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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

POLITICAL LEARNING IN ADOLESCENCE: A SURVEY OF POLITICAL AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE HEARTLAND

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

James T. LaPlant
Norman, Oklahoma
1998

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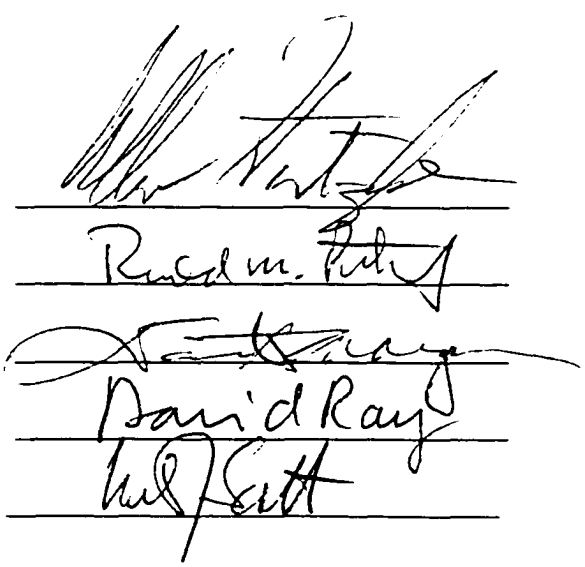
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A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY



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ABSTRACT

The major studies of political socialization are now fifteen to thirty years old. The social world has changed dramatically for adolescents over the past thirty years. Teenagers in the 1990s must confront family disruption, poverty, crumbling schools, the pervasive influence of television and the unraveling of community networks. This research project is driven by the central concern with how the social environment provides a "pull" in the political socialization process. Based upon Merelman's (1986, 307) lateral theory of socialization, this study explores the horizontally connected agents of socialization that "compete with one another to reach the young and, in the process, deliver quite varying images of society."

The results of this study of 942 middle school students in the Oklahoma City Public Schools reveal that family discussions of politics and group membership provide a pull into the world of politics for many adolescents. Adolescents who are being raised in families that frequently discuss politics are more likely to identify with a political party than students who do not discuss politics in their home. Group membership has a positive impact on citizenship awareness, political interest, political efficacy and political knowledge. In support of Merelman's lateral theory of socialization, the results of the Oklahoma City survey not only confirm the important role of group membership and television viewing in adolescent political socialization, they also reveal the varying images of society that are delivered to teenagers. Television viewing has a deleterious impact on citizenship awareness, social trust, political efficacy and political interest, while membership in school and after-school groups has a positive influence on all four factors.

Since 37 percent of the students in this sample are African-American, this study provides a detailed analysis of racial differences in political socialization. Black students are more likely to perceive high levels of discrimination in society than white students. Heavy television viewing is associated with a preference for school and neighborhood segregation among both black and white students. Almost half of the white and black middle school students believe that race relations will get worse in the future.

Chapter 1

In Defense of Political Socialization Research

In his book Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools, Jonathan Kozol (1991) describes his journey to schools and neighborhoods across this country. Kozol traveled to some of the poorest school districts in America. Kozol recounts the poignant conversations that he held with students in a seventh grade social studies class at Clark Junior High School in East St. Louis. After a class discussion about the civil rights movement, one of the African-American students named Christopher tells Kozol (1991, 36)

> Write this down. You asked a question about Martin Luther King. I'm going to say something. All that stuff about 'the dream' means nothing to kids I know in East St. Louis. So far as they're concerned, he died in vain. He was famous and he lived and gave his speeches and he died and now he's gone. But we're still here. Don't tell students in this school about 'the dream.' Go and look into a toilet here if you would like to know what life is like for students in this city.

Following the advice of Christopher, Kozol inspects one of the bathrooms at the school. Kozol (1991, 36) notes that "four of the six toilets do not work. The toilet stalls, which are eaten away by red and brown corrosion, have no doors. The toilets have no seats. One has a rotted wooden stump. There are no paper towels and no soap." Prior to his visit to the school, Kozol had been informed by school administrators that he would be visiting the best school in East St. Louis.

Christopher's critique of the civil rights movement and the condition of his school reminds us that adolescents often hold powerful attitudes about the social and political world. As the title of his book indicates, Kozol discovers that many adolescents are aware of the savage inequalities in the world around them. We live in an era that devotes a great

amount of energy to the study of adult political opinions and behavior. Social scientists are constantly checking the pulse of the electorate through public opinion polls, university research centers, exit polls and focus groups. Despite this impressive effort, we know very little about the political attitudes of today's adolescents.

The studies of preadult political socialization are now fifteen to thirty years old. These studies were often based upon all white samples or students from affluent school districts. In the early studies of political socialization, the vast majority of students could count on growing up in a home with both their mother and father. Television had yet to become a dominant force in shaping how youngsters perceive the social and political world. Teenagers in the 1990s must confront family disruption, poverty, crumbling schools, the pervasive influence of television and the unraveling of community networks. This study will show that a return to political socialization research can illuminate how contemporary social forces influence political learning in adolescence. We must not forget that the teenagers in the 1990s will be the voters, community activists and politicians of the next century.

The Critique of Political Socialization Research: A Response

During the 1960's and 1970's, political socialization research was a dynamic and proliferating subfield of political science. Herbert Hyman (1969, v.), one of the founding fathers of the subfield, declared with great enthusiasm that "the study of political socialization has become a large-scale enterprise." Greenstein (1970, 969) observed that "political socialization is a growth stock" and Sears (1975, 94) concurred that "research output has increased at a geometric rate." The halcyon years of political socialization research were soon followed by a significant decline in research output. Cook (1985,

1079) reports that "interest in the subfield has slackened, and the bull market has turned bearish." Important questions were raised concerning the persistence of attitudes from childhood and adolescence into adulthood. Ambiguities emerged concerning the application of childhood models of learning to the process of political socialization. The theoretical models that supported the structure of political socialization research were called into question. The decline in political socialization research over the last 15 years has led one scholar to label the subfield an "intellectual fad" (Peng 1994).

The criticisms and questions concerning political socialization research certainly merit close inspection, but they hardly justify abandoning the ship. Despite Peng's (1994) description of political socialization as an intellectual fad, a return to research in the field need not be the academic equivalent of bringing back bell-bottomed pants. The criticisms of previous research can provide a valuable focus to contemporary political socialization research. The revitalization of political socialization depends upon building a bridge from political socialization to the growing body of literature on changes in the family, the role of race, the impact of social groups, and the influence of television.

An extensive review of the political socialization literature reveals five major "criticisms" of previous research. These criticisms include the question of persistence, methodological pitfalls, the problem of universalizing research findings, misunderstood models of learning and the limitations of theoretical models for political socialization research. A close examination of each criticism can help provide focus and structure to a successful research agenda on political socialization. Rather than viewing these criticisms as cyanide pills, we should look at them as guideposts in building a productive research agenda.

The Question of Persistence

A major and widely invoked criticism against political socialization has been the "question of persistence." After reviewing six major political science journals[1] from 1982-1987, Sears (1990, 71) calculates that "in the 125 issues thus reviewed, offering well over 1,000 articles, there were but 14 articles on what might be called the 'traditional' topic of political socialization research." Sears (1990, 73) asserts

> My interpretation of these trends is that the absence of interest in preadult socialization today is related quite directly to a change in the conventional wisdom about the importance of preadult political socialization. Most researchers have simply concluded that children's political attitudes are not very strong or very persistent and therefore have little impact in adulthood. If they do not have much impact on adult attitudes or behavior, why study them?

The question of persistence initially emerged in relation to some of the classic studies in political socialization. Easton and Dennis (1969) emphasize the development of powerful attitudes in children concerning support for the regime. Greenstein (1969, 154) observes that among the children in his study "the affective response to political leaders is strikingly **positive**, more so than adult responses to leaders." Hess and Torney (1968, 243) report that "the child's initial relationship with governmental authority is with the President, whom he sees in highly positive terms, indicating his basic trust in the benevolence of government." This powerful socialization of support for the regime would soon be called into question. Sears (1990, 75) nicely summarizes that "some members of the generation of American children that seemed so wedded to political authority in early political socialization studies wound up rioting in the streets of Chicago or smoking dope in Vietnam or working as carpenters under assumed names in Toronto."[2]

In a recent article in the American Political Science Review, Sears and Valentino (1997) contrast the "persistence" account with the "lifelong openness" view. Subscribers to the persistence account assume that basic political attitudes are acquired in the preadult years and persist throughout life. The lifelong openness view asserts that political orientations such as party identification are continually adjusted throughout adulthood.[3] The results of a longitudinal study conducted by Jennings and Niemi (1981) called into question the persistence of partisan identification throughout adolescence and young adulthood. Jennings and Niemi (1981, 49) report that roughly 40 percent of the eighteen-year-olds changed party identification by the time they were twenty-five. The authors (1981, 153) also note that between 1965 and 1973 "the proportion of Independents, already high in 1965, rose another 11%, reaching almost half of the sample. At the same time, the proportion of strong identifiers was cut nearly in half." Charles Franklin (1984, 474) reveals that "by the age of 25 young adults are quite actively adjusting their partisanship to accord with the party they prefer on those policy issues about which they care." Finally, Jennings and Markus (1984, 1016) report that "party identification remains fairly supple into the late twenties in the usual course of events but hardens considerably soon thereafter." Not only has research questioned the persistence of early attachments to political parties but further scholarship suggests that the socialization process, as it relates to the adoption of clear partisan preferences, does not appear to be working anymore (Miller and Shanks 1982; Wattenberg 1984).

The question of persistence is a serious issue for political socialization, but it is not a fatal blow to research efforts. Sears (1990, 1975) calls for a focus on attitudes that persist through the life-span such as racial attitudes, certain moral attitudes, and even party

identification. An impressive body of literature emphasizes the stability of racial attitudes (Converse and Markus 1979; Kinder and Rhodebeck 1982; Sears and Gahart 1980). Racial attitudes are also a powerful political orientation (Miller and Stokes 1953; Carmines and Stimson 1980,1989). Sears and Valentino (1997, 61) argue that "the chronic racial tensions left by the legacies of slavery and a century of enforced second-class citizenship after Emancipation virtually guarantee racial issues a permanent place in the nation's political attention and, consequently, strongly socialized racial attitudes in the mass public (Sears 1983; Sears and Funk 1996)." Merelman (1972, 156) contends that "adult racial attitudes undoubtedly depend heavily upon socialization during childhood and adolescence. Consequently, studies into the socialization of racial attitudes have immediate political significance."

Racial attitudes are not the only orientations worthy of study, there is also evidence that political trust persists from adolescence to adulthood (Abramson 1983). Schwartz (1975) notes the endurance of childhood attitudes into adulthood of views concerning political efficacy, pessimism, and political cynicism. A recent nationwide survey by the Pew Research Center (1998a, 6) reveals that political cynicism is particularly high among "Americans who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s when criticism of government leaders and policies crescendoed." The survey results provide evidence of attitudinal persistence in relation to political distrust. Persistence is also evident in what Inglehart calls postmaterialist values (Inglehart 1985). Miller and Sears (1986) discover persistence in attitudes toward racial, gender and sexual tolerance. A path analysis reveals that preadult environments have about twice as great an impact as do adult environments (Miller and Sears 1986, 227).

As noted earlier, serious questions have been raised about the persistence of partisan orientations. Sears (1990, 76) contends that the case for a lack of a persistence is largely based on the Jennings-Niemi panel study (Jennings and Markus 1984; Jennings and Niemi 1981). This study found instability in the attitudes of **one particular cohort** during their 17-to-24-year-old period. Sears (1990, 76) contends that the "cohort was highly unusual, living its formative years through the decade of the most tumultuous social and political change since the Revolutionary and Civil Wars." It is important to keep in mind that the analysis of a rather unique cohort should not close the book on the subject of pre-adult partisan orientations. Sears (1990, 76) also argues that the lack of persistence "was usually demonstrated with rather insensitive statistical techniques, principally bivariate correlations of often rather insubstantial single items." More sophisticated recent scholarship suggests that party identification, once adjusted for measurement error, is extremely stable over time (Green and Palmquist 1994; Miller 1991).

Cook (1985, 1080) reminds us that "even revisionists, who wish to deflate, for example, the idea of partisanship as an affective orientation absorbed during childhood from one's parents, cannot contend that party preference has no origins before adulthood." Vaillancourt and Niemi (1974, 148) argue that partisanship among children is too stable and too meaningful to be interpreted as a "nonattitude" (Converse 1970). Vaillancourt and Niemi (1974, 148) conclude that given "the fact that change across the party spectrum is less frequent than changes in and out of the independent category suggests again that partisan wavering is often limited in its extent." In their panel study of preadults aged 10 to 17 in the state of Wisconsin, Sears and Valentino (1997, 61) argue "our data are persuasive in tracing back to the early years of adolescence a stable, inertial component of

party identification whose origins are partially occasioned by the political events of the day."

Furthermore, the rise in the number of Independents in the electorate can serve as evidence of the importance of the preadult years. Sears and Valentino (1997, 46) explain "the 'dealigning' period of the late 1960s and 1970s had its major effect on young people entering the electorate, not on older voters (Miller and Shanks 1996) as would be expected from an 'impressionable years' account (Sears 1975)." If many adolescents do not develop partisan orientations, our research focus should investigate the factors that are driving this nonpartisanship. The substantial rise of Independents in the adult electorate warrants a focus on preadult decisions to eschew the two major parties.

A growing body of literature emphasizes the critical link between adolescent political socialization and adult political participation. In a longitudinal study that surveyed adolescents and reinterviewed them at the age of 30, Hanks and Eckland (1978, 488) discover that participation in extracurricular activities in adolescence has a direct and positive effect on membership in adult voluntary associations. Membership in these associations reduces political alienation and increases voter turnout (Hanks and Eckland 1978, 489). Merelman and King (1986, 483) report that a high sense of efficacy among 18 year old students is related to political activism and still greater efficacy eight years later. Verba et al. (1995, 425) note that involvement in high school government or school clubs is a strong predictor of political activity in adulthood. Confirming the powerful role of adolescent political socialization, Verba et al. (1995, 439) conclude that "growing up in a politicized household and being active in high school are associated with political engagement as an adult."

The question of persistence must not be treated lightly or ignored by scholars of political socialization. Sears (1990) correctly notes that if preadult political attitudes have little impact in adulthood, it is hard to justify research into preadult political socialization. The studies by Hanks and Eckland (1978), Merelman and King (1986), and Verba et al. (1995) clearly indicate that adolescent political socialization shapes adult political opinions and political activism. After reviewing the literature on political socialization, Erikson and Tedin (1995, 145) conclude that "there is a good deal of evidence that many important political predispositions do endure over a considerable time span."

Previous scholarship often focused on numerous childhood and adolescent attitudes regardless of evidence of persistence. The question of persistence can help focus research on those items in which there is evidence of preadult persistence into adulthood. Researchers must avoid the temptation to consider every possible preadult political orientation. Research can become so broad that it is rendered meaningless.

Finally, the debate over the question of persistence leads to what Cook (1985, 1081) calls the grievous misinterpretation "that socialization studies can, do, and must focus exclusively upon attitudes." Cook (1985, 1081) elaborates that

> ...the revisionists' exclusive attention to attitudes as the sine qua non of the socialization process overlooks other dispositions toward politics which the child may form, and which may be more influential. Most important is cognition. This is arguably essential because, after all, individuals must know what something is before they can say how they feel about it, or whether or not they like it. Likewise, how one understands a phenomenon is directly linked to one's actions and reactions toward it.

Moore et al. (1985), in their longitudinal study of children, discover that cognition is strongly related to a sense of political efficacy, perceptions of government responsiveness, and evaluations of the laws.

Methodological Pitfalls

A second major criticism of political socialization research has involved methodological pitfalls. The question of persistence has become intertwined with concerns about survey research of children. Vaillancourt (1973) reports that despite the findings that survey research often **creates** attitudes among adult respondents by asking them to consider matters about which they have no attitude, this problem has been virtually ignored in the survey research of children. Vaillancourt (1973, 376) notes that "data from a three-wave panel survey of 1,000 San Francisco Bay Area youngsters, ranging in age from 9 to 15, was used to evaluate the stability of children's responses[4] to common political socialization survey items and indices." Vaillancourt (1973, 380-381) discovered "the highest stability was achieved on the party identification question and lowest stability on an image of the president item." Vaillancourt's discovery of extreme instability in a child's image of the president was particularly damaging to the "classic" studies of political socialization that placed great significance on childhood attitudes about the president (see Easton and Dennis 1969; Hess and Torney 1968). Vaillancourt (1973, 385) bluntly concludes that "many children do not have political attitudes on the topics about which they are queried."

Based upon her findings, Vaillancourt (1973) makes several specific research suggests. She (1973, 386) argues that "a 'don't know' alternative seems crucial for almost every survey question. This is frequently neglected at present in political socialization questionnaires." Vaillancourt (386) further recommends that "wherever possible it should be determined whether children are marking questions at random or to please the researcher. 'Lie scales' and 'consistency checks' have been commonplace in

psychological testing for many years." For the purposes of data analysis, Vaillancourt (1973) suggests stratifying the sample according to whether or not the respondents actually have attitudes on specific topics. Vaillancourt (1973) offers a powerful argument that political socialization research must be more attentive to basic methodological issues.

A more specific methodological critique concerns the statistical tests that are often used in political socialization research. Weissberg and Joslyn (1977, 47) argue that "the commonly employed measures in the study of family influence frequently bias the results toward very low relationships." Research on parent-child agreement often utilizes some form of correlation coefficient. The authors (59-65) demonstrate that correlation coefficients result in misleading substantive conclusions and often fail to measure the proximity of parent-child attitudes. Weissberg and Joslyn (1977) also note that research has failed to adequately test subcultural variations in political socialization. Alleged group differences are often based on aggregate item-by-item percentage differences. The authors (75-79) convincingly demonstrate that such analysis is inappropriate. Weissberg and Joslyn (1977, 78) explain that to claim blacks and whites are "different" politically requires much more than item-by-item analysis based on aggregate percentage differences. Some form of multivariate analysis is necessary.[5]

Taking Weissberg and Joslyn's advice to heart, Dalton (1980) conducts a reanalysis of the Jennings and Niemi survey (1968) utilizing multiple indicator methodology. Jennings and Niemi (1968) report a correlation of .47 between parental and child partisan values. Utilizing LISREL analysis, Dalton (1980, 423) upgrades the intergenerational agreement on the concept of partisan values to .90. Dalton's analysis revises other findings of Jennings and Niemi. LISREL analysis improves that generational

transfer of racial attitudes from a .3 correlation to .83 (Dalton 1980, 425). While Jennings and Niemi observe a "null" relationship between parent and child civic tolerance values, Dalton (427) discovers a substantial correlation of .44. Dalton's findings are very significant since they emphasize what previous research has missed because of less advanced statistical techniques. For students of political socialization, it is frustrating that research in political socialization had withered by the time that advances in statistical analysis offered great promise.

A final methodological complaint involves the lack of explained variance in many political socialization models. Rosenberg (1985, 725) reveals that "attempts to explain the political socialization process with regard to the influence of agents of socialization or with reference to learning theory have rarely yielded results which allow for the investigator to account for more than 10 percent of the variance in their subjects' attitudes or behavior (for example, see Jennings and Niemi 1968, 1974; Jaros et al. 1968; Connell 1972; Campbell 1980; Merelman 1980)." Merelman (1972, 152-153) adds that "regression models in socialization research have become notorious for their inability to find independent variables that explain variance. Easton and Dennis (1969, 367), for example, explain only 5 per cent of the variance in children's feelings towards the President; and Merelman (1971, 147) accounts for but 18 per cent of the variance in adolescent support for democratic values." Despite the emerging debate over what is meant by "explained variance" and the utility of the R^2 statistic (see Achen 1990; Lewis-Beck and Skalaban 1990), valid concerns have certainly been raised about model misspecification and concept versus indicator problems in political socialization research.

While it is undeniable that early political socialization research was plagued by

weak statistical models, research utilizing path analysis has produced robust results (Miller and Sears 1986; Conway et al. 1981; Long 1976). As noted earlier, research that utilizes a multiple indicator methodology has produced quite impressive results. Finally, it should not come as a surprise that research has struggled to "explain variance" given the rather vague and nebulous "Hess-Easton" type questions that were often used (Vaillancourt 1973).

Universalizing on Shaky Ground

A third major criticism of political socialization research involves the attempt by many scholars to universalize their findings. The vast majority of political socialization research relies on samples of affluent white or middle-class white children. Merelman (1972, 153) points out that

> instead of taking warning from anthropological, psychological, and sociological investigations into the "culture of poverty" (Lewis 1961, Intro.), students of political socialization gave the impression that deprived groups followed socialization patterns similar to those of stable working-class whites, whose rate of socialization lags behind that of more affluent whites, but who apparently adopt many of the same political orientations (Merelman 1971, Ch. 5; though incompletely in Hess and Torney 1968, Ch. 7). Studies by Greenberg (1970a, 1970b) and Lyons (1970) provide data that controvert these Panglossian assumptions. Black socialization is fundamentally different from that of working-class whites. In short, patterns of socialization the literature had implied to be universal now appear to be specialized.

Many scholars slipped into the methodological trap of drawing inferences about political socialization that exceeded the limits of the samples under study (Merelman 1972, 153).

Despite a flurry of research on African-American political socialization in the early to mid-1970s, the tumbleweeds would return to this area of study by the 1980s. Cook (1985, 1090) laments that "defensible studies are lacking on subjects other than white, middle-class children, often from private schools." Despite Merelman's (1972) warnings

about the dangers of universalizing research findings, American government textbooks continue to discuss political socialization in universalistic terms.[6] Moore et al. (1985, 240) declare that "it seems essential that future studies incorporate a greater diversity of ethnic and socioeconomic levels, especially children from the lower end of that scale. It is likely that the cognitions and the feelings of youngsters raised in lower income families, and especially in lower income minority homes, will have different perceptions of the U.S. political system and some of the authorities and processes that dominate it."

Political science research has exploded concerning the role of race in voting, campaigns and elections. Racial differences concerning levels of political participation have also merited close attention. The influence of race on public opinion is another area that has attracted scholarly interest. Given the focus on the role of race in American politics, it is amazing that the "best" research on race and political socialization is now twenty years old. Unless we make the assumption that all relevant political learning occurs in adulthood, a proposition that can hardly be sustained given the evidence on the "question of persistence", political science commits a grave error by ignoring the formative processes in childhood and adolescence.

Misunderstood Theories of Learning

A fourth criticism of political socialization research involves the inappropriate application of certain theories of learning to the political socialization process. Merelman (1972, 147) describes how scholars postulated "universal sequences of socialization" based upon a Freudian perspective or a cognitive-development model. In relation to the Freudian perspective, Merelman (1972, 147) charges that "a Freudian framework has difficulty predicting the differentiation of attitudes towards parental authority from

attitudes towards political authority...Moreover, psycho-analytic theory treats subordination to parental authority as a source of neurotic defenses, but there is little evidence that such defenses play a major role in political socialization." Merelman (1972, 148) also notes that Piaget's cognitive-development model may be inappropriate for political socialization research since "cognitive-developmental theory fails to account for the purely affectual, motivational side of political socialization."

Cook (1985) offers a spirited charge that Piaget's developmental model is inappropriate for political socialization research. Cook (1985, 1083) points out

> Most notably, his [Piaget's] principal concern was how children reach logical operations, pertaining to questions of space, time, number, physical causality, and similar concepts. If we conceive of formal operational thought in the political realm to indicate going from the possible abstraction to concrete reality, it is a truism that formal thinking does not characterize the political understanding of most citizens. Instead, the preferred way of political understanding appears to be intuitive, more akin to earlier concrete operations.

Cook (1985, 1083) bluntly charges that "Piaget's theory is somewhat at a loss to explain the disuse of formal operational thought in the political realm." Cook (1985, 1084) concludes "that Piaget's focus upon the push supplied by the individual in moving development along underestimates the pull supplied by the social environment."

As an alternative to the reliance on the work of Jean Piaget, Cook (1985) recommends that political socialization research borrow from the insights of L.S. Vygotsky (1962, 1978). Cook (1985, 1084) explains that

> Whereas Piaget's interest is primarily biological, Vygotsky's is essentially sociological. Instead of underscoring the affinity of accommodation and assimilation across organisms as Piaget does, Vygotsky stresses the unique nature of the human mind, which is shaped by society, language, and social interaction.

Cook (1086) contends that the implications of Vygotsky's research are quite significant for political socialization research. If an individual fails to develop into a rational political thinker, the social environment might well have failed to provide "an adequate pull." Cook (1086) summarizes that "only when politics becomes more central in one's existence would a pull provided by one's environment impel one to a higher level of reasoning and understanding." Given the significance of social interaction, Cook (1090) challenges future scholars to formulate and test research hypotheses concerning the impact of the social environment, particularly the politicization of that environment.

Limited Theoretical Models

A final criticism of political socialization scrutinizes the questionable theoretical foundations of most research. Merelman (1986, 282) identifies "four of the 'grand theories' of politics: systems theory, hegemonic theory, pluralist theory, and conflict theory. Each of these theories has a long and illustrious history in discussions of politics; more important, each makes either explicit or implicit arguments about political socialization." Merelman (1986) emphasizes important limitations to each of the four traditional theories as they relate to political socialization.

System-maintenance theory has often been invoked to provide a theoretical foundation for political socialization research (Easton 1968). Merelman (1986, 282) nicely summarizes that systems analysis

> ...presents a picture of socialization in which responsible, benevolent, but authoritative political leaders and their loyal subjects are central actors. According to this approach, positive attitudes toward authority emerge in the socialization process through psychologically normal tendencies to respect authority among the young, and also through the provision of positive models of authority at home and school. The result is a harmonious system held together by feelings of

> deference on the part of the followers to leaders, and obligation on the part of leaders to followers.

Greenstein (1970, 973) recognizes that the reliance on system-maintenance theory fueled the criticism "that political socialization studies necessarily have a conservative bias--they are appropriate for illuminating processes of 'pattern-maintenance,' but not those of change." Merelman (1986, 289) notes that "both class and culture place real limits on socialization to system support in childhood." Finally, there have been very few recent studies concerning political trust among young people. It is not possible to currently draw firm conclusions concerning the socialization to political trust as a key element of systems support (Merelman 1986, 288).

A second theoretical foundation involves hegemonic theory. Merelman (1986, 282-284) describes the hegemonic model as one in which the dominant political actors are capitalist owners and their political allies. The socialization agents under state control, such as the schools and the mass media, indoctrinate the young into rejecting any economic system other than capitalism and into accepting economic values such as "consumerism." In a thorough review of the literature, Merelman (1986) reveals that the schools and the mass media have hardly been able to provide the kind of indoctrination assumed by the hegemonic model. The hegemonic model fails "to consider evidence that some television depictions stimulate counternormative, anti-system behaviors among the most deprived sectors of society" (Merelman 1986, 294). Finally, most state socialist systems have failed to have a major impact on the young (Merelman 1986, 295).

A third theoretical foundation, and arguably the most popular, is the pluralist model. Merelman (1986, 284) points out that the dominant actors in this model are

interest groups and political parties. The primary agents of political socialization are parents, the schools, the mass media, and competing political organizations. Merelman (1986, 284) summarizes that "the socialization process aims to create a participatory public jealous of its own prerogatives, anxious to participate in ways that permit dissent and choice but rejecting of extreme, destructive forms of mass participation." Merelman (1986, 306) charges that "the pluralist model contends that instruments of representation--political parties, interest groups, voluntary associations--are objects of socialized loyalty. But in most parts of the world these institutions have proved increasingly unwieldy as controllers of their societies." Merelman (1986, 297-300) points to the lack of partisanship among the young, the intolerance evident in adolescent public attitudes, and the dearth of consistent ideological viewpoints in adolescence as key problems for the pluralist model.

The final theoretical foundation for political socialization research is the conflict model. As the name implies, the "conflict model describes cohesive groups locked in enduring, inescapable struggle...the dominant agencies of socialization are group-based propaganda organs, such as newspapers; focused settings, such as neighborhoods; and organizations representative of group interests" (Merelman 1986, 284). Merelman (1986, 284) argues that "the dominant purpose of socialization is the creation of young people loyal to their group and willing to support it against others on a daily basis." Research (Crain and Crain 1976; Moore et al. 1976) indicates a strong sense of compassion in childhood for the disadvantaged in society as opposed to a "socialization to conflict." Furthermore, Inglehart's (1977; 1981; 1988) research points to the creation of "postmaterialist" values that de-emphasize economic conflict and place a great emphasis

on community and quality of life. Merelman (1986, 304-305) notes that "these values appeal to a sizable proportion of middle-class youth, who, once the process of political recruitment carries them into positions of power, implement their values and alter the entire course of public policy (see also Kraus and Fendrich 1980)." Merelman (1986, 306) concludes that the conflict model has suffered because "its main actors--unions and working-class political parties--no longer command as much strength as they once enjoyed."

The review of the four theoretical models indicates that the political socialization process does not transmit any single one of the four models to the exclusion of the others (Merelman 1986, 305). Merelman does acknowledge the merit of particular research questions in each of the four models. He seeks to broaden the theoretical foundation of political socialization research. Merelman (1986, 307) roughly sketches the contours of what he calls a "lateral theory of socialization" in which horizontally connected agents of socialization "compete with one another to reach the young and, in the process, deliver quite varying images of society." Given the high levels of social and geographic mobility in the United States, as well as the significant changes in the family, such as the absorption of women into the world of work, the rise in divorce and out-of-wedlock births, and the explosion in the number of single parent households, young people absorb new social images through a multiplicity of socialization agencies (Merelman 1986). Merelman (1986, 308-309) emphasizes that the breakdown of formal authority in contemporary society creates situations in which learning is often structured through peer groups and mass media viewing.

Although Merelman (1986) only briefly sketches his "metatheory of political socialization," it appears to dovetail nicely with Cook's analysis of the appropriate learning model for political socialization research. Cook's (1985) emphasis on the "pull of the social environment" for political socialization certainly fits with a "lateral theory of socialization" that calls our attention to a multiplicity of socializing agents. Merelman (1986) and Cook (1985) appear to recognize the great potential for diversity in the political socialization process based upon dynamic change in our social environment.

Overview of the Dissertation

This research project is driven by the central concern with how the social environment provides a "pull" for the political socialization process. Research organized around this theme would be sensitive to the diversity that can occur in the political socialization process. Following Merelman's (1986) lateral theory of political socialization, a multiplicity of agents in the social environment such as peer groups, the mass media and of course the family are critical to examine. A focus on the social environment can help to highlight the significance of family disruption, poverty, social groups, race and television to the political socialization process.

This study of political socialization is based upon a written survey of 942 diverse middle school students in the Oklahoma City Public Schools. Seventh and eighth grade students were surveyed in randomly selected social studies classes in five middle schools between February 1996 and May 1996. Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of the criteria for selecting the age of the students, design and pre-test of the questionnaire, sampling procedures and the administration of the questionnaire. Chapter 2 also provides a demographic profile of the sample. As noted earlier, important methodological concerns

have been raised in relation to surveying adolescents. As Chapter 2 outlines the procedures followed in this study, careful attention is devoted to the methodological criticisms of political socialization survey research.

Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the role of the family in adolescent political socialization. Many scholars consider the family to be the most important agent in the political socialization process. This research project investigates the impact of family discussions of politics and family breakup on the formation of adolescent political attitudes. Careful attention is paid to the influence of family politicization on the development of an adolescent's sense of party identification. Chapter 3 also explores whether or not the breakup of the nuclear family retards the political socialization process: diminished family discussions of politics, decreased interest in politics, lower levels of political knowledge and higher rates of political cynicism. The analysis considers how family disruption influences an adolescent's level of social trust.

Although peer groups have often been dismissed as insignificant to preadult political socialization, Merelman (1986) suggests that the breakdown of the family might create more opportunities for peer groups to become salient in the political socialization process. Chapter 4 explores the relationship between membership in peer groups and the development of a sense of citizenship. The analysis considers how membership in school and after-school groups influence social trust, political efficacy, political interest and political knowledge. Chapter 4 also investigates the impact of peer discussions of politics on preadult political learning.

Chapter 5 explores racial differences in adolescent political socialization. As mentioned earlier, American government textbooks continue to paint a picture of political

socialization as a universal process. Studies that do investigate racial differences in political socialization are twenty to twenty-five years old. Although there has been an explosion in research on racial differences in adult public opinion and political participation, there is a dearth of research on racial differences in preadult political opinions. Chapter 5 attempts to fill that vacuum by analyzing racial differences in citizenship awareness, political interest, political knowledge, political efficacy, political cynicism and materialist values. Chapter 5 provides the first contemporary exploration of adolescent perceptions of racial discrimination, attitudes about segregation and opinions concerning the future of race relations. Chapter 5 also probes the influence of the civics curriculum and church membership on adolescent political opinions by racial group.

Chapter 6 examines the relationship between television viewing and the development of adolescent political attitudes. Television is playing an increasingly dominant role in the lives of America's children and adolescents. The average American child will watch 19,000 hours of television by the time he or she reaches 18 years of age (Zoglin 1990, 75). Chapter 6 examines the media viewing habits of adolescents. The factors that account for heavy television viewing in adolescence are scrutinized. Chapter 6 investigates how media exposure influences adolescent partisanship, political interest, political knowledge, political efficacy and political cynicism. Finally, the link between television viewing and social trust is analyzed. Putnam (1995a) has detailed the powerful link between heavy television viewing and social distrust among adults, and this study investigates whether or not a steady diet of television breeds social distrust in adolescence.

A productive research agenda on political socialization must not only consider the aforementioned criticisms, it must also link political socialization research to other

growing subfields in political science. Peng (1994) argues that the fragmentation of political science and the occurrence of numerous "academic cul-de-sacs" (Seidelman 1985) may have hastened the decline of political socialization research. To prevent political socialization research from becoming an intellectual dead-end, avenues of research must be built from political socialization to other areas of interest such as the role of race in American politics, the impact of social groups, the influence of the mass media and the changing dynamics of the American family.

Chapter 2

Research Methodology

Clarence Darrow once declared that "I shall not follow my friend into the labyrinth of statistics. Statistics are a pleasant indoor sport, not so good as crossword puzzles, and they prove nothing to any sensible person who is familiar with statistics." As the social sciences increasingly rely upon survey research and statistical models, skeptics often invoke Darrow's criticism. Researchers can guard against such cynicism by following precise steps and procedures when designing a research project. Survey research, like most methodological approaches, is not without its critics. When outlining the procedures followed in this study, careful attention will be devoted to the criticisms of political socialization survey research.

This study of adolescent political socialization is based upon the administration of a written questionnaire to 942 middle school students in the Oklahoma City Public Schools. This chapter explores the criteria for selecting the age of the students, design and pre-test of the questionnaire, sampling procedures and the administration of the questionnaire. A demographic profile of the sample will be analyzed. Concerns about the reliability and validity of the composite measures will also be addressed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the external validity of this study

Age of the Students

Studies of preadult political socialization have focused on children as early as kindergarten to fourth grade (Moore et al. 1985) and as late as seniors in high school (Sigel and Hoskin 1981; Jennings and Niemi 1974). This study will examine seventh and

eighth grade public school students. Seventh and eighth grade students are selected for two primary reasons. First, Erikson and Tedin (1995, 139) argue that the major spurt in a child's political learning occurs during early adolescence. Although political learning occurs throughout the life span, two principles of learning emphasize the importance of the preadult years: the primacy principle and the structuring principle. The primacy principle asserts that what is learned first is learned best and the structuring principle contends that what is learned during childhood will structure later learning (Peterson 1990, 28-29). A second reason for studying middle school students is to test the influence of a civics course. In the Oklahoma City Public Schools, students are first exposed to a civics course in the middle schools.[1]

Concerns might be expressed about the sophistication level of seventh and eighth grade students, but research indicates that such students can be meaningfully studied. Easton and Dennis (1969, 391-392) observe that the student in grade 8 is able to sort out the public from the private sphere and can accept the higher power and performance qualities of political institutions when compared to the family. Although Hess and Torney (1968) assert that seventh and eighth graders have unrealistic feelings of personal clout, Moore et al. (1985, 190-191) discover that by late childhood students recognize government is not able to respond to the individual needs and concerns of all citizens. The students are able to recognize that government is more likely to respond to matters of broad concern or widespread deprivation rather than isolated cases of personal need. Stevens (1982, 150) reports that by early adolescence the children are competent in using political concepts. They are also able to link politics with roles, structures and policies.

Stevens (150) notes that questions concerning basic democratic processes, political knowledge and the accountability of government are appropriate.

Design and Pre-test of the Questionnaire

The survey instrument consists of fifty questions and it appears in the Appendix. The questionnaire includes a cover page that describes the purpose of the study and emphasizes to the students that this is not a test (Sigel and Hoskin 1981). The first five questions measure the extent of political interest by the respondents. Questions two and three measure the levels of politicization in the home and peer group. The first four questions are derived from Sigel and Brookes (1974) and Sigel and Hoskin (1981). The fifth question, naming two famous Americans, taps political interest in terms of the adolescent listing political leaders as opposed to athletes or entertainers (Sigel and Brookes 1974). Questions six through ten measure the levels of political efficacy (Lyons 1970; Sigel and Hoskin 1981).

Part two of the questionnaire ascertains the party identification of the adolescent, the ability to recognize differences between the parties, trust in other people and the characteristics of a good citizen. Part three involves an exploration of the racial attitudes of the respondents. Questions 16 through 19 measure the perceptions of racial discrimination in society (several scholars label this a measure of "political reality;" see Greenberg 1970a,1970b; Long 1976; Abramson 1977). Questions 20 and 21 explore the students' opinions toward racial integration (Clarke 1973). Question 22 examines the racial distrust of respondents (Colasanto 1988) and question 23 explores the perceptions of improvement for race relations.

Part four attempts to measure the political knowledge levels of the respondents. The questions follow the general design of Sigel and Hoskin (1981) and Jennings and Niemi 1981). The questions have obviously been updated for contemporary politics. In part five, questions 30 through 33 explore the political and civic tolerance of the students. When constructing questions to measure political tolerance, Babbie (1973, 143-144) recommends avoiding negative wording. Questions often ask if a communist or a racist should be prohibited from teaching in the public schools. Respondents often answer "yes" to indicate their support for such a person being able to teach. Questions 30 through 33 avoid negative wording and the response categories include "yes, allow" and "no, not allow."

Question 34 attempts to capture the materialism vs. post-materialism orientations of the adolescents (Inglehart 1981). In question 34, materialism is measured by three concerns ("create more jobs", "make sure that this country has a strong army" and "fight against crime") and post-materialism is explored through the other three concerns ("try to make our cities and countryside more beautiful", "protect freedom of speech" and "give people more say in the decisions of government"). Questions 35 through 38 measure the levels of political cynicism. The questions have been extensively utilized in previous research (Clarke 1973; Rodgers 1974; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Sigel and Hoskin 1981).

The final section includes several demographic questions. Backstrom and Hursh-Cesar (1981) recommend that demographic questions be placed at the end of the questionnaire. The authors argue (160) that "by the time the interview reaches its final stage, answers to personal questions come easily and naturally." Furthermore, Babbie (1973, 150) asserts that placing dull demographic questions at the beginning "gives the

questionnaire the initial appearance of a routine form, and the person receiving it may not be motivated to complete it." Part six begins with questions concern age, gender and race. Question 42 ascertains the family structure of the adolescent. Questions 43, 44 and 45 measure the group involvement of the student. Question 43 explores the involvement of the adolescent in what Hanks (1981) describes as expressive groups. Question 44 taps into the adolescents involvement in instrumental groups, which Hanks (1981) hypothesizes have a stronger influence on political socialization. The questionnaire concludes with questions about church attendance and media use.

The questionnaire was pre-tested in December 1995. The questionnaire was administered to one class of seventh graders (N=15) and one class of eighth graders (N=22) in a large Oklahoma City middle school. The goal of the pre-test was to analyze the ability of students to comprehend the questions and to uncover any potential problems in question wording. After completing the survey, a discussion period followed in which students were asked about questions that did not make sense or seemed to be confusing. The pre-test resulted in modifications of the questions on race relations and television viewing. In the pre-test survey, questions 16 through 19 offered the responses of "agree," "disagree" and "don't know." Several African-American students wrote in "strongly agree" and several white students wrote in "strongly disagree" to the questions of perceived racial inequality in society. The discussion period also highlighted the intensity of student opinions on this topic. Questions 16 through 19 were modified to include "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" as possible answers.

A further problem was that question 50, the number of hours spent each day watching television, did not provide enough options for heavy television viewing. The

pre-test survey allowed students to answer "one hour or less per day," "two to three hours per day" and "four or more hours per day." 22 percent of the respondents selected one hour or less, 28 percent selected two to three hours, and exactly 50 percent selected four or more hours. The questionnaire was modified to allow students to select from "one hour or less per day," "two hours per day," "three to four hours per day," "five to six hours per day" and "seven or more hours per day."

The pre-test also revealed that some students had trouble comprehending question 34 which asked them to rank the most important problems that government should try to fix. The directions for question 34 were lengthened based upon the pre-test. The pre-test also helped to ascertain the period of time needed to complete the survey. Students were able to complete the questionnaire within a period of 20 to 35 minutes.

A major criticism of survey research is that the act of filling out the questionnaire can create opinions. Vaillancourt (1973, 373-374) explains

> Converse (1965,1970) has shown that survey research often creates attitudes among adult respondents by asking them to consider matters about which, for all practical purposes, they have no attitude. He suggested that, on some political issues, as much as 80 percent of the population has no attitude. If this "non-attitude" phenomenon is so important in adult studies, might it not be even more important for the study of children's attitudes?

Vaillancourt (1973) conducted a three-wave panel survey of 1,000 San Francisco Bay Area youngsters, ranging in age from 9 to 15, to evaluate the issue of "nonattitudes." Vaillancourt analyzed the children's responses to a series of standard political socialization questions over the three surveys. If the responses fluctuated substantially over the three surveys, which were administered between December 1968 and May 1969, the

fluctuations were interpreted as evidence of "nonattitudes." On a series of questions concerning the children's images and evaluations of the president, the tau b scores indicated low stability. A series of questions on the political participation of the students also produced response patterns over the three surveys that fluctuated substantially.

Vaillancourt's (1973) research calls into question the widely accepted doctrine that children evaluate the president in a positive and benevolent manner (Hess and Torney 1968; Easton and Dennis 1969). The children do not appear to have meaningful political attitudes on questions evaluating the president. Vaillancourt's Bay Area study also questions Hess and Torney's (1968) findings on political activities. Hess and Torney (1968, 100) report the rather amazing responses of children to a series of questions on participation in political activities. Approximately 95 percent of seventh and eighth graders had read about candidates, 65 percent wore a campaign button, and roughly 27 percent handed out buttons and handbills. These results suggest that children are much more politically active than adults! Since the levels of political participation by the students in the Vaillancourt study fluctuated dramatically across the three surveys, it appears that children do not give meaningful responses to these types of questions.

Vaillancourt does not suggest that survey research of children should be abandoned. She (1973, 386) recommends "don't know" categories for most survey questions so that children are not forced into an answer on a question about which they have no opinion. Although there is some evidence of fluctuations in childhood partisanship, party attachments do not fall into the category of "nonattitudes." In her panel study of 9 to 15 year-olds, Vaillancourt (1973) reports a stability coefficient (tau-beta) of .62 for party identification from wave 1 to wave 2. In their three-wave panel

study of preadults, Sears and Valentino (1997, 60) report stability estimates of .70 from wave 1 to wave 2 and .83 from wave 2 to wave 3 in relation to party identification. Sears and Valentino (1997, 61) reject the argument that preadults have "nonattitudes" when it comes to partisan identification.

A further concern in survey research of children is the danger of a positive response bias. Kolson and Green (1970) argue that children can be reluctant to evaluate any object negatively in a survey situation. Kolson and Green (1970) administered a questionnaire to 289 fourth through eighth grade students in the public schools of Fayette County, Kentucky. Students were asked to evaluate several political figures including the speaker of the house and the vice-president of the United States. Students were also asked to evaluate a non-political object: summer school. The authors (1970, 535) discover "the overwhelmingly positive direction of nearly all the response patterns." Kolson and Green (537) conclude that "children are extremely reluctant to make an unfavorable judgment of an object with which they are unfamiliar." This finding also raises troubling questions for the Hess and Torney (1968) and Easton and Dennis (1969) dictum that children evaluate political leaders in a favorable light.

In response to the aforementioned methodological concerns, the Oklahoma City survey provides the students with "don't know" categories. Furthermore, the standard questions concerning childhood evaluations of the president and political activities have not been included. The Oklahoma City survey does attempt to measure adolescent partisanship. In the Oklahoma City pre-test, there was no positive response bias. As noted earlier, some students wanted the option to "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" with statements about perceived racial inequality in society. As will be noted in later

chapters, students in the final survey were willing to express political cynicism and political intolerance. Students were also willing to express opinions about perceived racial inequality in American society. A thorough analysis of the frequencies from each question in the final survey revealed no evidence of a positive response set bias.

Sampling Procedures and Administration of the Survey

Students were selected for this study based upon multistage cluster sampling. Five middle schools were initially selected in the Oklahoma City Public Schools. The schools were selected based upon consultations with Oklahoma City Public School administrators. The five middle schools represent the main geographic quadrants of the school district and help to capture the diversity of the school district. In each of the five middle schools, students were surveyed in randomly chosen social studies courses.[2]

In the fall of 1995, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Oklahoma City Public School District reviewed this research project. The IRB approved the design of the research project and the questionnaire.[3] Emphasis was placed on the fact that the survey would be anonymous (students were specifically instructed not to put their name on the surveys), and no personal information was utilized from student files.[4]

Between February 1996 and May 1996, a total of 950 students were surveyed. Of the 950 questionnaires, eight surveys could not be coded. For whatever reasons, eight students only completed the first few pages of the questionnaire. In a total sample of 950 students, these eight questionnaires accounted for less than one percent of the sample. This study will refer to the 942 valid respondents. Of the 942 students surveyed, 501 (53.2 percent) are female and 441 (46.8 percent) are male. The sample is split evenly between 476 seventh graders (50.5 percent) and 466 eighth graders (49.5 percent). The

racial composition of the survey sample closely mirrors the racial composition of the entire Oklahoma City Public Schools as noted in Table 2.1. One of the strengths of this sample is that it is not dominated by one racial group. The racial diversity of this sample provides an opportunity to not only measure differences between black and white adolescents but also investigate the political opinions of Hispanic students. The age of the students in the sample is described in Figure 2.1. 351 thirteen year olds (37.3 percent) and 414 fourteen year olds (43.9 percent) constitute the majority of the sample. 79 twelve year olds account for approximately nine percent of the sample. Fifteen year olds are roughly ten percent of the sample. Sixteen year olds account for less than one percent of the sample.

