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A Complex Relationship: Civic Education and Political Activism

By

Raquel Alexis Espitia

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

Oxford
December 2017

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Abstract:

Over the past decade or so, a community of civic education advocacy organizations have been created. These various organizations, while varying on methodology, have signified a common support of the 2003 report, *The Civic Mission of the Schools*, and have based their organizations' foundations on the main proposals found in the report. Each organization agrees that American civic education has been on the decline in recent years. They argue that this decline warrants education reform because civic education is the key to maintaining American democracy and that the public school system is the best institution to teach civic skills. The organizations also agree that the main goal of civic education is to teach students how to comprehend current political issues in order to produce more confident and, consequently, more active citizens. Two major organizations have been successful in passing civic education legislation, yet focus on improving traditional civic education in the confines of the classroom or focus on introducing an entirely new curriculum based on the American citizenship test.

However, the advocacy organizations have shown support for the 2003 report that proposes a multi-faceted approach to improve civic education. A multi-faceted approach includes improvement in the classroom as well as participation in government styled extracurricular activities. This research project set out to test whether or not there is an impact on political activism as a result of civic education. A complementary hypothesis is presented that a multi-faceted approach to civic education is more effective than classroom instruction alone. A survey was created to test respondents' amount of civic

education, political activism, political knowledge, and civic proficiency. As the work will show, the survey data indicates support for the complimentary hypothesis that civic education is most successful when a multi-faceted approach is used.

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Introduction

There has been a perceived decline in political engagement over the last several decades (Putnam, 1). Some scholars argue that this decline is due to a decline in civic education. Civic education advocates argue that civic education is the key to maintaining a healthy democracy and that the public school system is the best-equipped institution to teach students civic skills (Gibson and Levine, 1). These advocates make a connection between political engagement and civic education by also arguing that civic education teaches students how to comprehend current political issues which produce more active citizens. Many of the civic education advocacy organizations possess a common foundation that promotes a multi-faceted approach to civic education. Despite a foundation that encourages an increase in civic education inside of the classroom as well as an increase in civic based extracurricular activities, two of the leading organizations as well as the organizations associated with them focus on classroom reform.

This thesis project will offer a complimentary hypothesis to these leading civic education advocacy organizations. I will first lay a foundation of civic education advocates' arguments. Then, my complimentary hypothesis will argue that proficiency in civic education does not exclusively determine whether or not a student will develop into an active citizen; instead, a multi-faceted approach should be more effective. I will then show results from my survey that was created to test respondents' political activism, civic education, political knowledge, and civic proficiency, with conclusions to follow.

Arguments for a Renewed Emphasis on Civic Education

The recent creation of various civic education organizations has created a community of advocates who support a similar narrative. Largely, these organizations agree that there has been a steady decline in the prevalence of civic education in public schools since the 1990s when the STEM curriculum was first introduced and supported. One of the leading civic education proponents even argues that they “*know* the recent educational emphasis on math and science has had a negative impact on the study of history, civics, and other subjects” (Foss, emphasis added). The civic education advocacy organizations also make use of high salience issues like immigration and America’s current methods of citizenship. Some of the advocates, such as the Joe Foss Institute, have combined their legislation proposals with immigration reform legislation. These tactics seem to grant more publicity to the civic education reforms since many of the organizations that are mainly concerned with civic education state that their main mission is to improve civic education proficiency in America. Yet, the combination of immigration reform platforms helps provide civic education organizations with a published citizenship curriculum and test material to use in the civic education legislative proposals. While the immigration reform addition is not particularly relevant to this research project, the testing material has been widely accepted as an affordable way to propose legislation and offers a method to test for civic proficiency.

These two general motivations lead a majority of these civic education advocacy organizations to argue, first, that producing young adults for the sole purpose of competing in today's applied science-based jobs does not align with the way our founding fathers foresaw the continual progression of democracy. Second, a majority of these organizations argue that in order to expect an immigrant to understand America's history and how to participate in our government, we must also expect the same level of civic proficiency from American citizens.

But as a 2003 report, *The Civic Mission of the Schools*, argues:

in recent decades...increasing numbers of Americans have disengaged from civic and political institutions such as voluntary associations, religious congregations, community-based organizations, and political and electoral activities such as voting and being informed about public issues. (Gibson and Levine, 4).

Accordingly, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and Carnegie Corporation of New York, in consultation with the Corporation for National and Community Service, conducted a series of meetings with scholars from various parts of the region to discuss a "more comprehensive approach to civic education in the United States" (Gibson and Levine, 4). This report has been credited with sparking the civic education movement and has been used as the foundation for many advocates. The report first sets the central arguments. The first contention is that civic education is "crucial for the future health of our democracy" and that schools should accordingly reinstate civic curriculum. The second point argues that schools are the best institutions to develop civic skills because they "are the most systematically and directly responsible for imparting citizen norms" and because other institutions have "lost

the capacity or will to engage young people” (Gibson and Levine, 5). Both contentions can then be seen in many different advocates’ work through their foundations.

One such advocate is Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. She became a co-chair of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools after the 2003 report was published and responded to its call for more research by helping publish a report that “builds and expands on the [2003] findings” (Gould, Jamieson, and Levine, 2). O’Connor and the other authors and editors of the follow-up 2011 report agree with the foundations in the 2003 report and add that their research has shown students with adequate civic education “are more likely than their counterparts to understand public issues, view political engagement as a means of addressing communal challenges, and participate in civic activities” (Gould, Jamieson, and Levine, 6). The 2011 report lists “six proven practices” of teaching civic education that were proposed in the 2003 report:

- Provide instruction in government, history, law, and democracy
- Incorporate discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events into the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives
- Design and implement programs that provide students with the opportunity to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction.
- Offer extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities
- Encourage student participation in school governance

- Encourage students’ participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures (Gibson and Levine, 6).

Justice O’Connor’s 2011 report lays out the importance of civic education, highlights some new data since 2003, and then recommends that public schools implement the six proven practices in their curricula and state constitutions. Yet, seven out of the ten recommendations for “schools and administrators at the local level” focus on improving civic education through the traditional classroom method. Likewise, each of the other recommendation categories place a majority of their emphasis on traditional classroom improvement recommendations. The emphasis on improving civic education within the classroom is consistent with O’Connor’s iCivics model:

“iCivics exists to engage students in meaningful civic learning. We provide civics teachers well-written, inventive, and free resources that enhance their practice and inspire their classrooms. Our mission is to ensure every student receives a high-quality civic education, and becomes engaged in – and beyond – the classroom” (O’Connor).

O’Connor’s civic education method can then be understood as largely focused on improving traditional teaching methods within the classroom that is derived from a foundation of the 2003 report.

The correspondence between both reports shows the commonality among multiple civic education advocacy organizations and provides a foundation of principles. Similarly, another leading civic education advocacy organization has similar roots from the 2003 report, yet has defined a different solution to the supposed problem. The Joe Foss Institute also argues that “our system of government depends on the consent of the governed, and on active, responsible citizenship” (Foss). However, the institute promotes

legislation that requires high school students to pass a one hundred question test directly derived from the United States Citizen Test. While the Joe Foss Institute quotes Justice O'Connor and agrees with the foundations from the 2003 report, they argue that "by using [the United States Citizenship Civics] test and the study materials provided, the legislation has next to no implementation costs" (Foss). The institute's methods reveal the amount of variation within the civic education advocacy community when policy methods are presented. Nonetheless, the common ground between each advocacy group helps provide a clear set of common principles and a foundation on which to build the research design for this project.

Turnout as a form of Political Activism

There are many forms of civic engagement that some political scientists identify as stretching from bowling leagues (Putnam, 70) all the way to political party affiliation (Kernell). Some of the societal aspects that can be categorized as evidence of civic engagement, however, take more argument and evidence to prove their civic quality than voting. Voting has been identified as a common goal or promotion among civic education advocates. Civic education advocates share a common foundational logic that civic education is the key to preserving democracy and utilize voter participation as a practical form of engagement to teach students. There is a narrative among the civic advocates referenced in the first two practices of the “six proven practices” that argues teaching civic education will produce more informed voters to produce a healthier democracy. One civic education advocate explains how “voters are responsible...during political campaigns they process relevant information to make reasonable decisions among the choices presented to them.” Similar to other advocates, Wolfe then uses this understanding of voters to build his advocacy for civic education. He argues that “[political scientists have thus agreed that] American voters possess scant information about politics and policy” creating a need for civic education to allow voters to live up to their responsibility (Wolfe, 24). Therefore, for ease of conceptual explaining and because advocates use voter participation as a way to build support for civic education, I chose to focus on this element of civic engagement in my research.

