of government. Therefore, educators, lawmakers,
citizens, Millennials, the next generation of voters, and political scientists must all work together to support the teaching of civics education, in its various forms. This thesis explored the impact of civics education on Millennials because it is important to understand its impact on this new generation’s political participation and political knowledge. The crux of the issue is civics education’s impact. Civics education impacted this generation, meaning that is important to the future of America and understanding other generations who live in a self-governing society.
Appendix A: Survey

Q37 Hello, and thank you for participating in this research study. The study should take between 10-15 minutes of your time. You can skip any question. And you can end your participation in the study at any time. My name is Hannah Haley and I am an undergraduate in the Public Policy Leadership program at the University of Mississippi. I am currently working on my honors senior thesis, and I am conducting a research study about civics education and political participation. Participation is completely voluntary and your answers will be anonymous. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey please contact the primary researcher, Hannah Haley, at (901) 326-6193 or hahaley@go.olemiss.edu, or the research adviser Dr. Heather Ondercin at ondercin@olemiss.edu. This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns about the conduct of this study, you may contact The University of Mississippi Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 100 Barr Hall, University, MS 38677, 662-915-7482, irb@olemiss.edu. Thank you!

Q1 Please select your birth year.
   ☑ 1980 (1)
   ☑ 1981 (2)
   ☑ 1982 (3)
   ☑ 1983 (4)
   ☑ 1984 (5)
   ☑ 1985 (6)
   ☑ 1986 (7)
   ☑ 1987 (8)
   ☑ 1988 (9)
   ☑ 1989 (10)
   ☑ 1990 (11)
   ☑ 1991 (12)
   ☑ 1992 (13)
   ☑ 1993 (14)
   ☑ 1994 (15)
   ☑ 1995 (16)
   ☑ 1996 (17)
   ☑ 1997 (18)
   ☑ 1998 (19)
   ☑ Birth Year Not Listed (20)

If Birth Year Not Listed Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey
Q3 Sex
☐ Male (1)
☐ Female (2)

Q2 Please specify your ethnicity.
☐ White/ (1)
☐ Hispanic/ Latino (2)
☐ African American or Black (3)
☐ Native American or American Indian (4)
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander (5)
☐ Other (6)

Q3 Which best describes your current level of education?
☐ Not a highschool graduate (1)
☐ High school graduate (2)
☐ Some college, but have not graduated (3)
☐ College graduate (4)
☐ Professional graduate degree (JD, MBA) (5)
☐ Terminal degree (PhD, EdD) (6)

Q4 What are the five rights guaranteed by the First Amendment in the U.S. Constitution?
☐ Freedom of Speech (1)
☐ Due Process (2)
☐ Right to Bear Arms (3)
☐ No Quartering Soliders in People's Homes (4)
☐ Right to Petition (5)
☐ Right to Trial by Jury (6)
☐ Freedom to Privacy (7)
☐ Freedom of the Press (8)
☐ Right to Assemble (9)
☐ Freedom of Religion (10)
☐ The Pursuit of Happiness (11)
☐ State's Rights (12)
☐ Healthcare (13)
☐ Citizenship (14)
☐ The Right to Work (15)
Q5 True or False the President's veto may be overturned
- True (1)
- False (2)

Q6 Do you happen to know which political party, the Democratic party or Republican party, currently controls the U.S. Congress?
- Democratic Party (1)
- Republican Party (2)
- Don't know (3)

Q7 Which Constitutional Amendment guarantees those 18 years and older the right to vote?
- 3rd Amendment (1)
- 28th Amendment (2)
- 15th Amendment (3)
- 20th Amendment (4)
- 12th Amendment (5)
- 26th Amendment (6)

Q8 Which Political Party currently controls Congress (Senate and House)?
- Democrats (1)
- Republicans (2)
- Don't Know (3)

Q9 What elections have you voted in? (select all that apply)
- School Elections (Student Body President, etc) (1)
- Local Elections (Mayor, City Council) (2)
- State Elections (State Legislature, Governor, etc) (3)
- National/ Congressional Elections (U.S. Senate, House of Representatives) (4)
- Presidential Elections (5)
- Don't Know (6)

Q10 How interested are you in information about what’s going on in government and politics?
- Extremely Interested (1)
- Very Interested (2)
- Moderately Interested (3)
- Interested (4)
- Slightly Interested (5)
- Not Interested at All (6)
Q11 How much can people like you effect what the government does? This could be through voting in elections, signing petitions, or other activities related to politics and government.
- A Great Deal (1)
- A lot (2)
- A Moderate Amount (3)
- A little (4)
- Not at All (5)

Q12 Which best describes your interest in politics and government?
- Extremely Interested (1)
- Very Interested (2)
- Moderately Interested (3)
- Interested (4)
- Slightly Interested (5)
- Not Interested (6)