Using a confidence level of 95 percent, a sample size of 942 produces a confidence interval of $\pm$ 3 percent (Arkin and Colton 1970, 145). This estimate assumes a 50/50 split in the population on a survey question. The 50/50 split is the most conservative case and is utilized when the "sampler is unable or unwilling to estimate a maximum (or minimum) occurrence rate to be expected" (Arkin and Colton 1970, 145). The confidence interval of $\pm$ 3 percent is based upon a population size of 5,000. For this study, the population is all the seventh and eighth graders in the Oklahoma City Public Schools which totaled 4,822 students in 1994-1995 (Oklahoma City Public Schools 1994-1995 Statistical Profile 1995, 36).

The surveys were administered in both morning and afternoon social studies courses. One potential bias in the administration of the survey concerns the race of the individual administering the survey. Given the diverse racial composition of the Oklahoma City school district, African-American students might be more comfortable expressing their opinions on race relations or political cynicism if a fellow African-American was

Table 2.1

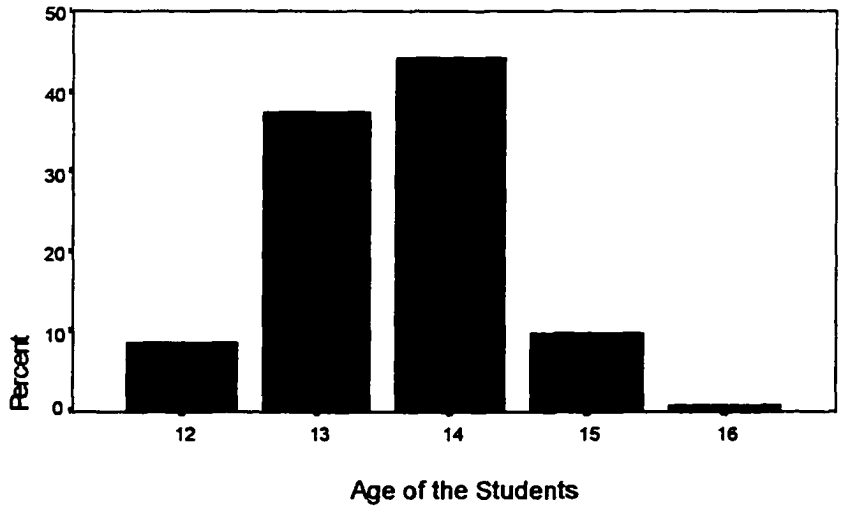
Racial Demographics of the Survey Sample and the OKC Public Schools

	Survey Sample	OKC Public Schools*
White	39.6%	38.5%
African-American	37.5%	40.7%
Hispanic	10.3%	12.7%
American Indian	6.9%	5.2%
Asian	4.6%	2.9%

*1994-1995 district-wide data

Figure 2.1

Age Distribution of the Sample



administering the survey. The vast majority of the surveys were administered by the author of this study. Approximately 20 percent of the surveys were administered by teachers of different racial backgrounds which provided the opportunity to test for differences in response patterns. No noticeable differences in student survey response patterns, either positive or negative, were apparent based upon the race of the individual administering the survey.

Constructing a Variable to Measure Poverty

An important variable that is not measured in the questionnaire is poverty. It is unlikely that adolescents can accurately report their parents' income level. Furthermore, student reports of their parents' occupations are not reliable (Vaillancourt 1973). Greenberg (1970a) utilizes data from the census tracts that surround the schools in his study of political socialization to measure poverty. In their recent study of neighborhood poverty and African-American politics, Cohen and Dawson (1993) estimate income and poverty levels based upon census tract data. The Oklahoma City Public School District provided 1990 census data on median household income and the percentage of households on public assistance for the attendance area of each middle school (Oklahoma City Public Schools 1994-1995 Statistical Profile 1995). For the purposes of this study, poverty will be measured as the median household income and the percentage of households on public assistance in the attendance area of a middle school. Although the Oklahoma City Public School District utilizes busing in some of the middle schools to achieve racial balance, the data provided by the school district are for the **entire attendance area** of the school.[5] The individual respondent receives a score based upon the data for a given middle school. For example, if a student attends a middle school in which 10 percent of the households in

the attendance area receive public assistance, the student receives a score of 10. For the five middle schools in this study, the percentage of households on public assistance ranges from 5.07 to 11.53. In the case of median household income, the range is from $20,827 to 31,457. Some measurement error is clearly introduced since these variables are aggregates for the entire school, but such an approach is more defensible than relying upon an adolescent's estimation of family income.

Composite Measures of Variables

Babbie (1993, 166) notes that "the researcher seldom is able to develop in advance single indicators of complex concepts. This is especially true with regard to attitudes and orientations." This study attempts to measure several concepts through the use of composite measures of variables. Babbie (1993, 166-167) emphasizes that "both scales and indexes are *composite measures of variables*: measurements based on more than one data item." It is important to keep in mind the distinction between scales and indexes. Babbie (1993, 167) reminds us that "an *index* is constructed through the simple accumulation of scores assigned to *individual* attributes. A *scale* is constructed through the assignment of scores to *patterns* of attributes." All of the composite measures of variables in this study are indexes.

Indexes have been constructed to measure six major concepts: political knowledge, political interest, political tolerance, political cynicism, political efficacy and perceptions of racial inequality. Table 2.2 lists the six indexes and provides certain univariate statistics for each. The political knowledge index is based upon questions 24 through 29 (see the Appendix). Correct answers to a political knowledge question are coded 1. Incorrect answers are coded 0. Students that wrote in "don't know" or left the question blank are

Table 2.2

Analysis of Composite Measures

Indexes	Range	Mode	Mean	Std. Dev.	Cronbach's Alpha
Political Knowledge	0-6	1	2.15	1.54	.64
Political Interest	0-16	6	5.25	3.10	.61
Political Tolerance	0-2	1	1.04	.64	.40
Political Cynicism	5-20	12	13.12	2.58	.57
Political Efficacy	0-20	8	9.43	3.75	.63
Perceptions of Racial Inequality	0-16	8	9.54	3.81	.80

also coded 0. The index has a range from 0 to 6. The mode (the most common value in any distribution) is 1 and the mean is 2.15 for the political knowledge index. The political interest index is based upon questions 1 through 4. The political interest index has a range from 0 to 16, a mode of 6 and a mean of 5.25. Political tolerance is based upon questions 30 and 31. The index[6] ranges from 0 to 2 and has a mean of 1.04.

Political cynicism, political efficacy, and racial inequality utilize the Likert scale question format. Political cynicism is measured by questions 35 through 38. Responses to each question are coded from 1 to 5. The range is 5 to 20, the mode is 13 and the mean is 12.81. "Don't know" responses were coded at the midpoint value (3) for each question (Backstrom-Cesar 1981, 136). The political efficacy index is constructed from questions 6 through 10. Responses to each question are coded from 0 to 4. The response category

"no opinion" is scored 2 for each question. The range of the political efficacy index is 0 to 20, the mode is 8 and the mean is 9.43. Finally, the perceptions of racial inequality index is based upon questions 16 through 19. Responses to each question are also coded from 0 to 4 and "no opinion" is coded at the midpoint value of 2. The range is 0 to 16, the mode is 8 and the mean is 9.54.

When constructing a composite measure, concerns about reliability must be addressed. Carmines and Zeller (1980, 52) note that "reliability can be assessed by analyzing the same measure for the same population at more than one point in time. The most typical method used to evaluate the stability of measurements is the test-retest reliability correlation." Since this study is cross-sectional in nature, reliability cannot be analyzed through the test-retest method. Carmines and Zeller (1980, 54) explain that another "broad strategy for assessing reliability focuses on multiple indicators of a concept measured at a single point in time. Each indicator is considered a separate but equivalent measure of the underlying concept." Cronbach's alpha has been calculated to measure equivalence. Carmines and Zeller (1980, 56) explain that "Cronbach's alpha is equal to the average of all possible split-half correlations for a composite scale 2N items long... Cronbach's alpha varies between .00 and 1.00, taking on these extremes when the item intercorrelations are equal to zero and unity, respectively." Table 2.2 reports Cronbach's alpha for each index. Political knowledge, political interest, political cynicism and political efficacy all have alpha values in the range of .57 to .64. The perceptions of racial inequality index has the highest alpha value of .80.

The political tolerance index has the lowest alpha value of .40. Four questions in the survey instrument, questions 30 through 33, were designed to tap into political

tolerance. Cronbach's alpha for an index of all four questions is a low .26. The problem may be that questions 32 and 33 measure more than political tolerance. Question 32 asks "do you think a racist should be allowed to run for President" and question 33 asks students "do you think a homosexual should be allowed to teach in a college or university." Opinions and prejudices about homosexuality and racism may be at issue as well as attitudes concerning political tolerance. Double-stimulus problems have long been a problem with measures of political tolerance. A principal components factor analysis of questions 30 through 33 produced two distinct factors with eigenvalues[7] in excess of 1.00.[8] Questions 30 and 31 both had positive factor loadings on the first factor. Question 32 had a positive factor loading and question 33 had a negative factor loading on the second factor. The final political tolerance index is based upon question 30 ("If a person wanted to make a speech in your school against churches and religion, should that person be allowed to speak?") and question 31 ("Do you think the United States should allow speeches against democracy?).

A principal components factor analysis of the other five indexes provides strong evidence of unidimensionality. Babbie (1992, 169) argues that "the methodological literature on conceptualization and measurement stresses the need for *unidimensionality* in scale and index construction: A composite measure should represent only one dimension." If the factor analysis of the index produced several distinct factors, concerns would be raised about the unidimensionality of the index. For each of the indexes, a principal components factor analysis revealed only one factor with an eigenvalue in excess of 1.[9] Factor analysis can help to establish that the items composing the index measure a single domain of content.

Another methodological issue that must be addressed concerns the validity of the measurements. Babbie (1993, 169) contends that "the first criterion for selecting items to be included in the index is *face validity* (or logical validity)." Each of the items on its face should appear to measure the underlying concept. As noted earlier in this chapter, the index items in this study have been previously used in numerous studies. Previous use of a question does not guarantee face validity, but it helps to establish a consensus that the question reflects the concept under consideration. Each of the questions used to construct the indexes appears to satisfy the criteria of face validity. For example, the students were asked to name the vice-president, the governor of Oklahoma and the length of the president's term as a measure of political knowledge. As a measure of perceptions of racial inequality, students were asked if police officers treat blacks worse than whites. To tap into political cynicism, students were asked if they think the government wastes a lot of tax money and if the people running the government are smart people who usually know what they are doing.

Another step in index validation involves item analysis. Babbie (1993, 178) argues that "in item analysis, you examine the extent to which the composite index is related to (or predicts responses to) the items in the index itself." The internal validity of the index can be confirmed with each individual item correlating with the index scores. Babbie (1993, 178) suggests that "if a given item is found to be poorly related to the index, it may be assumed that other items in the index cancel out the contribution of that item. If the item in question contributes nothing to the index's power, it should be excluded." An item analysis of each index confirms that each item is strongly related to the respective index scores. For the perceptions of racial inequality index, the Pearson correlation coefficients

between each item and the index scores are .77 or higher. The correlations are all significant at $p<.01$. For the political efficacy index, each item correlates with the index scores at .57 or higher. Each correlation is also significant at probability less than .01. For the political cynicism index, the correlation coefficients are .62 or higher ($p<.01$). An item analysis of the political knowledge index reveals that each item correlates with the index at .30 or higher ($p<.01$). For the political interest index, the correlation coefficients are .63 or higher ($p<.01$). Finally, the correlation coefficients for the item analysis of the political tolerance index are .73 or higher ($p<.01$).

A final methodological concern involves the external validity of this study. Meier and Brudney (1993, 444) define external validity as the extent to which research findings can be generalized to hold true in other populations or settings. While this study does not involve a nationwide survey of adolescents, the survey results have greater generalizability than many previous studies of political socialization that were based upon all white or affluent samples. When studies explored minority socialization, the samples were often comprised exclusively of minority students. As noted earlier in this chapter, the racial diversity of the Oklahoma City sample is a strength of this study. Furthermore, the middle schools in this study range from 25 to 86 percent African-American. This variance allows for a meaningful comparison of segregated and integrated school environments. The next chapter reveals that the Oklahoma City sample is also very diverse in terms of family structure. The disintegration of the nuclear family is clearly captured in this sample. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the teenagers in the Oklahoma City survey report levels of television viewing that are roughly equivalent to the results of nationwide surveys of adolescents. These findings indicate that the Oklahoma City sample is not atypical. With

over a million people in the metropolitan area, Oklahoma City contains a diverse population and a diversified economy (Pence 1998). Oklahoma City is often praised for its "heartland" quality. Because of a diverse collection of 942 middle school students, this sample provides an excellent opportunity to study adolescent political learning and political awareness in the heartland of America.

This chapter has outlined the precise steps and procedures followed in the design of this research project. Several encouraging factors can be noted. The administrative and teaching personnel of the Oklahoma City Public School District were very supportive in the design and administration of this research project. The pre-test provided valuable information on the design of the questionnaire. No response set biases were evident in student responses to the questionnaire. Over 99 percent of the students fully completed the questionnaire. Analysis of the reliability and validity of the indexes provides support for the use of composite measures in this study. While the methodological procedures followed in this study may not convince Clarence Darrow of the utility of quantitative political science research, the procedures should provide confidence in the results of the analysis to follow.

Chapter 3

The Tie that Binds: The Influence of the Family on Adolescent Political Socialization

In The Republic, Plato advocates the abolition of the family for the guardian class. Aristotle argues in The Politics that families make an important contribution to the polis, and he warns that the abolition of the family and a community of wives and children could lead to the destruction of the polis (The Politics Book II, Chapter 2). Political scientists have long recognized the important contributions made by the family to political learning. The family is often considered to be the most powerful agent in preadult political socialization. This chapter considers two main factors that might condition the influence of the family on political socialization: the level of politicization in the home and the composition of the family

Most American government textbook discussions of political socialization place primary emphasis on the role of the family. This analysis of the role of the family will investigate whether or not family politicization increases a sense of partisanship among the young, expands political knowledge and efficacy, and decreases political cynicism. This chapter also explores if the breakdown of the nuclear family has a deleterious impact on political socialization: fewer family discussions of politics, lower levels of political efficacy, higher levels of political cynicism and a reduced interest in politics.

The Role of the Family in Political Socialization

A focus on the family has often served as a foundation for political socialization research. Hyman (1959, 60) initially posited that "foremost among agencies of socialization into politics is the family." Erikson and Tedin (1995, 125) contend that

"children, particularly young children, spend a large amount of time with their parents. The opportunities for children to learn parental attitudes and for parents to exert influence on children are considerable." Hess and Torney (1968, 110-111) suggest that parents participate in the political socialization of their children in three important ways. Initially, parents transmit political attitudes to their children such as respect for the symbols of government, patriotism and the meaning of a good citizen. Second, the parents present examples that the children may emulate. The most widely noted example is the influence of the family on the party preference of the child. Furthermore, children may become politically active if their parents are active. Finally, Hess and Torney (111) observe that "expectations formed from experience in family relationships are later generalized to political objects." The child learns about hierarchy, authority and compliance to regulations in the home which serves as a reference point for later encounters with government.

The most widely discussed evidence of parental influence on children is the transmission of partisan identification. In a 1965 survey of high school seniors and their parents, Jennings and Niemi (1968) discovered that only 7 percent of the high school seniors held a party identification opposite of their parents. Despite this impressive finding, a panel study of those 1965 high school seniors revealed that the transmission of party identification from parent to child decays over the life cycle. While the correlation between parent and child party identification was .61 in 1965, it declined to .42 in 1973 and .39 in 1982 (Beck and Jennings 1991, 749). Luttbeg and Gant (1995, 57-58) argue that a large part of the decline in partisanship in this nation may be attributed to the weakened transmission of party attachments from parent to child. Echoing this sentiment,

Erikson and Tedin (1994, 127-128) report that

> In 1958, 79 percent of children with Democratic parents and 72 percent with Republican parents adopted parental partisanship. By 1976 these figures had dropped to 62 percent and 56 percent, respectively. In 1992 it was 57 and 56 percent (NES). This failure of socialization is one of the causes of the current 'partisan dealignment.' The decrease in successful transmission is a function of an increasing conflict between parental partisanship and the issue preferences of the offspring.

In relation to issue preferences and the transmission of partisan identification, Luskin et al. (1989, 440) argue that "young voters cling to or stray from their parents' affiliation partly as a function of issue proximities." The authors discover that reflective moves from one party to another are heavily influenced by issues such as economic ones. Casual moves from partisanship to independence are only lightly influenced by issues. When issues do become salient in such moves, it is usually racial issues. Niemi et al. (1978) report low to moderate correlations between college-age youths and their parents on numerous political issues (see also Connell 1972). Tedin (1974) suggests that parents have an inherent potential for the successful transmission of issue preferences to their children but the relationship is conditioned by issue salience to the parent and adolescent perceptual accuracy of the parental attitude.

Despite the doubts that have been raised concerning the influence of the family on the formation of adolescent political attitudes, the family still merits close inspection. Beck and Jennings (1991, 742) argue that "the parental partisan legacy remained strong even though it was eroded by the antipartisan period pressures of the late 1960s and early 1970s." Frantzich (1989, 152) reports that in families where both parents are Democrats, 64 percent of the children identify with the Democratic party. In those families where both parents are Republican, 60 percent of the children identify with the GOP. In families

where both parents are Independent, an astounding 80 percent of the children identify themselves as Independent. As noted in Chapter 1, Dalton's (1980) LISREL analysis of the Jennings and Niemi (1968) study upgrades the intergenerational agreement on partisanship from .47 to .90. Dalton also emphasizes the powerful transferring of racial attitudes and civic tolerance values from parent to child.

Research has also asked whether or not one parent has more influence on the child's political socialization than the other parent. Erikson and Tedin (1994, 127) report that "when parents disagree on partisanship (one is Democrat, the other a Republican), the child is more likely to adopt the mother's partisanship than the father's (although the number of Independent children rises substantially as one would expect given the cross-pressures)." Frantzich (1989, 152) asserts that "although conventional wisdom suggests that fathers serve as political role models more than mothers, empirical evidence indicates that this was true only for less-educated children in the past (Jennings and Langton 1969), and the situation has more recently been reversed, with mothers becoming slightly more likely to influence partisan choices." To the contrary, Kritzer (1984, 225) contends that "there is no statistical evidence that the parent of one sex has a greater influence on the child's partisan identification than does the parent of the other sex."

The ideal research design for studying the influence of the family is to survey parents and their offspring and then correlate the responses. Another possible research design is to survey students and then have the students take home a questionnaire for their parents to fill out. Connell (1972, 326) explains that the bias with such a research design is that "the students who did get their parents to do the job would generally be those who had a closer relationship with them, and hence quite probably those who shared their

opinions most closely." When the parents are not surveyed, several studies have asked students to report the party identification of their parents. Such assessments by the students have probably inflated stability across generations (Vaillancourt and Niemi 1974). Since this study is based upon the surveying of students in civics courses, it is not possible to correlate parental and child attitudes on a variety of issues. When exploring the role of the family in political socialization, two main factors will be explored: the level of politicization in the home and the composition of the family.

Politicization of the Family

The relationship between politicization of the family and political socialization is relatively straightforward: the family that discusses politics is the family that learns about politics. Jennings and Niemi (1968, 181) argue that "one would expect parents for whom politics is more salient to emit more cues, both direct and indirect." The authors (1968, 182) discover that party identification and cynicism are related to the level of family politicization, but other variables such as cosmopolitanism, group ratings, prayer and integration issues, and freedom issues are not related to the level of politicization. Sigel and Brookes (1974, 122) suggest that political socialization differences between middle-class and working-class youths may well be traced to middle-class children becoming more politicized in their homes. In a unique study of Jamaican students, Langton and Karns (1969, 815) report that "children reared in families where parents are interested in politics, discuss politics among themselves, and also participate in political activities, are more likely to have developed a sense of political efficacy than those students from less politicized families." Sigel and Hoskin (1981, 227) argue that a politicized environment[1] has a direct and positive impact on the amount of political information absorbed and on

the inclination to participate in politics for high school seniors. Chaffee and Young (1990, 155) nicely summarize that "children whose parents have tolerated and encouraged the expression of opinion in the home end up knowing more and being more active politically, in school and in later life, than do those whose homes provided no outlet for pluralistic expression."

Based upon an analysis of a three-wave panel study, Beck and Jennings (1991, 751) report that as the level of family politicization[2] increases so does the amount of parent-child agreement on partisanship. As Beck and Jennings (758) elaborate,

> ...the partisan loyalties of the filial generation strongly resemble the partisan environment of their family of origin, even under the adverse conditions of the 1965-1973 period. The parental partisan legacy was powerful when the youth were in the home and, although it suffered considerable erosion, remained at a still substantial level even after they had become adults. This continuity is all the more remarkable considering the powerful antipartisan period forces of the time.

Beck and Jennings (1991, 746-747) also discover that parental politicization is related to the politicization of the youth in all three waves of the survey but the correlations are rather modest. The authors conclude that adult politicization is influenced by factors outside of the family.

Although Beck and Jennings (1991, 758) emphasize the significance of "extrafamilial experiences and more contemporaneous forces" for adult politicization, the authors might be missing differences among racial groups. Lower levels of political participation among minority groups may result in less opportunities for minority children to learn about political activities through family discussions of politics. Even if politics is discussed in the home, these children may not acquire a sense of political efficacy. Furthermore, Rodgers (1974, 278) discovers that as the black adolescent discusses politics

with family or peers, the level of political cynicism actually rises. The dynamics of race and politicization of the family have largely remained unexplored. Levels of family politicization and the subsequent influence on political socialization must be carefully disaggregated and examined by race. As Cook (1985) calls our attention to the importance of examining the pull of the social environment on political socialization, the politicization of the family becomes a key independent variable for this study.

This chapter explores six hypotheses in relation to family politicization and the political socialization of adolescents:

Hypothesis 1 Family politicization should encourage a sense of partisanship among adolescents.

Hypothesis 2 Adolescents from a politicized family should be more likely to identify a difference between the Republican and Democratic parties.

Hypothesis 3 Family politicization should lead to higher levels of political knowledge and political efficacy among adolescents.

Hypothesis 4 The relationship between family politicization and political efficacy should be strongest among white students.

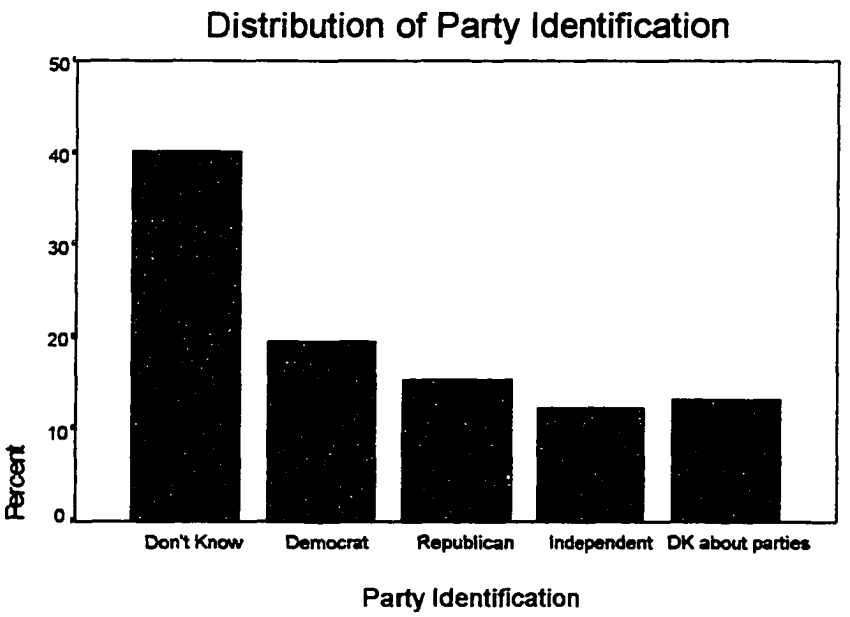
Hypothesis 5 Adolescents from politicized homes should have lower levels of political cynicism than adolescents from less politicized homes.

Hypothesis 6 Family politicization might actually raise the political cynicism level of black adolescents.

How children come to adopt a sense of party identification has been the most studied aspect of political socialization. The first hypothesis asserts that children are more likely to acquire a sense of partisanship in homes that are politicized. Oklahoma City middle school students were asked the following question to tap their sense of partisanship: "If you could register to vote, would you be a Democrat, a Republican, or an

Independent?" Students could answer "Democrat," "Republican," "Independent," "Don't Know," or "Don't Know what Republican and Democrat means." Figure 3.1 reveals the distribution of student responses to the party identification question. Exactly 40 percent of the sample answered "don't know." Approximately 20 percent of the middle school students identified themselves as Democrats and 15 percent identified with the Republican party. 12 percent of the adolescents consider themselves to be Independent and another 13 percent said they do not know what Republican and Democrat means. A majority of the students have yet to acquire a sense of partisanship. Slightly more than a third of the sample identifies with a political party. In their study of students in grades four through eight, Hess and Torney (1968, 183) discover that party affiliation becomes most salient for the child in grades seven and eight. Party affiliation might be more salient in the middle

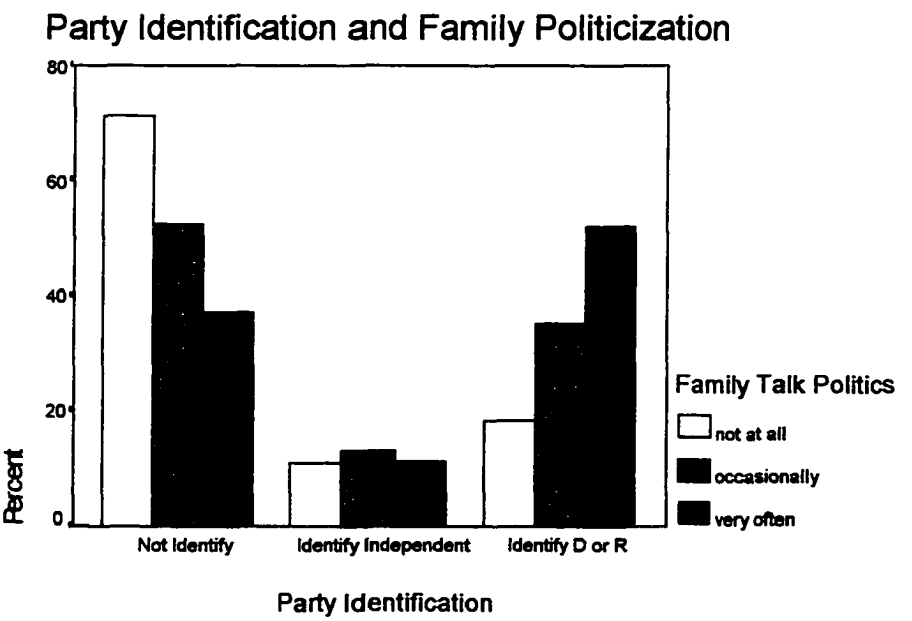
Figure 3.1



school years when compared to the elementary school years, but the results in Figure 3.1 demonstrate that many students have yet to be socialized towards a political party.

The failure of the family to discuss politics might be one explanation that helps to account for the lack of partisanship among the students. Family politicization is measured through two questions: "do you hear anyone in your family talk about politics, voting, and things like that?" and "do you ever ask anyone in your family questions about politics and government?" Students could answer "yes, very often," "yes, occasionally," or "no, not at all" to each question. Figure 3.2 illustrates the relationship between party identification and family politicization. For those students who do not discuss politics at all in their family, over 70 percent do not identify with a political party. Only 18 percent of adolescents from families that do not discuss politics identify with the Democratic or Republican party. In families that talk about politics very often, 52 percent of the

Figure 3.2



adolescents identify with a political party, 11 percent are Independents and 37 percent do not have a sense of party identification. At the bivariate level, it appears that family politicization contributes to a sense of party identification. Students that grow up in families that frequently discuss politics are more likely to develop an attachment to a political party than students who live in families that never talk about politics.

A second research question concerning family politicization asks whether or not adolescents from a politicized family are more likely to identify a difference between the Republican and Democratic parties. Initially, students were asked "do you think there are any important differences in what the Republicans and Democrats stand for?" For those students that answered yes, a second question asked them to identify an important difference between the Republicans and Democrats. Table 3.1 details the differences that students identified between the two parties. A total of 212 students (22.5% of the sample) identified a difference between the two parties. The most commonly identified difference, mentioned by 60 students, is the rather vague statement that the parties "offer or stand for different things." The second most popular response is that "Republicans help the rich." "Democrats care more" and "Democrats and Republicans don't get along" are both mentioned by 14 students.

Several of the definitions demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of differences between the two parties. Half a dozen students mentioned that "Democrats include blacks and minorities" while nine students mentioned that "Democrats help working people." A few students mentioned that "Republicans are conservative," "Republicans are more for the middle class," "Democrats support Medicare and Social Security," and "Democrats

Table 3.1

Identification of Differences Between Democrats and Republicans

Party Difference	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Offer/Stand For Different Things	60	6.4	28.3	28.3
Republicans Help Rich	23	2.4	10.8	39.1
Democrats Care More	14	1.5	6.6	45.7
Dem/Rep Don't Get Along	14	1.5	6.6	52.3
Run The Central Govt. Differently	11	1.2	5.2	57.5
Democrats Help Working People	9	1.0	4.2	61.7
Republicans For The Public/People	9	1.0	4.2	65.9
Republicans Have More Say	8	.8	3.8	69.7
Republicans Selfish	6	.6	2.8	72.5
Democrats Include Blacks/Minorities	6	.6	2.8	75.3
Abortion Issue	6	.6	2.8	78.1
Run The Country Differently	6	.6	2.8	80.9
Democrats Too Much Welfare	4	.4	1.9	82.8
Democrats Too Much Taxes	4	.4	1.9	84.7
Dem Wrong Issues Rep Right Issues	4	.4	1.9	86.6
Democrats Spend More Money	4	.4	1.9	88.5
Symbols-Elephant And Donkey	4	.4	1.9	90.4
Republicans Are Conservative	3	.3	1.4	91.8
Taxes	3	.3	1.4	93.2
Dem. Support Medicare/Soc Sec	2	.2	.9	94.1
Rep. More For The Middle Class	2	.2	.9	95
Like Republicans	2	.2	.9	95.9

Table 3.1 continued

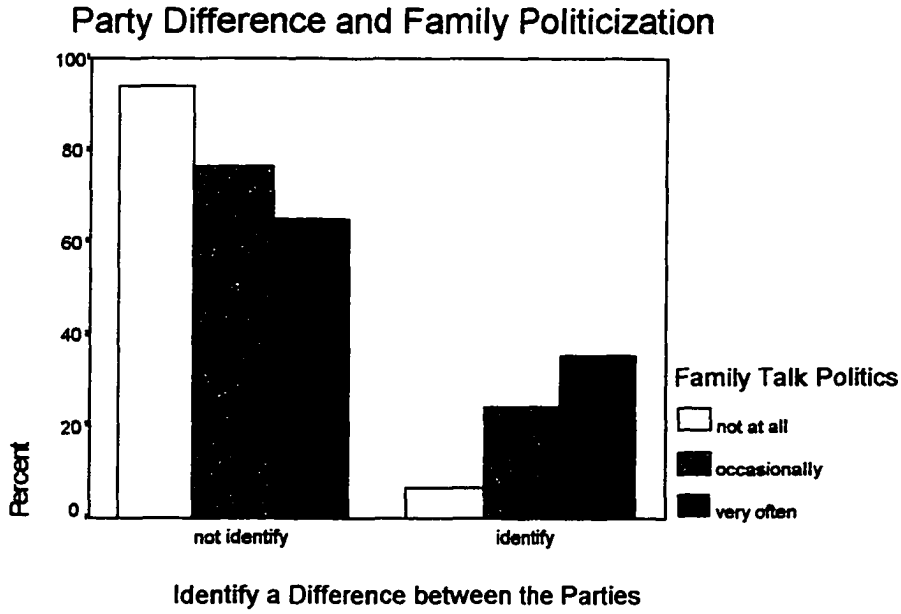
Party Difference	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Different Views of The Future	1	.1	.5	96.4
Dem Big Govt Rep Small Govt	1	.1	.5	96.9
Republicans Give Money To People	1	.1	.5	97.4
Dem Support Gays In The Military	1	.1	.5	97.9
Different Rules	1	.1	.5	98.4
Republicans Don't Lie Like Clinton	1	.1	.5	98.9
Democrats Are Honest	1	.1	.5	99.5
Republicans Make Wars/Dem. Don't	1	.1	.5	100.0
Total Identification	212	22.5	100.0	
Missing	730	77.5		
Total	942	100.0		

support gays in the military." A few of the identified differences illustrate an antagonism toward one of the political parties such as "Republicans selfish," "Democrats too much welfare," and "Democrats too much taxes." A twelve year-old white female provided one of the more entertaining responses: "Republicans don't lie like Clinton." To no surprise, she identifies with the Republican party. As a possible response to such a charge, another twelve year-old white female who identifies with the Democratic party declared that the "Democrats are honest."

For the 212 students that are able to identify a difference between the political parties, the second hypothesis asserts that family politicization contributes to the ability to identify such a difference. Figure 3.3 explores the relationship between family

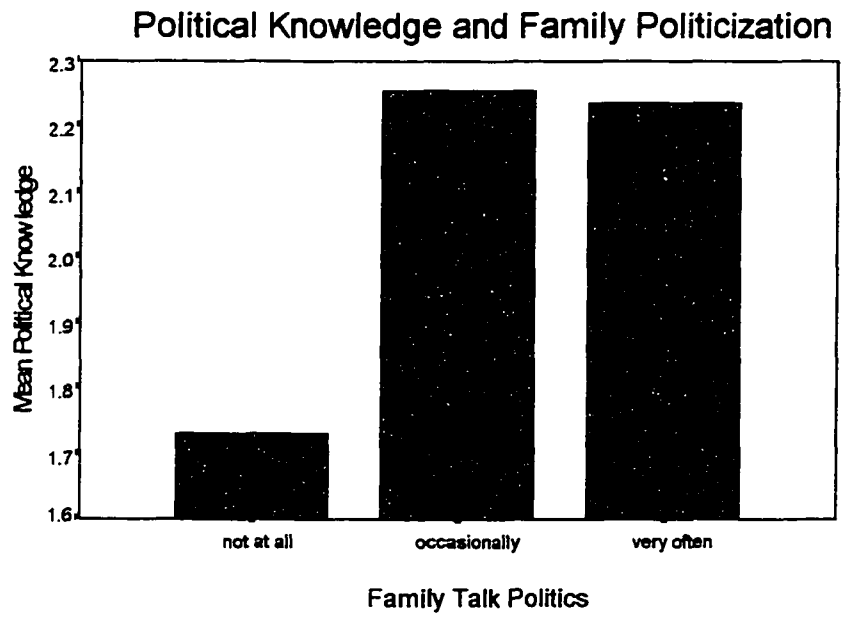
politicization and the ability to identify a difference between the two political parties. The most striking point of Figure 3.3 is that for adolescents who live in families that do not at all discuss politics an amazing 94 percent did not identify a difference between the political parties. Only 6 percent of adolescents from families that do not discuss politics identify a difference between the parties. For those students from families that discuss politics very often, 35 percent are able to identify a difference between the parties. Even occasional discussions of politics are beneficial for an adolescent in terms of identifying a difference. Of those students reporting that their families occasionally discuss politics, 24 percent are able to name a difference between the parties. Students that occasionally discuss politics in the family are four times more likely to identify a difference between the parties than students who do not discuss politics. For students that frequently discuss politics, they are roughly six times more likely to identify a difference than students who do not discuss politics in the home.

Figure 3.3



While family politicization encourages a sense of party identification among adolescents and facilitates their ability to identify a difference between the parties, the third hypothesis considers whether or not family discussions of politics have an impact on the political knowledge and political efficacy of preadults. Figure 3.4 reports the mean score of political knowledge for each category of family politicization. Students who are being raised in families that never discuss politics have a mean score on the political knowledge index of 1.73. Adolescents that report occasionally discussing politics in the home have a

Figure 3.4

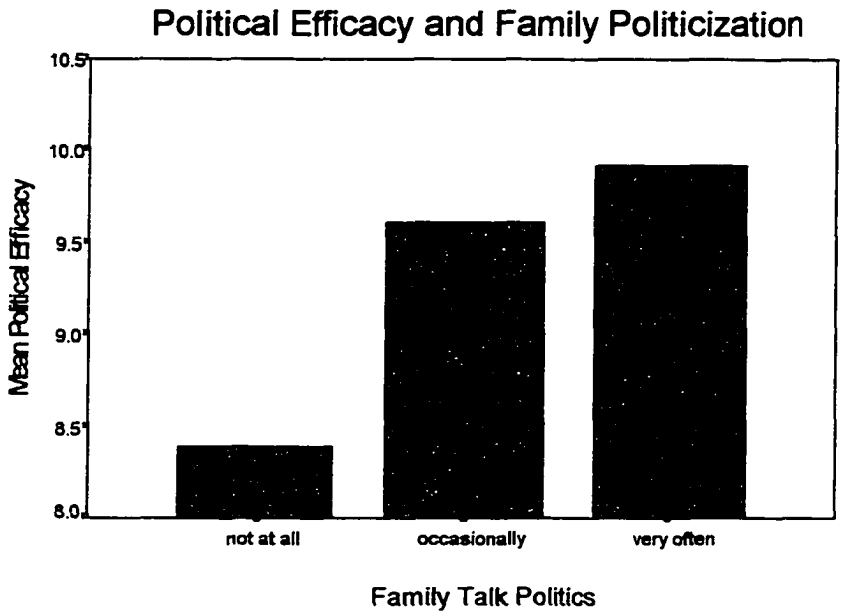


mean political knowledge score of 2.25. Using a difference of means test, there is a statistically significant difference between the political knowledge scores of students who never discuss politics in the home and those who occasionally discuss politics.[3] Although there is an impressive jump in political knowledge from not discussing politics to

occasionally discussing politics, the level of political knowledge remains constant between the categories of occasionally discussing politics in the home (mean of 2.25) and very often discussing politics (mean of 2.24). Political knowledge that is gleaned from occasional family discussions of politics may only be reinforced through frequent political conversations in the home. Additional gains in political knowledge may come from other factors such as age, education and media consumption.

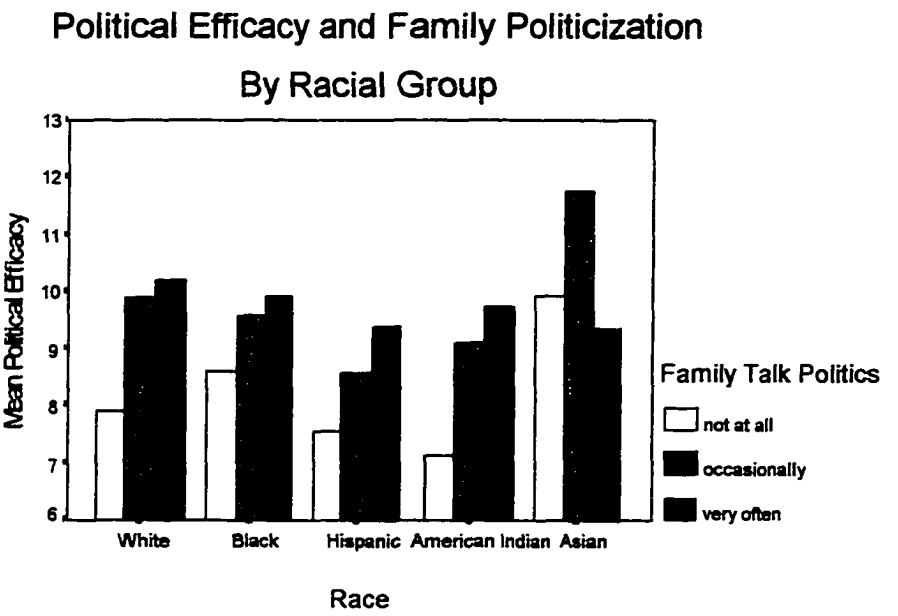
Just as in the case of political knowledge, Figure 3.5 reveals that the sharpest jump in political efficacy occurs between the categories of not at all and occasionally discussing politics. The political efficacy index ranges from 0 to 20. The index is based upon five statements: "what happens in government will happen no matter what citizens do. It is like the weather, there is nothing they can do about it;" "there are some big, powerful people in the government who are running the whole thing, and they do not care about us ordinary people;" "my family doesn't have any say about what the government does;" "I don't think people in the government care much what people like my family think" and "citizens don't have a chance to say what they think about running the government." Students who do not discuss politics at all have a mean political efficacy score of 8.38. Adolescents who occasionally discuss politics in the home have a mean score of 9.61. The highest level of political efficacy, mean of 9.91, is evident for adolescents who discuss politics very often in the home. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean political efficacy scores of students who do not discuss politics and those that occasionally discuss politics (t-value=4.08 $p<.01$). Although political efficacy increases between the categories of occasionally and very often discussing politics, the difference is not statistically significant.

Figure 3.5



The relationship between political efficacy and family politicization might vary across racial groups. Although hypothesis 4 asserts that the relationship between family politicization and political efficacy should be strongest among white students, Figure 3.6 reveals that family politicization raises levels of political efficacy for all racial groups except Asians. White and black students show significant gains in political efficacy between the categories of not at all to very often discussing politics. White students who do not discuss politics in the home have a mean political efficacy score of 7.89. The political efficacy score jumps to 10.17 for white adolescents who frequently discuss politics. Black adolescents also show an increase in political efficacy between the categories of not at all (mean of 8.59) to very often discussing politics (mean of 9.9). In a unique study of political ambition and family background, Perkins (1986) reports that a politicized family associates with performing political activities which in turn links to

Figure 3.6



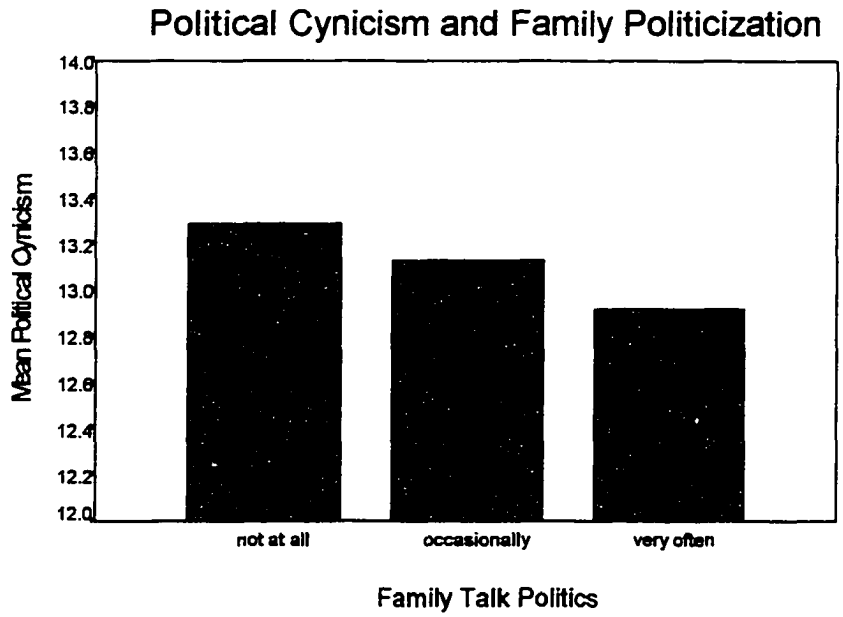
ambition for black women. For the black adolescents in this study, family conversations about politics help to promote a sense of political efficacy. Even though minority groups continue to be at a disadvantage in terms of the politically relevant resources that facilitate political participation (Verba et al. 1993), family discussions of politics in minority households can promote political efficacy among the young which might encourage political involvement in adulthood.

For white and black adolescents, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean political efficacy scores of those who do not discuss politics and those that frequently discuss politics in the home.[4] Although Hispanic and American Indian students exhibit an increase in political efficacy between the categories of not at all to very often discussing politics, the differences are not statistically significant. In the case of Asian students, the lowest level of political efficacy is for adolescents that very often

discuss politics in the home. Such results should be interpreted with caution since the total sample of Asian students is relatively small (N=43).

If family politicization helps to improve an adolescent's political knowledge and sense of political efficacy, it might also reduce levels of political cynicism. Family discussions of politics might provide insights into the complexities of government and an appreciation for how the political process functions. Such conversations might help to reduce the levels of political distrust which have become endemic to contemporary American politics. Figure 3.7 clarifies the relationship between political cynicism and family politicization. While levels of political cynicism decline as family politicization increases, the decline is very modest and statistically insignificant. For students that do not discuss politics, the mean score of political cynicism is 13.29. The mean score of political cynicism is a slightly smaller 12.92 for adolescents that frequently discuss politics.