Civic Education, Civic Proficiency, and Political Activism

The growth in civic education advocacy and the arguments presented by the advocacy leaders led me to wonder whether or not the decline in civic education is indeed connected and responsible for the decline in civic involvement. The connection in question is whether or not being proficient in civic curriculum determines a person's involvement in American government. Like civic education advocates, I theorized that because the American public education curriculum has experienced a shift in which subjects to emphasize, students are less exposed to civic education and lack practical knowledge of how to vote and be an active citizen. Yet, I also was not satisfied with the reforms the advocates have suggested. Justice O'Connor's organization as well as the organizations that have supported her have called for a resurgence in civic education importance and focus on a reform within the traditional classroom setting. They categorize civic education classes that already exist and call for more regulation that make these courses a requirement for students. The Joe Foss Institute, on the other hand, uses the citizenship test in proposed legislation as the new civic curriculum for upcoming high school students. Both major organizations, though, agree with proposals in the 2003 report which advocated for schools to "offer extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities" (Gibson and Levine, 6). With this foundational proposal, this project theorized that there is more complexity in the relationship between civic education and political activism. Therefore,

I designed a survey to not only show how many students are being taught civic education or if students entering our public university reach basic requirements of civic education proficiency, but also to test whether or not traditional classroom civic education is the only factor that effects how students participate in government activities.

My hypothesis is that the steady decline in civic education does have an impact on students' view of democracy, but proficiency in civic education does not exclusively determine whether or not a student will develop into an active citizen. A major argument for civic education is that a successful civic curriculum will teach students “to understand public issues, view political engagement as a means of addressing communal challenges, and participate in civic activities” (Gould, Jamieson, and Levine, 6). Civic education is argued to provide the skills needed to be an active citizen. Yet, my argument is that this goal of teaching students how to comprehend political issues and how to effectively act based on this comprehension will not be achieved with a simple resurgence of traditional civic classes or an introduced basic testing method.

One civic education advocate articulated the concern best by arguing:

Teachers must be taught how to teach young students about their rights. It is not simply a matter of going through the first ten amendments to the Constitution. There is little relationship between the words written near the end of the eighteenth century and the current meaning given to these words by our courts. Moreover, these rights are very much in flux (Fieth, 38).

Alan Dershowitz, for example, is using his knowledge of civic education and the recent legislation advocacy to argue that teachers are responsible for more than simply teaching what rights are. With Dershowitz' ability to clearly articulate a concern for passionate teachers along with an importance on civic education, I began to view civic education as only part of the education. Likewise, the “six proven practices” offer a more complex

foundation than what the two major organizations have acted on. The proposed practice of offering extracurricular activities alongside traditional civic education courses reveals an idea that civic education, in its most successful formula, should contain a multitude of teaching methods in order to achieve such goals as public issue comprehension.

A complimentary hypothesis to Justice O'Connor's and the Joe Foss Institute's methods then arises that is consistent with the 2003 report (Gibson and Levine, 6). Justice O'Connor's focus on an increase in traditional teaching methods and the Joe Foss Institute's introduction of a new basic curriculum suggest that both organizations support the idea of successful civic education reform as classroom reform. A complimentary hypothesis is that classroom reform will not produce an adequate level of civic proficiency and, consequently, does not exclusively determine whether or not a student will be politically engaged. If civic education does indeed have an impact on political activism, then a resurgence of traditional methods or an introduction of basic testing methods will not be enough to produce a civically proficient student who uses his or her proficiency to participate in American democracy. The complimentary hypothesis works under the understanding that advocates believe the connection between civic education and political activism hinges on a student's ability to comprehend political issues and act on this comprehension. Thus, the structure of my research aims to consider civic education, political knowledge, and political participation as three separate entities in order to observe the extent to which civic education is associated with greater civic proficiency and a concomitant increase in political activism. The research also considers whether the presence of political knowledge provides the bridge between civic education and political activism.

Research Design

I designed a survey to assess respondents' political involvement, civic education, political knowledge, and civic proficiency. The entire survey is included in the appendix. The first contention of the civic education advocacy organization is that there has been a decline in civic education, which is the key to maintaining our political system. Thus, three survey questions asking about the respondent's high school and college civic class participation as well as seven questions testing the respondent's civic knowledge were written with the intent to show whether or not there is indeed a difference in political knowledge between those with civic education and those without. The other contention is that schools are the best institutions to instill civic skills-yet each advocacy group identifies other major factors in a child's life that help instill civic values. Some list parents, unions, political organizations, religious organizations, and many others. Civic education advocates who support the 2003 report's foundation agree that government styled clubs can also be effective in teaching civic skills; accordingly, a question asking if the respondent had participated in a list of proposed clubs was written into the survey to test whether or not the students were involved in such an organization. By adding a question that measures another type of civic education, the faction of civic advocates who propose a multi-pronged approach to civic education curriculum is represented. More importantly, the data is given another variable to compare with political involvement that may prove to have a larger association with political involvement than simply taking a

civic course. Additionally, the alternate civic experience question tests whether or not the last three of the “six proven practices” do have a greater effect on political activism than civic based courses.

The “six proven practices” helped provide motivations for the other survey questions. The first practice, to “provide instruction in government, history, law, and democracy,” can be associated with the questions that ask about a respondent’s civic involvement in either a proposed class or club as well as the questions that are categorized as civic knowledge. Practice number two, to incorporate discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events into the classroom, was used to write three questions about political events that were of high salience during the 2016 presidential election. This particular practice is argued to help students learn to become informed voters by learning how to digest current news and to be the connection between civic education and political activism. Thus, the three questions ask of three events relevant to the most recent presidential election to show if the respondents did indeed have the skills to recall information about recent national events. In an effort to keep the survey and research scope concise, the third practice to design community service programs was left out of the survey. Being able to trace a respondent’s community service specifically to a civic education motivated class while including every variation of community service that the respondent could have participated in was simply too great of a challenge for this particular survey. Additionally, if the hypothesis aims to show a connection between civic education and political engagement, data of a students’ community service history is not especially helpful.

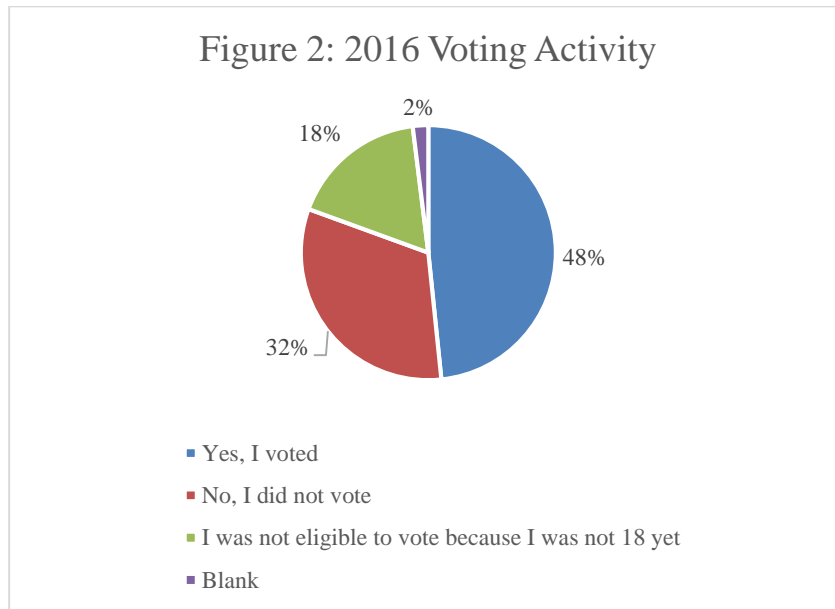
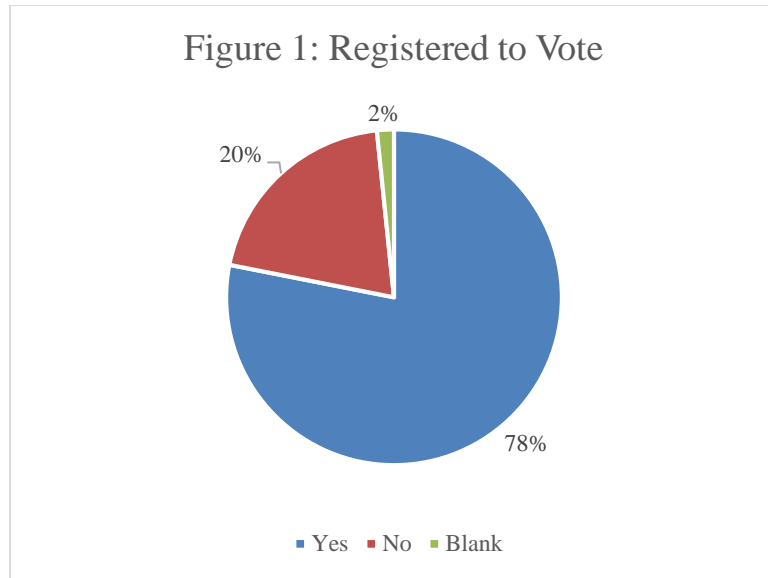
Two of the most prominent or well-known organizations that use the 2003 report as a foundation are Justice O'Connor's iCivics organization and the Joe Foss Institute's Civic Education Initiative. I chose these two organizations to represent some of the survey questions because of their success in legislation and prominence within this community of civic education advocacy organizations. The first portion of my hypothesis is to see what percent of college students have received civic education. I also test whether or not civic education exclusively determines a person's political activism. The simplest way to formulate the survey to do so is to test based on prominent civic education advocates' proposal of how to reinstate civic education. As discussed, many advocates have based their proposed curriculum on America's citizen test in order to avoid questions of funding. The only successful curriculum that has been published among the civic education advocates is the curriculum found on the iCivics website and the actual United States Citizenship Civics Test. The last eight questions of the survey were derived directly from these two sources with two questions about the Bill of Rights and the presidential term using the same wording from the Joe Foss Institute's 100 question test. Accordingly, the data comparisons used the same method of grading as the Joe Foss Institute proposes; if the respondent answers 75% of the questions correctly then he or she is categorized as "civically proficient." For the most part, iCivics tests their students on questions that are very similar to the citizenship test, yet they also have drafted application based tests. The last two questions come from this application idea that attempts to test whether or not students are aware of the methods of voter registration and how to vote in general (Appendix B).