Q13 Which of the following have you done in the past year? (select all that apply)
- Wore a political button (1)
- displayed a political yard sign (2)
- displayed a political bumper sticker (3)
- attended a protest or rally (4)
- wrote or emailed an elected official (5)
- donated to a political campaign or political party (6)
- donated to a political cause (7)
- volunteered for a political campaign or political party (8)
- volunteered for a political cause (9)
- attended a political meeting (10)
- Posted a political opinion on social media (facebook, twitter, instragram, etc) (11)
- Shared a story or link that contained political information on social media (facebbok, twitter, instragram, etc) (12)
- Engage in a face to face discussion about politics. (13)
- Engage in a discussion about politics on social media (facebook, twitter, instragram, etc) (14)

Q14 Which state did you complete a majority of high school career?
<table>
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<th>State</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<td>Rhode Island</td>
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</table>
South Carolina (41)
South Dakota (42)
Tennessee (43)
Texas (44)
Utah (45)
Vermont (46)
Virginia (47)
Washington (48)
West Virginia (49)
Wisconsin (50)
Wyoming (51)

Q15 Did you attend a public, private, charter, homeschool, other, or didn't attend?
- Public (1)
- Private (2)
- Charter (3)
- Homeschool (4)
- Other (5)
- Didn't Attend (6)

Q16 Did you have a civics course while you attended high school? This could be an American history course, a government course, an economics course, etc.
- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

If Yes Is Not Selected, Then Skip To Do you favor, oppose, or neither favo...

Q17 How many years of civics education did you receive in high school?
- Less than 1 year (1)
- 1 year (2)
- 2 years (3)
- 3 years (4)
- 4 years (5)
- Other (6)

Q18 Did you have a positive, negative, or neither feeling towards your high school civics course?
Q19 Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose having civics courses in high school?
- Favor (1)
- Oppose (2)
- Neither favor nor oppose (3)

Q20 Did you participate in civic education programs outside of the classroom while you were in high school? Please choose all that apply.
- Mock Trial (1)
- Model United Nations (2)
- Youth in Government (3)
- High School Student Government (4)
- Youth Legislature (5)
- Simulated Elections (6)
- Interviews with Election Officials (7)
- Government Based Field Trips (8)
- We the People (9)
- Model Congress (10)
- Conference on National Affairs (11)
- Page for State or National Government (12)

Q21 Do you agree with the following statement? My high school civics education has made me better a citizen because I am better educated about American politics and government.
- Strongly Agree (1)
- Somewhat Agree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Strongly Disagree (5)

Q22 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My civics teacher(s) explained the importance of political participation.
Strongly Agree (1)
Agree (2)
Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
Disagree (4)
Strongly Disagree (5)

Q23 Which best describes your current exposure to civics after high school? (This can include government, political, or economic based courses or politically based extracurriculars)?
- No, I have not taken any civics based classes, and I do not plan to do so (1)
- No, I have not taken any civics based classes, but I plan on taking at least one class (2)
- Yes, I have continued to take civics based classes, but I am not involved in politics outside of the classroom (3)
- Yes, I have continued to take civics based classes, and I am also involved in politics outside of the classroom (4)
- Not currently in school (5)

Q24 If you are currently in school, are you pursuing a degree that has a civics focus (can be international relations, economics, political science, etc)
- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Maybe (3)
- Don't Know (4)
- Not in School (5)

Q25 How important is it to understand the American political process and American history?
- Extremely Important (1)
- Very Important (2)
- Somewhat Important (3)
- Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)
- Somewhat Unimportant (5)
- Very Unimportant (6)
- Not at all Important (7)

Q26 Which best describes your parents interests in politics and government?
Q27 To what extent do your parents encourage you to be politically active?
- Very Much (1)
- Somewhat (2)
- Not Much (3)

Q28 Did your parents ever take you to vote with them or campaign for specific candidate or issue?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Maybe (3)

Q29 How often do you discuss politics with your family?
- Never (1)
- Less than Once a Month (2)
- Once a Month (3)
- 2-3 Times a Month (4)
- Once a Week (5)
- 2-3 Times a Week (6)
- Daily (7)

Q30 How influential were your parents on your political participation?
- Extremely Influential (1)
- Very Influential (2)
- Moderately Influential (3)
- Influential (4)
- Somewhat Influential (5)
- Not Influential (6)

Q31 In the past month, how often do you watch the news or read a newspaper?
Haley 99

- Never (1)
- Less than Once a Month (2)
- Once a Month (3)
- 2-3 Times a Month (4)
- Once a Week (5)
- 2-3 Times a Week (6)
- Daily (7)

Q32 Where do you receive most of your news?
- Twitter (1)
- Snapchat (2)
- Facebook (3)
- Radio (4)
- Traditional Newspaper (5)
- News Websites (6)
- T.V. (7)
- Other (8)

Q33 Do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, Republican, Independent or something else?
- Democrat (1)
- Republican (2)
- Independent (3)
- Something Else (4)

Q34 Please describe your civics education and how you think it impacted you. Please include anything you remember from the class.
References


Pew Research Center, June 2015, “Millennials & Political News


United States Constitution. Amendment XXVI.