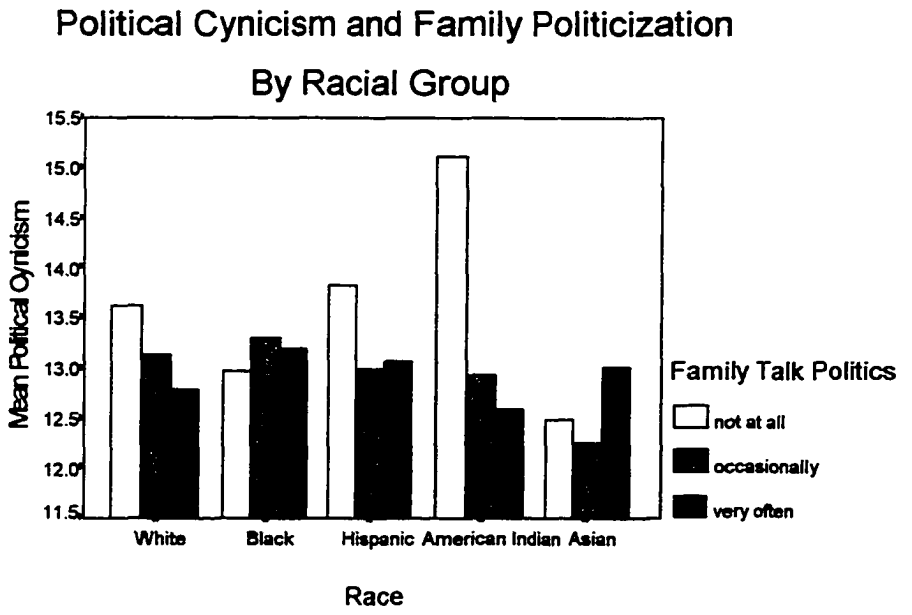
Figure 3.7



In the Oklahoma City survey, the political cynicism index ranges from 5 to 20. The index includes the following four questions: "do you think some of the people running the government are dishonest," "how much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right," "do you feel that the people running the government are smart people who usually know what they are doing," and "do you think the government wastes a lot of tax money?"

Examining the role of race might shed light on the relationship between political cynicism and family politicization. Hypothesis 6 asserts that family politicization might actually raise the political cynicism level of black adolescents. Figure 3.8 explores racial differences in the relationship between political cynicism and family politicization. Political cynicism levels are fairly constant for African-American students across the three categories of family politicization. For white students, political cynicism declines from a

Figure 3.8



mean score of 13.6 for those who do not discuss politics in the home to a mean score of 12.79 for those that frequently discuss politics. The difference between the two means is not statistically significant (t-value=1.79 p=.09). For Hispanic and American Indian adolescents, levels of political cynicism decline as the family increasingly discusses politics, but the differences are not statistically significant.[5] For Asian students, the highest level of political cynicism is among those that frequently discuss politics. Since political efficacy is lowest among Asian adolescents who frequently discuss politics, it seems logical that political cynicism would be highest among that group.

Family Composition and Political Socialization

While several studies have explored the relationship between family politicization and political socialization, few studies have investigated the impact of family composition on adolescent political learning. Hess and Torney (1968, 114), in a very brief examination of the relationship between family composition and political socialization, report no differences between children from homes with both parents and children from homes with the father absent. Only 12 percent of the children in the Hess-Torney study came from homes without fathers. Family demographics have certainly changed since Hess and Torney's 1968 study. Whitehead (1996, 30) notes that "more than half of all American children are likely to spend at least part of their lives in one-parent homes." Garfinkel and McLanahan (1986, 166) report that "about one of every six white children and slightly more than one of every two black children now live in mother-only families." Popenoe (1996, 13-14) describes the years of 1970 through 1980 as the "baby bust" period in which only 50 percent of the children born during that time period could expect to still live

with both natural parents by the age of 17. The decline is staggering from the 1950s in which 80 percent of children still lived with both natural parents by age 17.

One scholar has described these changes in the American family as "a disappearing act by fathers" (Preston 1984, 443). Shapiro et al. (1995, 39) report that "an astonishing 38 percent of all kids now live without their biological fathers—up from 17.5 percent in 1960. More than half of today's children will spend at least part of childhood without a father." Popenoe (1996, 14) notes that "a 1981 survey of adolescents who were living apart from their fathers found that 52 percent had not seen them at all in more than a year; only 16 percent saw their fathers as often as once a week."

While scholars of political socialization have largely ignored the implications of this earthquake-like disruption of the American family, sociologists have carefully documented the fallout from the breakup of the nuclear family. Whitehead (1993), in a survey of a large body of literature, argues that children from single-parent families are six times more likely to be in poverty, more likely to drop out of high school, to get pregnant as teenagers, to have emotional and behavioral problems, to abuse drugs, and to be in trouble with the law as compared to children from intact families. McLanahan (1994, 61) reports that "children who grow up apart from a parent are disadvantaged in many ways relative to children who group up with both parents. They are less likely to graduate from high school and college, they are more likely to become teen mothers, and they are somewhat more likely to be idle in young adulthood." McLanahan (1994, 26) also observes that fathers who live in separate households see their children less often and this can undermine a child's sense of commitment and trust. Newman and Denman (1971)

argue that males deprived of their fathers during childhood are more likely to express conflict by socially disapproved behavior.

In one of the few studies on father absence and political socialization, Langton (1969, 166) reports from separate studies in the Caribbean and the United States that

> A predicted cross-sex pattern develops in which the absence of the father and maternal domination increase authoritarian attitudes and decrease political interest among male students, while this has little effect on females. With political efficacy, however, there is no sex differentiation. Both boys and girls from mother-only families are less efficacious than children from nuclear families.

Jaros et al. (1968) conducted an interesting subcultural study of children from the Appalachian region and discovered that the absence of the father is actually associated with **more favorable** political evaluations in the children. The authors argue that the Appalachian child from a fatherless home escapes close contact with the powerful political cynicism of the Appalachian male. Jaros et al. (1968, 574) conclude that the fatherless family leaves the "children very vulnerable to the socialization of other agents, agents with rather different (more positive) values."

Easterlin and Crimmins (1991) have recently hypothesized a link between rising materialism among America's youth and the growth in single parent families. Based upon national survey data, Easterlin and Crimmins discover a sharp increase in private materialism as a life goal among America's youth from the early seventies to 1987. The authors (1991, 524) suggest that "a growth in single parent families and/or decline in number of children per family might be expected to lead to increased material and self-centered emphasis among young people." The authors conclude that family structure does not predict materialism but rather economic deprivation for a family is the best predictor of the growth in materialism among the nation's young.

A research focus on the breakdown of the family fits nicely with Merelman's (1986) directive for scholars to explore the demise of a center of formal authority in the socialization process. This chapter explores several hypotheses in relation to family structure and political learning:

Hypothesis 7 Single parent families should have lower levels of family politicization than two parent families.

Hypothesis 8 Adolescents from mother-only families should have lower levels of political efficacy and higher levels of political cynicism than adolescents from intact families.

Hypothesis 9 The relationship between mother-only families and political cynicism should be strongest among minority groups.

Hypothesis 10 Adolescents from mother-only families should have lower levels of social trust than adolescents from two parent families.

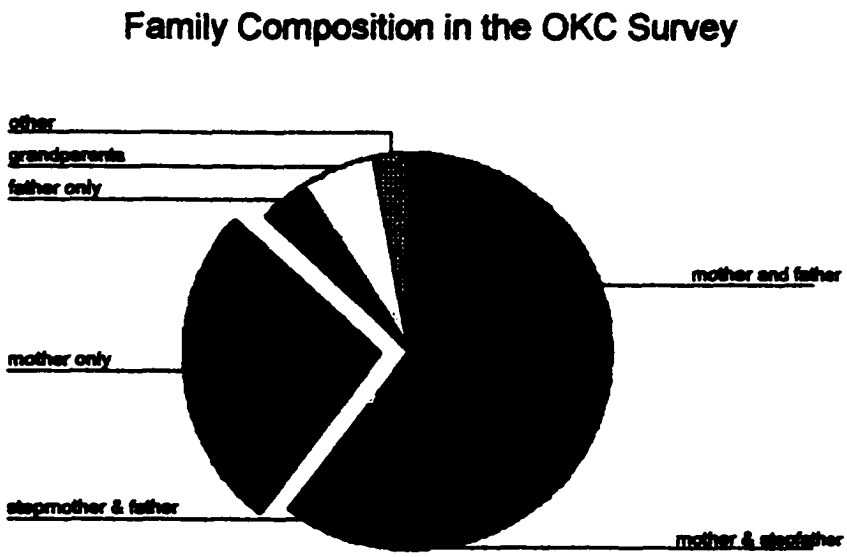
Hypothesis 11 Adolescents from mother-only families should have lower levels of political interest and political knowledge than adolescents from intact families.

Hypothesis 12 Levels of materialism should be highest among adolescents in mother-only families.

Hypothesis 13 In mother-only families, boys should have lower levels of political interest than girls.

Initially, it is useful to examine a demographic profile of family composition for the adolescents in this survey of Oklahoma City middle school students. Figure 3.9 reveals the striking diversity of family structure in the sample. Much like the rest of the nation, students in this sample come from a variety of family backgrounds. Students were asked "who do you currently live with?" 39 percent answered that they live with their mother and father. 19 percent said they live with their mother and stepfather. Only 3 percent said they live with their stepmother and father. Slightly more than one-quarter of the sample

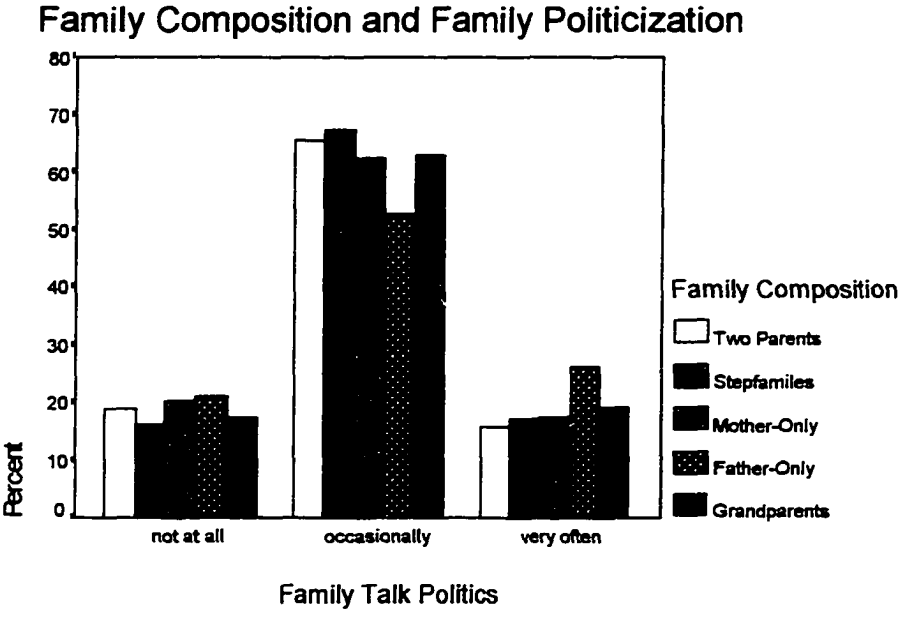
Figure 3.9



(26.6%) report that they live in a mother-only family. Only 4 percent of the adolescents report living in father-only families. Approximately 6 percent live with their grandparents and 3 percent selected the "other" category. A real strength of this sample is the diversity in family composition and the large number of cases (N=251) in mother-only families. This allows for the testing of differences within mother-only families particularly between boys and girls. Although this is only a sample of school children in one large metropolitan school district, Figure 3.9 clearly highlights the fragmentation of the American family.

Hypothesis 7 asserts that single parent families should have lower levels of family politicization than two parent families. The assumption behind this hypothesis is that single parents have very hectic lifestyles and little time may be left for discussions of politics in the home. Figure 3.10 reveals a striking similarity in the politicization of mother-only and two parent families. Roughly one-quarter of adolescents in mother-only

Figure 3.10

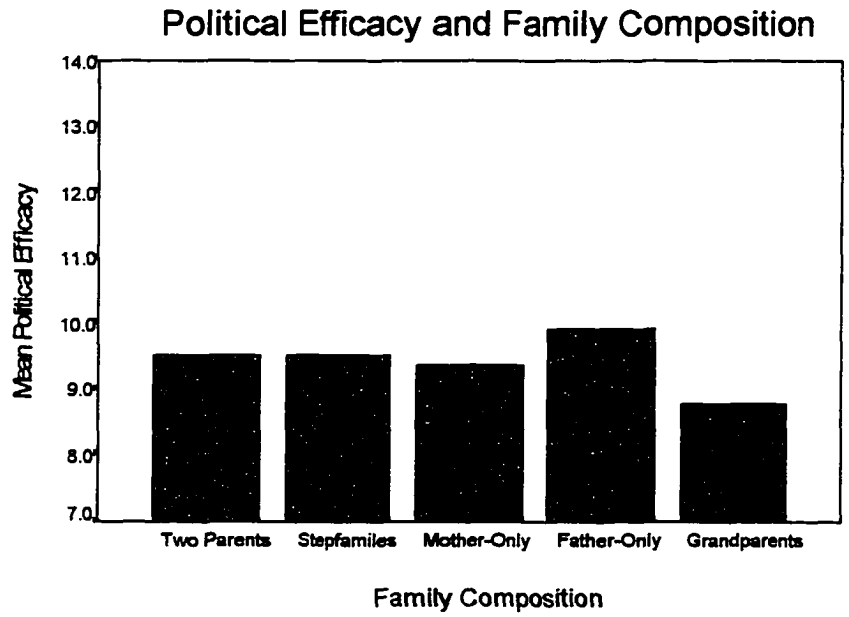


and two parent families admit to no family discussions of politics. 65% of the adolescents in two parent families and 62% in mother-only families occasionally discuss politics. There is also a strong parallel in the category of very often discussing politics: 16 percent of respondents in two parent families and 17 percent in mother-only families frequently discuss politics in the home. Slightly more than one in four adolescents in father-only families report that they have frequent discussions of politics in the home. These results should be interpreted carefully since only 38 respondents mentioned living with only their father. In this sample, adolescents in single parent families are no less likely to have political conversations at home than their counterparts in two parent families. The general equivalence evident in Figure 3.10 may be the result of declining levels of politicization in two parent families. In many two parents families, both parents work full-time to make ends meet. Since this study is cross-sectional and not longitudinal in nature, it is not

possible to determine if discussions about politics have become less frequent over time in two parent families.

Hypothesis 8 predicts that adolescents from mother-only families should have lower levels of political efficacy and higher levels of political cynicism than adolescents from intact families. Figures 3.11 and 3.12 illustrate that political efficacy and cynicism levels do not vary much between the different types of families. Adolescents in two parent families and stepfamilies have identical mean political efficacy scores of 9.51. Students growing up in mother-only families have a mean efficacy score of 9.35. Respondents in father-only families have the highest mean score for political efficacy at 9.89. Figure 3.12

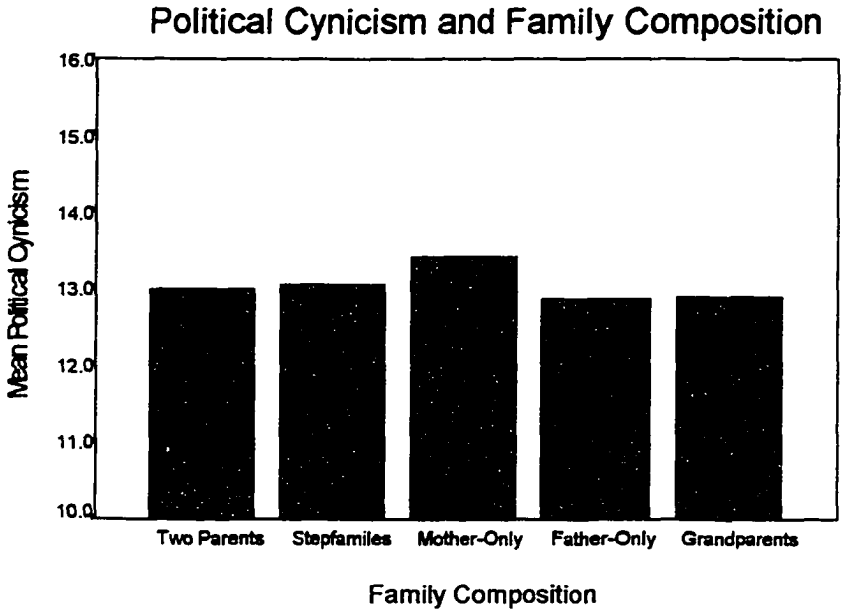
Figure 3.11



reveals equivalent levels of political cynicism across categories of family structure. While adolescents in mother-only families have the highest level of political cynicism (mean=

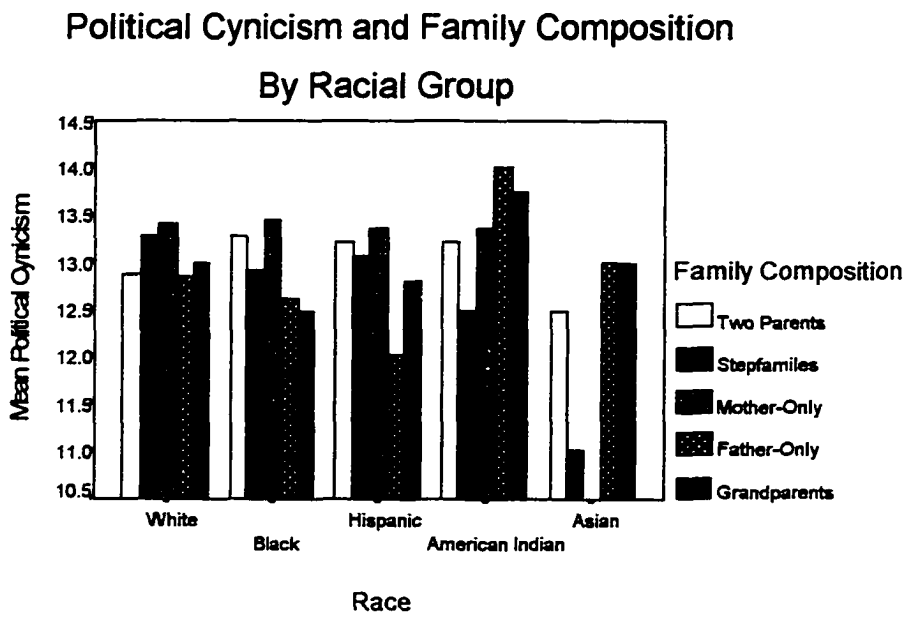
3.41), it is not significantly higher than the levels for adolescents in the other four types of families.

Figure 3.12



Although political cynicism is constant across the types of families, it might vary once race is considered. Figure 3.13 demonstrates that adolescents growing up in mother-only families have the highest levels of political cynicism for whites, blacks and Hispanics. For those three racial groups, statistically significant differences do not appear between the political cynicism levels of adolescents in mother-only families and two parent families. In the case of Hispanics, there is a substantial decline in political cynicism between mother-only families (mean= 13.36) and father-only families (mean=12). The difference between the two means is statistically significant at $p<.01$. In the case of American Indian respondents, the highest levels of political cynicism appear for adolescents in father-only

Figure 3.13



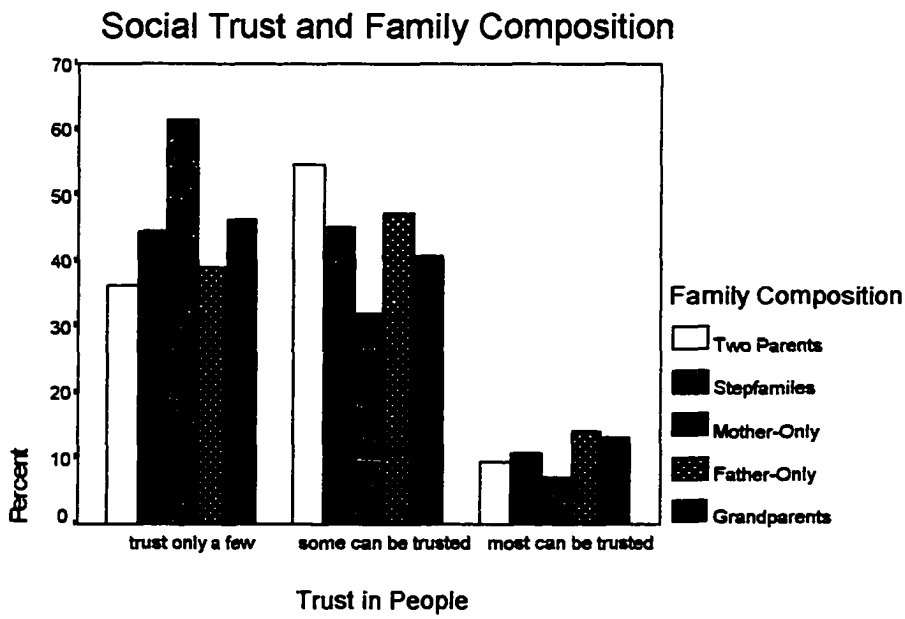
families (mean=14) and those being raised by their grandparents (mean=13.75).

Although sociologists have linked the breakdown of the nuclear family to a myriad of social problems, the results of this survey indicate that political efficacy and political cynicism do not vary with changes in family structure. Social trust is one area where we might expect to find significant differences by family type. Garfinkel and McLanahan (1986, 16) document that many single mothers and their children experience the loss of important social networks and support in the wake of a divorce. According to the National Survey of Children, close to half of the children from disrupted families had not seen their father at all in the past year (Whitehead 1993, 65). The "disappearing act by fathers" (Preston 1984, 443) can seriously undermine a child's sense of commitment and trust (McLanahan 1994, 26). While the decline in social trust is a prima facie concern for society, it also has important consequences for the political system. Putnam (1995a, 665-

666) argues that social trust is related to civic connections. Teixeira (1992, 36) notes "that interpersonal, community, and general social ties provide a substantial proportion of an individual's motivation to vote, because these ties can provide external encouragement to vote, as well as an enhanced sense of an election's meaningfulness."

In the Oklahoma City survey, middle school students were asked "would you say that most people can be trusted, some people can be trusted or only a few people can be trusted?" In support of hypothesis 10, Figure 3.14 reveals that social trust is lowest among adolescents from mother-only families. 61 percent of adolescents in mother-only families believe that only a few people can be trusted. Only 36 percent of the students in two parent families believe that only a few people can be trusted. An analysis of the "most can be trusted" category reveals that few students score high on social trust. For the entire sample, only 9 percent of respondents believe that most people can be trusted.

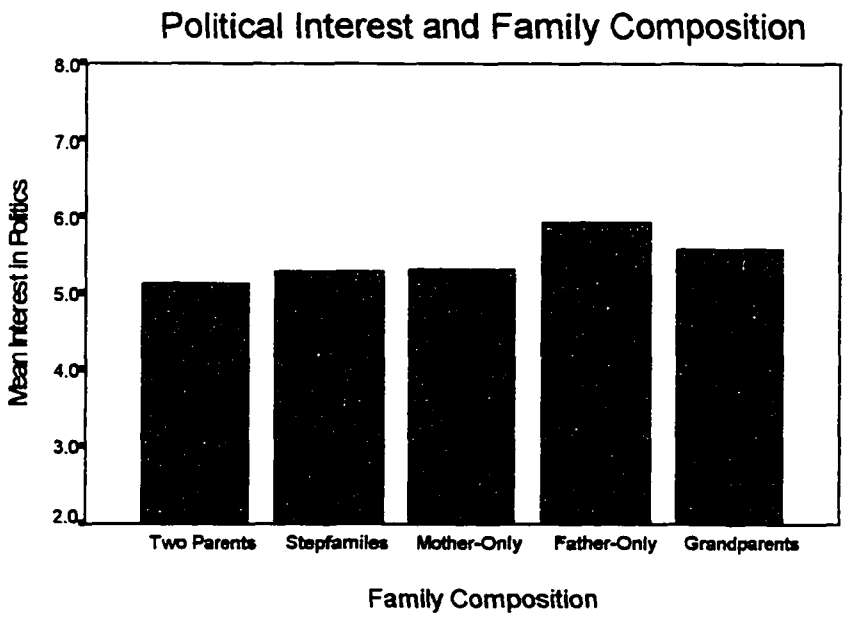
Figure 3.14



7 percent of the adolescents in mother-only families believe that most people can be trusted, and 14 percent in father-only families share in that belief.

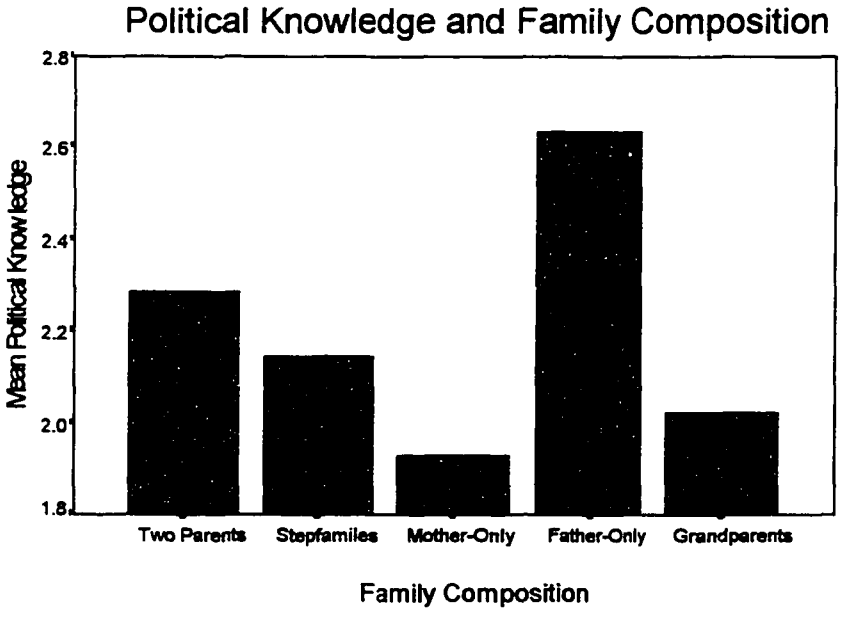
Furthermore, hypothesis 11 assumes that adolescents from mother-only families should have lower levels of political interest and political knowledge than adolescents from two parent families. As illustrated in Figure 3.15, levels of political interest are similar across the types of families. Since politicization is highest in father-only families, it comes as no surprise that levels of political interest are highest in those families (mean of 5.92). The next highest level of political interest is for adolescents living with their grandparents (mean of 5.57). Adolescents in mother-only and stepfamilies have identical levels of political interest (mean of 5.29) while teens in two parent families do not trail far behind with a mean score of 5.11 on political interest.

Figure 3.15



Although the levels of political interest do not vary significantly across the different types of families, there are important fluctuations in political knowledge by family composition. Figure 3.16 reveals that political knowledge is highest among adolescents from father-only families (mean of 2.63). This fits with the finding that politicization levels and political interest scores are highest among those adolescents. Teens from two parent families have the next highest level of political knowledge with a mean score of 2.28. Adolescents in stepfamilies and those living with their grandparents have mean political knowledge scores of 2.14 and 2.02 respectively. Respondents in mother-only families have the lowest level of political knowledge (mean of 1.92). There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of father-only families and mother-only families (t-value of 2.55 $p<.05$) as well as two parent families and mother-only families (t-value of 2.89 $p<.01$).

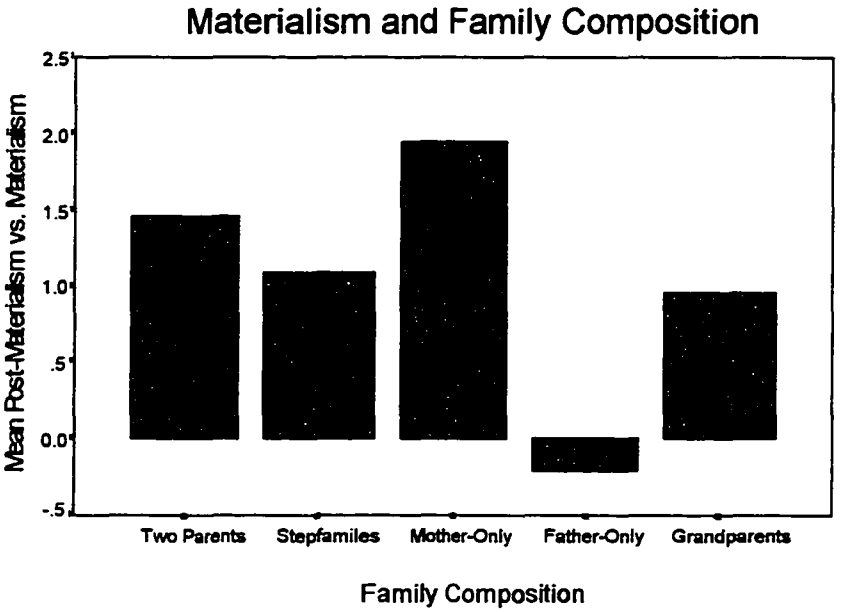
Figure 3.16



While important differences exist in political knowledge across the types of families, further differences are also evident in concerns about materialism. Hypothesis 12 contends that levels of materialism should be highest among adolescents in mother-only families. Students were asked "if you were a member of the government, what problems in this country would you try to fix?" Students were asked to rank the most important problem, the second most important problem and the third most important problem. Students could select from a list of six topics: create more jobs, fight against crime, make sure this country has a strong army, try to make our cities and countryside more beautiful, protect freedom of speech and give people more say in the decisions of government. Based upon the research of Inglehart (1977; 1981; 1985; 1988), the first three topics (jobs, crime and army) measure materialist concerns and the last three topics (cities and country beautiful, free speech and say in government) measure post-materialist concerns. The materialism scale ranges from a high of 6 to a low of -6. A score of six represents a student mentioning materialist concerns for all three problems. A score of -6 represents a student mentioning post-materialist concerns for all three problems.[6]

Figure 3.17 clearly illustrates that materialist concerns are highest among adolescents from mother-only homes. Teenagers from mother-only families have a materialism score of 1.94. McLanahan (1994, 23) reports that almost half of the families headed by single mothers are living below the poverty line. Whitehead (1993, 62) documents that "only 20 percent of unmarried mothers receive child support." Given this economic deprivation, it should come as no surprise that many adolescents in single mother households place greater emphasis on materialist concerns as opposed to post-materialist values. Respondents from two-parent families have a materialism score of

Figure 3.17



1.45. Adolescents who live with stepparents or grandparents have roughly equivalent materialist scores of 1. The only adolescents that have an average score on the post-materialist side of the scale are those from father-only families. The sharpest difference in Figure 3.17 is between mother-only and father-only families (1.94 vs. -.21). The difference of means test between mother-only and father-only families is statistically significant at $p<.01$ (t-value=2.82). Other statistically significant differences in Figure 3.17 appear between mother-only families and stepfamilies as well as two parent families and father-only families.[7]

The final hypothesis concerns potential differences in the political socialization of boys and girls from mother-only families. Previous research discovered that boys in mother-only families had lower levels of political interest than girls in such families. Table 3.2 reports the differences between boys and girls in mother-only families. Although boys

Table 3.2

Gender Differences in Mother-Only Families

gender		political efficacy	political cynicism	trust people	interest in politics	political knowledge	materialism vs. post-materialism
female	Mean	**9.4800**	**13.1933**	**1.48**	**5.4933**	**1.8467**	**1.7133**
	N	150	150	147	150	150	150
	Std. Deviation	3.9284	2.1290	.60	3.1254	1.3448	3.7261
male	Mean	**9.1584**	**13.7327**	**1.43**	**4.9901**	**2.0396**	**2.2772**
	N	101	101	95	101	101	101
	Std. Deviation	3.7356	2.8806	.66	3.3926	1.5615	3.7739
Total	Mean	**9.3506**	**13.4104**	**1.46**	**5.2908**	**1.9243**	**1.9402**
	N	251	251	242	251	251	251
	Std. Deviation	3.8477	2.4680	.62	3.2384	1.4361	3.7481

do have lower levels of political interest than girls, the difference is not statistically significant. In fact, none of the differences in Table 3.2 are statistically significant.

Summary

David Popenoe (1993, 537) has recently argued that "a strong case can also be made that the family has weakened in conducting the function of child socialization. As Samuel Preston, former President of the Population Association of America, has suggested: 'Since 1960 the conjugal family has begun to divest itself of care for children in much the same way that it did earlier for the elderly' (Preston 1984, 443)." Although the family may have declined as a general agent of socialization and the nuclear family has certainly undergone dramatic changes, the family should not be dismissed as an agent of political socialization. While this study did not compare the survey responses of parents and their children, the importance of the family is most evident in the realm of family politicization.

Adolescents who are being raised in families that frequently discuss politics are more likely to identify with a political party than students who do not discuss politics with their parents. It is important to note that only a third of the students in the sample had acquired a sense of partisanship. This immature sense of partisanship is also reflected in the fact that only 212 students (22.5% of the sample) were able to identify a difference between the political parties. For those students who do not discuss politics at all in the home, 94 percent could not identify a difference between the political parties. More than one-third of the students who frequently discuss politics could identify a difference between the parties.

While previous research has emphasized the positive impact of family politicization on political efficacy (Langton and Karns 1969) and political knowledge (Sigel and Hoskin 1981; Chaffee and Young 1990), this study finds that even occasional discussions of politics can have a major impact. Political knowledge and political efficacy increased significantly between the categories of never discussing politics to occasionally discussing politics in the home. Political knowledge and political efficacy remained fairly constant between the categories of occasionally and very often discussing politics in the home. For all racial groups except Asians, political efficacy increased with family politicization.

While family politicization does not significantly reduce levels of political cynicism, it may be the result of the content of family discussions of politics. For every family conversation about politics that reduces an adolescent's distrust of government, there may be another discussion in which a parent vents anger and frustration at the political system. Although Rodgers (1974) reports that family politicization increases the level of political

cynicism for black adolescents, this study discovered that levels of political cynicism remain fairly constant across the categories of family politicization for black students.

This chapter also explored the relationship between family structure and political socialization. Although sociologists have documented a string of problems related to divorce from teen pregnancy to dropping out of high school to drug abuse, family disruption does not have an across the board negative influence on political socialization. Adolescents in this survey from mother-only families report family discussions of politics at the same level as teens from two parent families. Levels of family politicization are roughly equivalent across the different types of families. Political efficacy, political cynicism and political interest levels do not vary significantly by family structure.

Changes in family structure are not irrelevant to the political socialization process. The most important finding in relation to family structure and political socialization is that adolescents in mother-only families score low on social trust. McLanahan (1994) has observed that children living apart from their father have a diminished sense of commitment and trust. More than 60 percent of the adolescents in the Oklahoma City survey from mother-only families agree with the statement that "only a few people can be trusted." While a much smaller percentage (36%) of teens in two parent families believe that only a few people can be trusted, it should be noted that the overall sample scores low on social trust. Only 9 percent of the respondents in the entire sample believe that most people can be trusted. A diminished sense of social trust in adolescence can be a grave threat to the American polity. Since teens being raised in mother-only families develop a high level of social distrust, we are left to wonder if they can recover trust in their fellow citizens during adulthood? Putnam (1995a) stresses that social trust and civic engagement

go hand-in-hand. Low levels of social trust among today's adolescents may very well contribute to an erosion of civic involvement and voting among adults in the next century.

In relation to political knowledge, adolescents from father-only families had the highest mean score and teens from mother-only families had the lowest score. The high level of political knowledge for adolescents in father-only families may be a manifestation of the fact that political efficacy and political interest are highest for such students.

The sharpest distinctions appear in the realm of materialism. Adolescents in mother-only families score highest on the materialism scale. Of all the types of families, only teens in father-only families score on the post-materialist side of the scale. This may partly be a function of income. Easterlin and Crimmins (1991) argue that the rising level of materialism among American youth is related more to economic deprivation than the growth in single parent families. Economic security is likely to be higher in father-only families than in mother-only families and post-materialist values may be more likely to surface in economically secure families. To arrive at a more complete picture of the inculcation of materialist values, variables such as race, income and media consumption need to be explored.

In one of the most interesting studies of father absence and political socialization, Jaros et al. (1968) report that the absence of the father helps to reduce the political cynicism of the Appalachian child. White, African-American and Hispanic students in this study exhibit the highest level of political cynicism in mother-only families. For Hispanic adolescents, there is a substantial decline in political cynicism from mother-only families to father-only families. In the case of American-Indian adolescents, the highest level of political cynicism arises in father-only families. It may be that the American Indian adult

male transmits a negative evaluation of the political system. Given the small number (65) of American Indian adolescents in this sample, further research into this group is certainly needed.

Popenoe (1993, 536) contends that "a large part of the history of childhood and adolescence in the twentieth century is the decline of parental influence and authority, and the growth in importance of both the peer group and the mass media (Hawes and Hiner 1985; Modell 1989)." Merelman's lateral theory of socialization also recognizes the decline of the family. Rather than dismiss the influence of the family, Merelman suggests that the family must compete with a variety of other agents such as peer groups and the mass media. The following chapters explore the influence of those competing agents.

Chapter 4

Peer Groups and Political Socialization: The Importance of Social Connectedness

Parents across this country enroll their children in Cub Scouts, Brownies, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts with the expectation that these organizations help to inculcate good citizenship. Parents often exhaust themselves shuttling their kids to soccer practices, baseball games, chorus and dance recitals because they believe such activities teach children the value of group cooperation and community. Schools sponsor activities ranging from band to student council to sports under the same rationale. Numerous studies have documented the link between social group membership and adult political behavior. Despite all the time and energy that adolescents invest in groups within and outside of school, we know very little about their influence on preadult political learning.

This chapter will shed some light on the relationship between membership in peer groups and political socialization. Initially, this chapter will investigate the link between group membership and adolescent concepts of good citizenship. This analysis also examines the link between group membership and social trust, political efficacy, political knowledge, political interest and political cynicism. Furthermore, this chapter will explore whether or not peer discussions of politics have an effect on adolescent political learning.

The Influence of Peer Groups on Political Socialization

There is no clear consensus on the role of peer groups in the political socialization process. One school of thought argues that peer groups are a critical agent of political socialization. Erikson and Tedin (1995, 128) assert that "the peer group enjoys considerable opportunity to influence attitudes and behavior. There are strong affective

ties involved, and young people normally spend a substantial part of their time with friends." Harvey (1972) notes that peer group involvement has considerable impact as a basic political skill learning experience. Harvey (1972, 601) boldly concludes that "peer groups would appear to be the most important of all socialization agencies by adolescence." A second school of thought argues that the influence of peer groups is conditioned by the family. Silbiger (1977, 182) contends that "the degree of peer influence in adolescent political socialization is less a function of the object of learning itself, than of the presence or absence of parental cue giving." Silbiger (1977, 183) continues that "peers will do more to reinforce, intensify, and clarify dispositions acquired from other sources at other times than to have an independent influence" (Dawson and Prewitt 1969; Finifter 1974). A final school of thought is largely dismissive of the role of peer groups. Peer groups might play a powerful role in adolescent drug and alcohol use, teenage fashion decisions and other social behavior, but the influence on political socialization is not noticeable. Campbell (1980, 342) concludes that "we cannot overlook the fact that the influence of the peer group on an individual's political and racial attitudes is limited at best."

Despite the view of this final school of thought, several studies have linked peer groups to important adolescent political dispositions. In their study of high school seniors, Sebert et al. (1974) discover that peers play a more powerful role than parents in determining political efficacy. Langton and Karns (1969, 822) assert that "the face-to-face peer group, on the other hand, concentrates almost exclusively on what may be the more difficult socialization task, moving students from medium to high political efficacy."

Harvey (1972, 598) notes that the level of peer group involvement correlates significantly with higher levels of political knowledge, a sense of relevance of government, a sense of citizen duty, a sense of political efficacy, political participation and reduced levels of political conservatism.

Like other areas of political socialization research, methodological problems have surfaced in the study of peer group influence. Silbiger (1977, 186) elaborates that

> The most convenient approach to demonstrate the existence of peer influence is simply to question a respondent regarding his own perceptions of the degree to which he finds himself influenced by friends (e.g., Ostlund 1973). A close relative of this approach, also relying on respondent reports, is to posit for him various hypothetical situations and ask him what sources of advisement he would most value for each—generally, with a comparison of parents and schoolmates as the available options (e.g., Hirsch 1971; Langton 1969). The obvious limitation of this self-reporting approach is the failure actually to assess the concordance of the subject's views with those of either peers or parents. One may well be tapping norms ("I think my mother is the right source") rather than actual practices or consequent influence.

This study does not attempt to utilize either of the aforementioned methodologies. Peer influence is analyzed in two ways: membership in peer groups and peer discussions of politics.

Group Membership, Social Connectedness, and Political Socialization

In his classic work Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville marveled at the fact that Americans were constantly joining associations, clubs and organizations. Hanks (1981, 211) notes that a strong tradition of research (de Toquevile 1945; Lane 1959; Lipset 1960) suggests that people come in contact with public issues through their involvement in organizations. These organizations prove to be a training ground for developing the "skills, knowledge and dispositions conducive to various forms of political action" (Hanks 1981, 211). Under the rubric of "social connectedness," a flourishing

body of literature has emphasized the important link between group membership and adult political behavior. Beck (1997, 184) elaborates that "a source of motivation to vote is the integration of individuals into the social world around them. People who are embedded in dense social networks are considerably more likely to participate in elections."

Several scholars have become alarmed about the declining levels of social connectedness in the American polity. Seidelman (1997, 176) notes that over the last thirty years civil society has become much weaker in the United States. Putnam (1995a, 666) laments that "membership records of such diverse organizations as the PTA, the Elks club, the League of Women Voters, the Red Cross, labor unions, and even bowling leagues show that participation in many conventional voluntary associations has declined by roughly 25% to 50% over the last two to three decades." Putnam (1995b) drives his point home with the colorful example that "more Americans are bowling today than ever before, but bowling in organized leagues has plummeted in the last decade or so." Miller (1992) has documented a sharp decline in social connectedness from the New Deal generation to the post-New Deal generations, especially the 1980s cohort. Teixeira (1992) suggests that the substantial decline in social connectedness can account for a large percentage, approximately half, of the decline in voter turnout over the last several decades.

Social connectedness has also been an important theme in the research exploring the consequences of divorce. McLanahan and Garfinkel (1989) describe how mother-only families can become more socially isolated than other families. The authors (1989, 99) explain that "social isolation may occur because the community no longer functions as a resource base for its members, as when a neighborhood has no jobs, no networks for

helping to locate jobs, poor schools, and a youth culture that is subject to minimal social control." Following a divorce, children can lose important social networks and support because of changes in residence (Garfinkel and McLanahan 1986, 16). Even if single parents do not move, they may "disengage from old friends after a divorce or separation, either because past memories are painful or because new associations are more attractive. And this may leave children feeling cut off from friends and neighbors" (McLanahan 1994, 32).

Despite the growing body of literature on social connectedness, there is a dearth of research concerning the relationship between group membership and adolescent political learning. In a longitudinal study that surveyed adolescents and reinterviewed them at the age of 30, Hanks and Eckland (1978) demonstrate that school activities serve as a training ground for adult participation in voluntary associations. The authors (489) elaborate that

> using longitudinal data, we have shown that, independent of social class background, ability, and academic performance, participation in extracurricular activities in adolescence has a direct positive effect on membership in voluntary associations some fifteen years later, plus positive indirect effects which are mediated through educational attainment, occupation and income. Membership in voluntary associations, in turn, increases voting rates in local and national elections and reduces political alienation, thus linking these outcomes to earlier adolescent socialization.

Although Hanks and Eckland provide impressive results, Hanks (1981, 212) reveals that several studies based upon cross-sectional data have concluded that involvement in school voluntary associations is largely unrelated to the student's development of political ideas and attitudes (Jennings and Niemi 1974; Niemi and Sobieszek 1977; Ziblatt 1965). Hess and Torney (1968, 249) bluntly declare that "participation in peer group organizations

within the school or outside it does not have a significant effect upon the political socialization process."

The failure to discover a significant impact from membership in peer group organizations during the preadult years may largely result from a failure to "disaggregate" the data. Hanks (1981) draws a distinction between instrumental groups that are externally oriented (student council, political clubs, school newspaper, vocational education clubs) and expressive groups that are internally oriented (athletic teams, cheerleaders, pep clubs, band, chorus, hobby clubs). Hanks (1981, 218) discovers that adolescent instrumental participation is significantly and positively associated with discussion of political issues and political participation. Expressive participation has a very weak effect on discussion of political issues and political participation. In their study of national voluntary youth organizations, Yogev and Shapira (1990) emphasize the importance of drawing a distinction between political and apolitical youth organizations.

Distinctions have also been drawn between males and females in relation to the importance of peer groups in the socialization process. Silbiger (1977, 175) reports that "when one focuses exclusively on the peer relationship, there is considerable evidence that women yield more to social pressure than men" (Carrigan and Julian 1966; Hollander, Julian and Haaland 1965; Staples and Walters 1961; Asch 1956; Sebert, Jennings and Niemi 1974; others cited in Sistrunk and McDavid 1971, 200). On the other hand, Campbell (1980, 335) contends that gender, when considered along with parental and peer attitudes, has relatively little influence on racial and political opinions.

This chapter will investigate the following hypotheses in relation to peer group membership and adolescent political learning:

Hypothesis 1 Adolescent involvement in school and after-school groups should contribute to citizenship awareness.

Hypothesis 2 Adolescents from single parent families should have lower levels of group involvement than teens from two parent families.

Hypothesis 3 Adolescent involvement in peer groups should enhance levels of social trust.

Hypothesis 4 Membership in peer groups should improve an adolescent's sense of political efficacy, political interest and political knowledge.

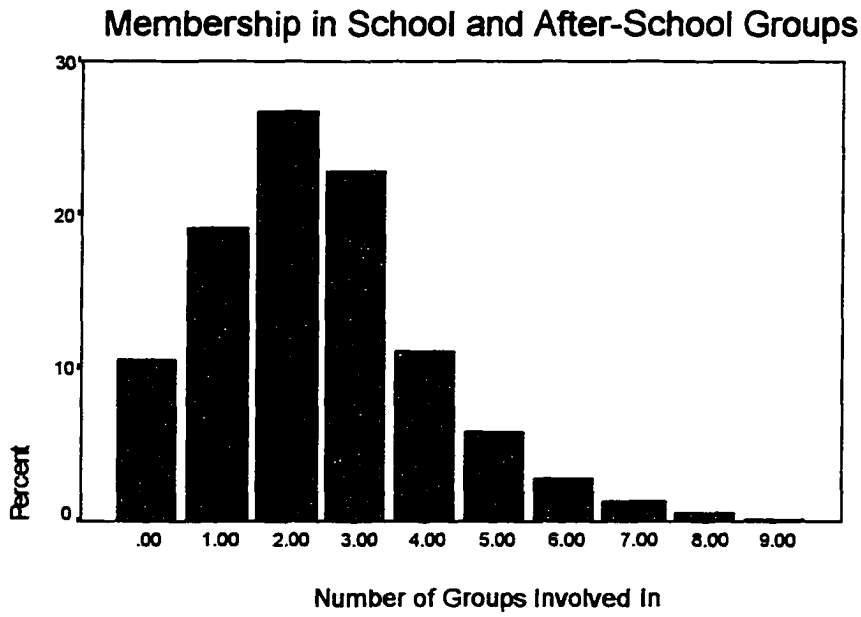
Hypothesis 5 Membership in peer groups should decrease an adolescent's level of political cynicism.