The next portion of the hypothesis then questions whether civic proficiency determines a students' political activism. The survey included three questions that aimed to show whether or not the student had recently participated in our political system. The first of the three political involvement questions asks if the respondent is currently registered to vote followed by a question of whether or not he or she voted in the 2016 presidential election. The last of the three political involvement questions then asks if the respondent donated or volunteered for a political campaign or if he or she attended a campaign rally. Another set of three questions then asks about the students' current political knowledge. One question asks who the current Vice President is. The second of these political knowledge questions asks which party currently holds the majority in Congress while the third question asks who the current Secretary of Education is. The political knowledge questions serve two purposes. They show whether or not the students who voted or are registered to vote are indeed informed citizens. Creating a generation of informed voters is viewed among advocates as the ideal model of our voting system and is thus a major contention among civic education advocates. They argue that civic education teaches students how to process political news in order to make a more educated decision at the polls. The advocates' argument that a comprehension of current political issues produces more active students provides the connection between civic education and political activism. Also, the political knowledge questions aim to account for the students who were not eligible to vote or who chose not to vote but were registered. Since current political awareness is a portion of political involvement that the civic education advocates aim to achieve, then political knowledge can reasonably be categorized as a form of political involvement.

Survey Results

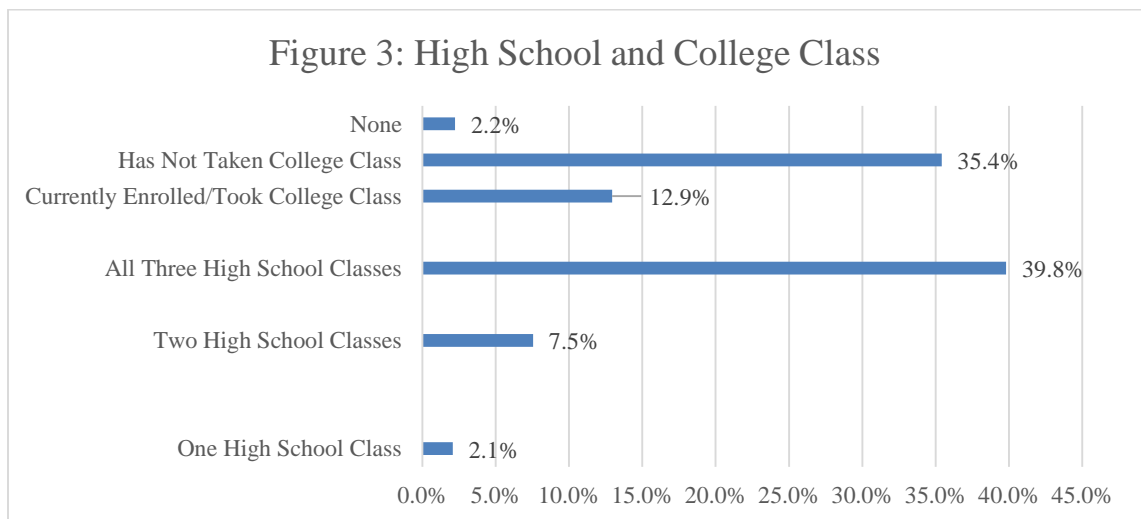
A total of 4,000 respondents were recruited from current students at the University of Mississippi to participate in the survey. Out of the 4,000 participants, 693 students responded to the survey while 603 respondents completed the entire survey (response rate of 15%). Each graph shows data from a total of 603 respondents who completed the entire survey unless specified otherwise. The survey was launched on October 16, 2017 and closed on October 30, 2017.

The first portion of survey data will show results from each item as they run consecutively from the survey. Then, comparisons of particular items will be provided to test the main hypotheses. One survey question asked of the student's parents' general household income; basic questions such as gender, race, and college classification were provided by the university. The question of income was the only question left to be asked. Three questions asking whether or not the respondent is registered to vote, voted in the 2016 presidential election and participated in a political campaign comprise the first set of items displayed below, measuring "political involvement."



The results for amount registered and amount who voted in the 2016 election are similar to the national average. With a national average for the 2016 presidential election, researchers “[estimate] more than 58 percent of eligible voters went to the polls” (Regan). This survey poll shows 78% who are registered to vote and 48% who actually voted. Data that divides voters into age ranges also closely resembles the respondents of this survey with about 40% of voters from ages 18-29 voting in the 2016 election (McDonald).

The next set of items measured “civic education,” and consists of three questions that ask about the respondents’ participation in civic education classes or clubs either in high school or college. The two questions regarding the respondents’ participation in a civic class are graphed together for reader’s ease; accordingly, the blank category was summed from a total of 1,206 respondents. Unfortunately, one issue made its way into the online survey; the questions regarding a respondent’s participation in a high school civic based club was meant to allow the respondent to indicate if they were in debate club, mock trial, student body government, or any combination of the three. The actual question, however, only allowed for one answer choice. Still, this error did not seem to skew the results and are displayed below.



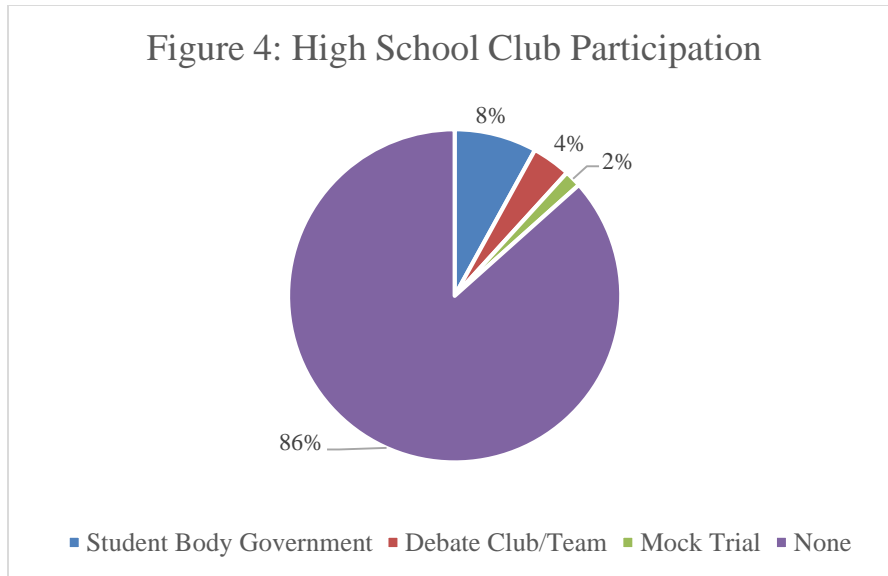


Figure 3 shows many respondents participated in at least three high school civics classes. Though, the question about Political Science 101 that is offered at the college level shows 35.4% who have not taken the course and are not enrolled. A large portion of the legislation lobbied by civic education advocates focuses on new curriculum for high school students. This may pose the question of whether or not advocates should consider legislation for college level courses along with high school level courses.

Figure 4 displays that 86% of respondents did not participate in any of the three civic clubs. The two major civic education advocacy organizations focus on improving traditional teaching methods and introducing new basic curriculum. Though the decline in high school civic education is not evident in Figure 3, Figure 4 shows a large majority of respondents did not participate in one of the “proven practices” from the 2003 report—civic-based extracurricular activities. This will provide a basis of comparison in the next section of survey data.

Three questions asking who the current vice president is, who holds the majority in Congress, and who the current Secretary of Education were used to measure “political knowledge.”

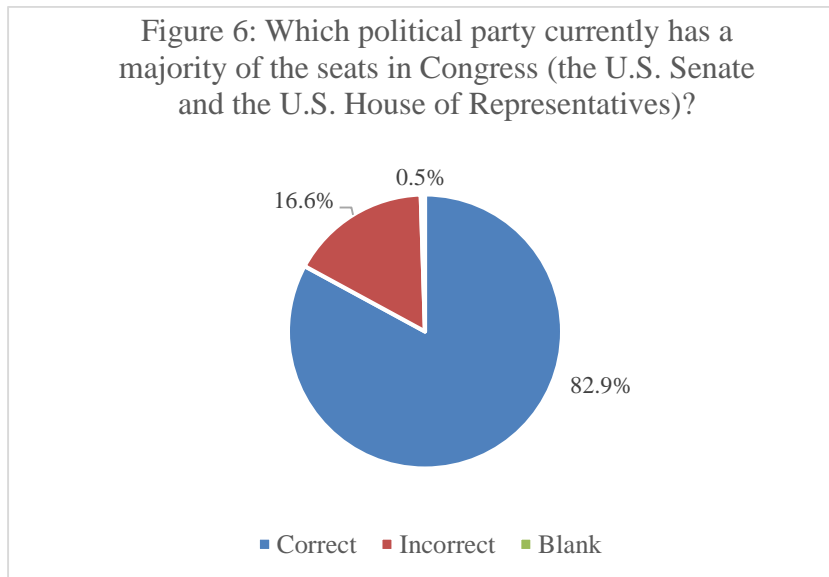
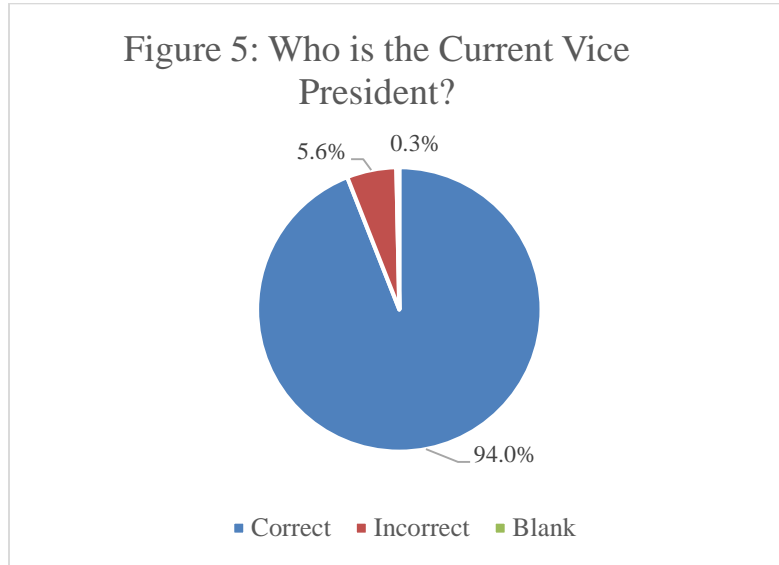
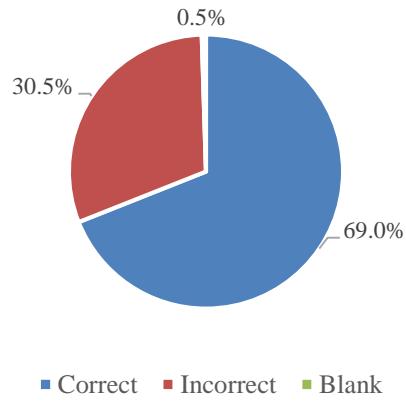


Figure 7: One particular name, who is now the United States Secretary of Education, is still making headlines. Who is this person?



Figures 5-7 show that the majority of the 603 respondents chose the correct answer for each question, revealing a high amount of current political knowledge.

The next set of questions were derived from both Justice O'Connor's and the Joe Foss Institutes methods of testing "civic proficiency."

Figure 8: How many members are in the U.S. House of Representatives?

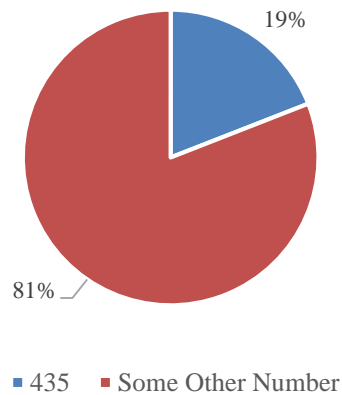


Figure 9: How many members are in the U.S. Senate?

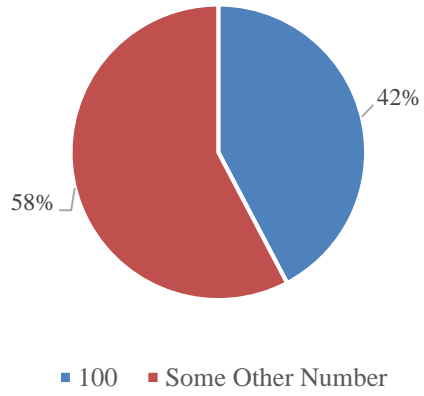


Figure 10: How many U.S. Supreme Court Justices are there?

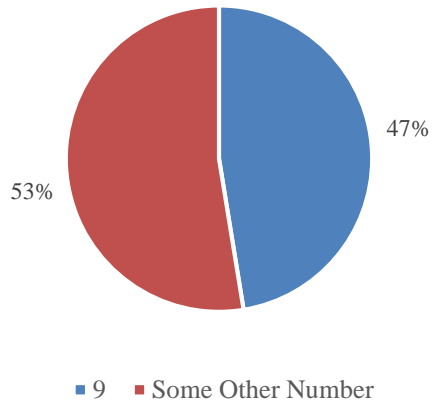


Figure 11: Which branch of the U.S. federal government is primarily responsible for passing legislation?

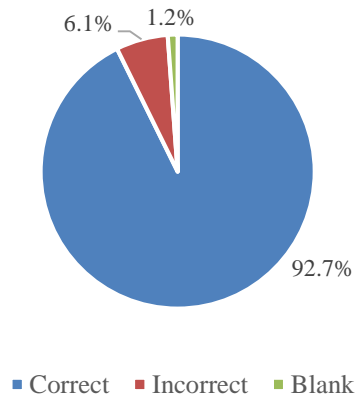
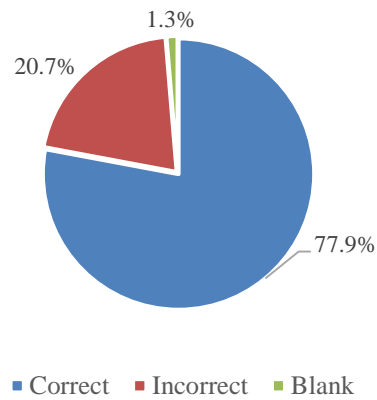
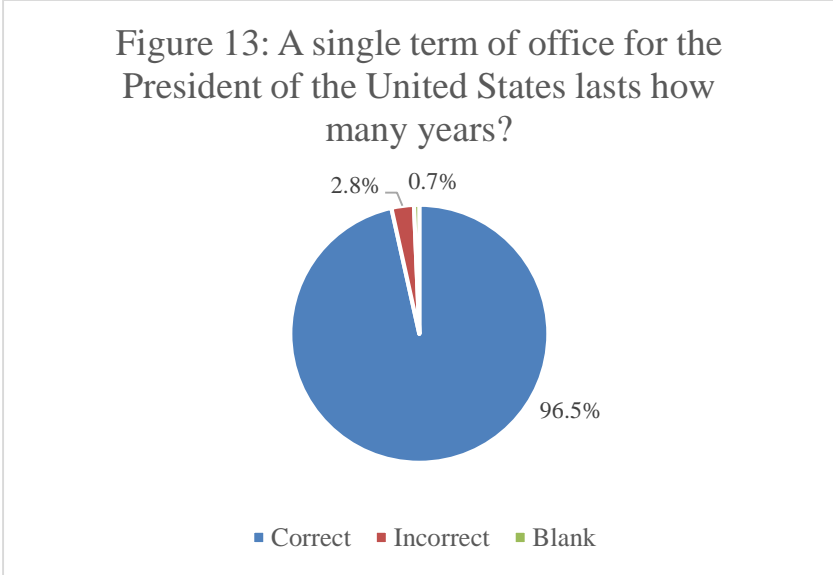


Figure 12: Which of the following is a right or freedom from the First Amendment to the Constitution?