Hypothesis 6 Membership in instrumental groups should have a stronger relationship to political efficacy, interest, knowledge and cynicism than membership in expressive groups.

Hypothesis 7 Group membership should have a stronger effect on the political socialization of girls than boys.

Initially, it is important to examine the extent of group involvement for the middle school students in this survey. The students were given an exhaustive list of school activities and asked to "place an X next to each of the following groups that you are a member of." School activities included athletic teams, cheerleading or pep club, debate or speech, band or chorus, school newspaper or yearbook, student council or student government, science club or language club, National Honor Society or your school's honor society and Future Farmers of America.[1] Students were then asked to "place an X next to each of the clubs or organizations which you belong to now, or which you belonged to in the past." Students could choose from Boy Scouts or Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts or Brownies, Camp Fire, YMCA or YWCA, 4-H Club or a church group.[2] Figure 4.1 reports the levels of group membership for all the middle school students in this

Figure 4.1



sample. 10 percent of the adolescents report involvement in no school or after-school groups. 19 percent report involvement in only one group. Slightly more than one-quarter of the sample (27%) report involvement in two groups. 23 percent of the adolescents are members of three groups. 11 percent of the students indicate membership in four groups. The final 10 percent of the sample fall in the range of five to nine groups.

A 1995 survey of adolescents in Oklahoma County by the organization Starting RIGHT! discovered that 27 percent of the teens reported no involvement in sports, clubs or other after-school activities. A similar survey in 1992 noted that 17.6 percent of the teens spent no time in after-school activities.[3] When only after-school activities are analyzed in this survey of Oklahoma City middle school students, more than one-quarter (29.4%) of the adolescents report no involvement in after-school activities. The Starting

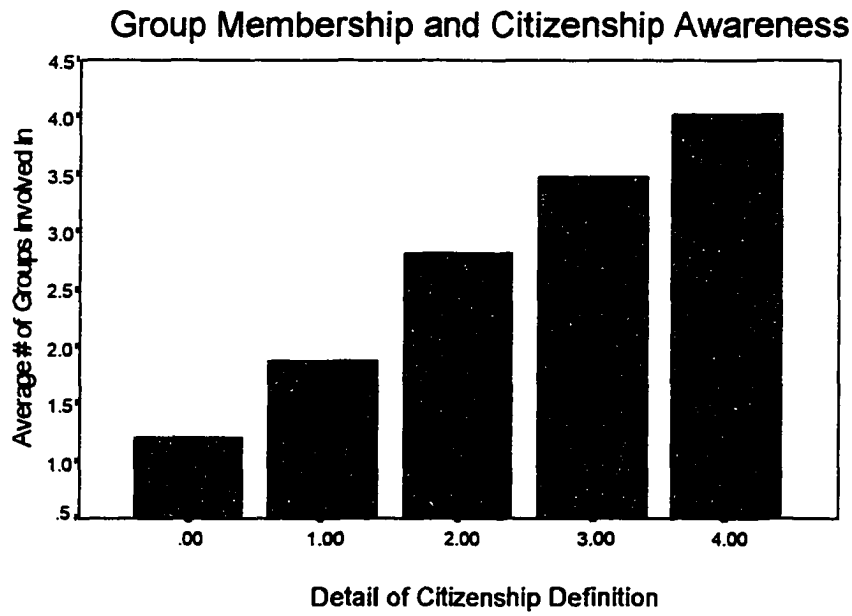
RIGHT! surveys and this study indicate that a substantial percentage of youth in the Oklahoma City area are disconnected from group activities when they are not in school.

The lack of adolescent involvement in group activities is of concern to community leaders, parents, school officials and elected representatives because they believe that group membership serves as a training group for good citizenship. Sports, clubs, and after-school activities can help teach our youth the value of good citizenship by stressing the importance of community, cooperative behavior, duty and responsibility. The first hypothesis asserts that adolescent involvement in school and after-school groups should contribute to citizenship awareness. Oklahoma City middle school students were asked to define what it means to be a good citizen. Students that left the question blank or answered "don't know" were given a score of zero. Students that listed one concept of citizenship were given a score of one. Students that listed two concepts were given a score of two. Definitions of citizenship that included three concepts were given a score of three and definitions that mentioned four concepts of citizenship were scored four.

For example, a 14 year old black female offered a definition that "a good citizen is a person who obeys the laws." A 14 year old American Indian female defined a good citizen as "staying out of trouble." Both definitions received a score of one. One of the most articulate definitions came from a 14 year old black female who stated "someone who votes, cares about their community, obeys all the laws, and will stand up for our country is a good enough citizen for me." A 14 year old Hispanic male defined a good citizen as "a person who helps out in volunteer groups like in Red Cross, or a heart association, helps keep his neighborhood safe and obeys the laws and doesn't take anyone else's rights away." Both of these definitions received scores of four.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the strong relationship between group membership and citizenship awareness. Those students who could not give a definition of what it means to be a good citizen are involved in 1.2 groups on average. Students that expressed only one concept in their definition of citizenship are involved in 1.9 groups on average. Adolescents that described two concepts in their definition of citizenship are involved in almost three groups. Middle school students that listed three concepts are involved in 3.5 groups on average, and students expressing four concept are involved in four groups. The correlation (Pearson's r) between group membership and citizenship awareness is .56. The relationship is strong and straightforward: as adolescents become involved in more groups, they are able to give more elaborate and detailed definitions of what it means to be a good citizen.

Figure 4.2



A further question concerns the relative impact of different groups on the ability to define the meaning of a good citizen. It seems logical to expect membership in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts to contribute to citizenship awareness, but does membership on an athletic team or band have an impact? Table 4.1 details all the groups listed in this survey and their connection to citizenship awareness. Table 4.1 lists the detail given in the definition of a good citizen for members and non-members of each group. The most modest impact comes from membership on an athletic team. Members of an athletic team provided 1.73 concepts in their definition of a good citizen compared with 1.54 for non-members. The difference between the two means is statistically significant (t-value of 2.41). Membership in school activities such as cheerleading/pep club, debate/speech and band/chorus all contribute to citizenship awareness. As we might expect, the school activity that has the greatest impact on citizenship awareness is student council/ government. Adolescents that are members of student council or student government have a mean score of 2.28 concepts in their definition of a good citizen. Non-members of student government provide 1.57 concepts on average. The difference of means test between the two is statistically significant at $p<.001$.

The greatest impact on citizenship awareness comes from after-school groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, Camp Fire and 4-H Club. A recent survey of 2,508 students in grades 4 through 12 in randomly selected schools all across the country discovered that boys who participate in Boys Scouts are more likely than non-Scouts to value education, the environment, honesty and the needs of others before their own (Peterson 1996). Table 4.1 reveals that members of Boy Scouts provide 2.35 concepts in their definition of a good citizen and Girl Scouts provide 2.48 concepts in their definition.

Table 4.1

Peer Groups and Citizenship Awareness

Peer Group	Citizenship Def. Not a Member	Citizenship Def. Member	Diff. of Means Test (t-value)	Significance
Athletic Team	1.54	1.73	2.41	.016
Cheerleading and Pep Club	1.58	2.04	3.57	.001
Debate/Speech	1.59	2.01	3.04	.003
Band/Chorus	1.45	2.01	6.98	.000
Student Yrbook/ Newspaper	1.57	2.06	4.28	.000
Student Council/ Government	1.57	2.28	5.18	.000
Science Club or For. Lang. Club	1.55	2.08	5.14	.000
Honor Society	1.56	2.19	5.49	.000
Cub Scouts/ Boy Scouts	1.55	2.35	7.03	.000
Brownies/Girl Scouts	1.50	2.48	9.59	.000
Camp Fire	1.59	2.60	7.81	.000
YMCA/YWCA	1.35	2.31	12.59	.000
4-H Club	1.62	2.81	4.01	.002
Church Group	1.34	2.09	9.88	.000

One of the sharpest differences in Table 4.1 is between members and non-members of the YMCA/YWCA. Members provide 2.31 concepts in their definition and non-members provide 1.35 concepts. The difference of means test produced a t-value of 12.59 ($p<.001$). Although members of a 4-H Club provide the most detailed definitions of a

good citizen, the finding should be interpreted with caution since only 11 students in the sample are members of a 4-H Club. The most striking finding in Table 4.1 is that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean citizenship scores of members and non-members for every group in this study.

While group membership appears to have a strong impact on citizenship awareness, it is important to consider the relationship in a multivariate model. Table 4.2 considers the influence of several variables on citizenship awareness. Family politicization and political knowledge should have a positive impact on citizenship awareness. Family discussions of politics and rising levels of political knowledge should contribute to more detailed definitions of a good citizen. Poverty and television viewing might have a negative relationship with citizenship awareness. Adolescents from an impoverished area may be less likely to recognize the value of a good citizen, and heavy television viewing tends to impair the socialization process (Condry 1993). The role of race and gender are also explored in Table 4.2. The number of concepts mentioned in a student's definition of a good citizen was regressed on group membership, race, gender, family politicization, political knowledge, poverty and television viewing. Group membership is the number of school and after-school groups that a student is involved in. Race is a dummy variable: 1 for white students and 0 for minority students. Gender is also a dummy variable: 1 for boys and 0 for girls. Family politicization measures family discussions of politics. It is based upon questions 2 and 4 (see the Appendix) and it ranges from 0 to 8. Political knowledge is the index of political knowledge discussed in Chapter 2. Poverty is the percentage of households on public assistance in the attendance area of the middle school.

Finally, television viewing is the number of hours spent viewing television each day (question 50 in the Appendix).

Even with the controls for six other variables, group membership has a powerful impact (Beta of .52) on citizenship awareness. Three other variables are conspicuous in the regression analysis. White students are more likely to give a detailed definition of a

Table 4.2

Regression Analysis of Good Citizen Definitions

Independent Variables	**Beta**	**t-value**	**sig.**
Group Membership	.52	18.65	.000
Race	.09	3.40	.001
Gender	-.07	-2.49	.013
Family Politicization	.04	1.33	.183
Political Knowledge	.11	3.84	.000
Poverty	-.01	-.34	.737
Television Viewing	-.07	-2.49	.013

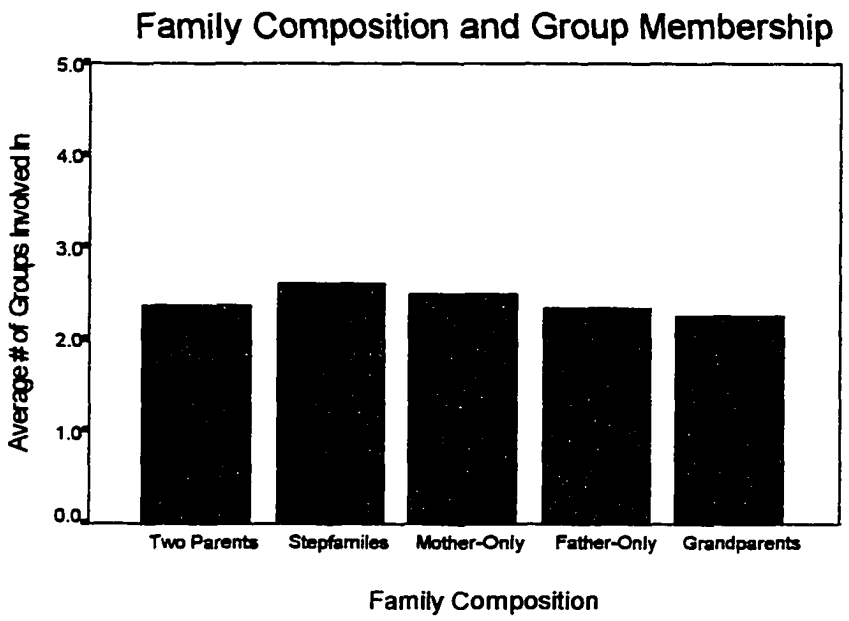
F-value=73.327 ($p<.001$)
R^2=.36
Adjusted R^2=.35

good citizen than minority students. The direction of the regression coefficient for gender is a bit surprising in that boys are less likely to give a detailed definition of citizenship than girls. Owen and Dennis (1988) report that girls are less strongly oriented toward the

political process and political leaders than girls. Rapport (1981) finds young girls are less politicized than young boys. Despite the findings of Owen and Dennis and Rapport, girls in this sample are more likely than boys to provide a detailed definition of what it means to be a good citizen. As expected, political knowledge correlates positively with citizenship awareness. Behind group membership, political knowledge has the next strongest impact on citizenship awareness (Beta of .11). Also as expected, heavy television viewing appears to impair the ability to define the meaning of a good citizen. While the regression coefficients for family politicization and poverty are in the expected direction, they are not statistically significant. An analysis of the auxiliary R^2s for the independent variables in Table 4.2 indicates that multicollinearity is not a problem. Furthermore, a diagnostic analysis of the standardized residuals of the regression reveals no problem with outliers.[4]

Research on adolescents and group membership has raised concerns about the social isolation of children who have experienced a divorce or separation of their parents. The second hypothesis argues that adolescents from single parent families should have lower levels of group involvement than teens from two parent families. Figure 4.3 reveals that levels of group involvement are roughly equivalent across the types of families. Adolescents in stepfamilies have the highest level of group involvement with membership in 2.59 groups on average. Teens in mother-only families are involved in an average of 2.47 groups. Adolescents from two parent families and father-only families are involved in the same number of groups—2.34. Respondents who live with their grandparents are involved in 2.24 groups. One explanation for the findings in Figure 4.3 might be that single parents make an extra effort to involve their children in school and after-school activities as a way to counteract the fallout from a divorce. The equivalent levels of group

Figure 4.3

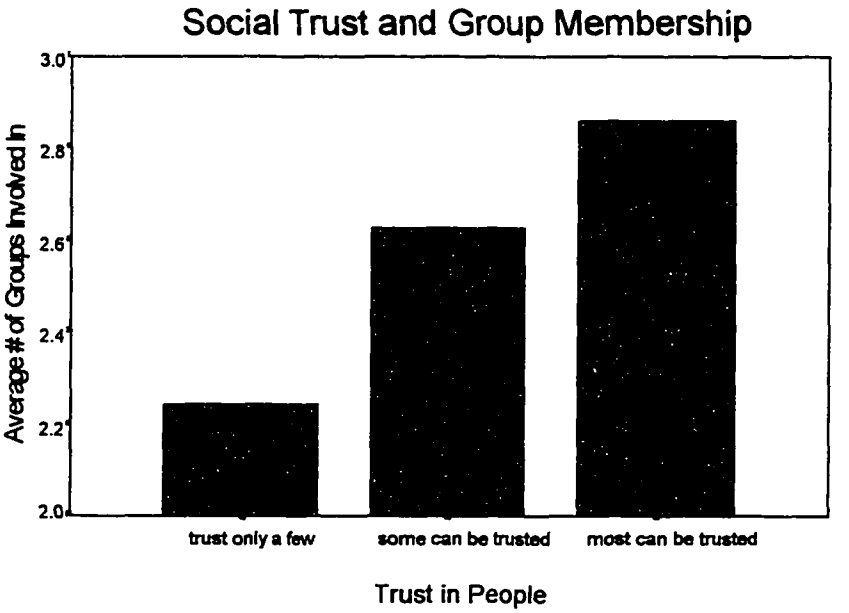


membership evident in Figure 4.3 could also be attributed to a general decline in the after-school activities of children in two parent families. Since both parents work full-time jobs in many two parent families, it is possible that the extracurricular activities of the children must ultimately be limited.

While adolescent group membership has a powerful influence on citizenship, the third hypothesis contends that adolescent involvement in peer groups should enhance levels of social trust. Putnam (1995b, 67) argues that group membership fosters norms of generalized reciprocity and encourages the emergence of social trust. Putnam (1995b, 73) continues that "the close correlation between social trust and associational membership is true not only across time and across individuals, but also across countries." This study is one of the first efforts to explore if such research findings among adults are applicable to adolescents. Figure 4.4 details the relationship between social trust and group

membership. Those students that report only a few people can be trusted are involved in 2.24 groups on average. Teens who believe that some people can be trusted are members in 2.62 groups. Adolescents who believe that most people can be trusted are involved in 2.86 groups on average. Although social trust appears to be associated with greater levels of group membership, the correlation between social trust and group membership is .14. Although this is statistically significant at $p<.01$, it is a rather modest correlation.

Figure 4.4



Hypothesis 4 declares that membership in peer groups should improve an adolescent's sense of political efficacy, political interest and political knowledge. Figure 4.5 illustrates the relationship between political efficacy and group membership. Adolescent involved in no groups or one group have a mean political efficacy score of 8.66. Teens involved in 2 to 3 groups have a political efficacy score of 9.67 and those

Figure 4.5

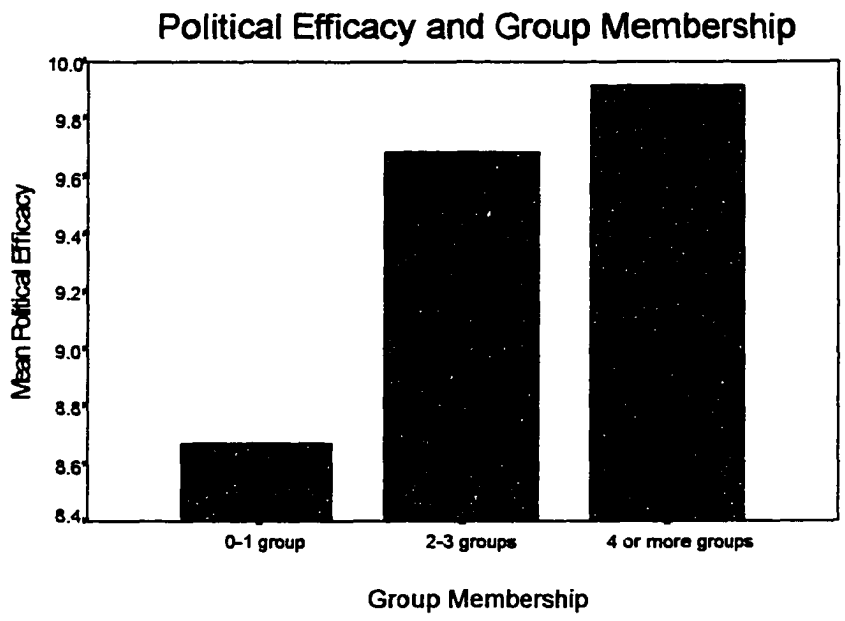
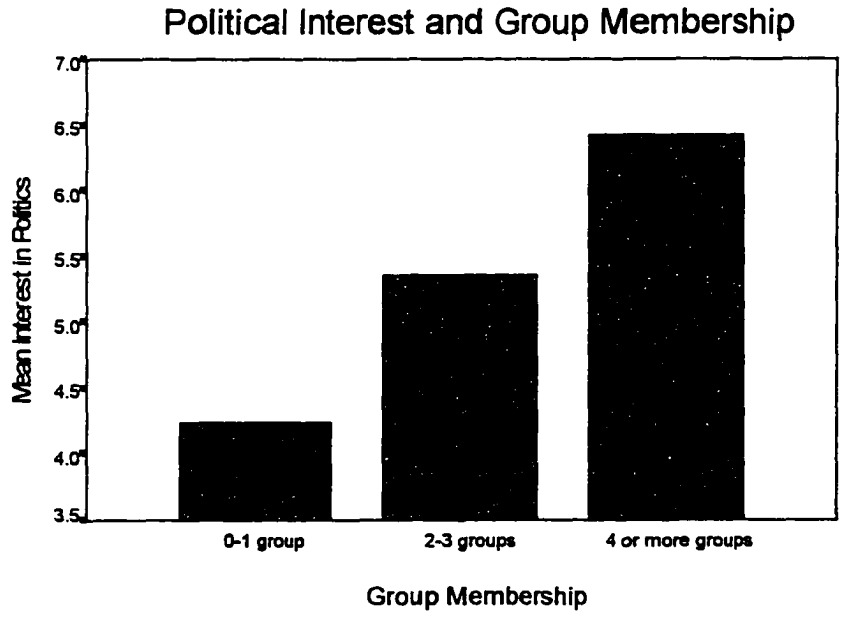


Figure 4.6

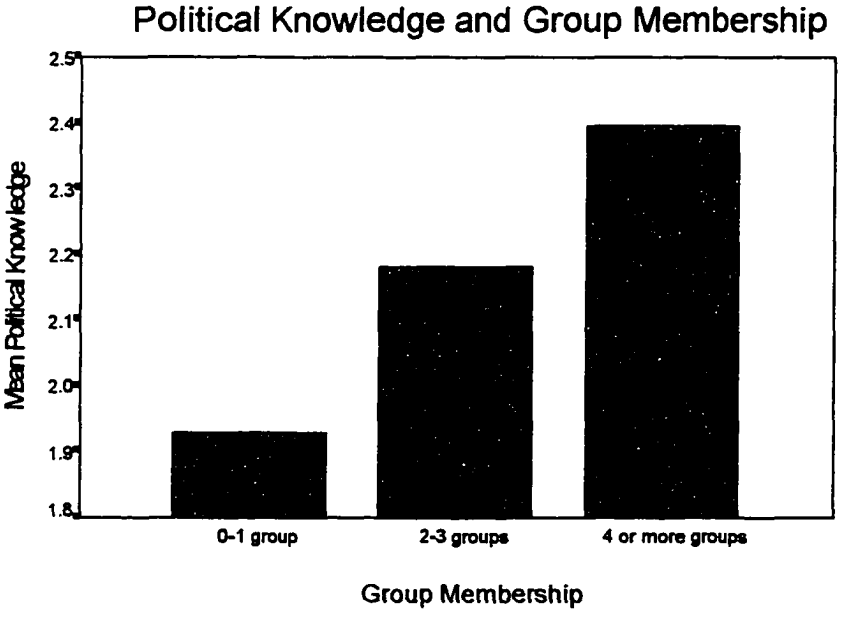


involved in 4 or more groups have a political efficacy score of 9.91. There is a statistically significant difference between the political efficacy scores of those involved in 0-1 group and those involved in 2-3 groups (t-value of 3.68 $p<.001$). There is not a statistically significant difference between membership in 4 or more groups versus 2-3 groups.

Figure 4.6 illustrates that political interest steadily increases with membership in peer groups. For those adolescents in no groups or only one, their mean political interest score is 4.23. Teens that are involved in 2 to 3 groups have a mean score of 5.35 and students in 4 or more groups have a mean score of 6.41. The differences between all three mean scores in Figure 4.6 are statistically significant.[5]

Group membership also helps to improve levels of political knowledge as illustrated in Figure 4.7. Students involved in no groups or one group have a mean political knowledge score of 1.93. Teens involved in 2 to 3 groups have a mean political

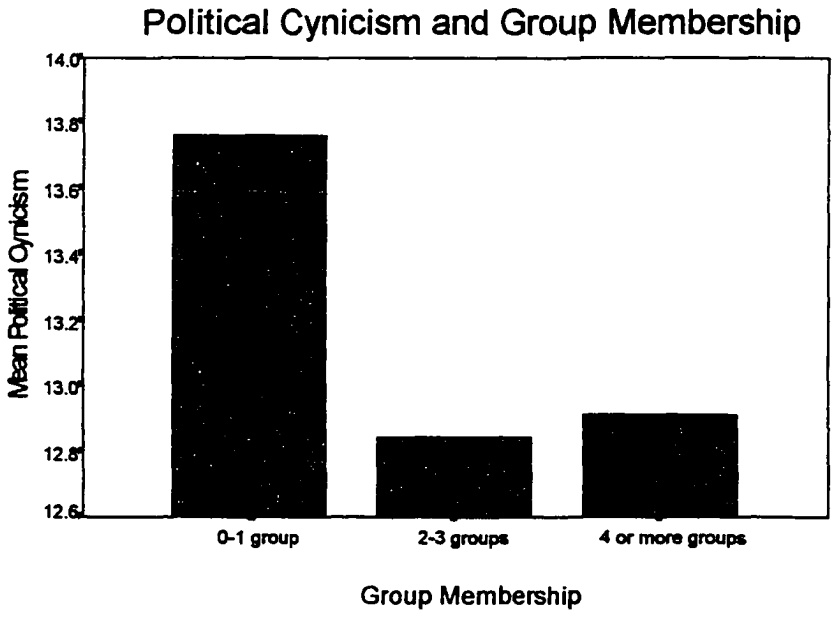
Figure 4.7



knowledge score of 2.18. Adolescents who are members in 4 or more groups have a mean political knowledge score of 2.40. The difference between the mean political knowledge scores of students involved in 0-1 group (1.93) and those involved in 2-3 groups (2.18) is statistically significant (t-value of 2.12 $p<.05$). The difference between the mean political knowledge scores of students involved in 2-3 groups and those involved in 4 or more groups is not statistically significant.

If peer group membership helps to increase an adolescent's sense of political efficacy, political interest and political knowledge, hypothesis 5 assets that group membership should decrease levels of political cynicism. Figure 4.8 reveals that political cynicism levels are highest among adolescents who are involved in no groups or only one group. Political cynicism scores decline substantially from students involved in 0-1 group (13.75) to adolescents who are members of 2 to 3 groups (12.83). The difference is

Figure 4.8



statistically significant (t-value of 4.61 $p<.001$). Political cynicism levels inch up slightly between the categories of membership in 2-3 groups and 4 or more groups. The unclear relationship between political cynicism and group membership may result from a situation in which certain groups serve to reduce political cynicism and others do not have an effect.

Hypothesis 6 argues that membership in instrumental groups should have a stronger relationship to political efficacy, interest, knowledge and cynicism than membership in expressive groups. Hanks (1981, 213) suggests that the instrumental-expressive conception of voluntary associations is common throughout the sociological literature on adult organizations (Gordon and Babchuk 1959; London 1975; Rogers et al. 1975; Rose 1954). Hanks (1981, 213) argues "the political relevance of this conception is that instrumental groups are generally expected to have a higher political content than expressive groups." Instrumental groups are externally oriented in which the primary activities serve as means to an end. Such groups include honorary clubs, school newspaper, school yearbook, science and language clubs, student council, student government and vocational clubs such as Future Farmers of America. Expressive groups are internally oriented in which the primary activities serve as ends in themselves. Examples of expressive groups are athletic teams, cheerleading, pep club, debating, drama, band, chorus, and hobby clubs.[6]

Table 4.3 reports the correlations between instrumental/expressive groups and political efficacy, interest, knowledge and cynicism. Membership in instrumental groups has a stronger correlation with all four political measures than membership in expressive groups. The greatest distinction appears in the case of political cynicism. The correlation between membership in expressive groups and political cynicism is in the expected

Table 4.3

Correlation Analysis of Membership in Instrumental Groups/Expressive Groups and Political Attitudes

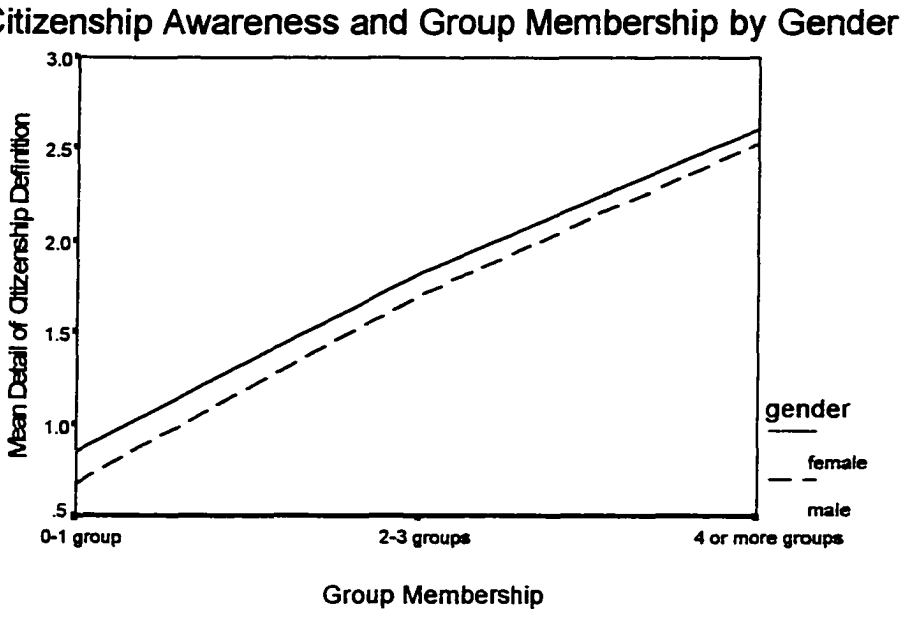
Political Attitudes	Expressive Groups	Instrumental Groups
Political Efficacy	.097**	.113**
Political Interest	.192**	.206**
Political Knowledge	.080*	.114**
Political Cynicism	-.041	-.186**

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

direction but is not statistically significant. In the case of instrumental groups, the correlation with political cynicism is statistically significant. It should be noted that all of the correlations in Table 4.3 are rather modest. Except for instrumental groups and political interest, the correlations are all below .20 (correlation coefficients range from 0 to 1).

The final hypothesis relating to peer group membership and political learning asserts that group membership should have a stronger effect on the political socialization of girls than boys. Silbiger (1977) argues that the peer relationship exerts a greater influence on women than men. While this may be true for a myriad of social pressures, it is not at all clear that such a dictum applies to political socialization. Figures 4.9 through 4.14 explore the relationship between group membership and gender for the political variables examined in this chapter. Initially, Figure 4.9 scrutinizes citizenship awareness

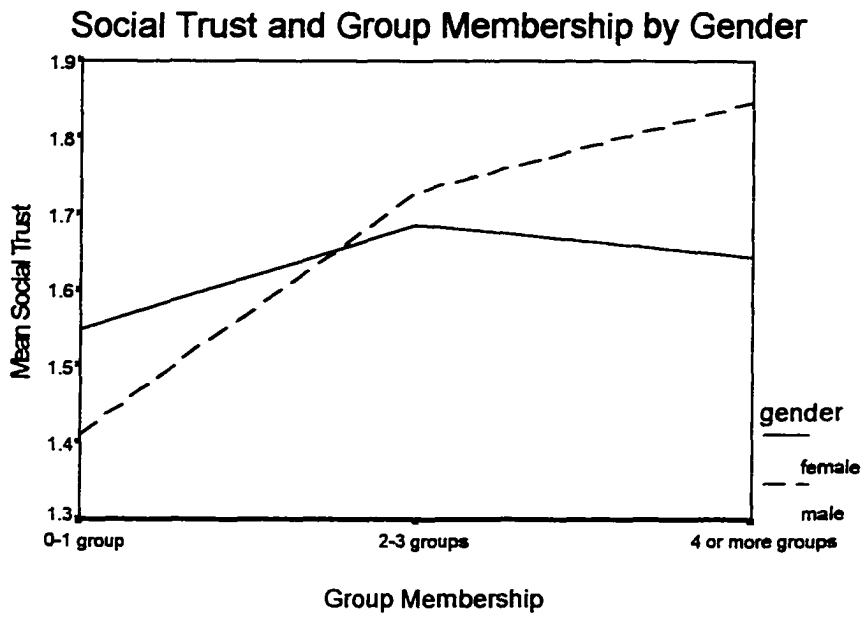
Figure 4.9



and group membership by gender. Group membership appears to have the same effect on citizenship awareness for both genders. There is a strong positive linear relationship between group membership and citizenship awareness for adolescent boys and girls in this sample. The overall correlation between group membership and citizenship awareness is .563. For boys the correlation is slightly higher (Pearson r=.592) and for girls the correlation is slightly lower (.514).

Although gender differences do not appear in relation to citizenship awareness, Figure 4.10 reveals that group membership has its strongest effect on social trust for boys. In the case of adolescent girls, social trust climbs slightly between the categories of 0-1 group and 2-3 groups but then declines to the category of 4 or more groups. The correlation between social trust and group membership for girls is statistically insignificant (Pearson r = .051). Social trust climbs steadily as group membership increases for the

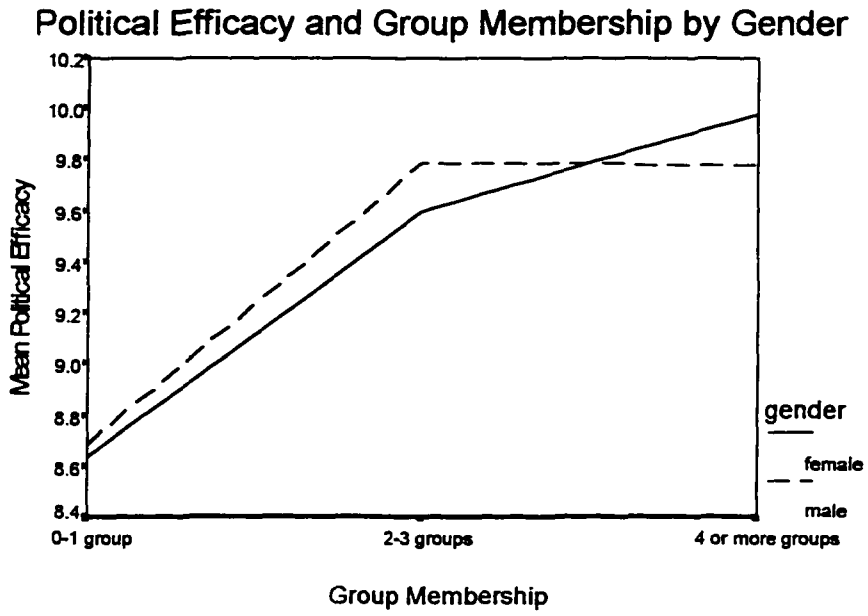
Figure 4.10



male students. The correlation between social trust and group membership for boys is .23 which is statistically significant at $p<.01$. In his book Men in Groups, Lionel Tiger (1989) documents the powerful influence of group membership on male social behavior. According to Tiger (1989), belonging to a group can generate strong social bonds among male participants. As indicated in Figure 4.10, the adolescent boys in this study might benefit most from the social interactions and cooperative behavior learned in school and after-school groups.

As noted in Figure 4.11, group membership has the most dramatic effect on political efficacy between the categories of 0-1 group and 2-3 groups for both boys and girls. In the case of male students, political efficacy remains constant between the categories of 2-3 groups and 4 or more groups while efficacy levels continue to climb for female students between the two categories. Despite this distinction, the correlation

Figure 4.11



coefficients between political efficacy and group membership are roughly equivalent for boys (.141) and girls (.131).

Just as in the case of citizenship awareness, group membership has a strong positive effect on political interest for both genders. Figure 4.12 reveals a positive linear relationship between political interest and group membership for boys and girls. The overall correlation between political interest and group membership is .253. The correlations are roughly equivalent for male (.239) and female students (.251) in this sample. The correlations are all statistically significant at $p<.01$.

Political knowledge is the one area where group membership appears to have more of an impact on girls than boys. Figure 4.13 indicates that political knowledge increases modestly for boys across the major categories of group membership. The correlation between group membership and political knowledge for boys is .11 which is statistically

Figure 4.12

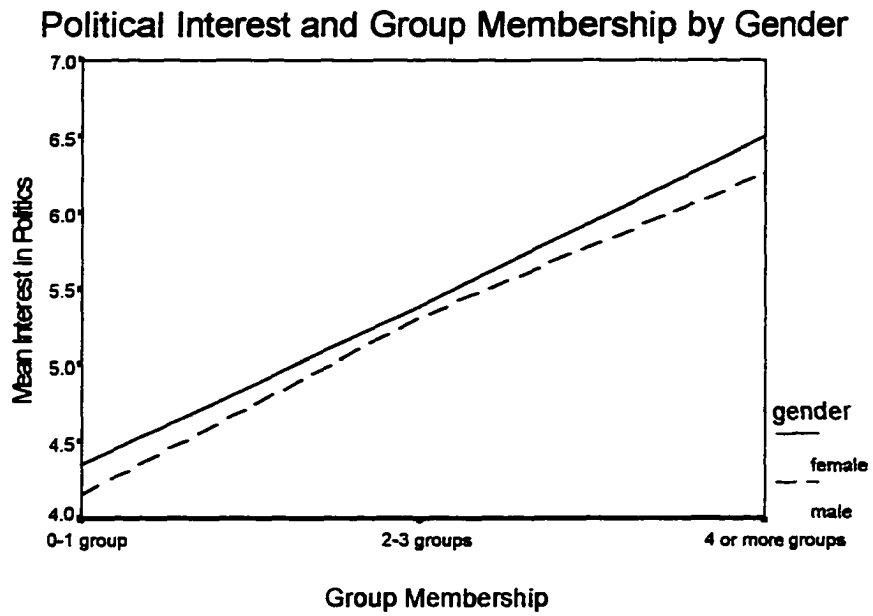
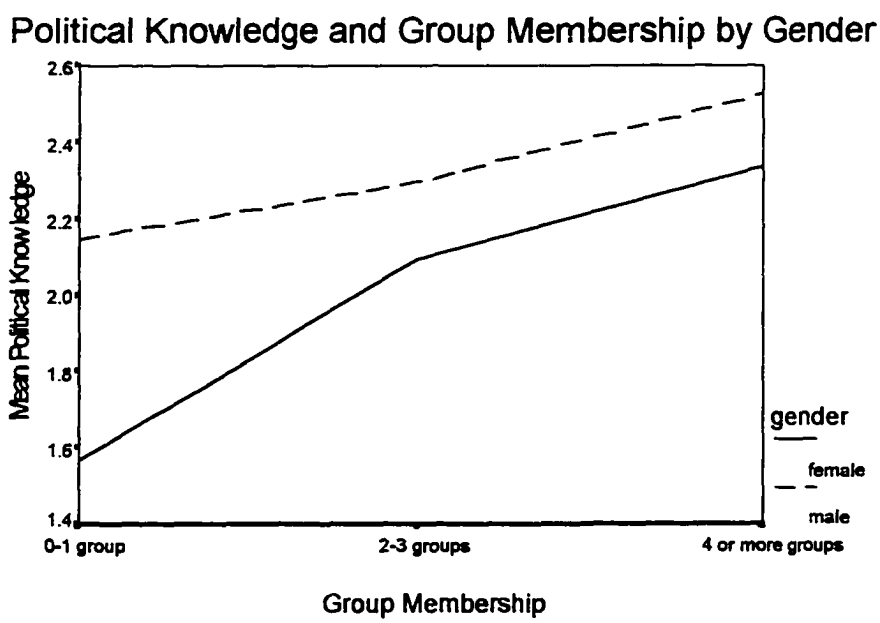


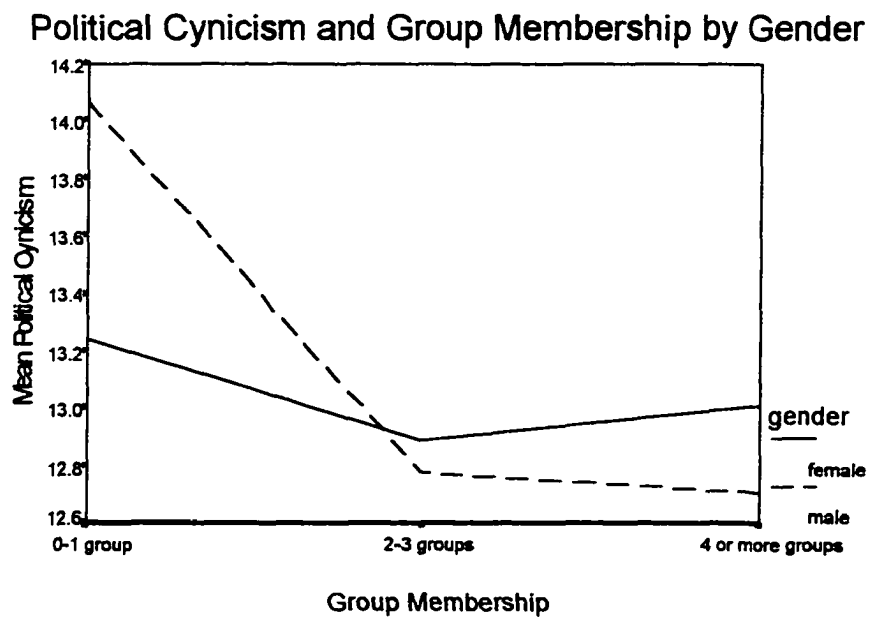
Figure 4.13



significant at p<.05. Figure 4.13 reveals a more dramatic increase in political knowledge for the females in the sample across the major categories of group membership. The gap between boys and girls in terms of political knowledge narrows with greater participation in peer groups. The correlation between group membership and political knowledge for adolescent girls is .20 which is statistically significant at p<.01.

Although group membership serves to improve the political knowledge of girls, it does not have a clear impact on the political cynicism of adolescent females in this sample. Figure 4.14 illustrates that political cynicism declines slightly for girls between the categories of 0-1 group and 2-3 groups but then increases to the category of 4 or more groups. The correlation between group membership and political cynicism for girls is a statistically insignificant .007. On the other hand, group membership serves to decrease the political cynicism of adolescent boys. For those students involved in no groups or only

Figure 4.14



one group, boys have a much higher level of political cynicism. For those adolescents involved in 2 to 3 groups and 4 or more groups, boys have a lower level of political cynicism than girls. The correlation between group membership and political cynicism for boys is -.19 ($p<.01$).

Peer Discussions of Politics

In addition to examining the relationship between group membership and political learning, this chapters explores the influence of peer discussions of politics on preadult political socialization. Only a handful of studies have investigated the link between peer discussions of politics and political socialization. Langton and Karns (1969, 815) report that "those respondents in the least politicized peer groups where they and their friends 'never' discuss politics are the most likely to have a low sense of political efficacy. There is an increase in efficacy as we move from the least to the most politicized peer groups." Sigel and Brooks (1981) emphasize the importance of political discussions with friends as one part of a five-variable scale measuring a politicized environment. Harvey (1972, 600) contends "it may be that the more politicized peer group is simply more salient to the individual's total political socialization."

The following hypotheses will be tested to illuminate the possible link between peer discussions of politics and political socialization:

Hypothesis 8 Adolescents who frequently discuss politics with their friends should be more likely to identify with a political party and identify a difference between the parties than teens who do not discuss politics with their peers.

Hypothesis 9 Adolescents who frequently discuss politics with their friends should have higher levels of political knowledge than teens who never discuss politics with their friends.

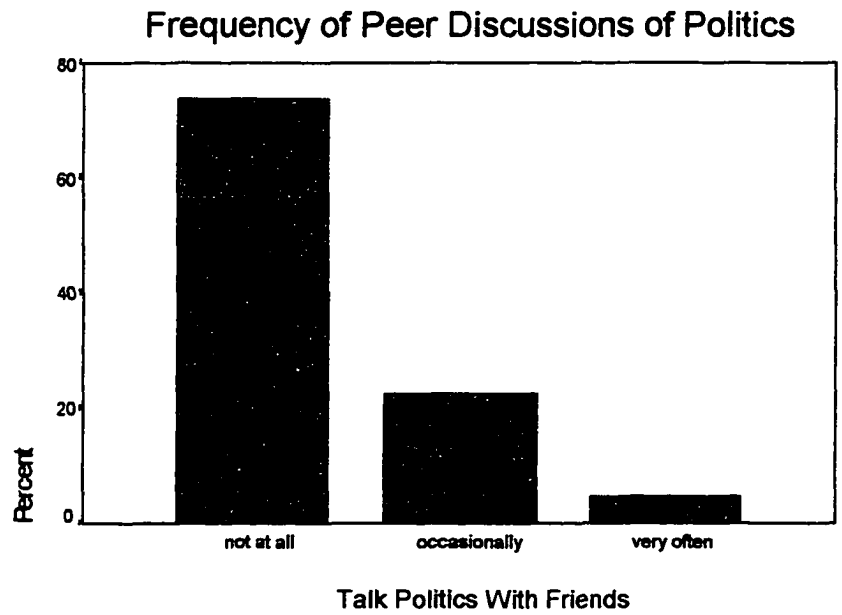
Hypothesis 10 Peer discussions of politics should contribute to a sense of political efficacy among adolescents.

Hypothesis 11 Peer discussions of politics should help to reduce levels of political cynicism among adolescents.

Hypothesis 12 Peer discussions of politics might actually contribute to the political cynicism of minority students.

Initially, it is instructive to examine how often the adolescents in this sample discuss politics with their friends. The third question in the Oklahoma City survey asked students "do you and your friends ever talk about politics, voting, and things like that." Student could select "yes, very often," "yes, occasionally" or "no, not at all." Figure 4.15 reveals the distribution of student responses to this question. The most striking feature of Figure 4.15 is that the vast majority of students do not discuss politics with their friends. Almost three-fourths (73%) of the students state that they never discuss politics with their

Figure 4.15



friends. Slightly more than one in five (22%) admit to occasionally discussing politics with their friends. Only 5 percent of the students said they "very often" discuss politics with their friends.

Chapter 3 reported that family discussions of politics contribute to a sense of party identification among adolescents. Teens from a politicized home are also more likely to identify a difference between political parties than teens from families that do not discuss politics. Hypothesis 8 asserts that peer discussions of politics should have the same impact. Figures 4.16 and 4.17 clearly reveal that discussing politics with friends does not contribute to an adolescent's party identification or the ability to describe a difference between the political parties. Students who frequently discuss politics with their friends are actually less likely to identify with a political party than students who never or occasionally discuss politics. Figure 4.16 highlights that 63 percent of the students who very often discuss politics with their friends do not identify themselves as Democrat, Republican or Independent. 48 percent of the adolescents who occasionally discuss politics with their friends and 54 percent of those who never have political conversations in their peer group fail to identify with either political party or Independents.