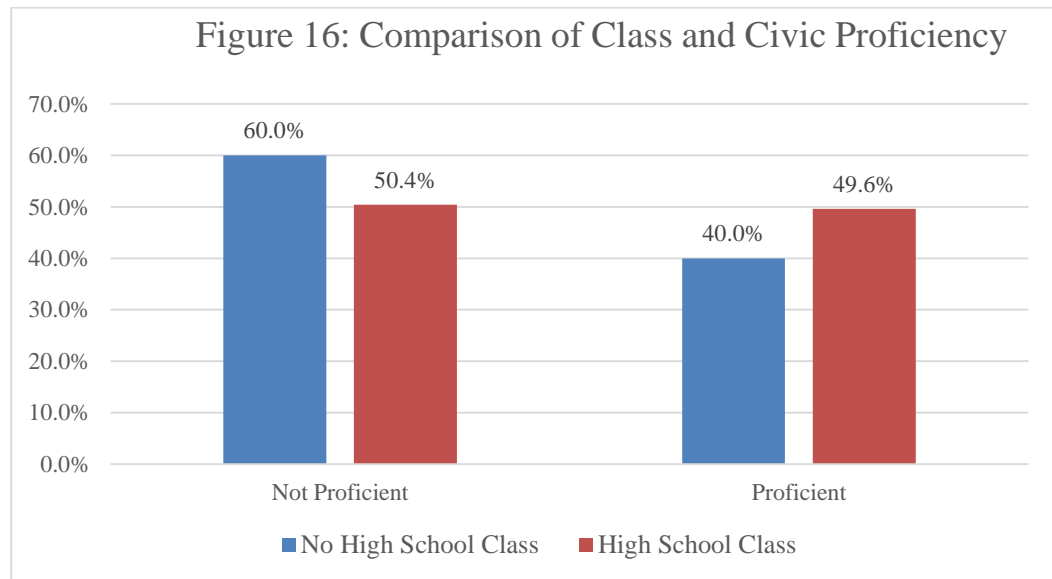




Figures 8-10 show a majority of incorrect answers. Yet, Figures 11-13 show a majority of the respondents answered these questions correctly. An inconsistency arises with the advocates' argument that civic knowledge has reached critical levels. The respondents in this survey show that they are capable of answering at least half of the civic proficiency questions correctly. Civic education organizations often use the statistic that only one third of Americans can be classified as civically proficient, yet the survey results show a majority of respondents who answered five out of eight (see Appendix) civic education questions correctly (Gould, Jamieson, and Levine, 4).

Associations Between Civic Education and Civic Proficiency

In this section I make comparisons between the different concepts of interest. The first major contention of the hypothesis supports the advocates' arguments that civic education increases a student's civic proficiency. If the hypothesis is correct, a presence of civic education should increase a respondent's civic proficiency. Civic proficiency, as explained in the Research Design section, is determined based on the Joe Foss Institute's proposed method of grading. If a respondent answers 75% of the civic education questions correctly, then he or she is categorized as civically proficient.



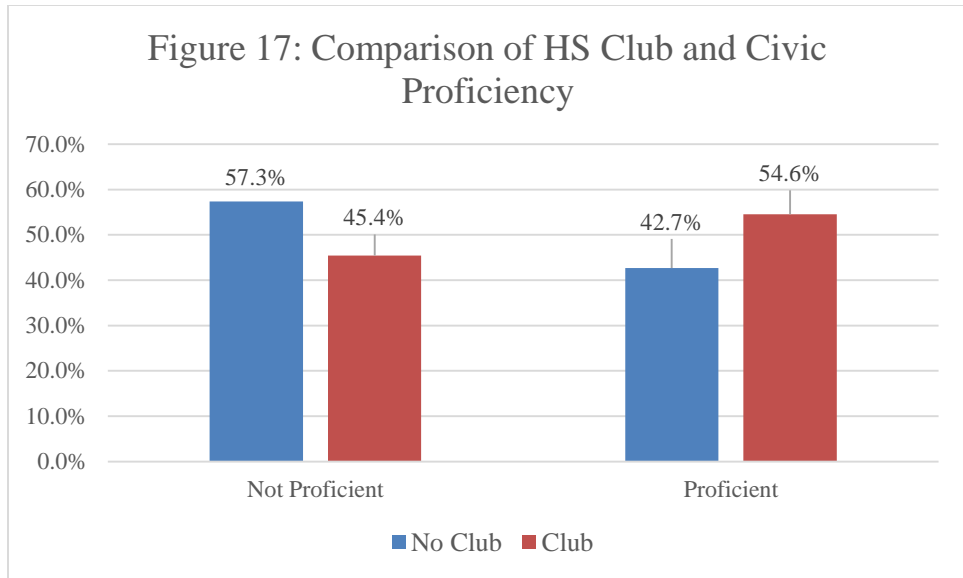
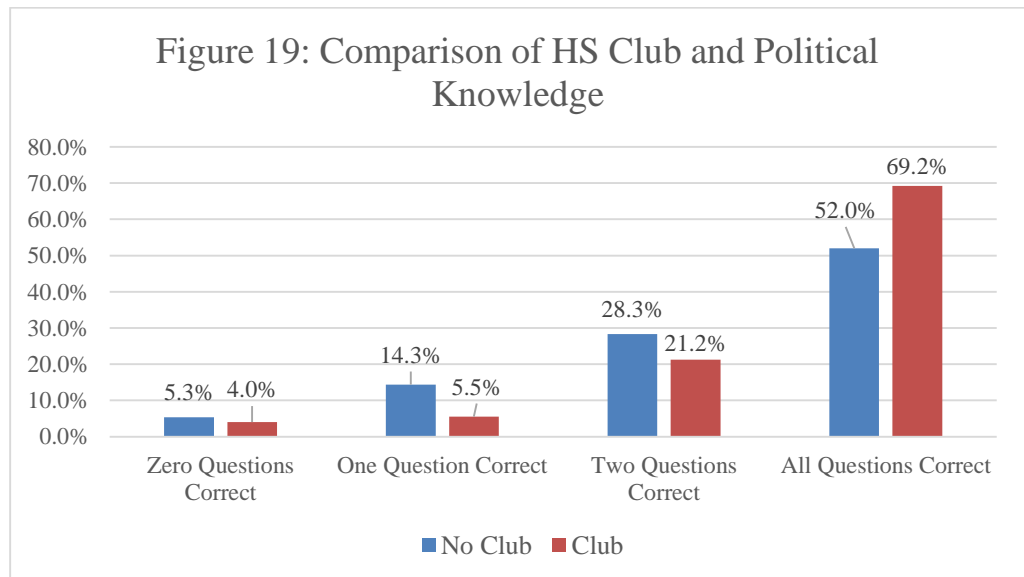
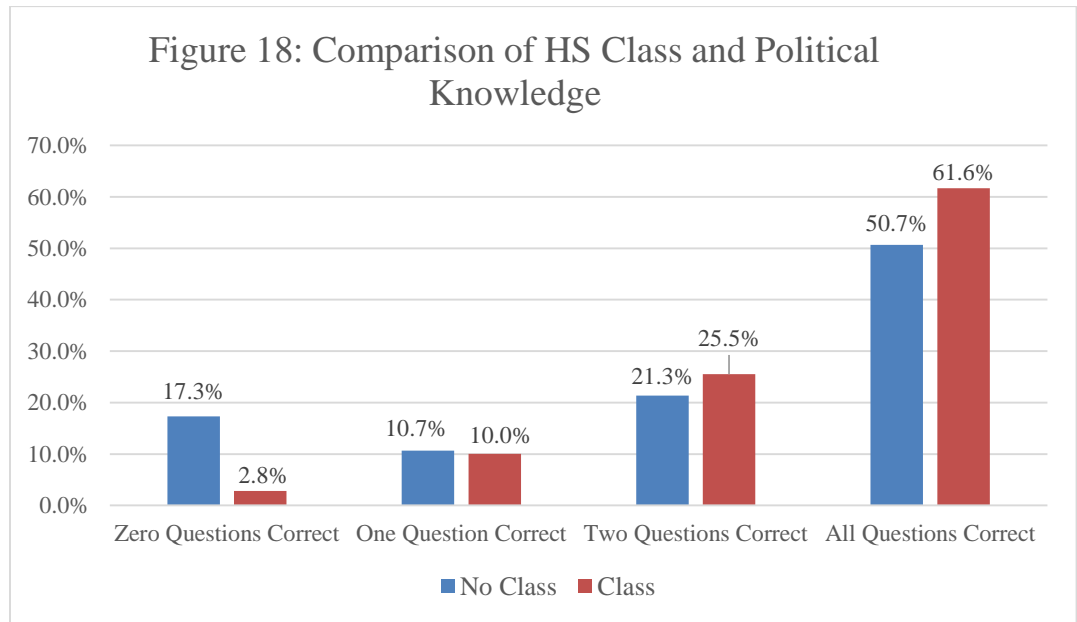
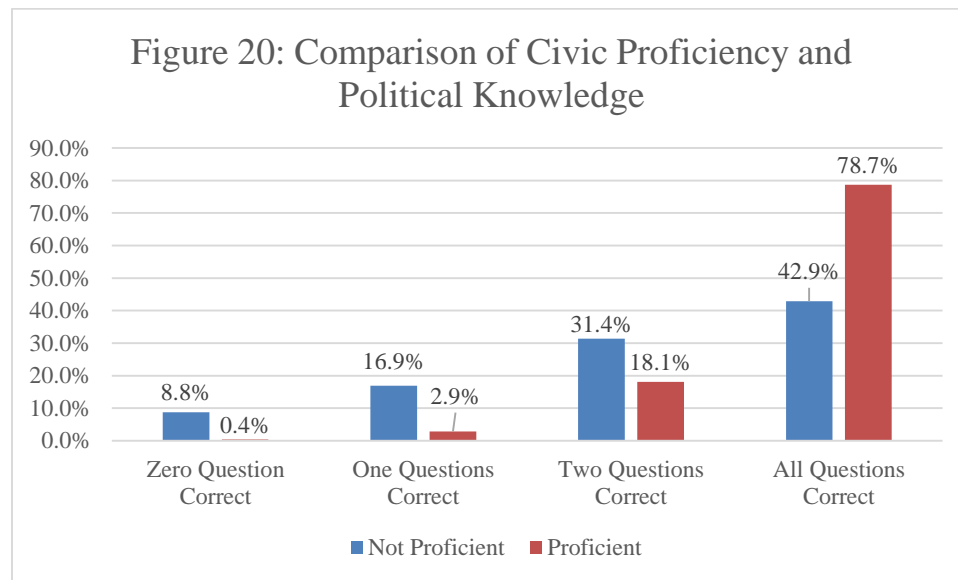