Figure 4.17 demonstrates that the ability to identify a difference between the political parties is roughly equivalent across the three categories of peer discussions of politics. Regardless of the extent of peer politicization, the vast majority of students are unable to identify a major difference between the Republicans and Democrats. For those students that occasionally discuss politics with their peers, 71 percent could not identify a difference between the two parties. Of the adolescents who never discuss politics with friends and those that frequently have such conversations, 80 percent did not identify a

Figure 4.16

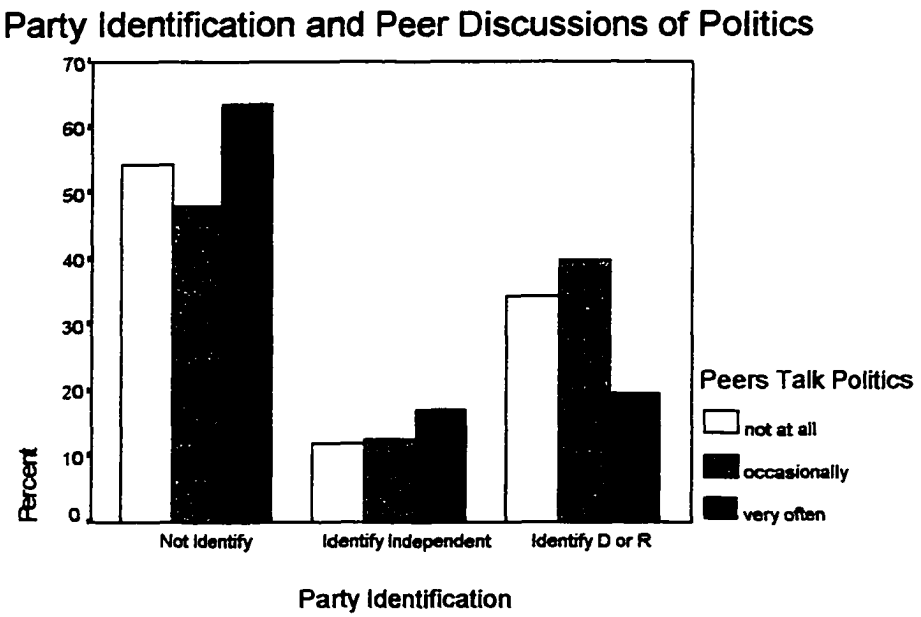
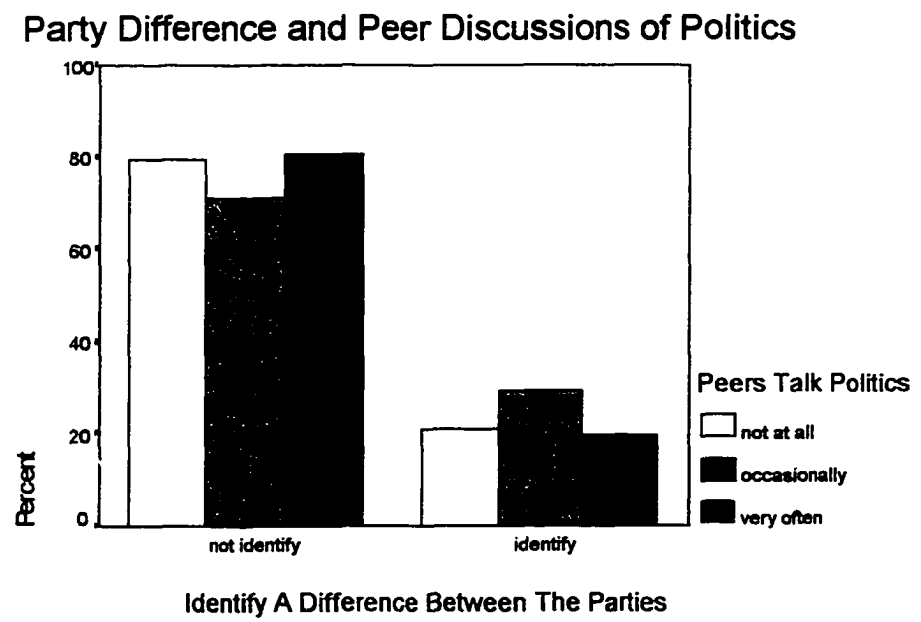


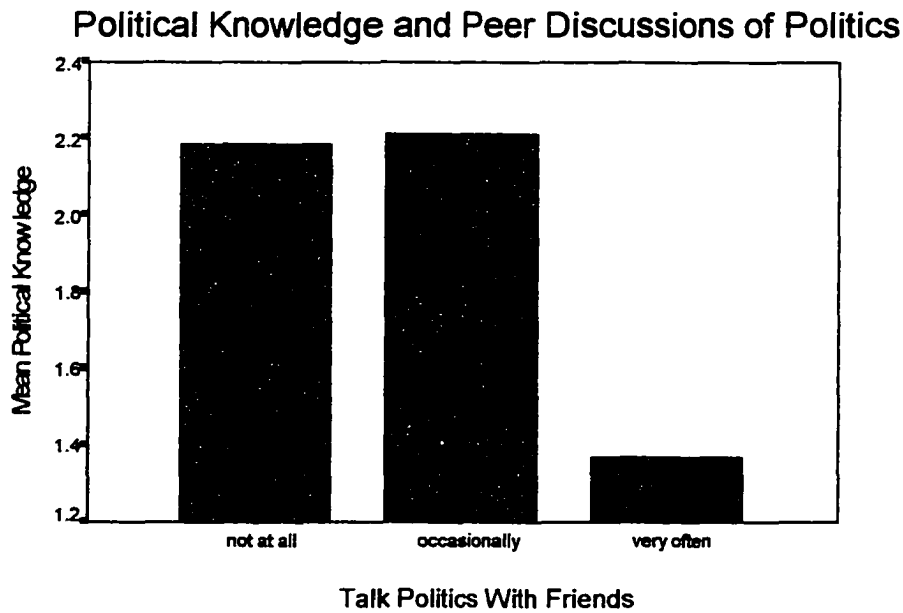
Figure 4.17



difference between the Democratic and Republican parties. It appears that peer discussions of politics, when they rarely occur, do not involve conversations about the political parties. Unlike family conversations about politics, peer discussions of politics do not influence an adolescent's sense of partisanship.

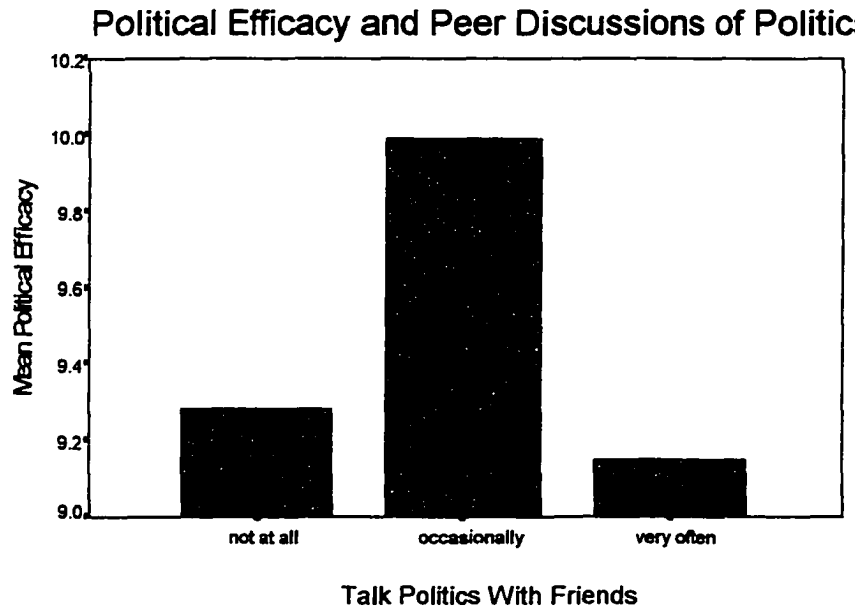
Just as in the case of party identification, peer discussions of politics do not have a clear impact on political knowledge. Figure 4.18 reports the mean levels of political knowledge for each category of peer politicization. Political knowledge levels are essentially equivalent for teens who never and occasionally discuss politics with their friends. Political knowledge actually declines as we move to the category of frequently discussing politics with peers. The correlation between political knowledge and peer discussions of politics is negative (-.067) but statistically insignificant.

Figure 4.18



Based upon the findings of Langton and Karns (1969), hypothesis 10 contents that political efficacy should increase as preadults engage in political discussions with their friends. Figure 4.19 demonstrates that political efficacy does increase between the categories of not at all (mean of 9.3) and occasionally (mean of 10.0) discussing politics with friends. The difference between the two means is statistically significant at $p<.05$ (t-value of 2.37). Surprisingly, political efficacy is at its lowest level for teens who frequently discuss politics with their friends. Since only a small percentage of students admit to frequently discussing politics with their friends (N=41), such results should be interpreted with caution. At least occasional peer discussions of politics appear to raise political efficacy levels.

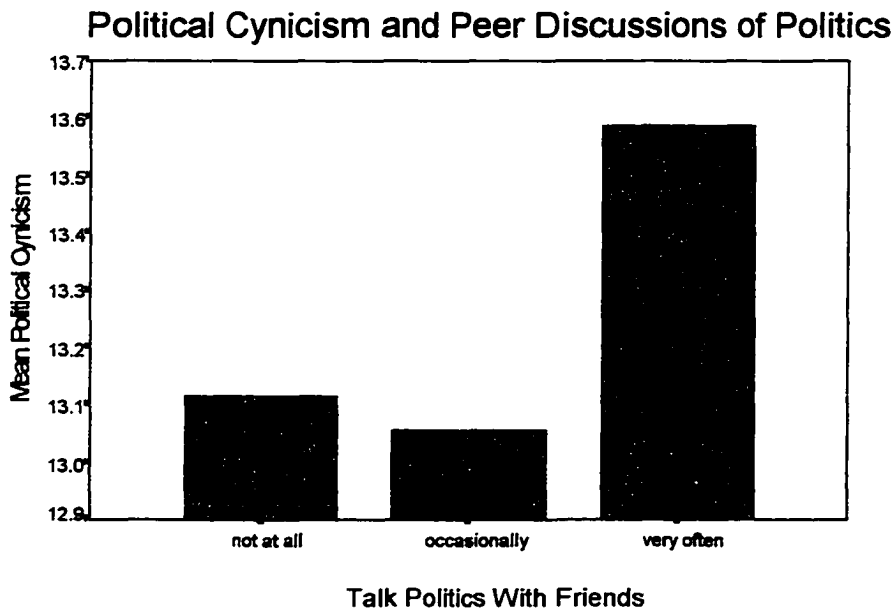
Figure 4.19



Hypothesis 11 charges that peer discussions of politics should help to reduce levels of political cynicism among adolescents. Figure 4.20 reveals that political cynicism levels

are basically equivalent between the categories of not at all and occasionally discussing politics with friends. Political cynicism levels reach their highest level for teens that frequently discuss politics. Teens who discuss politics with their friends may use such conversations to complain about the political system and criticize politicians. Since adolescents who frequently discuss politics have the lowest level of political efficacy, it might be expected that they would have the highest level of political cynicism. The overall correlation (Pearson r=.018) between political cynicism and peer discussion of politics is minuscule and statistically insignificant.

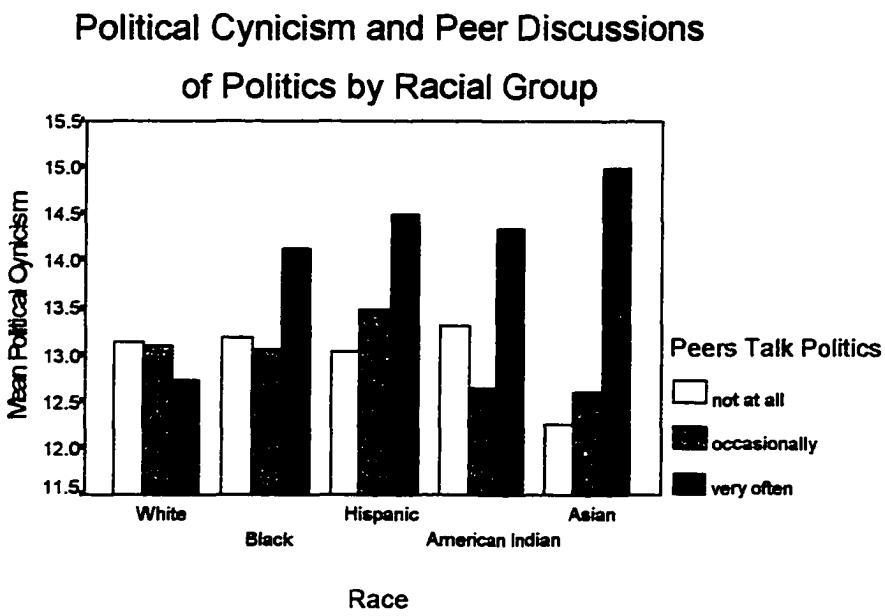
Figure 4.20



The high level of political cynicism for teens who frequently discuss politics may be driven by minority students. The final hypothesis argues that peer discussions of politics might actually contribute to the political cynicism of minority students. Figure

4.21 illustrates that the relationship between political cynicism, peer politicization and race is in the expected direction. For white students, political cynicism declines with peer discussions of politics although the decline is not statistically significant. For all four

Figure 4.21



minority groups, political cynicism is at its highest level for those students who frequently discuss politics. The increases in political cynicism between the categories of not at all and very often discussing politics with friends for minority students are not statistically significant.[7]

Summary

At the President's Summit for America's Future in April of 1997, President Clinton called for an era of big citizenship. President Clinton along with Colin Powell, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and George Bush emphasized the importance of group

membership and community involvement for our nation's youth. The research presented in this chapter clearly indicates that group membership for adolescents can be very beneficial in the political socialization of the students who will become the voters, political activists and community leaders of the twenty-first century. The most powerful and important finding of this chapter is that group membership contributes to citizenship awareness. The results of this study indicate that membership in after-school activities such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, and YMCA contribute to the ability of students to provide elaborate and articulate definitions of what it means to be a good citizen. Even school activities such as athletic teams, cheerleading, band and chorus contribute to citizenship awareness. One of the most impressive findings is that **all** groups in this study contribute to a sense of what it means to be a good citizen.

The multivariate analysis revealed that group membership continues to exert a powerful influence on citizenship awareness even after controlling for other factors. After group membership, political knowledge has the strongest impact on the ability to define the meaning of a good citizen. White students and females provide the most elaborate definitions of good citizenship. The regression analysis in Table 4.2 offers evidence that television may impair the political socialization process. The analysis reveals that heavy television viewing has a negative and statistically significant correlation with the ability to define the meaning of a good citizen.

When we consider the benefits of group membership, it is troubling that a large percentage of adolescents opt out of involvement in after-school activities. At the end of the list of after-school activities, students could check the space for "I do not belong to any club or organization outside of school." Almost 30 percent of the students (N=277)

report that they are involved in no after-school activities. A 1995 survey of Oklahoma county adolescents by the organization Starting RIGHT! revealed that a similar percentage (27%) of adolescents devote no time to after-school activities. Starting RIGHT! has expressed concern that idleness among Oklahoma County adolescents appears to be growing over time since a 1992 survey noted that a smaller percentage of adolescents (17.6%) were uninvolved in after-school activities. Scholars of mass political behavior have highlighted the declining social connectedness of the electorate (Miller 1992; Teixeira 1992; Putnam 1995a; Seidelman 1997). The powerful findings of the longitudinal study by Hanks and Eckland (1978) teach us that extracurricular activities have a direct positive effect on group membership in adulthood which in turn contributes to voting. As the President's Summit for America's Future aptly noted, America cannot afford to have large numbers of our youth disconnected from voluntary associations and community groups.

Although many students report no involvement in after-school groups, it does not appear to be a function of family disruption. In this study, adolescents from single parent families are involved in just as many groups as teens from two-parent families. McLanahan and Garfinkel (1989) have expressed concern that mother-only families can become more socially isolated than other families. In this study of one large metropolitan school district, single parents appear to keep their children just as involved in group activities as kids from two parent families. Single parents might make an extra effort to involve their children in school and after-school activities given the disruption caused by a divorce.

Once of the most recent themes in the literature on social connectedness is that group membership contributes to social trust (Putnam 1995b). Social trust appears to

increase with group membership, but when the relationship is disaggregated by gender the relationship is basically limited to adolescent boys. Group membership has a positive impact on the political socialization of girls in many areas, but social trust does not appear to be one of those areas.

Group membership also contributes to higher levels of political efficacy, interest and knowledge. The largest increases are evident between the categories of membership in no groups or one group and membership in 2-3 groups. Hanks (1981) has hypothesized that externally oriented instrumental group should have a greater impact on political learning than internally oriented expressive groups. The results of this study confirm that instrumental groups exert a greater influence on political efficacy, political interest, political knowledge and political cynicism than expressive groups. In fact, membership in expressive groups has no noticeable impact on adolescent political cynicism levels. While the insights of Hanks have been confirmed, it must be noted that none of the correlations between group membership and the political measures are particularly robust.

No clear pattern emerged in relation to gender, group membership and political learning. As noted earlier, group membership has its most pronounced effect on social trust for male students. In a similar manner, group membership serves to reduce the political cynicism of boys but does not significantly alter the cynicism levels of girls. Adolescent boys that are not involved in school or after-school groups have lower levels of social trust and higher levels of political cynicism than girls who are uninvolved in groups. Increasing membership in peer groups helps to raise the low levels of social trust and lower the high levels of political cynicism for boys. At least in this study, adolescent boys appear to be in greater need of social connectedness than girls. Without connections

to school and after-school groups, teenage boys can become isolated, cynical and fatalistic. In the areas of citizenship awareness, political efficacy and political interest, group membership has a roughly equivalent influence on boys and girls. Political knowledge is the only area where group membership has a greater influence on adolescent girls than boys. The correlation between political knowledge and group membership for girls is .20 and for boys it is .11. Given these diverse findings, it does not appear that a general rule can be articulated that girls are more susceptible to the influence of peer groups in the political socialization process.

While group membership is important to the political learning of adolescents in this study, peer discussions of politics do not play a significant role. The vast majority of students in this sample (73%) state that they never discuss politics with their friends. Only 5 percent admit to "very often" discussing politics with friends. It should come as no surprise that middle school students believe that they have more important things to discuss with friends than politics. Peer discussions of politics have no appreciable impact on party identification, the ability to identify a difference between the parties, or political knowledge.

Political efficacy does increase between the categories of not at all and occasionally discussing politics, but then it plummets for those students who very often discuss politics with friends. Students who frequently discuss politics with their friends have the highest level of political cynicism. The final hypothesis of this chapter argues that peer politicization among minority students might increase political cynicism. While political cynicism did not increase with peer discussions of politics for white students, the highest levels of political cynicism for all minority students appear in the category of very

often discussing politics with friends. While the increases in political cynicism for minority students are not statistically significant, it nevertheless reminds us to pay attention to racial differences in political learning.

Following that strategy the next chapter provides a detailed exploration of potential racial differences in the political socialization process. While the president is correct to highlight the importance of group and community involvement for the nation's youth, the increasing racial diversity of America demands that we inspect the preadult opinions of minority students. Our ability to strengthen the American polity in the twenty-first century depends upon not just group involvement and activism but also on developing an understanding of the roots of our racial differences and how to bridge them.

Chapter 5

Racial Differences in Adolescent Political Socialization

A recent series of polls by the Washington Post (Morin 1995) revealed profound differences in the political attitudes of black and white Americans. African-Americans were significantly more likely to perceive racial discrimination in society, support government programs to aid minorities and perceive income inequality in society. Highly publicized events such as the O.J. Simpson trial have uncovered striking differences in perceptions of the American political system between blacks and whites. Despite a growing body of literature on racial differences in adult public opinion, there is a dearth of research concerning potential differences in adolescent political attitudes. An examination of adolescent political socialization can help to illuminate the sources of these striking racial differences in the political opinions of adults.

More than twenty years ago, David Sears (1975) noted that political socialization research on minority groups was in its infancy. The statement is still valid today. American government textbooks continue to paint a picture of political socialization in which American children experience a universal pattern of political learning. This chapter primarily investigates if there is a universal pattern of political socialization across racial groups. Initially, this analysis explores how adolescents define the meaning of a good citizen by race. Second, this chapter scrutinizes potential racial differences in terms of political interest, political knowledge, political efficacy, political cynicism and materialism. Third, this chapter examines adolescent attitudes about discrimination and race relations in

America. Finally, this study considers the influence of the civics curriculum and church attendance on political learning across racial groups.

Race and Citizenship Awareness

As early as pre-school and kindergarten, the American educational system attempts to inculcate concepts of citizenship into our children. Elementary schools are filled with images of the American flag, national monuments and the founding fathers. Most elementary school children begin the day by reciting the pledge of allegiance. The focus on good citizenship does not end in the elementary schools. Students take social studies and civics courses in middle school and high school. The bread and butter of every political science department in this country is the required Introduction to American Government course. University Regents require such college courses based upon the assumption that they build citizenship.

Questions that tap childhood and adolescent definitions of a good citizen have been a staple of political socialization research. In their study of elementary school children, Moore et al. (1985, 232) report that children have a passive model of citizenship. Citizenship is generally understood in terms of obeying the laws and being a good person. Third and fourth graders were asked "Which is more important—to vote in an election or to obey the laws?" 92 percent of the students said that obeying the laws was more important (Moore et al. 1985, 162). Elementary school teachers might be responsible for the development of a passive view of citizenship. Hess and Torney (1968, 126) surveyed elementary school teachers and discovered that great emphasis was placed on "the law, the policeman, and the child's obligation to conform to school rules and the laws of the community." When a student receives a "good citizen" award in elementary school it is

often because the child was quiet, well-behaved and obeyed the teacher. Hess and Torney (1968, 45) also report that a "good citizen" is synonymous with a "good person" for most children. Among fourth and fifth graders, the most popular definitions of a good citizen were "helps others" and "always obeys the laws." At the seventh and eighth grade level, the most popular responses included "votes and helps others to vote" and "interested in the way the country is run" (Hess and Torney 1968, 46). The passive model of citizenship may give way to a more sophisticated view in adolescence.

Jennings and Niemi (1974, 123) report that high school seniors in their survey associate the ideal citizen with a remarkable number of political characteristics such as voting, paying attention to politics and working to improve the country. Jennings and Niemi confirm the findings of Almond and Verba's Civic Culture (1963) that the socialization process in the United States instills a "participant" as opposed to a "subject" view of citizenship. Despite this rather glowing assessment of the socialization process in the United States, Sigel and Hoskin (1981, 277) argue that the family, the schools and the media have not effectively communicated to teenagers that politics is relevant to the average citizen. Furthermore, many high school seniors lack a real comprehension of the term democracy (Sigel and Hoskin 1981, 115). Most political science faculty might also argue the same statement applies to college freshmen.

A few studies have shed light on the role of race in adolescent perceptions of the good citizen. Jennings and Niemi (1974, 201) note that "sixty-one percent of the black students focus on loyalty rather than participation. Only 41 percent of the white students, on the other hand, see the good citizen role as being one of loyalty rather than political participation." Jennings and Niemi (1974, 202) explain that "while the civics curriculum

has little impact upon the white student's view of the good citizen role, it appears to inculcate in blacks the role expectation that a good citizen is above all a loyal citizen rather than an active one." Garcia (1973, 182) notes that Mexican-American children are substantially less likely than white children to identify voting as an image of government. In relation to their conception of the ideal citizen, Garcia (1973, 184) discovers that "the law-abiding citizen is held in the highest esteem by Chicano third-graders, while political interest is seen by older students as the prime characteristic of a good democratic citizen." The major problem with the research on race and adolescent views of citizenship is that it is quite dated. Most of the literature on black political socialization is fifteen to twenty years old. What little research exists on Hispanic political socialization is also as dated. The lack of research on minority political socialization is particularly troubling when one considers U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by the year 2050 a quarter of the nation's population will be Hispanic and another 15 percent will be African-American (Morganthau 1997, 59).

How teenagers define the meaning of a good citizen may reflect their feelings of attachment to the American political system. Lower levels of political participation by minority groups may result in minority children failing to associate "the good citizen" with actions such as voting, working on a campaign or running for public office. In the earliest grades, American schools inculcate obedience to the laws and conforming to the rules as the basic elements of good citizenship. If minority children are not exposed to acts of political participation, these children may continue to cling to a rather passive model of citizenship in adolescence and adulthood. Furthermore, many minority students may lack an attachment to the political system. This lack of political connectedness could be

expressed through less detailed definitions of citizenship or the inability to define the meaning of a good citizen.

This chapter investigates the following hypotheses concerning race and citizenship awareness:

Hypothesis 1 Minority students will provide less detailed definitions of a good citizen than white students.

Hypothesis 2 Black, Hispanic and American Indian adolescents subscribe to a passive model of citizenship while white students believe in a more active model of citizenship.

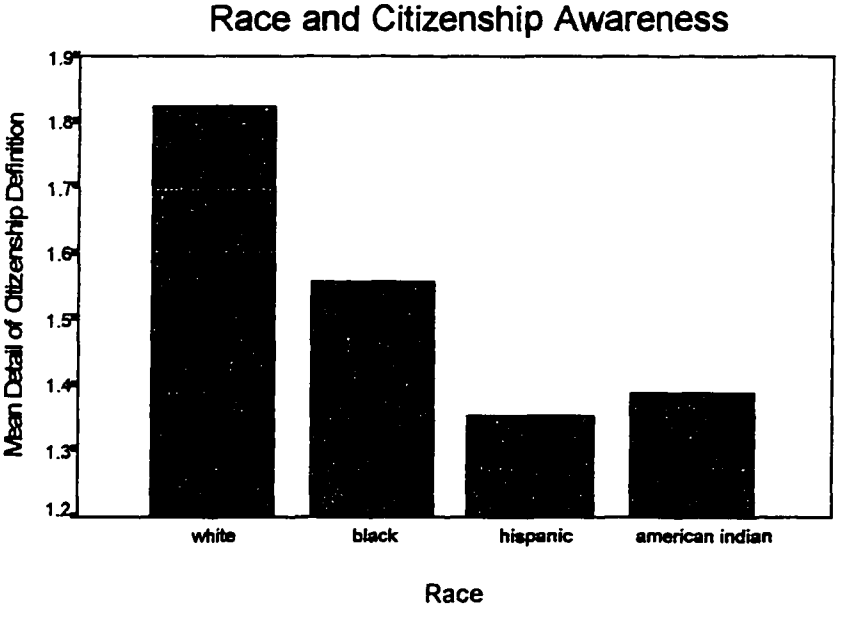
It is possible to test these hypotheses because of the impressive racial diversity of this study. The sample is approximately 40 percent white (N=373), 38 percent African-American (N=353), 10 percent Hispanic (N=97) and 7 percent American Indian (N=65). Asian students amount to roughly 5 percent of the sample, but they are not included in this analysis because the subsample amounts to less than fifty cases. As noted in Chapter 2, the racial diversity of this sample closely mirrors the racial composition of the entire Oklahoma City Public School District.

The first hypothesis contends that minority students should provide less detailed definitions of what it means to be a good citizen. This hypothesis is based upon the assumption that minority students may feel less connected to the American political system and that feeling will be reflected in less detailed definitions of what it means to be a good citizen. Rodgers (1974) discovers that as black adolescents mature they come to reject the national political community. Garcia (1973, 181) reports that "Mexican American children, especially of the working class, lag behind their Anglo classmates in ability to verbalize symbols of the United States." In the Oklahoma City survey, the students were

asked the following open-ended question: "People have different ideas about what being a good citizen means. How would you describe a good citizen in this country." Student responses were coded based upon the detail of the definition. Students that left the question blank or answered "don't know" were given a score of zero. Students who listed one concept were given a score of one. Students that listed two concepts were given a score of two and students that described three concepts were given a score of three. The most detailed definitions listed four distinct concepts and were given a score of four.

Figure 5.1 reports the detail of citizenship definitions by race. Figure 5.1 clearly illustrates that white students provide the most detailed definitions of a good citizen with an average of 1.8 concepts. Black students provide 1.55 concepts in their definitions of a good citizen. Hispanic students articulate 1.35 concepts and American Indian students furnish 1.38 concepts in their definitions of a good citizen. Using a difference of means

Figure 5.1



test, the differences between white students and all three minority groups are statistically significant.[1]

Beyond the detail provided in the definition of a good citizen, student evaluations of a good citizen were also coded in terms of their content. Eight general categories emerged in the open-ended responses. The first category includes **personal traits**. This category captures student responses that equate the good person with the good citizen. Examples of personal trait responses include a good person, honest person, caring person, reliable person, and someone who is drug free. A second major category of **passive citizenship** includes responses such as obey the laws, follow the Constitution, pay taxes, and do what the government tells you. The third and fourth categories relate to active citizenship. **Active citizenship—community** includes definitions of a good citizen such as helping neighbors, taking care of the community, recycling, keeping the Earth clean, helping to stop gangs and helping the poor. **Active citizenship—political** includes student responses such as voting, exercising your rights, following current events, care what happens in government and don't let the government do bad things. The **patriotism** category includes definitions such as support the country, respect the country, be patriotic and fight for the country. The **work/family** category includes those responses that emphasize providing for the family or working hard at your job. The **equality** category captures student responses that mention treating people equally or being colorblind. The **other** category includes responses that did not fit into one of the aforementioned categories such as protecting the future and having good credit.

Figures 5.2 through 5.5 provide a description of the content of adolescent definitions of a good citizen for all the respondents. Figure 5.2 is instructive in that it

illustrates the first thing that students think of when asked to define a good citizen. More than one in five students (23%) provided no definition of a good citizen. They either left the question blank or answered don't know. Personal traits were mentioned by approximately 25 percent of the students. Roughly 20 percent of the adolescents mentioned characteristics consistent with being an active citizen in the community. Definitions consistent with a passive model of citizenship were offered by 17 percent of the students. Only 6 percent of the middle school students defined a good citizen as someone who is active politically. 4 percent of the responses were classified in the category of patriotism and 3 percent of the responses mentioned work or family. Only 1 percent of the students listed equality.

Figure 5.3 reports the second definition that students offered of a good citizen. Close to half of the students (45%) did not provide a second concept in their definition of a good citizen. More than one in every five students (22%) mentioned active citizenship in the community. 15 percent mentioned personal traits and 7 percent offered definitions of passive citizenship. Only a small percentage of students, 3.4 percent, equated a good citizen with political activity in their second definition. 3 percent mentioned characteristics consistent with patriotism and another 3 percent listed dedication to work or family in their second definition of a good citizen.

Figure 5.4 describes the third definition of a good citizen articulated by the middle school students. Approximately three-fourths of the sample did not provide a third definition of a good citizen. Of the quarter that did provide a third definition, the most popular definition was active citizenship in the community followed by personal traits and

Figure 5.2

First Definition of Citizenship

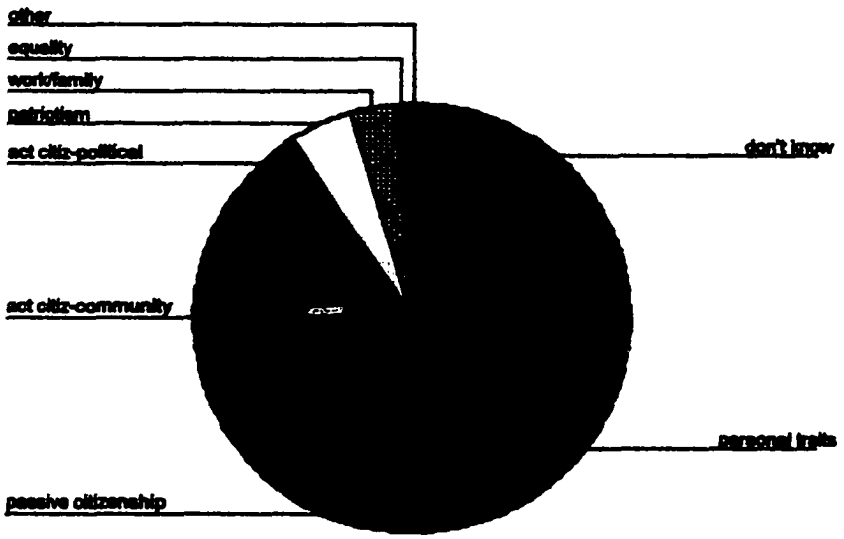


Figure 5.3
Second Definition of Citizenship

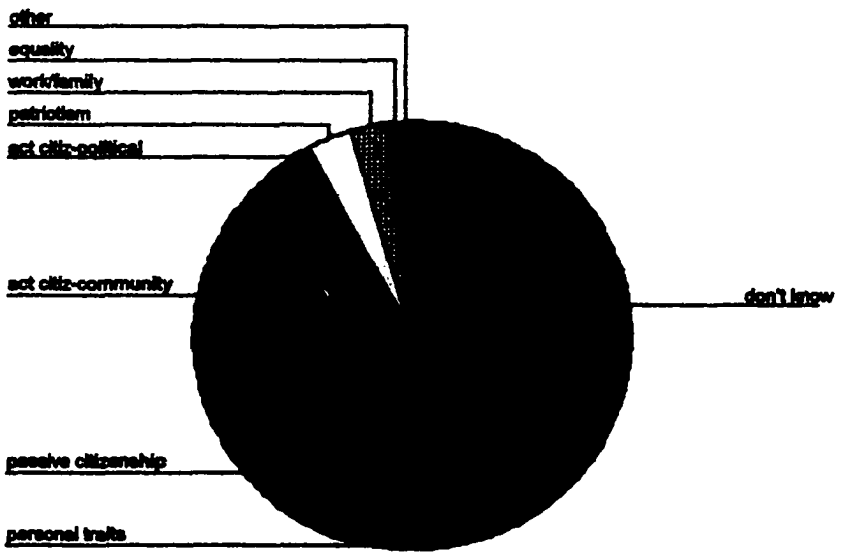


Figure 5.4
Third Definition of Citizenship

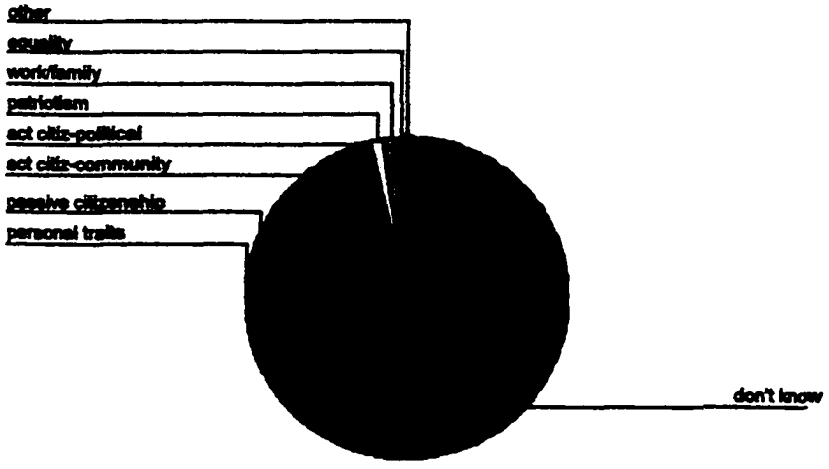
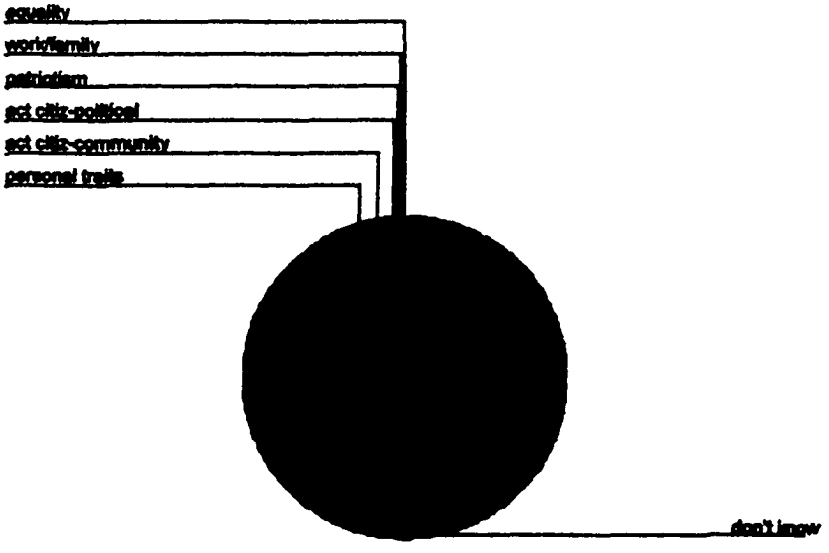


Figure 5.5
Fourth Definition of Citizenship



passive citizenship. Figure 5.5 summarizes the fourth definition of a good citizen. Only 6 percent of the students articulated a definition of a good citizen that included four distinct concepts. Definitions that described active citizenship in the community and personal traits were the most popular fourth definition.

Since racial differences are evident in the detail of citizenship definitions, we might also ask if racial differences appear in the content of those definitions. Hypothesis 2 argues that minority students should subscribe to a passive model of citizenship while white students believe in an active model of citizenship. Table 5.1 provides a tabulation of all the definitions offered of a good citizen by each racial group. A careful inspection of Table 5.1 reveals that American Indian students are most likely to provide passive definitions of citizenship. Almost one-quarter of the definitions provided by American Indian adolescents follow a passive model of citizenship. White and Hispanic students have equivalent percentages in the passive citizenship category. Black adolescents are actually the least likely to provide passive definitions of citizenship. Contrary to hypothesis 2, white students are not substantially more likely to subscribe to an active political model of citizenship. When it comes to defining a good citizen, few students across all racial groups think of concepts such as voting and running for office. Only 7 percent of the definitions by white students fall in the category of active political citizenship. About 9 percent of the citizenship definitions by Hispanic adolescents mention active political citizenship. Roughly 6 percent of the definitions by black and American Indian students include concepts of political involvement.

Although the students do not appear to equate good citizenship with political activity, many students do think of citizenship in relation to community involvement. 37

Table 5.1

Race and Definitions of Citizenship

Citizenship Definitions	White	Black	Hispanic	Am. Indian	Total
Personal Traits	185 **27.2%**	177 **32.3%**	32 **24.4%**	31 **34.5%**	425 **29.3%**
Passive Citizenship	116 **17.1%**	76 **13.8%**	23 **17.5%**	21 **23.3%**	236 **16.3%**
Active Citizen Community	254 **37.4%**	187 **34.1%**	43 **32.8%**	21 **23.3%**	505 **34.9%**
Active Citizen Political	48 **7.1%**	32 **5.8%**	12 **9.2%**	6 **6.7%**	98 **6.8%**
Patriotism	41 **6.0%**	28 **5.1%**	6 **4.6%**	6 **6.7%**	81 **5.6%**
Work/Family	21 **3.1%**	28 **5.1%**	11 **8.4%**	3 **3.3%**	63 **4.3%**
Equality	10 **1.5%**	15 **2.7%**	4 **3.1%**	2 **2.2%**	31 **2.1%**
Other	4 **.6%**	6 **1.1%**	0 **0.0%**	0 **0.0%**	10 **.7%**
Total	679 100%	549 100%	131 100%	90 100%	1449 100%

percent of the citizenship definitions by white students mention active involvement in the community such as helping neighbors and taking care of the community. Approximately a third of the definitions by black and Hispanic students discuss active involvement in the community. American Indian students lag behind in this category with only 23 percent of the definitions describing active citizenship in the community.

The far right column in Table 5.1 includes the totals for each category of the citizenship definitions across the four racial groups. The total number of definitions in Table 5.1 (N=1449) exceeds the number of students in this sample because many students provided multiple definitions of a good citizen. Only 6.8 percent of all the definitions

mention political involvement. It is disturbing that even a basic concept such as voting does not come to mind for these middle school students when they define the meaning of a good citizen. A large percentage of the definitions (29.3%) equate good citizenship with personal traits such a being an honest person or being a good person. It is a rather unsophisticated view of citizenship to equate the good citizen with the good person. Close to half of all the definitions (45.6%) fall in the categories of personal traits or passive citizenship.

The news is more encouraging in relation to community activity. More than one-third (34.9%) of all the definitions mention activities such as helping neighbors, taking care of the community, don't litter, keep the Earth clean, recycle, join charities, help stop gangs, help the poor and help the elderly. Except for American Indian students, active involvement in the community is the most popular citizenship definition for each racial group. The popularity of responses such as "recycle" and "keep the Earth clean" may reflect the growing emphasis on the environment in elementary education. Milbrath (1990) asserts that given many of the urgent environmental problems facing society today, a central task for political socialization should be to inculcate an environmental ethic. This study provides some evidence that students are equating an environmental ethic with good citizenship.

The emphasis on community is also encouraging given the apparent rise in a socially disconnected adult electorate. Putnam (1995a; 1995b) laments the decline in civic engagement and social trust. Teixeira (1992) asserts that one of the major factors in the decline in voter turnout is our lack of social connectedness—the extent to which individuals are socially integrated into their community. Popkin (1994, 226) believes that

"in this age of electronic communities, when more people are living alone and fewer people are involved in churches, PTAs, and other local groups, interpersonal social stimulation must be increased if turnout is to increase." If our adolescents increasingly equate good citizenship with community, there may be some hope in reversing the trends of a nation disengaged from community.

Race and Political Attitudes

The bulk of the research on race and political socialization explores the differences between black and white children/adolescents on measures such as political interest, knowledge, efficacy and cynicism. Laurence (1970) discovers that black children have lower levels of political interest and political knowledge than white students. In a survey of children 8 to 13 years old, Laurence (1970, 180) notes that black children are less likely than white students to talk with parents or friends about a candidate, talk with parents about our country's problems or read about a candidate in newspapers or magazines. Laurence (1970, 178) also reports that older white children had substantially higher levels of political knowledge than black children.

Several studies report that black adolescents score low on political efficacy and high on political cynicism when compared to white students (Dennis 1969; Lyons 1970; Rodgers 1974). Abramson (1977, 7-8) details 20 surveys that "clearly found blacks to feel less efficacious than whites, while five others found blacks to be less efficacious on some measures." Abramson (1977, 9) also reports that 24 of 33 surveys conducted during and after the summer of 1967 found blacks to be less trusting of public officials than whites. Abramson (9) notes that these differences in political efficacy and trust still appear even when controlling for social background. Lyons (1970, 297) reports the powerful

finding that black children at the elementary school level are as cynical toward politics as white children are at the senior high level. In their survey of children from second through eighth grade, Liebschutz and Niemi (1974, 92) conclude that white children become increasingly convinced they can be influential in politics and black children become increasingly convinced of the opposite.

In the case of Hispanic children, Garcia (1973, 184) argues that "political distrust increases with maturity until most Chicanos become quite distrustful of government." Garcia (184) also notes that feelings of political efficacy rise substantially through the school years for white children but climb only slightly for Hispanic students. Although there is a deterioration of support for the political community as Hispanic children grow older, the decline does not appear to be as severe as that among black children (Garcia 1973, 182).

While the aforementioned research documents racial differences in political interest, political efficacy, political knowledge, and political trust, the studies are more than two decades old. A fundamental research question is whether or not these racial differences are still evident in the 1990s. This analysis investigates the following hypotheses in relation to race and basic political dispositions:

Hypothesis 3 Black, Hispanic and American Indian adolescents should have lower levels of political interest than white students.

Hypothesis 4 Minority students should have lower levels of political knowledge than white students.

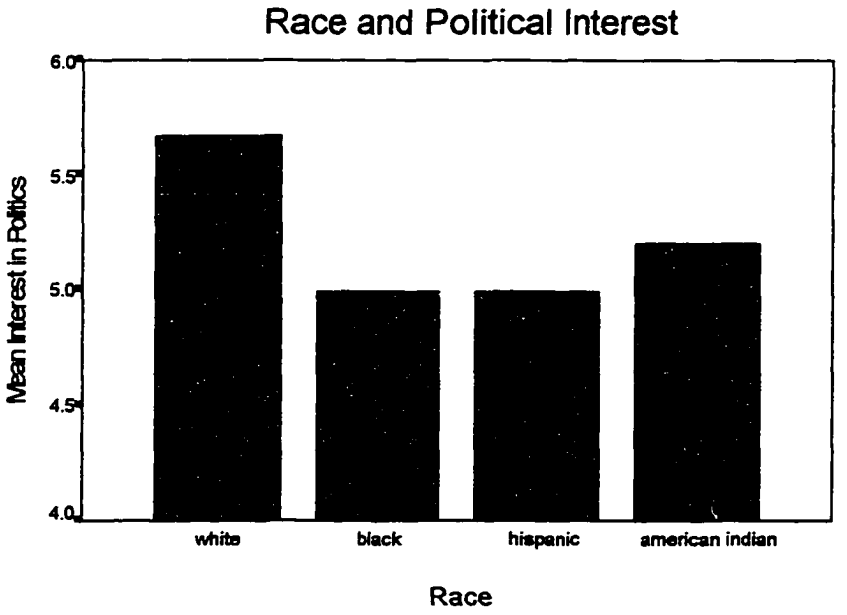
Hypothesis 5 Minority students should have lower levels of political efficacy than white students.

Hypothesis 6 Black, Hispanic and American Indian adolescents should have higher levels of political cynicism than white students.

In the Oklahoma City survey, an adolescent's level of political interest was measured through four questions. The first question asked "some people think about what's going on in government and public affairs very often, and others are not that interested. How much interest do you take in such matters?" The second question asked "do you hear anyone in your family talk about politics, voting, and things like that?" The third question asked "do you and your friends ever talk about politics, voting, and things like that?" The final question asked "do you ever ask anyone in your family questions about politics and government?" Student responses to these four questions formed an index of political interest that ranges from 0 to 16 with a mean of 5.25.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that white students should have the highest level of political interest. Figure 5.6 confirms that all three minority groups have lower levels of political interest than white adolescents. White students have a mean political interest score of 5.66 and American Indian students have the next highest level of political interest with a

Figure 5.6



mean score of 5.2. Black and Hispanic adolescents have identical mean political interest scores of 4.99. Although white students have the highest level of political interest, the differences in Figure 5.6 are not dramatic. The only statistically significant difference in political interest scores is between white and black students (t-value of 2.96 $p<.01$).

Another strategy for measuring political interest, developed by Sigel and Brookes (1974), is to ask students to "please name two famous Americans whom you admire a lot." The assumption behind this type of question is that students who list political leaders as opposed to athletes or entertainers have higher levels of political interest. Sigel and Brookes (1974, 116) report that the adolescents in their 1966 and 1968 surveys have high levels of admiration for political leaders. Sigel and Brookes (1974, 1116) express surprise "given the generally low esteem in which politicians are held in the United States, this great admiration for political leaders seems almost an about-face and may be because of the popularity of certain leaders (the ones most frequently mentioned were John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and former President Eisenhower)." Sigel and Brookes did not disaggregate their survey results by race.

The fifth question in the Oklahoma City survey asked students to "please name two famous Americans whom you admire a lot." The open-ended responses to this question were coded into six main categories. The first category of **governmental leaders** includes student responses that mention President Clinton, former presidents, founding fathers, the governor of Oklahoma, the mayor of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma county commissioners, or a Supreme Court Justice. The second major category of **civil rights/minority leaders** includes references such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Jesse Jackson, Malcolm X, and Louis Farrakahn. The third category of **non-political**

leaders includes military figures (Colin Powell) and religious leaders (Billy Graham). The fourth category of **cultural figures** captures athletes, entertainers, models, and authors/artists. The fifth category, **professionals**, is a catch-all for references to scientists, lawyers, business figures, teachers and astronauts. The final category of **family** includes parents, grandparents or other family members.

Table 5.2 explores racial differences in the types of figures that the students admire. The first row in Table 5.2 lists the percentage of students that left the question blank or answered "don't know." A sizable percentage of Hispanic students (33%) did not list a famous American. Almost a quarter of American Indian students elected to leave the question blank. Approximately 30 percent of the first responses by white and Hispanic students name governmental leaders. Slightly more than one in five first responses by American Indian adolescents refer to governmental leaders. African-American students trail far behind the white students in the governmental leaders category. Only 8 percent of the first responses by black students mention leaders of government.

Although they are least likely to mention governmental leaders, black students express political interest through civil rights leaders. A large percentage (29.2%) of the first responses by African-American adolescents list civil rights or minority leaders. Approximately 10 percent of the first responses by white and American Indian students mention civil rights leaders. One of the most powerful findings in Table 5.2 is the dominance of cultural figures. Almost 40 percent of the black responses refer to athletes, entertainers, models or artists. Roughly a third of the responses by white, Hispanic and American Indian students list these figures. The far right column in Table 5.2 reveals that the most popular reference involves cultural figures—34.2 percent. Many students

Table 5.2

Race and First Famous American Whom You Admire

			Race				
			White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Total
First Famous American Whom You Admire	Don't Know	Count	78	65	32	16	191
		% of race	20.9%	18.4%	33.0%	24.6%	21.5%
	Governmental Leaders	Count	114	30	29	14	187
		% of race	30.6%	8.5%	29.9%	21.5%	21.1%
	Civil Rights Leaders	Count	34	103	5	6	148
		% of race	9.1%	29.2%	5.2%	9.2%	16.7%
	Non-Political Leaders	Count	15	4		4	23
		% of race	4.0%	1.1%		6.2%	2.6%
	Cultural Figures	Count	115	137	30	22	304
		% of race	30.8%	38.8%	30.9%	33.8%	34.2%
	Professionals	Count	7	2			9
		% of race	1.9%	.6%			1.0%
	Family	Count	10	12	1	3	26
		% of race	2.7%	3.4%	1.0%	4.6%	2.9%
Total		Count	373	353	97	65	888
		% of race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

mention individuals such as Michael Jordan, Emmitt Smith, Troy Aikman, Cindy Crawford, Wil Smith and Ice-T. While the students occasionally mention movie actors, models and musicians, athletes are the most frequent response in the cultural figures category.

Table 5.3 describes the second response to the question of "please name two famous Americans whom you admire a lot." The racial differences in Table 5.3 parallel the findings in Table 5.2. Hispanic and American Indian students are most likely to leave the question blank or answer "don't know." Approximately one-quarter of the second responses by Hispanic and white students list governmental leaders. Black students are three times more likely to mention civil rights leaders than white students (25.5% vs.

Table 5.3

Race and Second Famous American Whom You Admire

			Race				
			White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Total
Second Famous American Whom You Admire	Don't Know	Count	102	77	33	20	232
		% of race	27.3%	21.8%	34.0%	30.8%	26.1%
	Governmental Leaders	Count	92	28	25	9	154
		% of race	24.7%	7.9%	25.8%	13.8%	17.3%
	Civil Rights Leaders	Count	31	90	6	4	131
		% of race	8.3%	25.5%	6.2%	6.2%	14.8%
	Non-Political Leaders	Count	14	1	5	3	23
		% of race	3.8%	.3%	5.2%	4.6%	2.6%
	Cultural Figures	Count	117	135	25	25	302
		% of race	31.4%	38.2%	25.8%	38.5%	34.0%
	Professionals	Count	2	3	1		6
		% of race	.5%	.8%	1.0%		.7%
	Family	Count	15	19	2	4	40
		% of race	4.0%	5.4%	2.1%	6.2%	4.5%
Total		Count	373	353	97	65	888
		% of race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

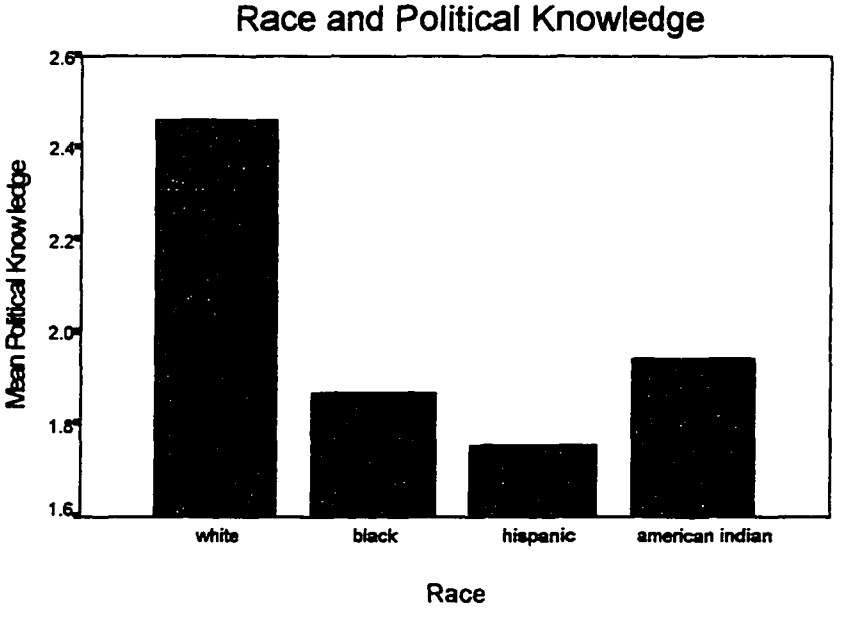
8.3%) and four times more likely than Hispanic students (25.5% vs. 6.2%). Cultural figures again dominate in Table 5.3. Almost 40 percent of the second responses by black and American Indian students refer to cultural figures. Almost one-third of the second responses by white students and one-quarter of Hispanic second responses mention cultural figures.

These results indicate that black students do not appear to have lower levels of political interest than white students but rather it is a different type of interest. Black students may be less likely to mention governmental leaders, but they are significantly more likely to mention civil rights and minority leaders than whites. This may reflect an "outside looking in" feeling about the governmental process among African-American

students. Despite the lack of mobilization and political participation by Hispanics in this country, Hispanic adolescents in this sample are just as likely as white students to admire governmental leaders. The most striking finding in Tables 5.2 and 5.3 is the dominance of cultural figures. Given the mass marketing of athletes and celebrity entertainers in contemporary American culture, it probably should come as no surprise that middle school students are most likely to admire athletes, entertainers, models and artists. These results raise the troubling question of whether or not our current celebrity culture precludes preadults from developing attachments to political figures.

The next research hypothesis suggests that minority students should have lower levels of political knowledge than white students. The political knowledge score is based upon student responses to six questions covering current events, governmental structure and political figures.[2] The political knowledge index ranges from 0 to 6 with a mean of 2.15. Figure 5.7 reveals that white students have the highest level of political knowledge.

Figure 5.7

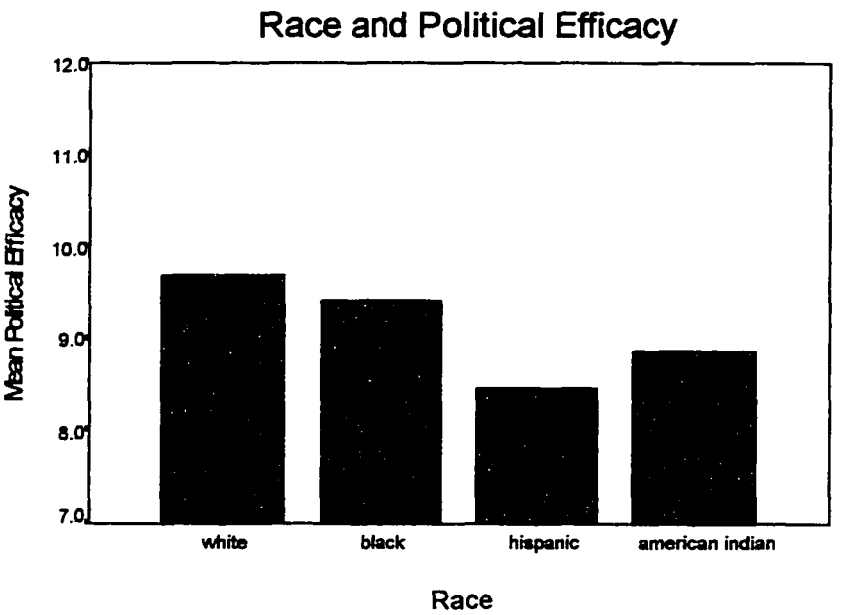


White adolescents answered 2.46 of the six political knowledge questions correctly on average. American Indian and African-American students answered approximately 1.9 questions correctly on average. Hispanic students had the lowest level of political knowledge with a mean score of 1.75. The differences between white students and minority students are all statistically significant.[3]

An extensive body of research has documented that white students have a stronger sense of political efficacy than minority students particularly black adolescents. Hypothesis 5 argues that white students should have higher levels of political efficacy than minority students. In this survey of Oklahoma City adolescents, political efficacy is measured through five questions. The following five statements were presented to the students: "what happens in government will happen no matter what citizens do. It is like the weather, there is nothing they can do about it"; "there are so some big, powerful people in the government who are running the whole thing, and they do not care about us ordinary people"; "my family doesn't have any say about what the government does"; "I don't think people in the government care much what people like my family think" and "citizens don't have a chance to say what they think about running the government." The students could select from strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree, or strongly disagree. The political efficacy index ranges from 0 to 20 with a mean of 9.43. Cronbach's alpha for the political efficacy index is a respectable .63

Figure 5.8 reveals that as predicted by hypothesis 5 white students have the highest level of political efficacy (mean score of 9.69) but it is only slightly higher than the level for black students (mean score of 9.39). Hispanic adolescents have the lowest level of political efficacy with a mean score of 8.46. American Indian students have a mean

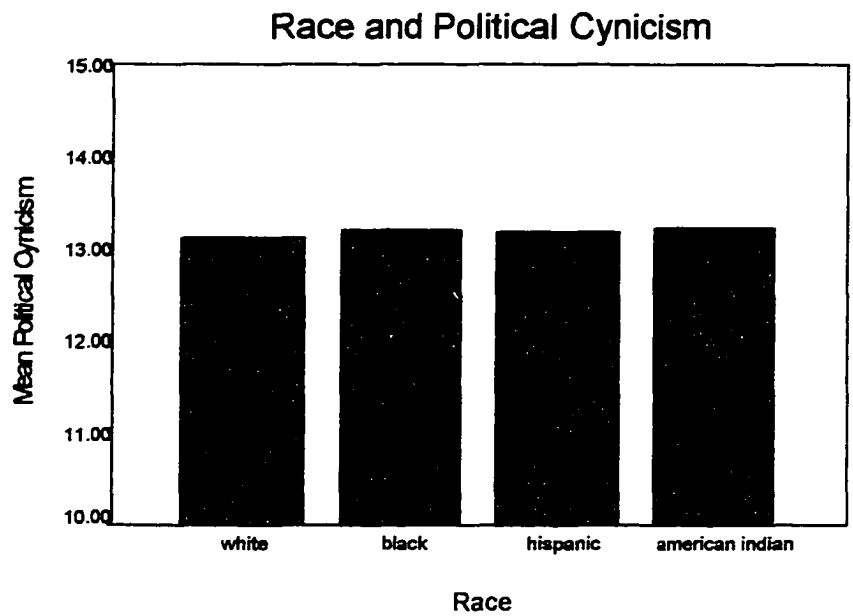
Figure 5.8



political efficacy score of 8.84. Using a difference of means test, statistically significant differences appear between white and Hispanic students (t-value of 3.00 $p<.01$) and black and Hispanic students (t-value of 2.31 $p<.05$).

Although some differences appear in relation to political efficacy, Figure 5.9 reveals that political cynicism levels are equivalent across all four racial groups. For the entire sample, the mean political cynicism score is 13.12 on an index from 5 to 20. The political cynicism scores for white, black, Hispanic and American Indian students do not deviate significantly from the overall mean of 13.12. Contrary to hypothesis 6, race is not a significant predictor of political cynicism levels. It may be that white students have caught up with minority students in terms of political cynicism. In their analysis of National Election Study data from 1958-1992, Erikson and Tedin (1995, 164-165) note that public trust in government has plummeted since the 1960s. White adults may be

Figure 5.9



transmitting a message of political cynicism to their children which brings white adolescents more in line with minority students. It should be noted that the political cynicism index is based upon four questions such as "do you think some of the people running the government are dishonest," "how much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right," "do you feel that the people running the government are smart people who usually know what they are doing," and "do you think the government wastes a lot of tax money?"

While minority students do not appear to possess higher levels of political cynicism than white students, we might expect them to have a more materialistic outlook. Inglehart (1977; 1981; 1985; 1988) has created a cottage industry exploring the basic values shift in Western publics from a materialist emphasis to a post-materialist one. Despite the extensive research on this topic, there has been little to no focus on racial differences. We

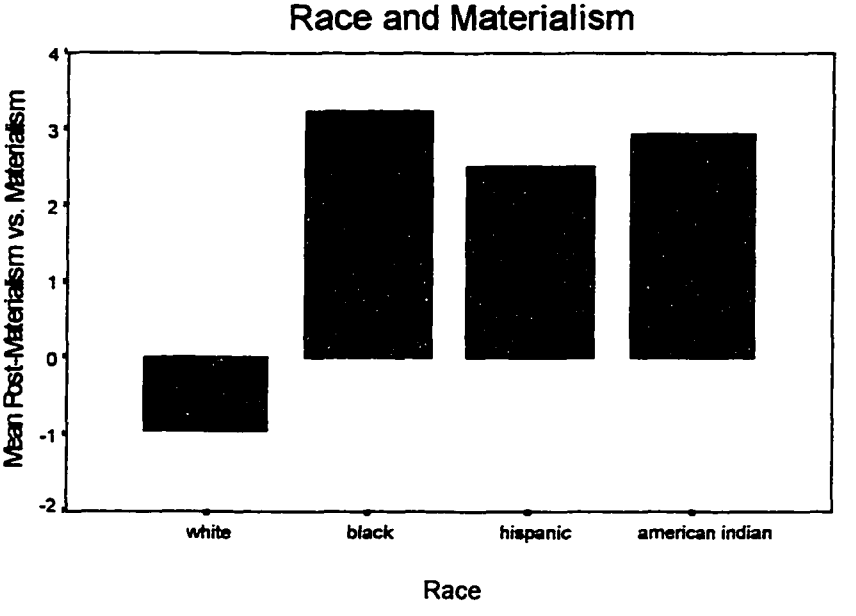
might ask if the shift to post-materialist values in affluent countries such as the United States has been universal even among disadvantaged groups? This study investigates the following hypothesis concerning racial differences and materialism:

Hypothesis 7 Minority students should place greater emphasis on materialist concerns rather than post-materialist goals.

In the Oklahoma City survey, students were asked to rank the most important problem, the second most important problem and the third most important problem confronting government. Students could select from a list of six topics: create more jobs, fight against crime, make sure this country has a strong army, try to make our cities and countryside more beautiful, protect freedom of speech and give people more say in the decisions of government. Based upon the research of Inglehart, the first three topics (jobs, crime and army) measure materialist concerns and the last three topics (cities and country beautiful, free speech and say in government) measure post-materialist concerns. The materialism scale ranges from a high of 6 to a low of -6. A score of six represents a student mentioning materialist concerns for all three problems. A score of -6 represents a student mentioning post-materialist concerns for all three problems.

Figure 5.10 provides rather striking evidence that all three minority groups place greater value in materialist as opposed to post-materialist goals. Black students place the greatest emphasis on materialist concerns with a mean score of 3.22 followed closely by American Indian students (mean score of 2.92) and Hispanic students (mean score of 2.50). White students score on the post-materialist side of the index with a mean score of -.95. Using a difference of means test, the differences between white students and all three minority groups are substantial and statistically significant.[4]

Figure 5.10



While race appears to have a strong influence on the formation of materialist values, it is important to see if that relationship holds after controlling for other important factors. Table 5.4 reports the results of regressing the materialism index on seven independent variables: race, family composition, group membership, age, gender, poverty and political knowledge. As noted in Figure 5.10, minority students should place greater emphasis on materialist concerns than white students. In relation to family composition, Chapter 3 revealed that children from father-only families possess post-materialist values when compared to children from other types of families. Poverty is an important variable to examine since adolescents from disadvantaged environments might be the most likely to focus on materialist values such as "create more jobs" and "fight against crime." Moore et al. (1985, 210) report that politically knowledgeable children are more likely to identify ecological issues as public priorities than less knowledgeable children. Since protecting the environment is a key factor in the measurement of post-materialism, students that

score high on political knowledge should have a strong commitment to post-materialist values. Adolescent group membership might also contribute to the emergence of post-materialist values. Membership in school and after-school groups might teach adolescents the value of recycling, keeping the Earth clean and protecting the environment. Finally, age and gender are examined to see if materialism varies with the maturity and sex of the child.

The dependent variable in Table 5.4 is the materialism index which is defined earlier in this chapter. Race is a dummy variable that is coded 1 for white students and 0 for minority students. Father-only family is also a dummy variable that is coded 1 for students that live only with their father and 0 for the other types of families. Group membership is the number of peer groups that the adolescent is involved in. Gender is a dummy variable coded 1 for male and 0 for female adolescents. Poverty is the percentage of homes in the attendance area of a middle school that receive public assistance. Political knowledge is the political knowledge index based upon six questions to tap knowledge of current events, government and political figures.

Table 5.4 illustrates that three variables have a statistically significant effect on materialist values: race, gender and political knowledge. Even after controlling for six other variables, race (Beta of -.50) has a strong correlation with materialism. The negative coefficient indicates that white students are more likely to favor post-materialist values than minority students. The direction of the regression coefficient for gender indicates that male students are more likely to possess materialist values than females. Close inspection of the data reveals that boys are more likely to value "make sure this country has a strong army" and girls are more likely to identify with "try to make our

Table 5.4

Predicting Materialist Values Among Adolescents

Independent Variables	Beta	t-value	sig.
Race	-.50	-17.18	.000
Father-only Family	-.03	-.92	.356
Group Membership	.02	.83	.406
Age	.002	.06	.953
Gender	.09	3.04	.002
Poverty	.03	1.02	.306
Political Knowledge	.08	2.86	.004

F-value=45.991 ($p<.001$)
R^2=.26
Adjusted R^2=.25
N=942

cities and countryside more beautiful." The largest gender differences emerge in relation to "protect freedom of speech" and "give people more say in the decisions of government." These last two post-materialist values are a greater priority for adolescent girls than boys. Contrary to the argument advanced by Moore et al. (1985) that political knowledge correlates with an environmental ethic, students that score high on political knowledge are significantly more likely to identify with materialist concerns than students with low levels of political knowledge. In fact, students that score low on political knowledge are more likely to identify the environment as a top priority than students who score high on political knowledge.[5] It might be argued that political knowledge

contributes to a recognition of major economic problems such as unemployment and inflation which are key materialist values.

Although children from father-only families are more likely to identify with post-materialist values, Table 5.4 indicates that the relationship is not statistically significant. Materialism increases with age and poverty but the effects are not statistically significant. It is surprising that poverty does not have a stronger influence on the formation of materialist values. The weak regression coefficient may be due to measurement error in that poverty is measured for the entire attendance area of a middle school. Poverty measured for each individual student might have demonstrated a stronger correlation with materialist values. For the regression model in Table 5.4, there does not appear to be a problem with multicollinearity or outliers.[6]

Race, Perceptions of Discrimination, and Attitudes about Race Relations

One of the most important topics for political socialization research is the development of racial attitudes in the preadult years. Merelman (1972, 156) emphasizes that "adult racial attitudes undoubtedly depend heavily upon socialization during childhood and adolescence. Consequently, studies into the socialization of racial attitudes have immediate political significance." Sears and Valentino (1997, 61) remind us that "the chronic racial tensions left by the legacies of slavery and a century of enforced second-class citizenship after Emancipation virtually guarantee racial issues a permanent place in the nation's political attention and, consequently, strongly socialized racial attitudes in the mass public (Sears 1983; Sears and Funk 1996)." An impressive body of literature emphasizes the stability of racial attitudes across the life-span (Sears 1975; Converse and Markus 1979; Kinder and Rhodebeck 1982; Sears and Gahart 1980; Sears 1990).

While numerous public opinion surveys have documented profound racial differences among adult respondents, there is a paucity of research exploring the roots of these differences in the preadult years. In a recent nationwide survey sponsored by the Washington Post, 68 percent of black adults agreed with the statement that racism is "a big problem in our society today," but only 38 percent of whites agreed (Morin 1995, 6). Almost half of the white middle class respondents agreed with the statement "the average African-American is just as well of as the average white person in terms of income." No black middle class respondents agreed with that statement! In relation to the role of government, "two-thirds of whites interviewed said the federal government had no responsibility to make certain minorities have jobs and incomes equal to whites, while 7 of 10 blacks surveyed said the federal government had an obligation to equalize outcomes as well as opportunity" (Morin 1995, 6). A Gallup poll in February of 1997 revealed that "whites are more positive than blacks on a variety of perceptual measures of how well blacks are faring in our society, and how they are treated in the local community" (Gallup Organization 1997, 1). The poll also discovered that 76 percent of whites think that blacks are treated the same as whites in their community while 49 percent of blacks think there is equal treatment in their community.

In one of the few studies on preadult evaluations of discrimination in society, Long (1976, 286) notes that black adolescents are more likely to perceive racial discrimination in society than white teenagers. Greenberg (1970b, 274) surprisingly reports that "black children manifest serious deterioration in confidence [in government] between the third and seventh grades, but dramatically recover during the junior high years. Moreover, the strongest recovery is displayed by those blacks students who are best able to perceive

inequality in race relations!" Greenberg's findings may largely be time-bound to a generation of black children that were socialized during the expansion of civil rights and government programs to fight poverty. Long's (1976) analysis of black and white adolescents reveals that perceptions of political reality[7] correlate positively with feelings of political alienation. A methodological concern with Long's research is that the measure of political reality includes questions that tap political trust and efficacy. The political reality measure is then used to "explain" political alienation which taps into feelings of political ineffectiveness and political cynicism.

In his recent work Savage Inequalities, Jonathan Kozol (1991) argues that many minority children, even at the elementary school level, are acutely aware of inequality in the United States. In his observations of inner-city classrooms and insightful discussions with minority students, Kozol discovers a powerful cynicism and lack of faith in the civil rights movement that dwells within many students. During a visit to East St. Louis, Kozol asked a seventh grade social studies class what they had learned about the civil rights movement of recent decades. Kozol (1991, 34-35) describes the discussion in which

> a 14-year-old girl with short black curly hair says this: "Every year in February we are told to read the same old speech by Martin Luther King. We read it every year. 'I have a dream...' It does begin to seem—what is the word?" She hesitates and then she finds the word: "perfunctory." I ask her what she means. "We have a school in East St. Louis named for Dr. King," she says. "The school is full of sewer water and the doors are locked with chains. Every student in that school is black. It's like a terrible joke on history."

Despite Kozol's valuable insights on this topic, political science has paid little attention to preadult opinions about racial discrimination over the last decade.

With the hope of shedding light on this important topic, this chapter investigates the following hypotheses concerning perceptions of discrimination in society:

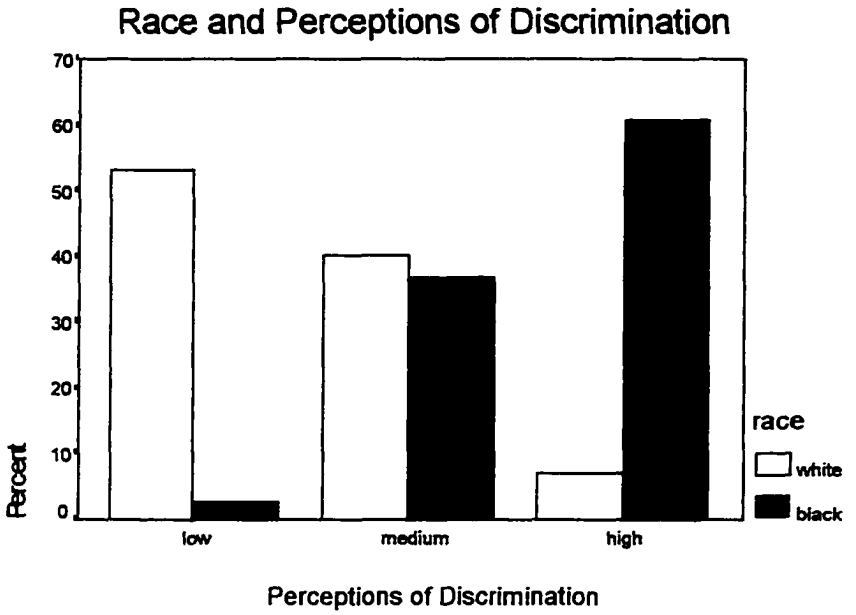
Hypothesis 8 Black adolescents should perceive higher levels of racial discrimination in society than white teenagers.

Hypothesis 9 For black students, perceptions of discrimination should have a strong positive correlation with political cynicism.

To tap perceptions of discrimination, the students were asked four questions about the treatment of whites and blacks in the United States. Middle school students had the option of answering "strongly agree," "agree," "no opinion," "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to the following four statements: some people say that whites and blacks are treated the same in this country, some people say that business people cheat black people more than they do white people, some people say that the police treat blacks worse than whites, and some people say that most laws treat blacks worse than whites. A composite measure of "perceptions of racial discrimination" was created with student responses ranging from 0 to 16 with a mean of 9.54 and a mode of 8. Cronbach's alpha for the four questions used in the composite measure is an impressive .80.

In confirmation of hypothesis 8, Figure 5.11 illustrates the striking difference in perceptions of racial discrimination between black and white middle school students. For Figure 5.11, student responses have been grouped as low, medium and high perceptions of racial discrimination.[8] Of the white middle school students, 53 percent possess low perceptions of racial discrimination, 40 percent fall in the medium category and only 7 percent perceive high levels of racial discrimination in society. For black adolescents, the picture is largely reversed. Almost 61 percent of black middle school students perceive high levels of racial discrimination in society, 37 percent perceive moderate levels and only 2 percent perceive low levels. On the perceptions of racial discrimination scale, black students have a mean score (12.2) which is almost twice as large as the mean score for

Figure 5.11



white students (6.9). Using a difference of means test, the difference is statistically significant (t-value of 23.97 $p<.001$). These findings provide powerful confirmation that the dramatic differences in perceptions of racial discrimination between white and black adult respondents are very much evident among teenagers.

While strong racial differences are evident in adolescent perceptions of discrimination, a multivariate analysis can help shed light on other factors that might account for preadult attitudes concerning racial discrimination. Age and gender might be related to adolescent perceptions of discrimination. Older students might have a greater awareness and recognition of discrimination of society. Along the same lines, political knowledge and family discussions of politics may be positively related to perceptions of discrimination. As students acquire more knowledge of the political system and discuss political events, they may perceive that the races are not treated equally in this country.

Poverty should have an impact on perceptions of discrimination. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds might be most likely to perceive unequal treatment of blacks and whites. A final factor worthy of consideration is television viewing. The average American child will watch 19,000 hours of television by the time he or she reaches 18 years of age (Zoglin 1990, 75). Dorr (1982, 30) argues that many children, particularly white children, learn about the condition of minorities through television. Because of continued segregation in our communities and schools, children are vulnerable to televised images of minority groups.

Table 5.5 reports the results of an ordinary least squares (O.L.S.) regression analysis of adolescent perceptions of racial discrimination. The dependent variable is the perceptions of racial discrimination index. Dummy variables represent race (1=white 0=nonwhite) and gender (1=male 0=female). Political knowledge is the six question political knowledge index. Poverty is the percentage of households on public assistance in the attendance area of a middle school. Family politicization, the measure utilized extensively in Chapter 3, is based upon the questions "do you hear anyone in your family talk about politics, voting, and things like that" and "do you ever ask anyone in your family questions about politics and government." Television viewing is the number of hours each day spent watching television.

The regression results in Table 5.5 confirm the powerful role of race (Beta of -.54) on adolescent perceptions of racial discrimination. The negative coefficient indicates that white students are substantially less likely to perceive discrimination than minority students. Beyond the influence of race, the regression coefficients for poverty and television viewing attain statistical significance. In this sample of middle school students,

Table 5.5

Regression Analysis of Adolescent Perceptions of Racial Discrimination

Independent Variables	Beta	t-value	sig.
Race	-.54	-19.42	.000
Gender	.03	1.22	.223
Age	-03	-1.01	.314
Political Knowledge	.02	.61	.545
Poverty	.08	2.79	.005
Family Politicization	.01	.30	.765
Television Viewing	.13	4.66	.000

F-value=66.803 ($p<.001$)
R^2=.33
Adjusted R^2=.32
N=942

heavy television viewers are more likely to perceive racial discrimination in society. Furthermore, students from impoverished areas are also more likely to perceive racial discrimination. Multicollinearity and outliers do not appear to be a serious problem for the regression results reported in Table 5.5.[9]

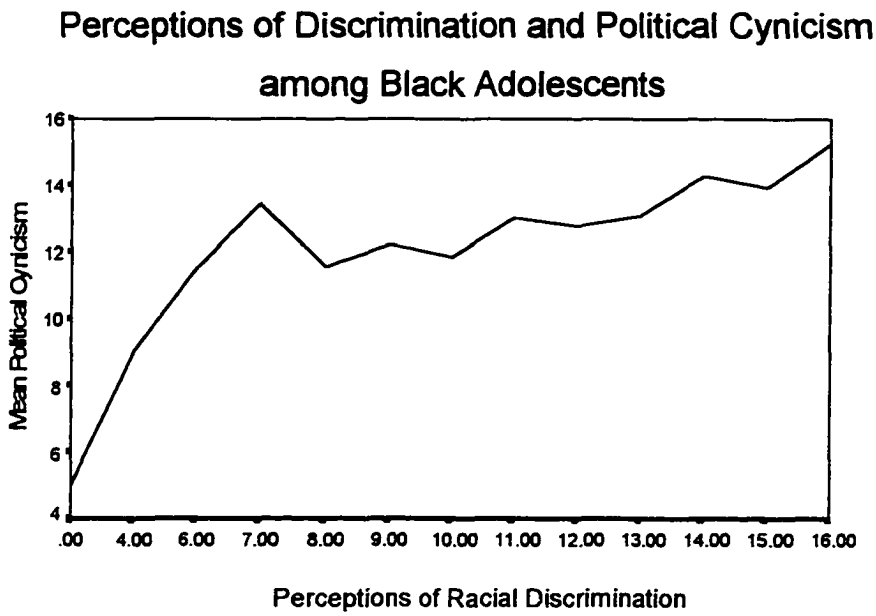
Close inspection of the data reveals that the link between television viewing and perceptions of racial discrimination only holds for minority students. For white students, the correlation between television viewing and perceptions of discrimination is actually negative and statistically insignificant (Pearson's r of -.051). For the minority students,

the correlation between television viewing and perceptions of discrimination is .30. It is not entirely clear why the relationship holds for minority students but not white students. This finding might be explained by the different media viewing habits of students in this study. Minority students may be drawn to entertainment and news programs that highlight racial discrimination in society. On the other hand, white teens might view programs that essentially ignore divisive issues such as racism, discrimination and poverty in society. Armstrong et al. (1992, 172-173) argue that rosy television entertainment portrayals of black life may lead white students to develop unrealistic beliefs that black and white Americans experience equal economic outcomes.

Hypothesis 9 asserts that perceptions of discrimination among black students should correlate strongly and positively with political cynicism. In his conversations with African-American middle school students, Kozol (1991, 35) notes that perceptions of discrimination are not only related to political distrust but some students even mention "the crimes committed by the government" against black people. Figure 5.12 elaborates on the relationship between perceptions of discrimination and political cynicism for black students in this sample. Levels of political cynicism rise among black adolescents as they increasingly perceive racial discrimination in society. The Pearson correlation coefficient between political cynicism and perceptions of racial discrimination is .43 ($p<.01$) for black middle school students.

Despite the large gap that remains between white and black Americans concerning perceptions of racial discrimination in society, scholars of public opinion have marveled at the change in public attitudes concerning segregation. Erikson and Tedin (1995, 92) note that "from 1942 to 1985, there was a 62 percent increase in white support for

Figure 5.12



integrated schools, perhaps the largest change in public opinion for which we have data." A 1997 Gallup poll reveals that "a majority of whites indicate a preference for living, working and sending their children to school in a mixed racial environment. A majority of whites say they would not object if blacks in great numbers moved into their neighborhood, or if their child went to a school which was majority black" (Gallup Organization 1997, 1-2). Just as in the case of racial discrimination, there is ample research on adult opinions, but there is a lack of research concerning preadult attitudes about segregation.

Almost twenty-five years ago, Clarke (1973, 313) reported that 62 percent of the black students in his sample preferred attending an all black school and living in an all black neighborhood. Clarke's results are based upon a very limited survey of 94 urban black children. The Oklahoma City survey of middle school students provides the first contemporary look at adolescent opinions about segregation. Based upon Clarke's (1973)

questionnaire, Oklahoma City middle school students were asked "if you had a choice, would you rather go to school with just black students, both black and white students, or mostly white students?" The students were also asked "if you had a choice, would you rather live in a black neighborhood, a mixed neighborhood, or a white neighborhood." Figure 5.13 details black and white student responses to the school segregation question. Much like surveys of adult respondents, the vast majority (75%) of white and black students prefer an integrated school. Sizable percentages of each racial group do express a preference for school segregation. If given the choice, 23 percent of black students would attend an all black school and 25 percent of white students would attend an all white school.

Figure 5.13

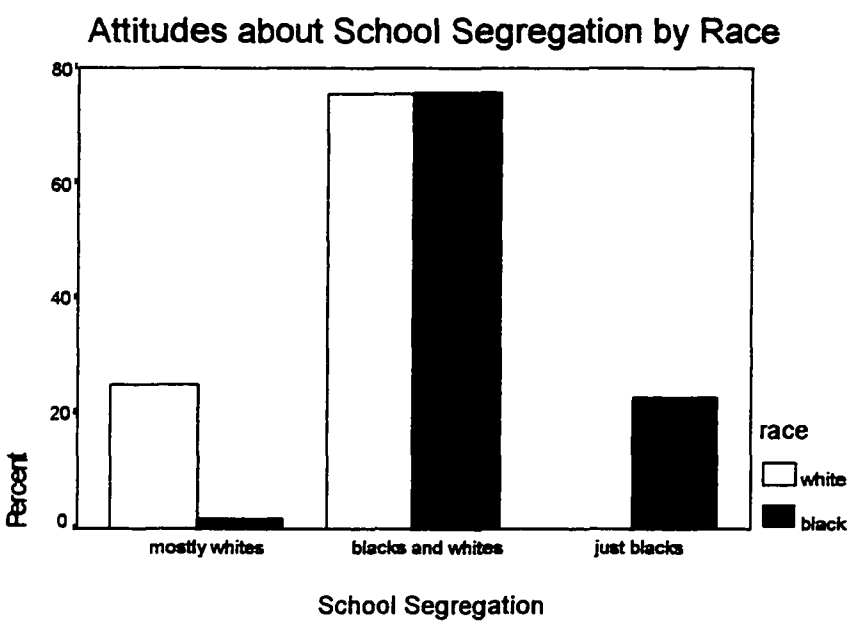
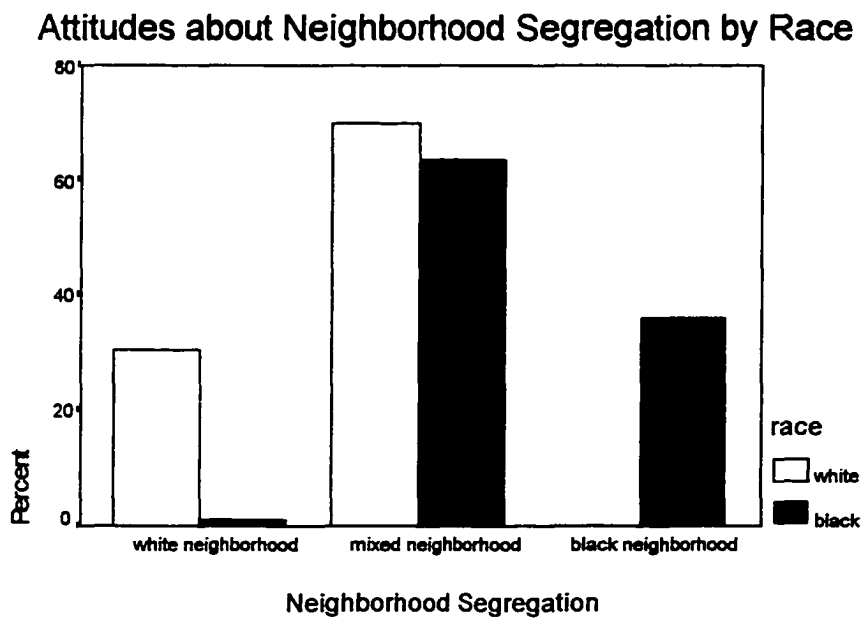


Figure 5.14 presents the responses of white and black students to the question concerning neighborhood segregation. A large majority of students support an integrated

neighborhood. 69 percent of white adolescents and 63 percent of black teens prefer living in a mixed neighborhood. A larger percentage of black and white students prefer neighborhood segregation than school segregation. If given the choice, 36 percent of black teens would live in an all black neighborhood and 30 percent of white teens would live in an all white neighborhood. Since roughly one in four white and black adolescents express a preference for a segregated school and one in three favor a segregated neighborhood, we should examine the factors that contribute to a preference for segregation.

Figure 5.14



Perceptions of discrimination might contribute to a desire for school and neighborhood segregation. Clarke (1973, 313) argues that segregationist views among blacks may be a reflection of familiarity and contempt for white society. Such contempt

may be rooted in perceptions of discrimination by white society. Clarke (1973) also uncovers a strong preference for separatism among father-absent children. A sense of racial isolation appears to be most acute among black children that grow up without their father. Poverty might also contribute to segregationist views. Zinsmeister (1988, 43) argues that "one of the clearest afflictions of the black underclass is its isolation from the rest of American society." Such isolation might feed a preference for segregated schools and neighborhoods. Another culprit might be extensive viewing of television. Dorr (1982, 27) fears that "the predominance of minority characters in heavily or totally minority casts suggests that minorities should remain within, or are only important within, the context of their own minority group." We might also hypothesize that heavy television viewing by white adolescents might heighten their preference for segregation as they view popular television shows with all white casts (*Friends* and *Seinfeld*).

This analysis will test the following hypotheses in relation to attitudes about school and neighborhood segregation:

Hypothesis 10 As black adolescents perceive greater levels of racial discrimination in society, they will be more likely to prefer segregation.

Hypothesis 11 Black adolescents from fatherless homes should be most likely to express a preference for segregation.

Hypothesis 12 Racial isolation contributes to segregationist views among black students.

Hypothesis 13 Television viewing promotes segregationist views among both black and white adolescents.

A multivariate analysis of school segregation attitudes is presented in Table 5.6. The dependent variable is coded 1 for students that prefer school segregation (black

students that prefer an all black school and white students that prefer an all white school) and 0 for students that favor an integrated school. Since this is a dichotomous dependent variable, ordinary least squares regression is not an appropriate technique.[10] Since school segregation is a dichotomous dependent variable, logit is utilized to estimate this nonlinear model. Eight independent variables appear in the model: perceptions of discrimination, mother-only family, age, gender, group membership, percentage of the school population that is black, median household income, and television viewing. As noted previously, perceptions of discrimination and growing up without a father figure should facilitate segregation attitudes among black adolescents. Age and gender are included to test for variations in segregation attitudes with maturity and sex. Group membership, particularly after-school activities, might promote the value of integration as adolescents interact with other races. Percentage of the school population that is black is included as a measure of racial isolation. Black students attending a middle school that is predominantly black may accept segregation as a way of life. Median household income is included with the assumption that the underclass is most likely to prefer racial segregation. Finally, television viewing may promote segregationist views as adolescents watch shows that have all black casts or all white casts.

Table 5.6 reports the individual coefficient estimates of the logit analysis. The standard errors of the parameter estimates appear in the parentheses. Logit parameters are estimated by a method called Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE).[11] Separate models have been estimated for white and black adolescents. The results of the two models provide some intriguing findings. The coefficients for perceptions of discrimination are statistically significant, but they are in different directions for black and

white students. As black adolescents increasingly perceive racial discrimination in society they are more likely to favor school segregation. White students that perceive extensive racial discrimination are more likely to favor school integration. As predicted by hypothesis 10, the positive relationship between perceptions of discrimination and school segregation for black students is consistent with a hostility towards white society and a desire for racial separatism. The negative relationship between perceptions of discrimination and a preference for school segregation for white students makes sense from a historical perspective. It might be argued that white resistance to desegregation began to crumble with a heightened awareness of the discrimination and police brutality against blacks. Images of fire hoses and attack dogs being used against civil rights demonstrators as well as the savage beatings of freedom-riders in the South may have turned white public opinion against segregation. For white adolescents in this sample, a sense of racial discrimination appears to liberalize opinions concerning school segregation.

In contrast to hypothesis 11, living in a mother-only family appears to diminish the probability that an individual will express a preference for a segregated school environment. It may be that adult males are likely to express segregationist views and their absence might help to diminish a desire for racial isolation among adolescents. The coefficients for the age variable indicate that as white adolescents get older they are less likely to express a preference for school segregation but older black adolescents are more likely to favor school segregation. In relation to gender, black males are significantly more likely to express a preference for school segregation than black females. The coefficients for group membership are statistically insignificant.

Table 5.6

Logit Analysis of School Segregation Attitudes for White and Black Adolescents

Independent Variables	**White Adolescents**	**Black Adolescents**
Perceptions of Discrimination	-.13*** (.0396)	.31*** (.0665)
Mother-only Family	-.78** (.3748)	-.12 (.3063)
Age	-.36** (.1796)	.31 (.188)
Gender	-.05 (.274)	.59** (.2998)
Group Membership	-.03 (.0882)	.07 (.0898)
Percentage of School Population that is Black	.004 (.0107)	.02** (.007)
Median Household Income	-.004 (.0367)	-.02 (.0315)
Television Viewing	.39*** (.1239)	.27* (.1493)
Model Chi-Square	28.373***	47.203***
% Cases Correctly Classified	75.14	76.01
Number of Cases	346	321

* p<.10
** p<.05
*** p<.01

Hypothesis 12 argues that racial isolation contributes to a preference for school segregation among black adolescents. Racial isolation is measured as the percentage of a school population that is black. For the Oklahoma City middle schools in this study, the

variable ranges from 25 percent to 86 percent. The logit analysis reveals that black adolescents attending predominantly black schools are significantly more likely to express a preference for school segregation than blacks that attend racially mixed schools. While the relationship appears logical, it is very troubling. Society may find itself caught in a vicious cycle of segregation. As many urban schools become predominantly black, the students in those schools may express a preference for segregation which only reinforces such patterns in the future. The coefficients for the median household income variable are in the hypothesized direction but are not statistically significant. Students from middle schools with a low median household income are more likely to favor school segregation. Since median household income is measured for the attendance area of a school, it may dampen the effect of the variable.[12]

The results of the logit analysis confirm hypothesis 13 that television viewing promotes a preference for school segregation among both black and white adolescents. The television viewing coefficient for black students is statistically significant at $p<.10$ and the coefficient for white students is statistically at $p<.01$. These results may provide more ammunition for critics of television in that many television shows with all white or all black casts project an image of segregation which is reflected in the attitudes and opinions of adolescent viewers. Both logit models in Table 5.6 correctly predict about 75 percent of the cases. The chi-square statistic in both models is statistically significant at $p<.01$.[13]

Table 5.7 provides a multivariate analysis of adolescent attitudes concerning neighborhood segregation. The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable that is coded 1 for students that favor neighborhood segregation (white adolescents that prefer living in a white neighborhood and black adolescents that prefer living in a black

Table 5.7

Logit Analysis of Neighborhood Segregation Attitudes for White and Black Adolescents

Independent Variables	**White Adolescents**	**Black Adolescents**
Perceptions of Discrimination	-.10*** (.0358)	.11** (.0489)
Mother-only Family	-.21 (.3047)	.19 (.2428)
Age	-.06 (.1558)	.12 (.1503)
Gender	.11 (.2426)	.49** (.2381)
Group Membership	.01 (.0786)	.06 (.0732)
Percentage of School Population that is Black	.01 (.0091)	.01* (.0057)
Median Household Income	-.03 (.032)	-.01 (.025)
Television Viewing	.32*** (.1079)	.24** (.1159)
Model Chi-Square	19.297**	22.543***
% Cases Correctly Classified	70.89	66.67
Number of Cases	371	348

* p<.10
** p<.05
*** p<.01

neighborhood) and 0 for teens that prefer an integrated neighborhood. The logit analysis reveals that perceptions of discrimination are once again an important factor in segregationist attitudes. Black students that perceive rampant racial discrimination favor

living in an all black neighborhood while white students who perceive high levels of discrimination favor an integrated neighborhood. Male black students are significantly more likely to favor neighborhood segregation than female black students.