Figure 16 shows that students who did not participate in a high school civics class are 9.6% less likely to be civically proficient compared to students who did participate in a high school class. The hypothesis for this research project, however, is also supported by Figure 16 as the graph shows that 50.4% of students who participated in a high school civics class do not meet the threshold needed to be classified as civically proficient. The hypothesis argues that traditional classroom methods do not solely determine a student’s political activism. One reason why may be that a multitude of civic education methods makes a student less likely to not be civically proficient. Figure 17 shows a comparison of respondents who participated in a civic based club and their civic proficiency; the graph shows a somewhat smaller percentage of respondents who participated in a club and who are not proficient than the percentage of high school class participants who are not proficient in Figure 16; 45.4% who participated in a club were not proficient, compared to 50.4% of those who took a class.

Another portion of the hypothesis works under the understanding that civic education advocates argue that civic education teaches students how to comprehend current political issues and, consequently, makes students more likely to participate. If the goal of civic education advocates is to increase political engagement, then the data should show that a presence of civic education does indeed improve a respondent's ability to answer current political knowledge questions.



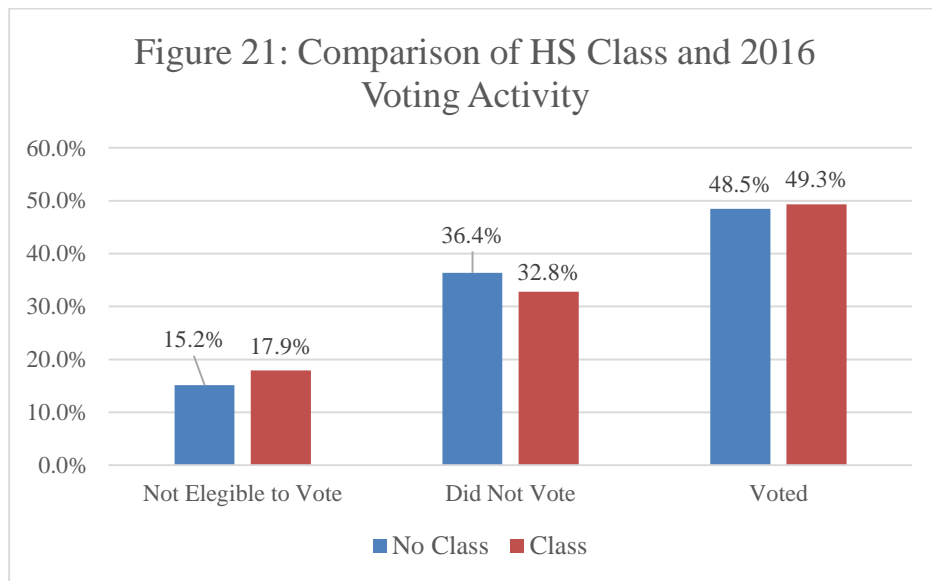
Figures 18 and 19 show the number of respondents who participated in either a high school class or club and how many political knowledge questions they answered correctly. Figure 18 shows that having participated in a civic based class makes a student 10.9% more likely to correctly answer all three questions about current political events. Yet, Figure 19 reveals respondents who participated in a high school civic based club are 17.2% more likely to answer all three current political event questions correctly. Both figures support the civic education advocates' argument that the presence of civic education makes a student more likely to comprehend current political events. Figure 19, though, also supports the complimentary hypothesis for this research project. The respondents who participated in a civic based club have an even greater advantage of answering the political knowledge questions correctly that the respondents who participated in a high school class.

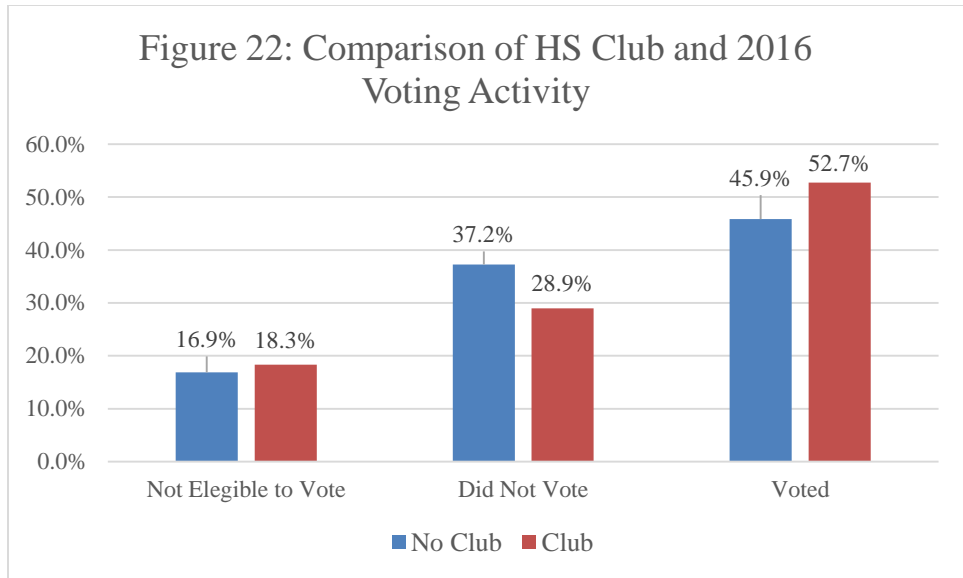


Additionally, Figure 20 shows that students who are civically proficient are 35.8% more likely to answer current political questions correctly. While this graph supports the

advocates' argument that civic proficiency correlates with a student's ability to comprehend current political events, Figure 20 also supports the complimentary hypothesis. If the connection between civic education and political activism is political knowledge, then civic proficiency should correlate with a respondent's ability to answer current political knowledge questions, which the data supports in Figure 20.

The political involvement and civic education subsections represent the other two major portions of the hypothesis. If civic education does indeed have an effect on political involvement, then a presence of civic education should correlate with a respondent's civic participation. Additionally, since civic education advocates argue that there is a correlation between civic education, political knowledge, and political activism, a comprehension of current political events should also increase a respondent's likelihood to participate. Comparisons of civic education and political activism as well as comparisons of political knowledge and political activism will be shown to test if there is indeed a connection between civic education and political involvement.





This first two comparisons in Figures 21 and 22 show the number of respondents who were in a high school class or club and whether the respondents participated in the 2016 Presidential election. Figure 21 reveals that respondents who participated in a high school civic class are only 0.8% more likely to vote than respondents who did not. Figure 22 once again supports the complimentary hypothesis that an additional civic education method produces students who are more likely to vote than those who only participate in a traditional teaching method. Students who participated in a civic based club are 6.8% more likely to vote than those who did not participate in a club. Additionally, students who participated in a club are 3.4% more likely to vote than students who only participated in a high school class.