Racial isolation appears to encourage a desire for neighborhood segregation among black adolescents. Black students who attend middle schools that are predominantly black have a greater likelihood of preferring neighborhood segregation than black students that attend integrated schools. Black students that attend a school which is 80 or 90 percent black probably live in neighborhoods that are almost exclusively comprised of minorities. As previous studies have documented, such a pattern of racial isolation can fuel the drive for racial separatism. Finally, television viewing is conspicuous in both logit models in Table 5.7. Heavy television viewing among black and white adolescents appears to encourage a preference for neighborhood segregation. The logit analysis correctly predicts 71 percent of the cases for white adolescents and 67 percent of the cases for black adolescents. Both chi-square statistics are statistically significant at $p<.05$.

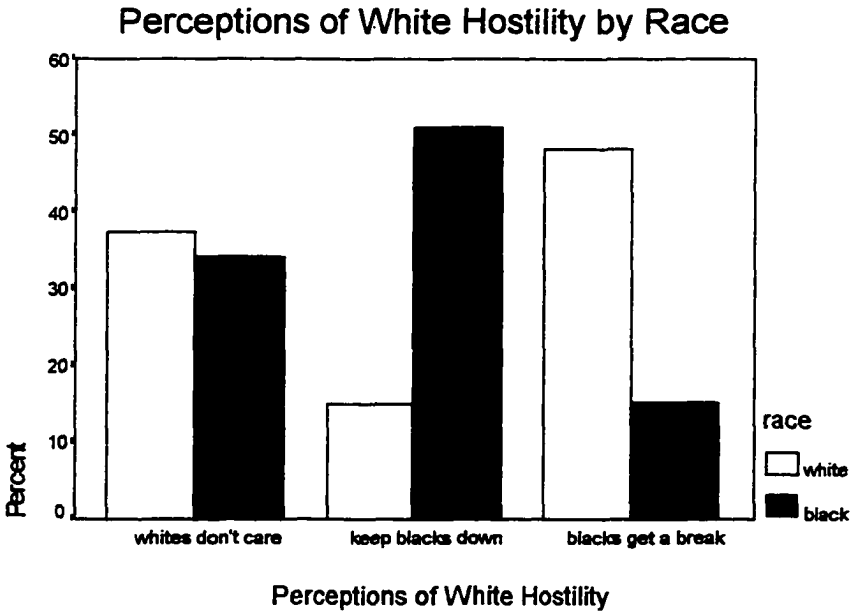
In addition to perceptions of discrimination and segregationist views, adult public opinion surveys have also explored racial distrust. Colasanto (1988, 47) reports that

> blacks and whites have different views about the feeling of whites toward blacks. Blacks are much more likely than whites (40 percent vs. 18 percent) to say that whites want to keep blacks down. Whites are much more likely than blacks (43 percent vs. 23 percent) to say that whites want to give blacks a better break. Blacks' perceptions of the extent of white racial hostility have deteriorated considerable since the time of the Kerner Commission report...Only 28 percent of the blacks interviewed in the 1968 survey and 17 percent of blacks interviewed in 1978 thought that most whites wanted to keep blacks down. In contrast, forty-one percent of central city blacks interviewed in 1984 thought that most whites wanted to keep blacks down.

A 1997 Gallup poll reports that "whites also tend to view themselves as having little personal prejudice against blacks, but perceive that 'other' whites in their area have much higher levels of prejudice against blacks. Blacks also ascribe to whites significantly higher levels of racial prejudice than whites give themselves" (Gallup Organization 1997, 1).

In the Oklahoma City survey, middle students were asked the following question: "do you think most white people want to see blacks get a better break, or do they want to keep blacks down, or don't you think they care either way?" Figure 5.15 reveals the response patterns of white and black adolescents to this question. Dramatic differences appear between the answers of white and black students. A majority (51%) of black adolescents believe that white people "want to keep blacks down." Almost half of the white adolescents (48%) believe that white people "want to see blacks get a better break." Roughly one-third of black and white students believe that white people don't care either

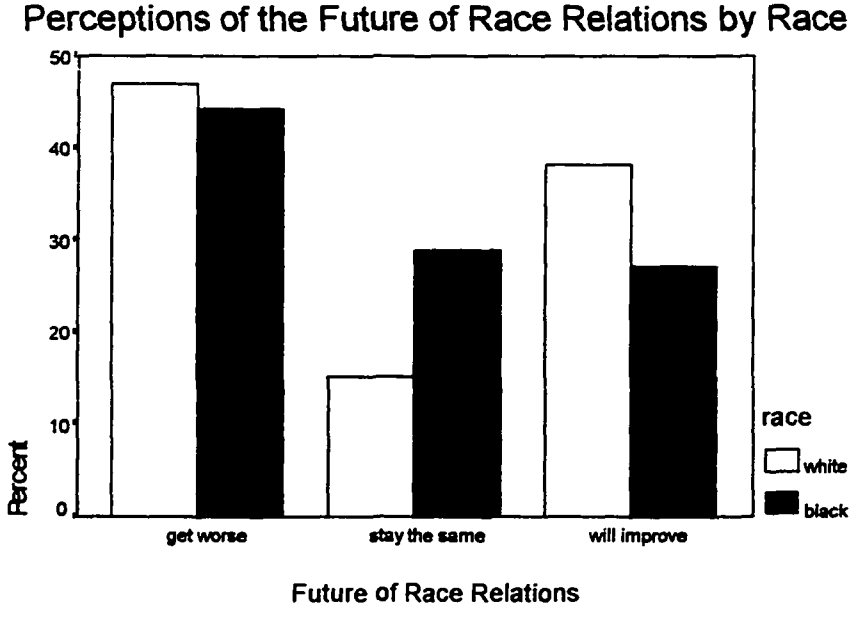
Figure 5.15



way. These results indicate that perceptions of white hostility are prevalent among many black adolescents in the middle school years. A picture is beginning to emerge in which many black adolescents are acutely aware of racial discrimination in society, and they attribute a high level of hostility to white society.

The Oklahoma City survey includes a final question concerning race relations: "as you look to the future, do you think that the relations between blacks and whites will improve in America, stay the same, or get worse?" Figure 5.16 demonstrates that many white and black adolescents are pessimistic about the future of race relations. 47 percent of white adolescents and 44 percent of black adolescents believe that relations between blacks and whites will get worse in the future. Whites are slightly more optimistic about the future of race relations in that 38 percent of white students believe that relations between blacks and whites will improve in America while only 27 percent of black students share that view.

Figure 5.16



Race and the Civics Curriculum

While few studies have investigated the formation of attitudes about racial discrimination and race relations in the preadult years, countless studies have explored the impact of civics courses on adolescent political attitudes. In their classic study, Hess and Torney (1968, 247-248) argue that "the school apparently plays the largest part in teaching attitudes, conceptions, and beliefs about the operation of the political system." After the Hess-Torney study, a growing body of literature seriously questioned the importance of the schools, particularly civics education, to the political socialization process. Langton (1969, 170) reports virtually no relationship "between the number of civics courses taken and students' political knowledge and sophistication, interest, discussion, media consumption, efficacy and cynicism, as well as their level of civic tolerance and perception of the 'good citizen.'" Anderson et al. (1990, 75) discover that the number of civics courses taken by high school seniors is largely unrelated to political knowledge. Langton and Jennings (1968, 865) bluntly declare that "our findings certainly do not support the thinking of those who look to the civics curriculum in American high schools as even a minor source of political socialization."

The failure of the schools to socialize children to politics has often been attributed to the powerful emphasis on order and discipline in the schools. Erikson et al. (1988, 148) believe that

> Discussing controversial political values in the classroom invites disorder; consequently the discussions tend to be superficial or moved away from controversy. As one discusses equality and participatory democracy, it becomes apparent that the school is operated on anything but democratic principles. Thus the disjunction between the democratic creed and what actually goes on in school tends to inhibit political learning.

Merelman (1980, 331) further elaborates that "the limitations of the transmission of democratic values in American schools are the price we pay for the strain between the school's demand for order and the egalitarian norms embedded in American political culture." Another explanation for the apparent failure of the schools is that primary and secondary school teachers may lack the requisite skills to effectively teach civics courses. Research by Massialas (1969, 170) suggests that many teachers do not possess the intellectual skills to lead a classroom discussion of complex political topics. In a rather disturbing finding, Massialas (1969, 177) reports that teachers were no better than students in distinguishing between fact and value statements.

Despite these dismal conclusions, the civics curriculum does appear to have an effect on black adolescents. Jennings and Niemi (1974, 205) note that "when white and black students were observed separately, it became clear that the curriculum exerted considerably more influence on the latter. On several measures the effect was to move the black youths--especially those from less-educated families--to a position more congruent with the white youths and more in consonance with the usual goals of civic education in the United States." The apparent influence of civics courses on black adolescents has often been explained by the redundancy hypothesis. Patrick (1977, 202) explains

> A 'redundancy hypothesis' was formulated to explain the differential impact of civics instruction on black and white students. It appeared that most black students, especially economically disadvantaged blacks, found new political information and ideas in their civics and government courses. Even if much of this subject matter is unrealistic and highly idealistic, it is fresh material for these blacks and thereby can have some impact on their thinking. By contrast, most white students found that their civics and government courses offered much information that already had been presented to them either through previous courses or through out-of-school experiences. These students were likely to 'tune out' this instruction about government because it was redundant.

It is not entirely clear that the civics curriculum has a positive influence on the political socialization of black adolescents. Jennings and Niemi (1974) report that the number of civics courses taken by blacks is positively associated with political knowledge, political efficacy, political interest and frequency of political discussions with peers. Despite these impressive findings, Rodgers (1974) assets that "participation in a civics course tended to raise the cynicism of black students in both segregated and integrated schools. Political knowledge is positively related to political cynicism if the black students have taken a civics course." Button (1974, 196) argues that civics courses which emphasize structure and institutions and de-emphasize political conflict and change may actually increase feelings of political alienation in the student. Button also emphasizes this problem for white students in her study. This chapter explores the following hypothesis concerning race and the civics curriculum:

Hypothesis 14 The civics curriculum should have a more noticeable impact on the political socialization of minority students as opposed to white students.

All seventh grade students in the Oklahoma City Public School District are required to take a one semester civics course. To test the influence of a civics course, the comparisons will be between seventh grade students that have completed the semester long course and seventh grade students who have not completed the course. From the outset, it should be noted that some measurement error is introduced since several classes of seventh graders were surveyed when they were partly through the civics course.

Table 5.8 explores the influence of the civics curriculum on six major political factors: detail in the definition of a good citizen, political knowledge index, political interest index, political efficacy index, political cynicism index and the political tolerance

index. The data are also disaggregated for white, black and Hispanic students. The subsample of American Indian students is not large enough to meaningfully compare seventh grade American Indian students who have completed the required civics course versus those who have not completed the course.

In relation to the total sample of seventh graders (N=476), the civics curriculum has a statistically significant effect on the detail of good citizen definitions and political cynicism. As might be expected, seventh grade students who have completed a civics course provide more detailed definitions of what it means to be a good citizen than students who have not completed the course. The civics curriculum also appears to lower political cynicism levels among adolescents. Civics courses may give students an appreciation for governmental institutions and processes which helps to dampen distrust and cynicism.

The analysis of white seventh grade students reveals that the civics curriculum does not have a statistically significant effect on any of the six political measures. Completion of a civics course does not raise the political knowledge, political interest or political tolerance levels of white adolescents. For black adolescents, the civics curriculum appears to lower levels of political cynicism. Statistically significant differences do not appear in the remaining five measures for black students. Although political interest and political efficacy levels are higher for Hispanic adolescents that have completed a civics course, the differences are not statistically significant. Contrary to hypothesis 13, the civics curriculum does not appear to have a more noticeable effect on minority students as opposed to white students. In fact, the impact of the civics curriculum is rather modest. Since the category of "not completed" in Table 5.8 includes some seventh graders who

Table 5.8

Influence of Civics Courses on Adolescent Political Attitudes

Total Sample (7th grade)

Civics Course	Good Citz. Definition	Political Knowledge	Political Interest	Political Efficacy	Political Cynicism	Political Tolerance
Completed	1.76*	1.89	5.58	9.93	12.64*	1.05
Not Completed	1.48*	2.03	5.17	9.51	13.40*	1.00

*differences are statistically significant ($p<.05$) using a difference of means test

Whites Only (7th Grade)

Civics Course	Good Citz. Definition	Political Knowledge	Political Interest	Political Efficacy	Political Cynicism	Political Tolerance
Completed	1.96	2.16	5.57	10.50	12.72	1.01
Not Completed	1.64	2.36	5.71	9.61	13.25	1.03

*differences are statistically significant ($p<.05$) using a difference of means test

Blacks Only (7th Grade)

Civics Course	Good Citz. Definition	Political Knowledge	Political Interest	Political Efficacy	Political Cynicism	Political Tolerance
Completed	1.60	1.80	5.56	9.94	12.63*	1.53
Not Completed	1.47	1.65	4.78	9.51	13.46*	1.54

*differences are statistically significant ($p<.05$) using a difference of means test

Table 5.8 continued

Hispanics Only (7th Grade)

Civics Course	Good Citz. Definition	Political Knowledge	Political Interest	Political Efficacy	Political Cynicism	Political Tolerance
Completed	1.43	1.32	5.83	8.94	12.13	1.10
Not Completed	1.30	1.95	5.05	7.65	13.32	.85

*differences are statistically significant ($p<.05$) using a difference of means test

have been exposed to several weeks of a civics course, this research project may underestimate the impact of the civics curriculum. Despite this limitation, a large body of literature from the last twenty years has consistently reported that civics courses play a minimal role in the political socialization process.

Race, Church Attendance and Political Socialization

While the civics curriculum appears to have a minimal influence on political learning by middle school students, several recent studies suggest that the church might be an important source of political learning. Wald et al. (1988, 546) explain that "churches are the most widespread form of voluntary organizational affiliation in the United States far outstripping labor unions, political and social action groups, and other secondary associations. To the extent that churches mobilize politically, they operate on a sizable share of the population." Verba et al. (1993, 471) describe how

> The weekly sermon at church may cover a political topic. Moreover, these settings are frequently the locus of political mobilization. On the job, in church or in organizations, individuals develop networks of friends and acquaintances that become the source of requests for political involvement. Moreover, leaders and staff in these settings often make deliberate attempts to mobilize the ranks to

political action.

The importance of the church in the political life of blacks has been closely studied in recent years. Cohen and Dawson (1993, 290) observe that "the black church, in particular, remains one of the most critical formal institutions for the transmission and shaping of African-American public opinion (Dawson, Brown and Allen 1990; Henry 1990)." Verba et al. (1993, 477) report that "for African-Americans, the pattern magnifies what we have already seen: not only are African-Americans more likely to be church members, but they are more likely to exercise [political] skills when they are." Harris' (1994, 65) analysis of the 1987 General Social Survey demonstrates that "in the Untied States religious beliefs and practices promote political mobilization rather than deter mobilization among both blacks and whites. These findings directly challenge the claim that religion in general is antipolitical, antiparticipatory, and an opiate of mass political consciousness."[14] Although Harris reports strong links between church attendance and political participation for whites and blacks, the results for Hispanics have not been as impressive. Verba et al. (1993, 481) explain that "the Protestant-Catholic difference is relevant to the important role that the Protestant churches have played in the political mobilization of African-Americans, a role that the Catholic Church does not seem to play for Latinos." The authors conclude that "in short, the Latino disadvantage with respect to opportunities to learn politically relevant skills in church seems to derive from the fact that they are disproportionately Catholic" (Verba et al. 1993, 481-482).

Although the literature focuses exclusively on adult political behavior, it does suggest several hypothesized links between race, church membership and preadult political socialization:

Hypothesis 15 Membership in church groups and church attendance should have a positive influence on adolescent political learning.

Hypothesis 16 The impact of membership in church groups and church attendance on adolescent political learning should be most noticeable for black students and least noticeable for Hispanic students.

As part of the effort to measure student involvement in after-school activities, the Oklahoma City survey asked students if they belong to a church group. Table 5.9 reports the correlations between membership in a church group and five political measures.

As noted in Chapter 4, church group membership contributes to the ability of middle school students to define the meaning of a good citizen. Table 5.9 illustrates that the relationship holds across all racial groups and is strongest for black adolescents. The strongest correlation in Table 5.9 is between church group membership and political interest for Hispanic students. Church group membership also appears to raise political

Table 5.9

Correlation Analysis of Church Group Membership and Political Learning by Racial Group

Political Measures	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Definitions of a Good Citizen	.293**	.308**	.255*
Political Interest	.246**	.069	.339**
Political Knowledge	.058	.167**	.111
Political Efficacy	.157**	.122*	-.049
Political Cynicism	-.096	-.096	.038

*correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

interest levels for whites but surprisingly not for black adolescents. Church group membership does contribute to the political knowledge and a sense of political efficacy among black students, but the correlations are rather weak. Church group membership does not have an across-the-board impact on political learning for adolescents in this sample. Contrary to hypothesis 16, church membership has its strongest effect on political interest levels for Hispanics. While church group membership may raise the political interest of Hispanic adolescents, it has no noticeable impact on their sense of political efficacy or levels of political cynicism.

In contrast to Table 5.9, all of the correlations in Table 5.10 are below .20. Church attendance makes a modest contribution to a sense of political efficacy for white students and contributes to political interest on the part of black adolescents. Although statistically significant, the correlations are very weak. Church attendance does not have a

Table 5.10

Correlation Analysis of Church Attendance and Political Learning by Racial Group

Political Measures	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Definitions of a Good Citizen	.117*	.064	.186
Political Interest	.050	.142**	.065
Political Knowledge	-.016	.053	.050
Political Efficacy	.155**	.135*	-.020
Political Cynicism	-.025	-.048	-.034

*correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

significant effect on the political learning of Hispanic adolescents, but the influence is not much stronger for whites and blacks. In surveys of adults, church attendance appears to have its strong effect on voting. Harris (1994, 63) reports that church attendance has a greater impact on voting than education and education has often been identified as the most important predictor of voter participation. For the middle school students in this sample, church attendance may become salient when they reach voting age.

Summary

President Clinton has declared that a national dialogue on race will be one of the main themes of his second term. The president has recently appointed an advisory board that will study race relations and hold a series of town meetings in an attempt "to reduce stereotypes and build a national consensus to ease the tensions that have existed for centuries" (Enda 1997, A8). President Clinton's advisory panel will conduct the most comprehensive study of race relations in America since President Lyndon Johnson appointed the Kerner Commission after the Los Angeles riots of 1967 (Breslau 1997). While the president has brought attention to a major national problem and the advisory panel as well as the town meetings are a step in the right direction, a key element of the national dialogue on race must involve discussions with children and adolescents. Not only are children the voters of tomorrow, but a significant body of research indicates that racial attitudes are instilled in the preadult years. If we hope to achieve some type of racial reconciliation in the twenty-first century, it is incumbent upon us to explore the formation of racial attitudes among today's adolescents.

This chapter began with an analysis of how adolescents define the meaning of a good citizen. Racial differences are most evident in the ability of students to articulate a

detailed definition of citizenship. White students provide the most detailed definition of what it means to be a good citizen. Less detailed definitions by minority students may reflect their lack of attachment to the national political community. The analysis of the content of the good citizen definitions reveals that regardless of race the middle school students do not think of citizenship in political terms. For the seventh and eighth graders in their sample, Hess and Torney (1968, 46) report that the most popular definitions of a good citizen are "votes and helps others to vote" and "interested in the way the country is run." In the Oklahoma City survey, only 7 percent of the good citizen definitions fall in the category of active political citizenship. Hopefully, these students will attach political concepts to the meaning of citizenship in the high school years.

Many of the middle school students have a rather unsophisticated view of citizenship. The good citizen is often equated with the good person or the good citizen is someone who simply obeys the laws and pays taxes. For American Indian students, more than half of the citizenship definitions mention personal traits or characteristics of passive citizenship. More than 40 percent of the definitions by white, black and Hispanic students describe personal traits or passive citizenship. As the schools place greater emphasis on discipline and order, middle school students may acquire an increasingly passive view of citizenship.

Despite the lack of political concepts in adolescent definitions of a good citizen, many students clearly value the importance of community. Active citizenship in the community is the most popular definition of a good citizen for all racial groups except American Indian students. The impressive diversity of responses such as helping neighbors, taking care of the community, don't litter, keep the Earth clean, recycle, join

charities, help stop gangs, help the poor and help the elderly indicate a willingness to get involved in the community. As we increasingly lament our atomistic political culture and socially disconnected electorate, such attitudes among adolescents may offer hope for the future.

Several subtle differences emerged in relation to race and political interest. White students had the highest level of political interest, but on a scale of 0 to 16 all the racial groups scored within a range of 5.6 to 4.9. An interesting way to measure political interest is to ask students to name two famous Americans whom they admire a lot. Cultural figures such as athletes, entertainers and models are mentioned more frequently than governmental leaders, particularly among African-American and American Indian students. It is a bit surprising that Hispanic students are just as likely to mention governmental leaders as white students. Despite the lack of political mobilization on the part of Hispanics, Hispanic adolescents in this sample demonstrate an attachment to political leaders. Black students may not admire governmental leaders, but they clearly value the contributions of civil rights and minority leaders. Greenberg (1970a) suggests that many black adolescents lack an attachment to the president, and Abramson (1977) argues that black children are less trusting of public officials than whites. The emphasis on civil rights leaders as opposed to governmental leaders may reflect a strongly socialized attitude among black adolescents that they must still fight for equality and access to the political system.

The analysis of basic political dispositions did not reveal as many racial differences as expected. White students did exhibit higher levels of political knowledge than black, Hispanic and American Indian students. Despite a large body of research that indicates

black adolescents have lower levels of political efficacy than white adolescents, white and black students in this sample have roughly equivalent levels of political efficacy. White and black adolescents do have significantly higher levels of political efficacy than Hispanic students. Race does not appear to be a significant predictor of political cynicism. White, black, Hispanic and American Indian students all have political cynicism levels roughly equivalent to the mean political cynicism score for the entire sample. White adolescents may have caught up with their minority counterparts in terms of political cynicism. The results of the Oklahoma City survey tend to confirm the finding of Rodgers and Taylor (1977) that blacks are more negative toward the police than their white peers, but they are not less trustful of the political system.

Substantial racial differences do appear in relation to materialist values. While numerous studies by Inglehart have documented the basic values shift in Western industrialized democracies from a materialist focus to a post-materialist focus, this study indicates that race must not be ignored. Only white students in this sample demonstrate a commitment to post-materialist values. Black, Hispanic and American Indian students all score high on the materialist side of the scale. This sample probably underestimates the extent of the difference between whites and minority students. A sample of students from affluent suburban schools or private schools might illustrate an even greater commitment to post-materialist values among white youth. In the multivariate analysis, race stands out as the strongest predictor of materialist values. Gender is also another variable worthy of consideration. Adolescent girls have a stronger commitment to post-materialism than boys. Girls are more likely to value "protect freedom of speech" and "give people more say in the decisions of government" which are key post-materialist values. Finally,

political knowledge correlates positively with materialism. Increasing levels of political knowledge may create a greater awareness of the need to fight unemployment and inflation.

The most dramatic and important racial differences in this chapter are evident in adolescent perceptions of racial discrimination. The survey results of this study illustrate a wide gap between black and white middle school students concerning the extent of discrimination in society. A large majority of black students (61%) perceive high levels of racial discrimination in society. Only 7 percent of white students perceive high levels of discrimination. A solid majority of white students (53%) perceive low levels of discrimination in society while only 2 percent of black students share that view. The dramatic differences among adult respondents concerning perceptions of discrimination are clearly evident among middle school students. While race is the strongest predictor of adolescent perceptions of racial discrimination, poverty and television viewing are also important. It should come as no surprise that adolescents from impoverished backgrounds are more likely to perceive discrimination. Heavy television viewing correlates with perceptions of racial discrimination in society among minority students. This relationship may be an artifact of heavy television viewing by black teens. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, black adolescents watch more television than any other racial group. Since black students are most likely to perceive racial discrimination, the connection between television viewing and perceptions of discrimination may be due to black teens scoring high on television viewing.

For the black adolescents in this sample, perceptions of discrimination correlate positively with political cynicism. While the relationship appears logical, there has been

some debate in the literature about the direction of the relationship. Greenberg (1970b) notes that black students who are best able to perceive inequality in race relations display confidence in government. Greenberg's findings appear to be limited to a generation of black Americans familiar with major civil rights legislation and government efforts to fight poverty. In the 1990s, perceptions of discrimination do not create warm fuzzy feelings for government among black adolescents. Jonathan Kozol's (1991) insightful discussions with minority students and the results of this survey confirm that many minority students are aware of the savage inequalities in society, and such disparities certainly do not engender trust in government.

Much of the contemporary debate on race relations has focused on the fact that many Americans lead increasingly segregated lives. Former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean, a member of the president's advisory board on race, argues that schools are more segregated today than they were 30 years ago, and neighborhoods, clubs and churches remain largely divided along racial lines (Enda 1997, A8). It is encouraging that large majorities of black and white adolescents in this sample express a preference for school and neighborhood integration. Yet, about one in four black and white students express a preference for a segregated school, and one in three favor a segregated neighborhood. Perceptions of racial discrimination have a fascinating effect on segregation attitudes by race. Among black students, perceptions of discrimination increase the likelihood that a student will favor school and neighborhood segregation. For white students, perceptions of discrimination increase the probability that the student will favor school and neighborhood integration. This creates quite a conundrum for policymakers. A national dialogue on race relations and discrimination might increase the

preference for integration among whites, but it might fuel racial separatism among blacks. These survey results may shed some light on why race relations have been and continue to be such an intractable problem in our society.

The multivariate analysis of segregation attitudes also reveals that black males are significantly more likely to favor school and neighborhood segregation than black females. It is not entirely clear why so many black males in this sample express a strong preference for segregation. The male and female black adolescents in this sample share the same outlook about the future of race relations and they have the same perceptions of racial discrimination in society. The black males and females in this sample also watch equivalent amounts of television per day. On the various factors that account for segregationist views, the African-American boys and girls are roughly equivalent. One possible explanation may be that black females are involved in more after-school activities than males. If the after-school activities provide opportunities for black females to interact with other races, the end result may be to dampen the preference for segregation. Future studies might want to explore if a pronounced difference exists in the segregation attitudes of adult black males and females.

Racial isolation is a key factor in the segregationist views of black adolescents. Black students attending predominantly black middle schools are significantly more likely to favor school and neighborhood segregation than black students attending integrated schools. While many urban areas have ended busing and the Oklahoma City School Board has recently voted to end busing in the middle schools, an integrated school can help to dampen the drive for racial separatism among black adolescents. President Clinton recently stated "we're going to have to depend on the young people of this country who

have had the experience of being with other people of different racial and ethnic groups to turn that [segregation] around. American won't resegregate if they honestly believe that they have shared values and shared interest in an integrated society" (Breslau 1997, 31). Unfortunately, recent court decisions and the actions of many school boards have allowed American schools to become resegregated. It will be very difficult to meet the president's challenge.

While students may have less face-to-face interaction with different racial and ethnic groups, they often develop an image of minorities through television. Dorr (1982) worries that the all white or all black casts of many television shows may give rise to segregation attitudes in adolescence. Fifteen years after Dorr conducted her research, the results of this survey indicate that heavy television viewing contributes to a preference for neighborhood and school segregation among black and white adolescents. While television casts are probably less segregated than they were fifteen to twenty years ago, television still appears to convey an image that minorities should stay within their group and whites should also stay within their own racial group. When we consider that children are attending increasingly segregated schools and they are watching more and more television, the prospects for integration in the future do not look good.

Echoing that sentiment, black and white students express cynicism about the future of race relations in the United States. Almost half of white and black students in this sample believe that relations between blacks and whites will get worse in the future. White adolescents are slightly more optimistic about the future of race relations in that 38 percent of white students believe that relations between blacks and whites will improve in America while only 27 percent of black students share that view. Black students also

perceive a significant amount of racial hostility on the part of white society. More than half (51%) of black adolescents believe that white people "want to keep blacks down." Almost half (48%) of white adolescents believe that white people "want to see blacks get a better break." Such divergent viewpoints in adolescence may sow the seeds for future conflict. Garcia (1973, 180) argues that one of the fundamental justifications for political socialization research is that investigations of childhood attitudes provide us with insight about the possible future behavior of American citizens and the system's potential for conflict and instability. Contemporary research into adolescent attitudes about discrimination and race relations may be some of the most important research that can be conducted.

In relation to the civics curriculum and political attitudes, this study finds only a modest impact for civics courses. For the subsample of seventh graders, students that have completed a civics course provide a more detailed definition of citizenship and possess lower levels of political cynicism than students who have not completed the course. Contrary to Rodgers' (1974) assertion that civics courses actually increase political cynicism among black students, this study reveals that political cynicism levels are significantly lower for black seventh graders who completed the required civics course. The civics curriculum did not appear to have a significant impact on Hispanic political attitudes. These results provide little support for the redundancy hypothesis that white students tune out government courses because the material is redundant and minorities often discover new political information and ideas in a civics course.

The limited impact of civics courses coupled with the lack of political concepts in student definitions of a good citizen suggests that more needs to be done in teaching our

youth about political activity. Mock elections might help to establish the connection between voting and good citizenship for adolescents. Button (1974, 195) reports that "blacks and Mexican-Americans were strongly influenced by the case studies of political change in the experimental curriculum and viewed them as models of political action for change." A curriculum that emphasizes political activism need not be viewed with suspicion. We must not lose sight of the fact that our schools help to mold future citizens.

Much like the civics curriculum, membership in church groups and church attendance have a limited impact on preadult political learning. For white, black and Hispanic adolescents, membership in a church group contributes to citizenship awareness. Although Verba et al. (1993) argue that Hispanics do not often learn politically relevant skills in church, membership in a church group has a strong correlation with political interest for Hispanic students in this sample. The church may have a latent effect on adolescent political socialization. When these students are old enough to vote and begin to express interest in political campaigns, the church may then mobilize them to politics.

Throughout this analysis of race and political socialization, the influence of television has been conspicuous. Television viewing has an influence on adolescent perceptions of discrimination and the emergence of segregationist views concerning schools and neighborhoods. Chapter 6 provides a full treatment of the role of television in adolescent political socialization. It is a sad fact of life that many children are now being raised by television. Chapter 6 also examines the importance of reading a newspaper and watching television news for adolescent political learning.

Chapter 6

The Mass Media and Political Socialization: Is Television the Vast Wasteland?

In the 1996 telecommunications deregulation bill, Congress and President Clinton agreed to a provision that would require manufacturers to implant in television sets an electronic circuit known as the "V-chip." The television industry would transmit a signal concerning the violent content of a program, and parents could program their television set to block programs containing the identical signal (Murray 1995, 13). The V-chip requirement reflects societal concerns about the increasingly violent nature of television and its deleterious impact on America's children. The V-chip debate also reveals a struggle between parents and television in the socialization of our nation's youth. Many parents fear that television has become the dominant force in how children learn about the political and social world. The V-chip may provide an opportunity for parents to wrestle some of that influence from television.

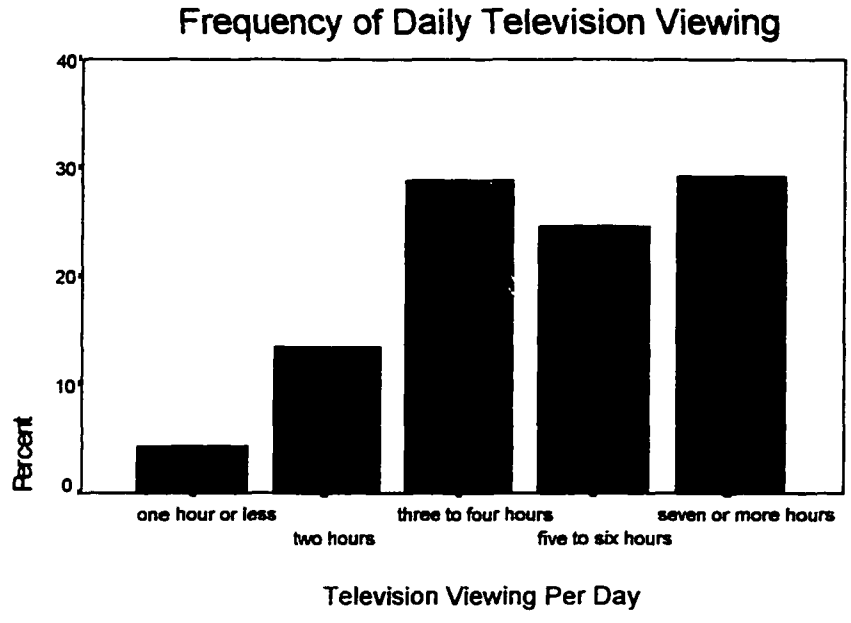
This chapter explores the influence of the mass media on adolescent political socialization. Initially, this chapter examines the media viewing habits of adolescents. The analysis explores how often teens read a newspaper and watch television news. This study considers how many hours each day are devoted to watching television and how often parents place limits on teen television viewing. Second, this chapter examines gender and racial differences in media exposure. Third, the analysis describes the influence of the mass media on adolescent partisanship. Fourth, this chapter details the impact of mass media viewing on political interest, political knowledge and political cynicism. Finally, this study explores the relationship between television viewing and social trust.

Media Exposure Among Adolescents

Television has often been characterized as the "electronic babysitter" of our nation's children and adolescents. When we consider the amount of time that children devote to watching television, such a description appears to be quite accurate. The prevalence of television viewing is evident at an early age. Centerwall (1993, 56) notes that the typical preschooler watches more than 27 hours of television per week. Condry (1993, 262) calculates that "the average American child watches approximately 4-5 hours of television a day during the week, and 7-9 hours a day on weekends, about 40 hours a week." Zoglin (1990, 75) estimates that "the average American child has watched about nineteen thousand hours of television by the end of high school." Putnam (1995a, 679) notes that "among youngsters aged 9-14 television consumes as much time as *all other discretionary activities combined*, including playing, hobbies, clubs, outdoor activities, informal visiting, and just hanging out." Given the fact that many children are essentially growing up in front of a television set, a careful inspection of the influence of television on adolescent political socialization is clearly in order.

In the Oklahoma City survey, students were asked "how many hours each day do you watch television?" Figure 6.1 reveals the extent of television viewing among the 942 adolescents in the sample. Only 17 percent of the students watch two hours or less of television per day. 29 percent of the teens watch three to four hours of television each day. One-quarter of the adolescents view five to six hours of television on a daily basis. 29 percent of the students admit to watching seven or more hours of television per day. It may seem shocking that almost one-third of the students in the sample watch seven or more hours of television each day, but the television set is turned on in the average

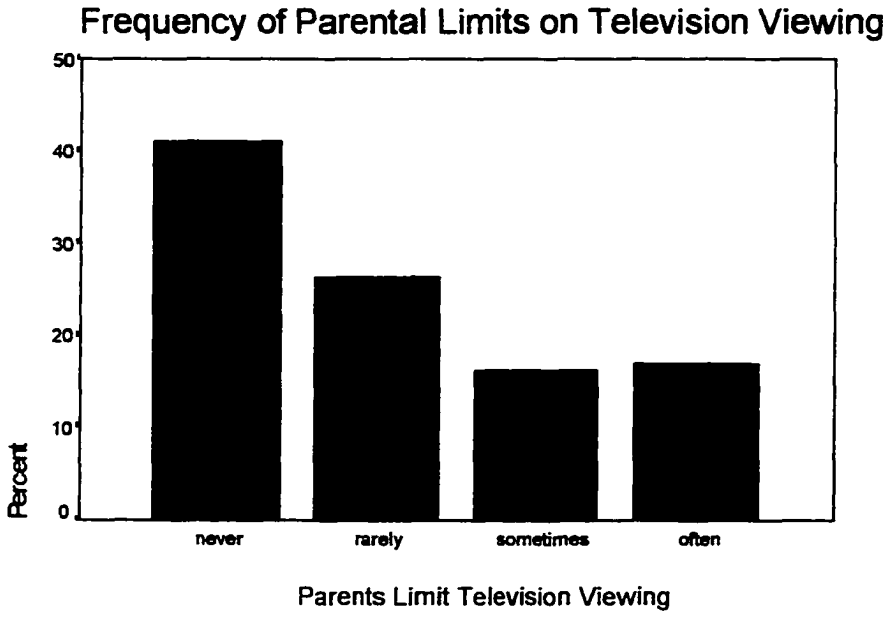
Figure 6.1



household more than seven hours a day (Condry 1993, 261). Levels of television viewing have been steadily increasing in the United States for several decades. Television viewing per household in 1995 was more than 50 percent higher that it had been in the 1950s (Putnam 1995a, 677). The middle school students that comprise this sample are being raised in an era of heavy television viewing.

Since the students in this sample admit to spending a large part of each day in front of a television set, we might surmise that their parents place few limits on television viewing. Oklahoma City middle school students were asked "how often do your parents limit the amount of time you can spend watching television?" Student responses to the question appear in Figure 6.2. Approximately four in every ten adolescents report that their parents place no limits on television viewing. 25 percent of the students note that their parents rarely limit television viewing. 16 percent of the teens report that their

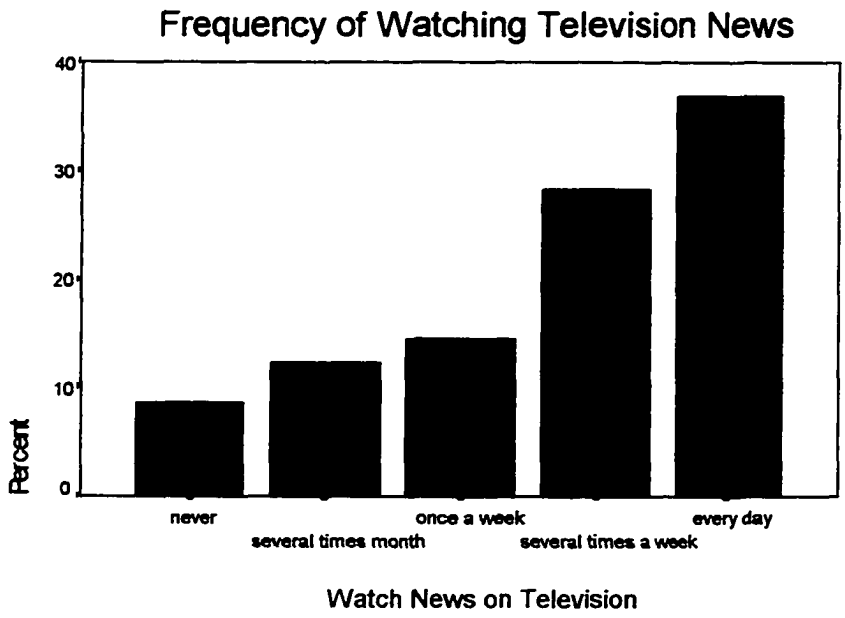
Figure 6.2



parents sometimes limit television viewing and another 16 percent admit that their parents often limit television viewing. Given the high levels of television viewing evident in Figure 6.1, it comes as no surprise that two-thirds of the students in this sample report that their parents rarely or never limit television viewing.

Adolescent media exposure was also measured by a question concerning television news viewing. The students were asked "how often do you watch the news on television?" Figure 6.3 illustrates the frequency of adolescent television news viewing. Almost nine percent of the teens admit to never viewing the news on television. 12 percent view television news several times a month and 14 percent watch the news once a week. 28 percent of the middle school students report that they watch television news several times a week. More than one-third of the sample (37 percent) watch television news on a daily basis. Approximately two-thirds of the middle school students view

Figure 6.3

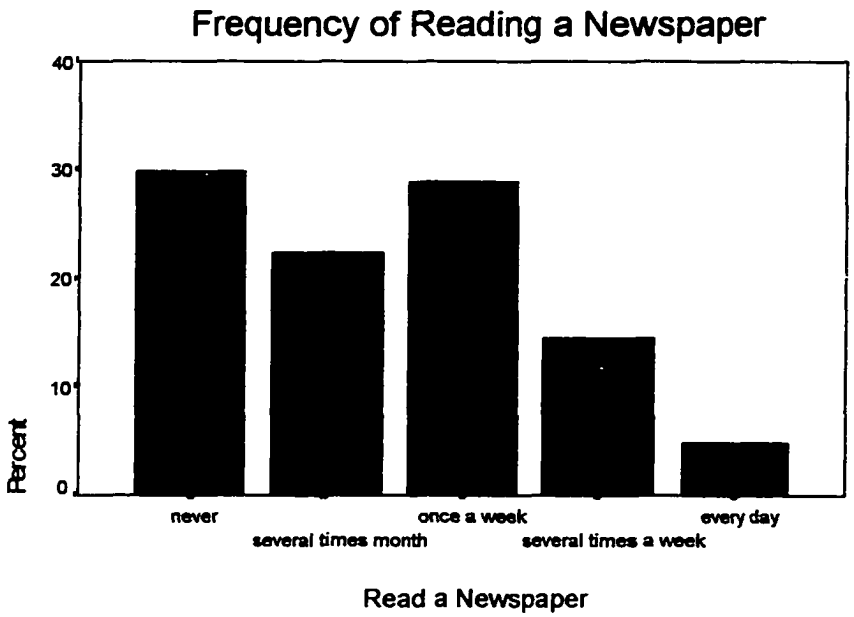


television news every day or at least several times a week.

The final question concerning adolescent media exposure relates to reading a newspaper. Oklahoma City middle school students were asked "how often do you read a newspaper?" Figure 6.4 reports the frequency of reading a newspaper by the adolescents in this sample. Roughly 30 percent of the student admit to never reading a newspaper. Slightly more than one in five students read a newspaper several times a month. 29 percent of the students read a newspaper once a week. Only 14 percent of the teens read a newspaper several times a week, and a paltry five percent read a newspaper every day. While many of the students watch television news on a daily basis, very few read a newspaper on a consistent basis.

Before we consider the influence of media exposure on adolescent political learning, it is important to examine the factors that account for the varying levels of media

Figure 6.4



exposure. Since more than half of the students view five hours or more of television per day, the forces that relate to heavy television viewing will be explored. Race has often been emphasized as a key variable relating to heavy television viewing. The analysis will also consider the variables that relate to television news viewing and reading a newspaper. Previous research has identified gender differences in relation to watching the news on television.

Race, Gender and Media Exposure

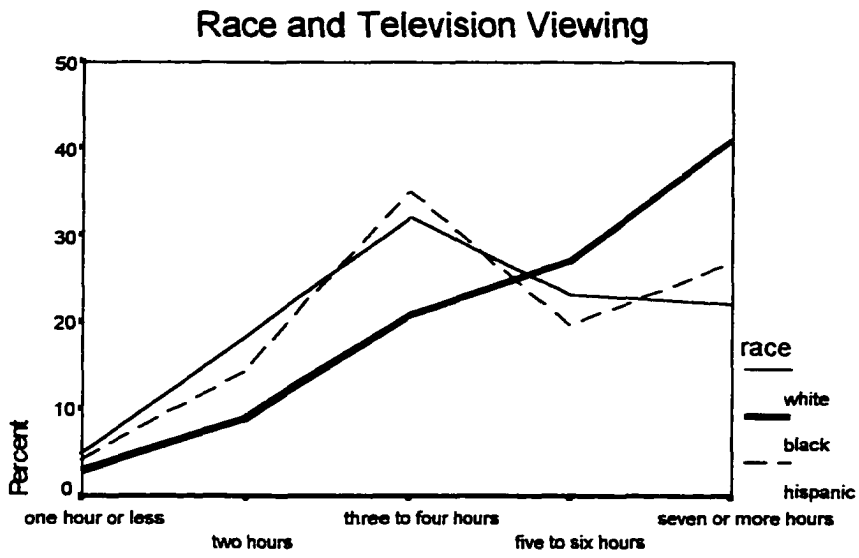
One explanation for the high levels of television viewing among the adolescents in this study may be the racial diversity of the sample. 37 percent of the students in this sample are African-American, and several studies suggest that television viewing is highest among black children. Dorr (1982, 22) documents numerous studies that reveal black children on the average spend more time watching television than do white children

(Greenberg and Dervin 1972; Greenberg and Dominick 1969; Lyle and Hoffman 1972). Jeter (1996, 31) reports that "nearly one of every two black fourth-graders said they watched six hours or more of television daily...That's more than three times the rate at which their white classmates reported spending that many hours in front of a television." Heavy television viewing among black adolescents may have its roots in cultural distinctions. Jeter (1996, 31) explains that "African-Americans are more drawn than whites to the spoken word, and television viewing habits are largely a manifestation of a long-standing oral tradition that has endured the middle passage, slavery and the invention of television."

Figure 6.5 illustrates the levels of television viewing for white, black and Hispanic students. The rates of television viewing for white and Hispanic students are roughly equivalent. The largest percentage of white (32 percent) and Hispanic students (35 percent) fall in the category of viewing three to four hours of television per day. Despite the findings of studies that Hispanic teens watch more television than white students (Lyle and Hoffman 1972; Jeter 1996), the two groups are very similar in this study. On the other hand, black students stand out as more likely to be heavy television viewers. 41 percent of the African-American students admit to watching seven hours or more of television each day. 27 percent of Hispanic students and 22 percent of white students report watching seven hours or more of television on a daily basis. Black students are also most likely to watch five to six hours of television per day.

While racial differences are evident in television viewing, several other factors are likely to have an influence on teen television viewing. Gender and age differences might also be evident. Television viewing may be highest among children from a mother-only

Figure 6.5



family. Jeter (1996, 31) asserts that many single working mothers rely on television to occupy their children while they are at work. Group membership should have a strong negative relationship with television viewing. Students who are very active in groups should presumably have less time available to watch television. Parental limits on television viewing should also have a strong negative influence on adolescent levels of television viewing. Finally, poverty is a factor that must not be ignored in relation to television viewing in childhood and adolescence. Jeter (1996, 31) notes that "nearly 40 percent of fourth-graders who attend school in districts designated as poor by the Department of Education watch at least six hours daily, nearly double the percentage of those from more affluent school districts."

Table 6.1 illustrates the results of regressing television viewing on seven independent variables: age, gender, race, mother-only family, group membership, parental

limits on television viewing and poverty. Age is simply measured as the age of the student and gender is a dummy variable coded 1 for males and 0 for females. Race is also a dummy variable coded 1 for black students and 0 for all other students. The mother-only family variable is another dummy variable that is coded 1 for teens that live only with their mother and 0 for all other family types. Group membership is measured as the number of school and after-school groups that students report membership in. Parental limits on television viewing is measured by the question "how often do your parents limit the amount of time you can spend watching television." The poverty variable is measured as the percentage of households on public assistance in the attendance area of a middle school. With the five middle schools in this study, the poverty variable ranges from 5.07 to 11.53. A limitation of this variable is that all of the middle school students from a given middle school share the same score for the poverty variable.