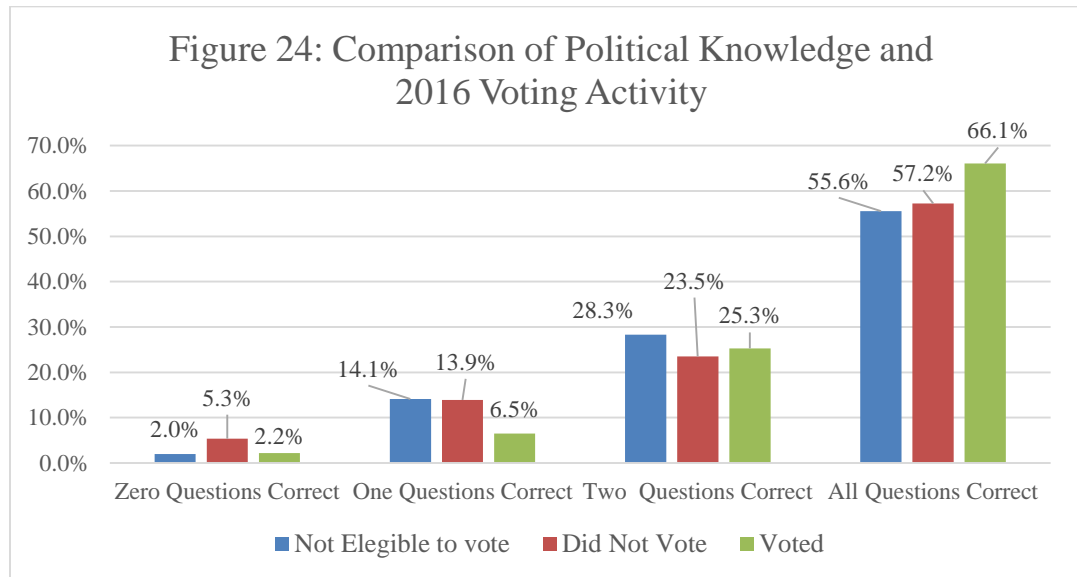
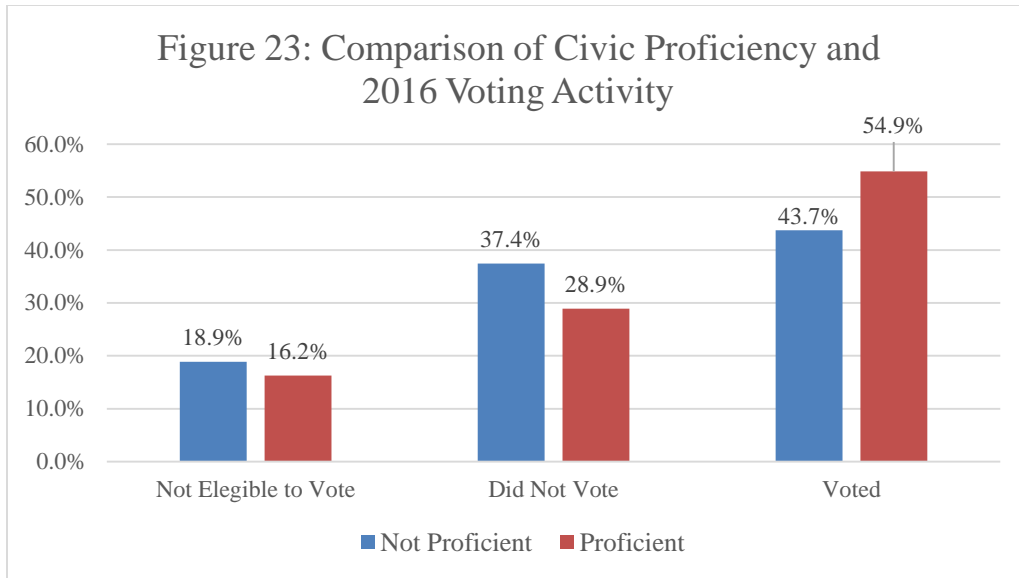
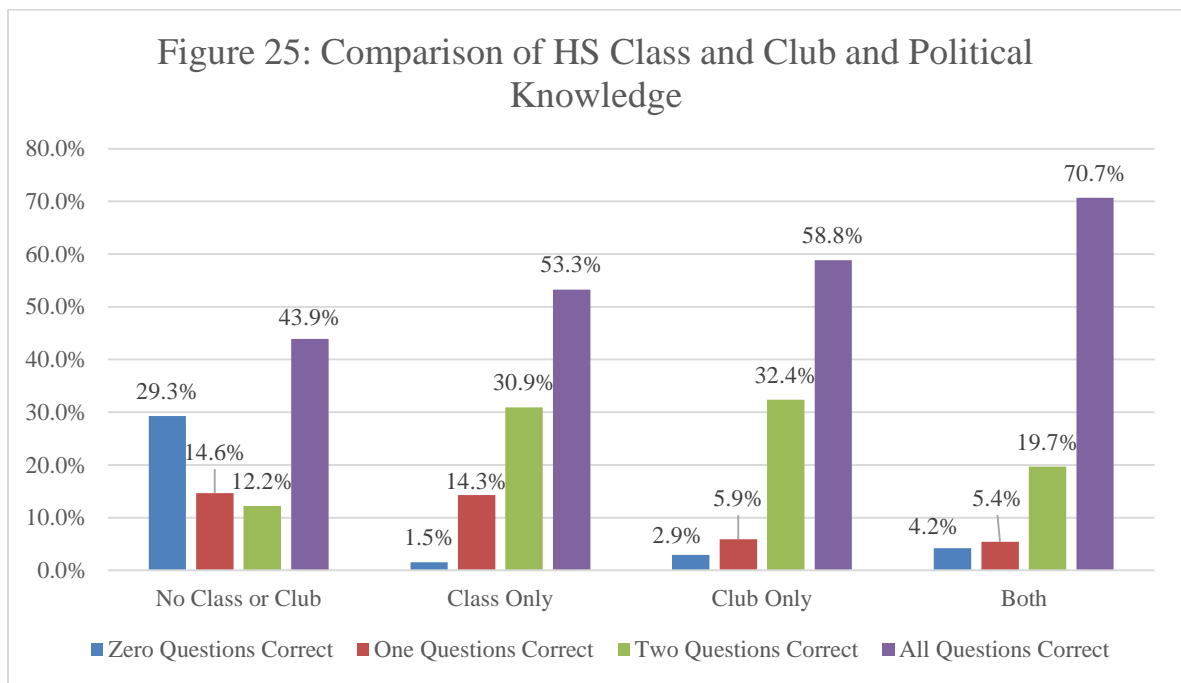


Figure 23 shows a breakdown of the respondents by whether they voted and their civic proficiency. The results support the civic education advocates’ argument that civic proficiency produces a greater likelihood of a student being politically active; students who proved to be proficient in civics are 11.2% more likely to vote than those who did not. Figure 24 shows the respondents who voted and how they answered the political knowledge question. The data shows that respondents who answered all of the political

knowledge questions correct are 63.9% more likely to vote than the respondents who were unable to answer any of the political knowledge questions. Therefore, the civic education advocates' argument that an ability to comprehend current political events makes a student more likely to vote is supported.

Since the complimentary hypothesis argues that classroom reform alone will not produce an adequate level of civic proficiency, the next set of items will aim to separate high school civic class participation from high school civic club participation.



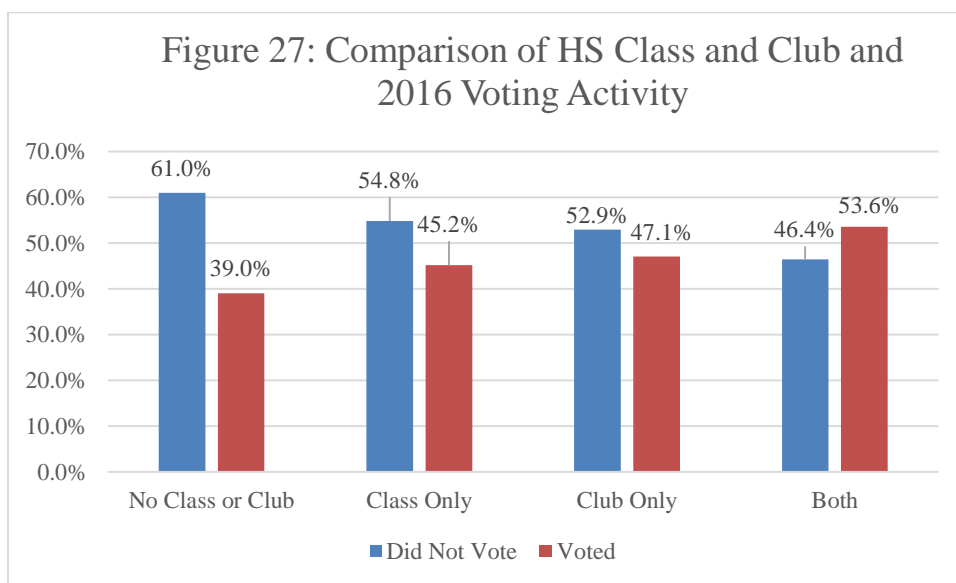
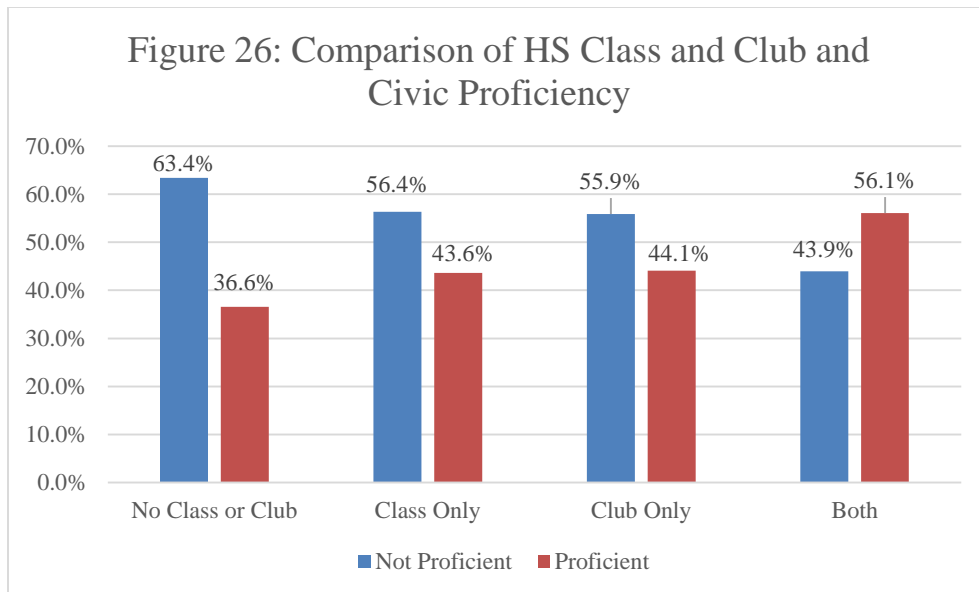


Figure 25 first shows respondents’ participation in either a high school civics class or club or their participation in both and their ability to answer the political knowledge questions. Figure 26 similarly shows the respondents’ class and club participation compared to their ability to rank as civically proficient. Figure 27 shows the respondents’ participation in either a class, club, or both alongside their 2016 voting activity. Each of the three graphs shows a greater likelihood of civic engagement among the respondents

who participated in both a high school civics class and a high school civics club. Figure 25 shows the greatest increase. The graph shows that students who participated in both a class and a club are 17.4% more likely than students who only participated in a class and 11.9% more likely than students who only participated in a club to answer all of the three political knowledge questions correctly. Figure 26 also shows a greater likelihood of being considered civically proficient among the students who participated in both a class and a club. Respondents who participated in both a class and a club are 12.5% more likely than respondents who only participated in a class and 12% more likely than respondents who only participated in a club to be classified as civically proficient. Figure 27 also shows a greater likelihood of the students participating in both a class and a club being politically active. The graph shows respondents who participated in both are 8.4% more likely than respondents who only participated in a class and 6.5% more likely than respondents who only participated in a club to be politically active.

Conclusion

My college experience has stood apart from most as I have been able to be a part of a university with a rich cultural history that is continually battling ways to cope with our state's history as well as introducing and reimagining our university in today's world. The removal of the state flag and the discontinuation of the song "From Dixie with Love" were the major events that led me to want to pursue this research project. As a freshman at the time of the state flag removal and a band member, I felt as though my voice in both matters was not heard. I was not at the university when the student legislation that voted to remove the state flag was passed and I was not given any choice in deciding whether or not to continue to play "Dixie"- yet I experienced the backlash and consequences for both actions on many occasions. The question I asked myself is whether or not this is an appropriate model of democracy for upcoming adults and whether or not young adults have any other outlets that teach and exemplify how to participate in a democracy. This line of questioning eventually led me to the question: How much do students entering college know about American government and how to participate in American democracy?

This project gave me an understanding of civic education advocates who commonly support the proposals in the 2003 *Civic Mission for the Schools* report. The foundation from the report supported a multi-faceted approach to civic education that would ensure students would adequately learn civic skills. The advocates also agreed that

the goal of civic education is to teach students to comprehend current political events in order to produce more confident students who are more likely to participate in American democracy. While the two major leaders among the civic education advocacy organizations, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and the Joe Foss Institute, support the 2003 report's findings, they promote two different methods. Justice O'Connor focuses on a resurgence of civic education within the confines of a traditional civic classroom structure while the Joe Foss Institute supports a basic civic curriculum derived from America's citizenship test. This project presented a complimentary hypothesis that supports the 2003 report's multi-faceted approach, yet disagrees with the traditional and basic approach of the two leading civic education advocacy organizations.

The results reported in this thesis supported the argument that the presence of civic education classes would positively influence a student's ability to answer current political knowledge questions as well as a student's ability to rank as civically proficient. Additionally, students who participated in civics classes were shown to be more likely to vote than those who did not. At the same time, the complimentary hypothesis was supported with results that showed a greater likelihood of being civically proficient, politically knowledgeable, and of voting among students who participated in both a civic based class and a civic based club.

I conclude that there is sufficient evidence that a multi-faceted civic education approach is more likely to produce students who vote. The results also support an unstated argument. A multi-faceted approach also proved to produce a greater likelihood of being civically proficient and to answer current political knowledge questions correctly. My suggestion for civic education advocates is to shift their focus from

traditional class methods and basic curricula to better support the 2003 report's foundation. A multi-faceted approach to civic education that includes an equal importance of class based civic learning and extracurricular based civic learning will be more likely to produce students with civic skills and students who are politically active.

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Appendix

Survey Questions

General Knowledge

1. Income of parents

To the best of your knowledge, is your family's income now higher, about the same, or lower than the average family income in the United States?

- a. Higher
- b. About the same
- c. Lower

Political Activism

1. Are you currently registered to vote?

- a. Yes
- b. No

2. Did you vote in the November 2016 U.S. presidential election?

- a. Yes, I voted
- b. No, I did not vote
- c. I was not eligible to vote because I was not 18 yet

3. Did you participate in any of these other ways during the 2016 U.S. presidential election?

- a. Attend a campaign rally (Yes/No)
- b. Donate money to a political campaign (Yes/No)
- c. Work/volunteer for a political campaign (Yes/No)

Civic Education

1. During high school, did you take any of the following classes?

Please check all that apply.

- a. U.S. History
- b. U.S. Government
- c. World History

2. During high school, did you participate in any of the following activities?

Please check all that apply.

- a. Debate Club/Team
- b. Mock Trial
- c. Student Body Government

3. Have you taken, or are you currently enrolled in, POL 101 (Introduction to American Government) at the University of Mississippi?

- a. Have taken
- b. Currently enrolled

- c. No, have not taken and not currently enrolled
- d. Don't know

Political Knowledge/Awareness

1. Who is the current Vice President of the United States?
 - a. Steve Bannon
 - b. Mike Pence
 - c. Paul Ryan
 - d. Don't know

2. Which political party currently controls [has a majority of the seats in] Congress (the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives)?
 - a. Democrats control Congress
 - b. Republicans control Congress
 - c. Democrats and Republicans share control
 - d. Don't know

3. During the first few months of 2017, there was much debate over who President Trump appointed for his cabinet. One particular name, who is now the United States Secretary of Education, is still making headlines. Who is this person?
 - a. Betsy DeVos
 - b. Sean Spicer
 - c. Joe Biden
 - d. Don't know

4. How many members are in the United State House of Representatives

{slider between 0 and 1,000 with 'Don't know' option}
5. How many members are in the U.S. Senate?

{slider between 0 and 500 with 'Don't know' option}
6. How many U.S. Supreme Court Justices are there?

{slider between 0 and 100 with 'Don't know' option}
7. Which branch of the U.S. federal government is primarily responsible for passing legislation?
 - a. The U.S. Congress
 - b. The Courts
 - c. The President
8. Which of the following is a right or freedom from the First Amendment to the Constitution?
 - a. Right to vote
 - b. Right to avoid taxes
 - c. Right to free exercise of religion
 - d. Right to bear arms
9. A single term of office for the President of the United States lasts how many years?

- a. 2 years
 - b. 4 years
 - c. 8 years
 - d. Don't know
10. Please indicate whether or not the following statements are true or false:
- a. Voter registration materials are available online?
 - b. If you are not in person in the place you are registered to vote on Election Day, there is no other way for you to cast a ballot.

Other Survey Results

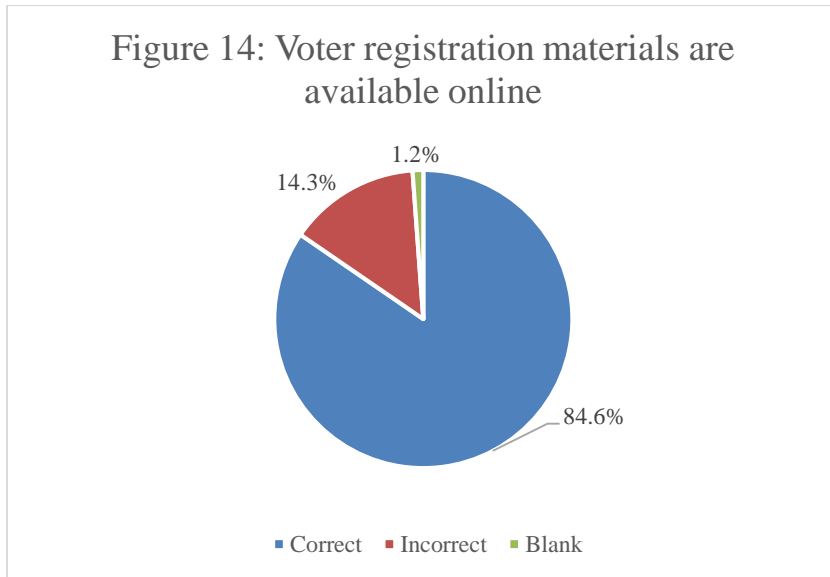


Figure 15: If you are not in person in the place you are registered to vote on Election Day, there is no other way for you to cast a ballot.