The O.L.S. regression results in Table 6.1 indicate that race has the strongest influence on television viewing. The standardized regression coefficient is .21 with a t-value of 6.57. The regression coefficient is in the expected direction—black students are significantly more likely to be heavy television viewers than all other students. Three other variables are conspicuous in Table 6.1. When parents limit television viewing, the adolescents in this study are less likely to be heavy television viewers. The regression coefficient for the group membership variable is significant and in the expected direction. Students that are involved in group activities watch less television than students that report little to no involvement in school and after-school groups. The gender variable indicates that boys are more likely to be heavy television viewers than girls. While teens in mother-only families are more likely to be heavy television viewers than children from

Table 6.1

Regression Analysis of Adolescent Television Viewing

Independent Variables	Beta	t-value	sig.
Age	-.02	-.61	.543
Gender	.07	2.04	.042
Race	.21	6.57	.000
Mother-only family	.06	1.95	.051
Group Membership	-.14	-4.27	.000
Parents Limit TV	-.19	-6.11	.000
Poverty	-.003	-.09	.928

F-value=17.476 ($p<.001$)
$R^2=.12$
Adjusted $R^2=.11$
N=942

other types of families, the regression coefficient is not significant at $p<.05$. The most surprising result in Table 6.1 is that poverty has virtually no impact on the television viewing habits of the adolescents in this study. If affluent suburban middle schools had been compared with several of the poorer Oklahoma City middle schools, the poverty measure might have had a more noticeable impact on television viewing among the students.

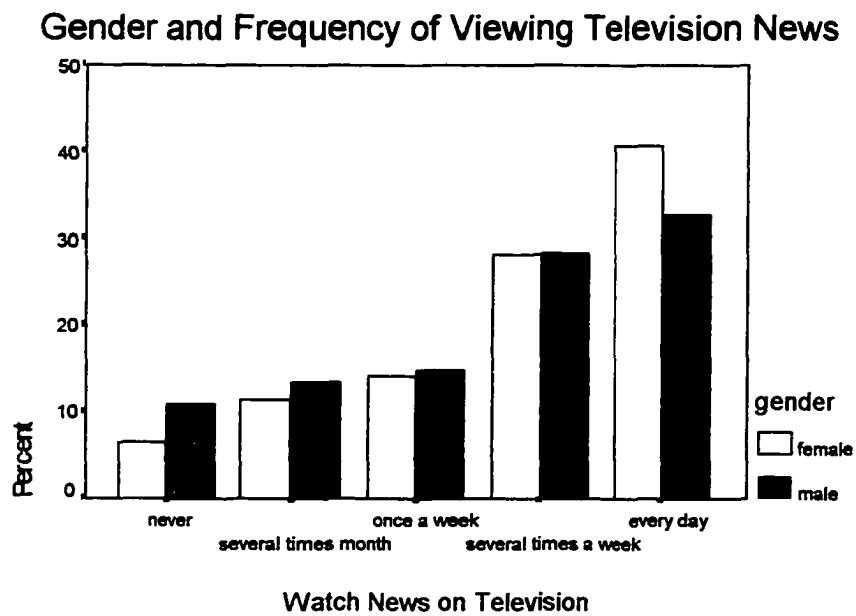
The most important finding in Table 6.1 is that race has a significant impact on television viewing even after controlling for age, gender, family structure, group membership, parental limits and poverty. While parental limits on television and group

membership have a statistically significant influence on television viewing habits, the impact is not as strong as might be expected. For both variables, the standardized regression coefficients are below .20 and the overall model only accounts for slightly more than 10 percent of the variance in the dependent variable. Despite parental limits and group involvement, some middle school students are still managing to watch substantial amounts of television on a daily basis. For the regression model in Table 6.1, there does not appear to be a problem with multicollinearity or outliers.[1]

The regression results indicate that boys are more likely to be heavy television viewers than girls, but are they also more likely to watch the news on television? Several studies have discovered that boys report viewing more news than do girls (Adkin 1978; Rubin 1978). In a study of English children, Dowse and Hughes (1971) discover that 89 percent of the teenage boys report that they "always watched the news on television" but only 25 percent of the girls in the Exeter sample gave the same response. Gender differences in viewing the news on television may be related to lower levels of political interest among girls. Owen and Dennis (1988, 30) report that "females tended to have less interest in politics and to pay less attention to presidential policy making than did males." The authors (40) also note that "females were less strongly oriented toward the political process and political leaders. Older girls in particular scored lower on questions of political knowledge and debate watching than did their male counterparts." Bennett and Bennett (1989) argue that although women vote in national elections at the same rate as men, they continue to lag behind men in political interest. A "gender gap" apparently still exists in relation to political interest.

Figure 6.6 reports the frequency of viewing the news on television by gender. Contrary to the findings of the aforementioned research, the rates of viewing television news are roughly equivalent for males and females in the Oklahoma City survey. Females are actually more likely to view the news every day than males. 41 percent of the adolescent females in this study watch the news on television every day compared to 33 percent of males who view the news each day. Not only are the girls in this sample more likely to watch the news each day than the boys, but they also have higher levels of political interest. On the political interest scale, girls have a mean score of 5.4 and boys have a mean score of 5.0.[2]

Figure 6.6



Since group membership is negatively correlated with television viewing, we might expect group membership to also have an effect on television news viewing and reading a newspaper. Figure 6.7 explores the relationship between group membership and television

Figure 6.7

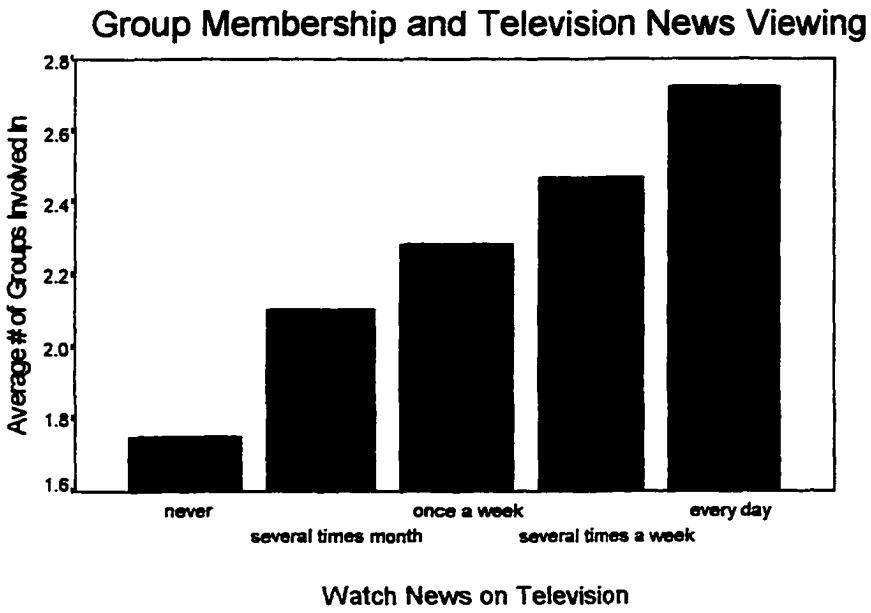
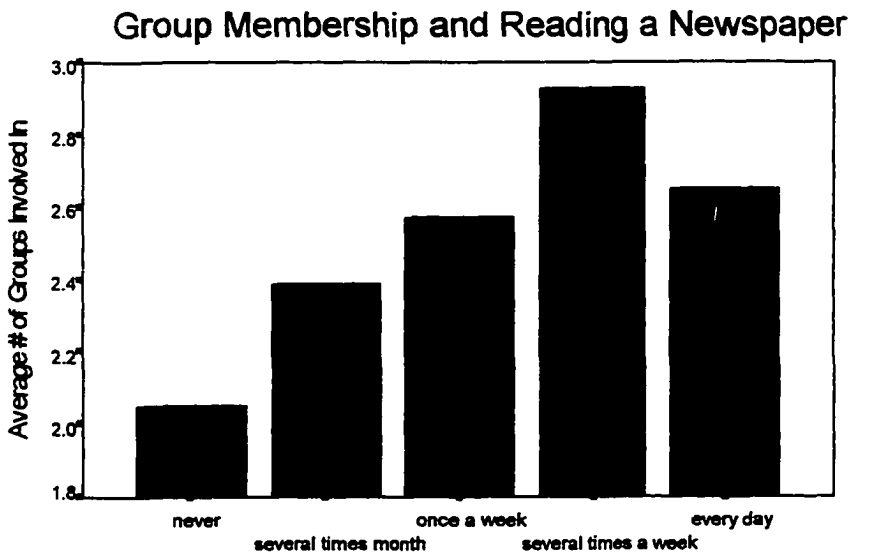


Figure 6.8



news viewing. Adolescents who watch the news every day are involved in 2.7 groups on average. Students who never watch the news are involved in only 1.76 groups on average. Group membership steadily increases across the categories of television news viewing. Figure 6.8 also reveals that group membership is at its lowest level for students who never read a newspaper. Students that read a newspaper several times a week have the highest group involvement (2.9 groups on average) and adolescents that read a newspaper every day have the next highest level of group involvement (2.64 groups on average). Figures 6.7 and 6.8 may reflect the link between group membership and civic awareness that is clearly highlighted in Chapter 4. Students that are actively involved in groups may take a greater interest in current events as reflected in the broadcast news and newspapers than students who are uninvolved in groups. It is also worth noting that students who frequently watch the news on television are most likely to read a newspaper on a regular basis. The correlation between watching the news on television and reading a newspaper is .32 which is statistically significant at $p<.01$.

Media Exposure and Adolescent Partisanship

While the family is often considered the most powerful agent in the transmission of party identification, the fact that many children are glued to a television set justifies an investigation of the role of television in the formation of adolescent partisanship. Dennis (1986) argues that the media can have a strong departisanizing effect on adolescents. Television not only has a bias against presenting partisanship in a positive light, but it also places great emphasis on individual personalities rather than the role of the parties (Dennis 1986). Gerbner et al. (1984) discover a link between heavy television viewing and a lack

of political orientations such as party identification or ideology among adults. Exposure to network news can also have a departisanizing effect. Dennis (1986, 430) explains that

> Network journalists, especially those most prominent in news programming, are not officially nonpartisan, but also sometimes subtly antipartisan as well. This is understandable given the strong professional norm of American journalism to look with suspicion upon the posturing and maneuvers of politicians, and thus quite easily to become skeptical of the role of the two major parties as well. The criticism by pro-party media observers is that television thus becomes, if not very consciously, an important source of cues about the value of maintaining one's political autonomy or a distant sense of identity with a party.

Scholars have also lamented that many newspapers have lost their partisan slant (Dennis 1986; Rubin 1981). Most newspapers have abandoned the strategy of endorsing candidates of a single party (Becker et al. 1975). The research on media exposure and adolescent partisanship leads to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 Heavy television viewing and frequent exposure to television news has a departisanizing effect on adolescents.

In the Oklahoma City survey, adolescent partisanship was measured by two questions. The first question asked the students "if you could register to vote, would you be a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent?" Approximately 35 percent of the students identified themselves as a Democrat or a Republican. 12 percent of the students described themselves as an Independent. 13 percent answered that they do not know what Republican and Democrat means. The remaining 40 percent simply answered "don't know" to the question. The second question asked the middle school students to name an important difference between the Republicans and Democrats. Only 212 students (22.5 percent of the sample) were able to identify a difference between the parties.

Beyond the influence of the mass media, several other factors should play a role in the formation of partisanship in adolescence. Based upon a three-wave panel study of

Wisconsin preadults aged 10-17, Dennis (1986, 427) reports that "older children are slightly more likely to be neutral in partisan terms." Dennis (1986, 428) also discovers that female adolescents are more likely than males to identify themselves as Independent. As noted in Chapter 3, a strong association exists between family politicization and adolescent partisanship at the bivariate level. For those students who do not discuss politics at all in their family, over 70 percent do not identify with a political party. In families that talk about politics very often, 52 percent of the adolescents identify with a political party. A corollary of the link between family politicization and partisanship is that political knowledge should have a strong positive influence on the emergence of a sense of partisanship in adolescence. Dennis (1986, 426) observes "the less information that the child seeks, the more antiparty she or he is likely to be." Group membership might also be related to adolescent partisanship. Teens who are actively involved in school and after-school groups might have a greater appreciation of the role of political parties than teens who are uninvolved in groups.

Table 6.2 presents the results of a multivariate analysis of adolescent partisanship. Party identification is a dichotomous dependent variable coded 1 for students that identify themselves as a Democrat or Republican and 0 for all other responses. The other dependent variable has been coded 1 for students that could identify a difference between the Democratic and Republican parties and 0 for the students that could not identify a difference. Since both of the dependent variables are dichotomous, logit analysis has been employed rather than ordinary least squares regression.

Ten independent variables appear in Table 6.2. The age variable ranges from 12 to 16 with 14 the most frequently reported age. Gender is a dummy variable coded 1 for

males and 0 for females. Race is also a dummy variable coded 1 for white students and 0 for all other students. Family politicization is measured by two questions relating to family discussions of politics. The first question asks students "do you hear anyone in your family talk about politics, voting, and things like that?" The second question asks the students "do you ever ask anyone in your family questions about politics and government?" The political knowledge index is based upon six questions covering current events, governmental structure and political figures. Group membership is the number of school and after-school groups that the student reports involvement in. Poverty is measured as the percentage of households on public assistance in the attendance area of the middle school. The final three independent variables capture the influence of the mass media: frequency of reading a newspaper, number of hours spent each day watching television and the frequency of watching the news on television.

Table 6.2 reports the individual coefficient estimates of the logit analysis. The standard errors of the parameter estimates appear in the parentheses. The results of the logit analysis reveal that none of the media variables have a significant influence on party identification or identifying a difference between the parties. Despite the findings of previous research that heavy television viewing, reading newspapers and watching televised news can have a depressing impact on partisanship, the sense of partisanship among the students in this sample is not conditioned by media viewing habits. In contrast to the media variables, family politicization and political knowledge exert a strong influence on adolescent partisanship. The data analysis in Chapter 3 reveals that family politicization is related to adolescent party identification and the ability to identify a difference between the Democrats and Republicans. The results of the logit analysis in

Table 6.2

Logit Analysis of Adolescent Partisanship

Independent Variables	Party Identification	Identify a Difference Between the Parties
Age	.13 (.0925)	-.03 (.1061)
Gender	.34** (.1521)	.05 (.1747)
Race	-.04 (.1538)	-.08 (.1764)
Family Politicization	.22*** (.0384)	.27*** (.0451)
Political Knowledge	.33*** (.0500)	.38*** (.0572)
Group Membership	.09* (.0479)	.10* (.0537)
Poverty	-.04 (.0402)	-.08 (.0481)
Read a Newspaper	-.002 (.0667)	.11 (.0768)
Watch Television News	.07 (.0622)	.004 (.0728)
Television Viewing	.06 (.0655)	.0907 (.0761)
Model Chi-Square	117.57***	123.92***
% Cases Correctly Classified	68.79	78.56
Number of Cases	942	942

* $p<.10$
** $p<.05$
*** $p<.01$

Table 6.2 convincingly demonstrate that the relationship holds even after controlling for nine other variables. Adolescents reared in families that frequently discuss politics are not only more likely to understand the differences between the political parties but also more likely to identify themselves as a Democrat or a Republican. Furthermore, high levels of political knowledge are positively correlated with party identification and identifying a difference between the parties. Adolescents that do not seek political information fail to identify with a political party, and they are unable to identify a major difference between the two parties.

Group membership has a positive influence on party identification and identifying a difference between the parties, but the impact is relatively modest. Group membership is statistically significant at the more relaxed criterion of $p<.10$. The results in Table 6.2 also reveal that boys are more likely than girls to identify themselves as a Democrat or a Republican. Although boys are more likely to identify with a political party, gender differences do not appear in relation to identifying a difference between the parties. The lower level of party identification among girls cannot be attributed to lower levels of political interest. As noted earlier in this chapter, the females in this sample have higher levels of political interest than boys. Although Dennis (1986, 428) reports that "females are more associated with this dimension of independence attitudes than are males," the boys in this sample are more likely to identify as Independents than girls (14% vs. 11%). The girls in the Oklahoma City sample are simply less likely to identify as a Democrat, Republican or Independent in comparison to the boys. Party identification might take on greater salience for females in late adolescence or early adulthood.

The logit model for party identification correctly predicts almost 69 percent of the cases. The model for identifying a difference between the parties correctly predicts 78 percent of the cases. The chi-square statistic for both models is statistically significant at $p<.01$. Although television viewing, newspaper reading and watching the news on television did not have a conspicuous influence on adolescent partisanship, the media viewing habits of adolescents might exert a greater influence on political interest, political knowledge and political cynicism.

The Influence of Mass Media Viewing on Political Interest, Political Knowledge and Political Cynicism

Drew and Reeves (1980) argue that a child's first contact with politics tends to come through television. Television may provide the first exposure to the president or other elected officials for many children. Adolescents can develop an understanding of current events and governmental processes by viewing the news on television. Chaffee and Yang (1990, 138) argue that "television continues to be a major bridge to politics throughout childhood, bringing to young people images of lively figures—dominated by the heads of state—to flesh out the 'textbook' concepts of government and national history they are learning at school." Many studies have documented a strong link between news media exposure and political knowledge among adolescents. Conway et al. (1981, 170) reveal that a child's news media use has a strong positive influence on political knowledge.[3] Chaffee and Yang (1990, 138) report that adolescents "who become readers of newspapers and newsmagazines rapidly outstrip their nonreading adolescent peers in knowledge both of current politics and of the more enduring structure and process of

government." Atkin (1981) documents that television news viewing is associated with high levels of political knowledge during adolescence.

Media exposure exerts a powerful influence on political knowledge even after controlling for other relevant variables. Chaffee and Yang (1990, 142) explain that news media use—measured as reading newspapers and newsmagazines—is a more important factor than age as a predictor of political knowledge levels for students ranging in age from 10 to 19. Chaffee and Tims (1982, 756) discover that news media use is "a powerful additional source of political information beyond the contributions of school and family." Owen and Dennis (1992, 21) contend that "children themselves perceive that they learn more about politics from television than from other information sources, including parents, teachers and peers."

Owen and Dennis (1992, 21) report that a growing body of literature indicates that news media exposure is not only associated with higher levels of political knowledge but also rising levels of political interest. Chaffee and Tims (1982, 748) note that only 12 percent of adolescents at the lowest level of media exposure report that they like to talk about politics. At the highest level of media exposure, 64 percent of adolescents report that they like to talk about politics.[4]

The influence of media exposure on basic political orientations is not always positive. Mutz (1986) finds that distrust of the political system is associated with political learning from the media. Chaffee and Yang (1990, 139) assert that low knowledge levels and a lack of political identity are associated with heavy viewing of television among the young and old. Based upon data from the 1990 American Citizen Participation study, a random sample of 15,000 members of the public, Norris (1996, 478) reveals that "people

who watch a great deal of television know less about politics, feel less able to affect government, and are less interested in politics." Norris (1996, 478) is careful to note that "reading newspapers was positively associated with knowledge, efficacy and interest, indeed the strongest predictor of these attitudes in the equation." Since reading a newspaper, viewing television news and the general viewing of television might have different effects on basic political orientations, a close inspection of each variable is in order. The aforementioned research on media use suggests the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2 Reading a newspaper and viewing the news on television improves levels of political knowledge among adolescents.

Hypothesis 3 Reading a newspaper and viewing the news on television increases levels of political interest among adolescents.

Hypothesis 4 Heavy television viewing is associated with high levels of political cynicism among adolescents.

These hypotheses will be tested through a path analysis. Several studies of media exposure and adolescent political socialization have utilized path analysis (Chaffee and Tims 1982; Conway et al. 1981). Conway et al. (1981, 166) argue that "research dealing with the role of the news media in children's political socialization suggests a developmental model in which certain antecedent variables influence news media use and political knowledge, with both antecedent and intervening variables having an impact on additional political attitudes and behaviors." The path analysis in this study includes nine exogenous or antecedent variables: age, gender, race, poverty, group membership, enrollment in an honors course, frequency of reading a newspaper, frequency of watching the news on television, and television viewing per day. The first stage of the path analysis examines the linkages between the nine exogenous variables and three intervening

variables. The intervening variables are political knowledge, political interest and political efficacy. The second stage of the path analysis explores the influence of the exogenous variables and the intervening variables on political cynicism.

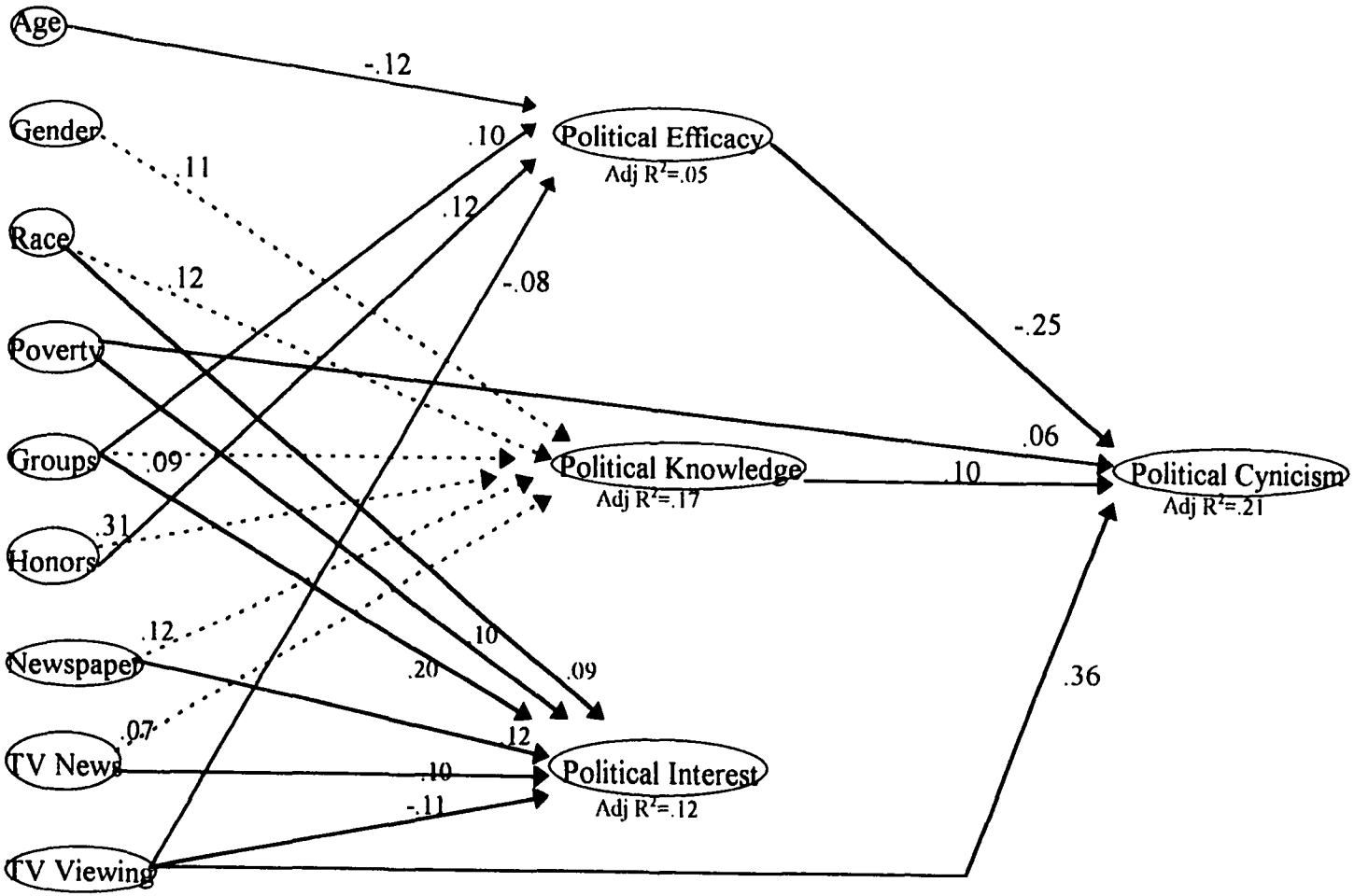
A note is in order on the selection of the three intervening variables. Conway et al. (1981) treat political knowledge as an intervening variable that influences electoral system support, party system support and political participation. Jennings (1996, 229) emphasizes the powerful role of political "expertise and information holding in the making of political judgments and the processing of political information." Political interest is also treated as an intervening variable. An adolescent's interest in politics or the lack thereof should influence basic political orientations such as trust in the political system. Students that are disinterested in politics might be the most cynical about the political system. The final intervening variable is political efficacy. Erikson and Tedin (1995, 167) contend that individuals with a strong sense of political efficacy tend to trust government.

The key dependent variable in the path analysis is political cynicism. Erikson and Tedin (1995, 163) note that scholars have paid considerable attention to political trust because it can "serve as a barometer indicating how well government is performing." Many scholars have emphasized the link between political trust and democratic stability. Arthur Miller (1974, 951) has declared that "a democratic political system cannot survive for long without the support of a majority of its citizens." Easton and Dennis (1969) provide a theoretical foundation for political socialization research based upon political trust. Easton and Dennis (1969) argue that preadult political socialization inculcates "diffuse support" for the political system. Diffuse support is a reservoir of trust in the political system that citizens can draw upon as they age. Given the dramatic rise in

political cynicism over the past two decades, scholars of mass political behavior have carefully studied political trust. The following path analysis should shed additional light on some of the contemporary causes of political cynicism in the preadult years.

The results of the path analysis are presented in Figure 6.9. Ordinary least squares regression was utilized to estimate the model.[5] The arrows represent relationships that are statistically significant at $p<.05$. The standardized regression coefficients appear next to each path in the model. Hypothesis 2 argues that reading a newspaper and viewing the news on television improves levels of political knowledge among adolescents. The findings of the path analysis confirm the relationship. Television news viewing and reading a newspaper have a positive and statistically significant effect on political knowledge. Enrollment in an honors course also contributes to higher levels of political knowledge.[6] As detailed in Chapter 4, group membership facilitates political learning. The race variable confirms the analysis presented in Chapter 5 that white students have higher levels of political knowledge than minority students. The path analysis in Figure 6.9 reveals that group membership and race exert a strong influence on political knowledge in a multivariate model. Finally, gender differences are noticeable in relation to political knowledge. The boys in this sample score higher on the political knowledge index than the girls. In a 1989 nationwide survey of political knowledge, Carpini and Keeter (1991, 606) discover that "at each level of education, men were more likely to be able to answer the questions than women." Jennings (1996, 248) also reports that men have higher levels of political knowledge than women. The classic studies of political socialization (Hyman 1959; Greenstein 1961, 1969; Easton and Dennis 1969; Hess and Torney 1968) emphasize gender differences in political learning. The analysis of political

Figure 6.9
Path Analysis of Media Exposure and Adolescent Political Cynicism



knowledge levels in this sample indicates that some of those gender differences continue to endure. The adjusted R^2 for the political knowledge model if .17.

In the case of political efficacy, the model fails to account for much of the variance in the variable. Although four exogenous variables have a statistically significant impact on political efficacy, the adjusted R^2 for the equation is only .05. Older teens in this sample appear to have lower levels of political efficacy than the younger students. Group membership contributes to a sense of political efficacy among the middle school students. Enrollment in an honors course also facilitates a sense of political efficacy. Television appears to retard a sense of political efficacy. In relation to political interest, the model performs better with an adjusted R^2 of .12. Six exogenous variables have a statistically significant effect on political interest. The race variable reveals that white students have more of an interest in politics than minority students. In a surprising finding, students from poorer middle schools report higher levels of political interest. Students that are active in school and after-school groups report high levels of political interest. In confirmation of hypothesis 3, middle school students that frequently read a newspaper and watch the news on television indicate greater interest in politics than students with little news media exposure. Finally, heavy television viewing on a daily basis appears to retard interest in politics.

The second stage of the path analysis scrutinizes the influence of the exogenous variables and the intervening variables on political cynicism. The path between political efficacy and political cynicism confirms the insight of Erikson and Tedin (1995) that individuals with a high sense of political efficacy are likely to trust the political system. As expected, students from schools that have an attendance area with a high rate of poverty

are likely to be cynical about the political system. One of the more distressing findings in Figure 6.9 is that political knowledge has a positive and statistically significant effect on political cynicism. As predicted by hypothesis 4, daily television viewing escalates levels of political cynicism among the middle school students in this sample. In the regression analysis of political cynicism, there does not appear to be a problem with multicollinearity or outliers.[7]

It should be noted that reading a newspaper and watching the news on television does not directly contribute to political cynicism, but there is an indirect effect through political knowledge. It may seem surprising that political knowledge contributes to political cynicism, but upon careful reflection the relationship makes sense. In the current political climate, gathering political information through the newspapers and television can heighten political distrust. NBC nightly news has a popular segment entitled "The Fleecing of America" and ABC nightly news runs a segment called "It's Your Money." Both segments are exclusively dedicated to exposing waste and fraud in government spending. The programs send a clear message to the viewer that taxpayer dollars are frequently wasted and misused. The viewer never receives an image of efficient government spending or a discussion of the billions of dollars in federal spending that are actually not wasted.

Furthermore, the front page of newspapers and the nightly news are often dominated by stories of investigations, prosecutions and indictments of elected officials. Ginsberg and Shefter (1990) have described contemporary politics as "R.I.P": revelations, investigations and prosecutions. Democrats and Republicans deal with each other by revealing scandals, conducting investigations and then prosecuting. Although Ginsberg

and Shefter wrote Politics By Other Means (1990) prior to the Clinton presidency and Republican control of the Congress, the last several years have provided ample evidence to support their thesis. Ginsberg and Shefter lament that R.I.P. fuels public distrust and cynicism towards the political system. The findings in Figure 6.9 indicate that such a relationship may hold in the preadult years. Teens who acquire political knowledge are more likely to distrust the political system which is not exactly the salutary impact that we hope for from political knowledge.

A picture is beginning to emerge concerning the rather negative impact of heavy television viewing on basic political orientations. The results of the path analysis indicate that heavy television viewing retards political interest, lowers political efficacy and has a dramatic impact on political cynicism. In their panel study of children from kindergarten to fourth grade, Moore et al. (1985, 192) argue that television coverage of crime, delinquency, drugs and abuse of the public trust contributes to negative perceptions of the United States. Conway et al. (1981, 173) discover that "children who are more knowledgeable about the political party system are more negative about it." Condy (1993, 270) bluntly declares

> Indeed, it [television] may be a dangerous source of information. It offers ideas that are false, unreal; it has no coherent value system, other than consumerism; it provides little useful information about the self. All of this makes television a terrible instrument for socialization. Since it was never meant to be a tool for the socialization of the young, children who use it in this manner face the possibility of growing up absurd.

While the results of the path analysis provide some evidence to indict television, the relationship between television viewing and social trust may be the smoking gun to convict.

Social Trust and Television Viewing

If we judge American society by the images presented on television, we would quickly come to the conclusion that our nation is awash in violence. Condy (1993, 263) reports that an average of twenty-five acts of violence appear per hour in children's programming compared with five acts of violence per hour in prime time television. Dworetz (1987) worries that the heavy television viewer lives in a symbolic world with its own world-view and psychological predispositions. Dworetz contends that this symbolic world is reminiscent of the world according to Thomas Hobbes. A key concern is that a steady diet of television can create a mean world syndrome. Murray (1995, 9) explains "the mean world syndrome suggests that children or adults who watch a lot of violence on television may begin to believe that the world is as mean and dangerous in real life as it appears on television, and hence, they begin to view the world as a much more mean and dangerous place."

A dire consequence of the mean world syndrome is that heavy television viewers become fearful of society and distrustful of their fellow citizens. Condry (1993, 263) reports that "youngsters who are heavy viewers of television, for example, are generally more fearful of violence in the real world." Gerbner et al. (1980) suggest that violence-laden television generates a pervasive and exaggerated sense of danger and mistrust. Murray (1995, 10-11) reports that "heavy television viewers (those who watch four hours or more each day), as opposed to light viewers (those who watched an hour or less each day), were much more fearful of the world around them, much more likely to overestimate their level of risk, and much more likely to overestimate the number of persons involved in law enforcement." Murray (1995, 11) also emphasizes that the relationship between

television viewing and fearfulness holds across education levels, income levels, and gender.

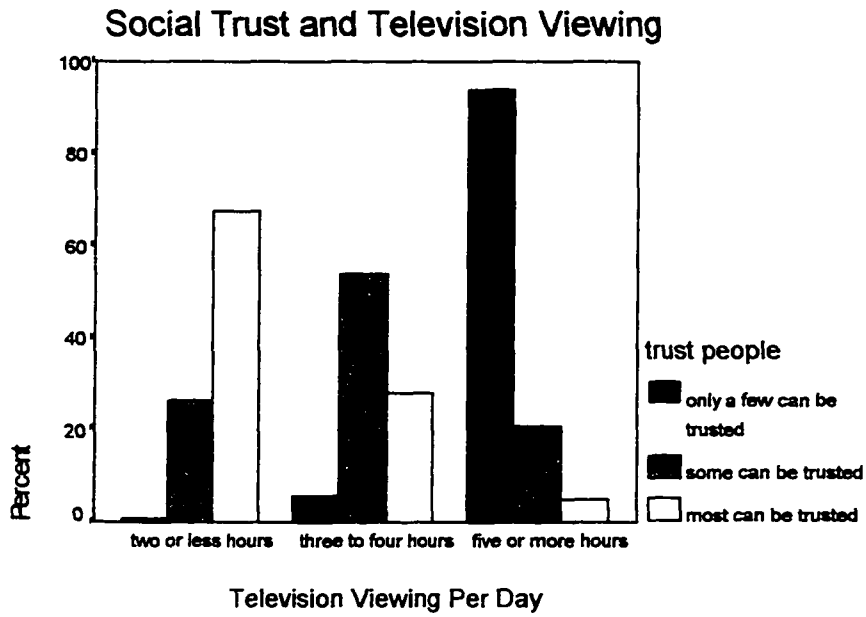
The growth of the mean world syndrome can significantly erode social trust. Putnam (1995b, 73) laments that "the proportion of Americans saying that most people can be trusted fell by more than a third between 1960, when 58 percent chose that alternative, and 1993, when only 37 percent did." Putnam believes that the key culprit in the declining levels of social trust is television. Through an analysis of General Social Survey data, Putnam (1995a, 678) discovers that "each hour spent viewing television is associated with less social trust and less group membership." Heavy television viewing can atomize the American polity as citizens isolate themselves and disengage from their community. The end result is the erosion of what Putnam (1995a; 1995b) calls "social capital." Social capital refers to the "features of social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam 1995a, 664-665).

The concerns expressed in the aforementioned research can be summarized in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5 Adolescents who are heavy television viewers exhibit lower levels of social trust than teens who are light television viewers.

In the Oklahoma City survey, middle school students were asked "would you say that most people can be trusted, some people can be trusted or only a few people can be trusted?" The wording is based upon a question tapping social trust that has been used in the General Social Survey for the past two decades. Figure 6.10 describes the relationship between television viewing and social trust. The results provide overwhelming support for

Figure 6.10



hypothesis 5. Of those middle school students that stated "only a few people can be trusted," 94 percent watch five or more hours of television per day. Among the teens that believe most people can be trusted, 68 percent watch two hours or less of television per day and 28 percent watch three to four hours per day. Figure 6.10 clearly reveals that social trust is primarily concentrated among light television viewers. Middle school students that believe only a few people can be trusted are consuming heavy amounts of television.

Although Figure 6.10 illustrates the strength of the relationship between television viewing and social trust at the bivariate level, other factors are likely to influence social trust. Chapter 3 notes that social trust appears to be lowest among adolescents being raised in mother-only families. Chapter 4 emphasizes the link between group membership and social trust. Putnam (1995a, 678) reports a strong correlation between newspaper

reading and social trust. Norris (1996, 479) argues that watching the evening news and reading a newspaper can be beneficial to the democratic health of society. Church attendance might also have an effect on social trust. Adolescents who attend church services on a weekly basis might exhibit more trust and confidence in people than teens who are disengaged from a religious community.

Table 6.3 reports the results of regressing social trust on ten independent variables. Age, gender, race and poverty have been included as control variables. Gender is a dummy variable coded 1 for males and 0 for females. Race is also a dummy variable coded 1 for white students and 0 for all other students. Poverty is the percentage of households on public assistance in the attendance area of a middle school. Mother-only family is another dummy variable coded 1 for adolescents who live with their mother and 0 for all other types of family structure. Group membership is the total number of school and after-school groups that teens report membership in. Church attendance is based upon a question that asked the teens "how often do you go to Mass, Church, Temple or Sunday school." Students could answer every week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never. The final three independent variables are the frequency of reading a newspaper, the frequency of watching the news on television and the number of hours spent watching television per day.

The O.L.S. regression results in Table 6.3 highlight the powerful influence of television even after controlling for nine other variables. As daily television viewing increases, social trust plummets. The standardized regression coefficient for television viewing is -.73 with a t-value of -31 which is statistically significant at $p<.001$. Although television dominates the regression equation, two other variables do reach statistical

Table 6.3

Regression Analysis of Adolescent Social Trust

Independent Variables	Beta	t-value	sig.
Age	-.01	-.60	.547
Gender	.04	1.87	.061
Race	.003	.14	.886
Mother-only Family	-.06	-2.58	.010
Group Membership	.05	2.06	.039
Church Attendance	-.01	-.34	.736
Poverty	.01	.59	.553
Read a Newspaper	-.01	-.57	.570
Watch Television News	.01	.41	.685
Television Viewing	-.73	-30.75	.000

F-value=106.741 ($p<.001$)
$R^2=.55$
Adjusted $R^2=.54$
N=889

significance. Confirming the analysis in Chapter 3, teens from mother-only families have relatively low levels of social trust. In support of Putnam's argument about the importance of social capital, group membership is positively correlated with social trust. Adolescents active in school and after-school groups have significantly higher levels of social trust than students who fail to join such groups. Despite the research that has emphasized the beneficial impact of reading a newspaper, the results in Table 6.3 indicate

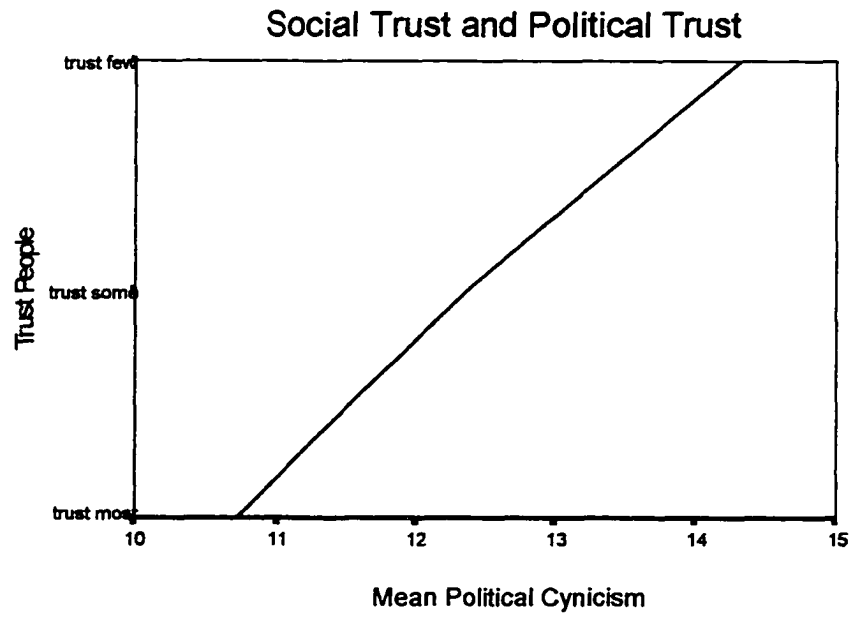
that reading a newspaper does not have a noticeable impact on social trust. In fact, the regression coefficient is in the opposite direction as predicted. Since so few students in this sample frequently read a newspaper, little can be made of this finding. It is also somewhat of a surprise that frequent church attendance does not improve the level of social trust for the middle school students in this sample. Reading a newspaper and church attendance may become salient in the adult years. The regression model performs well by accounting for more than half of the variance in social trust with an adjusted R^2 of .54. The number of cases is 889 since 53 students answered "don't know" to the social trust question. Multicollinearity is not a problem in the equation.[8]

The data analysis in Figure 6.10 and Table 6.3 represents the first effort to extend Putnam's theory to the study of preadult political socialization. It is not an overstatement to argue that heavy television viewing has a crippling effect on social trust for the adolescents in this sample. Teens who are being raised on a steady diet of television simply do not feel like they can trust other people in society. Although this survey did not include questions about societal fear and danger, the connection between television viewing and the lack of social trust may well have its roots in the mean world syndrome. In his writings and speaking engagements across this country, Robert Putnam has attempted to call our attention to the dramatic decline in social trust. The results of this study indicate that the situation may be even worse than Putnam imagines. Even in the seventh and eighth grade, social trust is being sacrificed on the altar of television. The most troubling question is whether or not adolescents can recover some degree of social trust later in life? Only a longitudinal study can answer such a question. The one encouraging finding is that group membership even in the middle school years has a

positive effect on social trust, although it is important to keep in mind the analysis presented in Chapter 4 that many adolescents are disengaged from school and after-school groups. Almost 30 percent of the students in the Oklahoma City middle school survey report no involvement in after-school groups. If a powerful sense of social distrust is inculcated in the preadult years, what are the chances that these students will become socially connected and trustful in their adult years? This question raises important concerns about the health of our democratic society as we head into the twenty-first century.

A final topic of interest concerns the relationship between social trust and political trust. Putnam (1995a, 665) speculates that "although social trust—trust in other people—and political trust—trust in political authorities—might be empirically related, they are logically quite distinct. I might well trust my neighbors without trusting city hall, or vice versa." Figure 6.11 illustrates a clear linear relationship between social trust and

Figure 6.11



political trust. Political cynicism sharply increases as social trust declines. Middle school students that believe only a few people can be trusted have a mean political cynicism score of 14.3 (on a scale of 5 to 20). Students that believe some people can be trusted have a mean political cynicism score of 12.4. The lowest political cynicism score, 10.7, is evident among students that state most people can be trusted. The differences in political cynicism across the levels of social trust are all statistically significant.[9] The correlation between social trust and political trust is -.47 which is statistically significant at $p<.01$.

Summary

In a 1961 speech to the National Association of Broadcasters, FCC Chairman Newton Minnow (Murray 1995, 11) argued

> ...when television is bad, nothing is worse. I invite you to sit down in front of your television set when your station goes on the air and stay there without a book, magazine, newspaper, profit and loss sheet or rating book to distract you—and keep your eyes glued to that set until the station signs off. I can assure you that you will observe a vast wasteland. You will see a procession of game shows, violence, audience participation shows, formula comedies about totally unbelievable families, blood and thunder, mayhem, violence, sadism, murder, western badmen, western good men, private eyes, gangsters, more violence, and cartoons. And endlessly, commercials—many screaming, cajoling, and offending...

Minow's speech would come to be known as the "vast wasteland" speech. In a 1981 speech to the National Association of Broadcasters, the new FCC Chairman Mark Fowler rejected the description of television as a vast wasteland (Murray 1995, 11). Chairman Fowler would later argue in an interview that the richness of television did not require regulation. Fowler declared that we do not regulate washing machines or dishwashers and television is just another appliance, it is just a "toaster with pictures" (Murray 1995, 11-12). When it comes to preadult political socialization, should television be viewed as a

"vast wasteland" or simply a "toaster with pictures?" The data analysis in this chapter indicates that it would be foolish to view television as nothing more than another household appliance. Television plays an important role in preadult political socialization and the impact is often quite negative.

Nationwide surveys indicate that American adolescents are heavy television viewers, and the students in this study are no exception. A recent nationwide survey of almost 1,000 teenagers discovered that "teens spend 7.5 to 9 hours a day watching TV or listening to the radio—more time than they spend in class and on homework" (Hales 1996, 5). More than half of Oklahoma City middle school students view five hours or more of television each day. At least some of this time in front of a television set is being spent on watching the news. 37 percent of the students watch the news on television every day. The Roper Organization (1983, 8) estimates that the average American spends seven hours watching television every day and about ninety minutes are devoted to news or documentaries in those seven hours. In the Oklahoma City survey, only 9 percent of the adolescents never watch the news on television. While many of the middle school students frequently view television news, the adolescents are much less likely to read a newspaper. Over half of the students in this sample never read a newspaper or only read one several times a month. Only 5 percent of the adolescents read a newspaper on a daily basis.

Although media exposure did not have a discernible influence on adolescent partisanship, media effects are noticeable in relation to political interest, political knowledge, political efficacy and political cynicism. The results of this study reveal that heavy television viewing lowers political efficacy, retards political interest and heightens

political cynicism. It appears that many adolescents in this study perceive the political world as it is portrayed on television. Television does not paint a flattering picture of politics, and many teens may absorb that image and evaluate government and politicians accordingly.

On the more positive side, watching the news on television and reading a newspaper increases political interest. Although reading a newspaper and watching the news on television improves political knowledge, it is disheartening that political knowledge in turn raises political cynicism. Many teens may be learning about politics through the barrage of scandals, congressional investigations, special prosecutors and indictments. Given the current American political scene, absorbing political knowledge may bring with it a heavy dose of political cynicism. American society might be trapped in a vicious cycle of political cynicism. High levels of political cynicism in the electorate encourage the media to produce news stories with a jaundiced view of politics and politicians which only reinforces cynicism.

The most troubling finding in this chapter is that heavy television viewing erodes social trust. Among adolescents that believe "only a few people can be trusted," an incredible 94 percent watch five or more hours of television per day. In the regression analysis of social trust, the television viewing variable dominates the equation. On the thirtieth anniversary of the vast wasteland speech, former FCC Chairman Newton Minow revealed "in 1961 I worried that my children would not benefit much from television, but in 1991 I worry that my grandchildren will actually be harmed by it" (Murray 1995, 11). Since a heavy dose of daily television viewing breeds social distrust among the students in this sample, Minow's concerns appear to be justified.

Parents, educators, politicians and concerned citizens need not throw up their hands in despair. The results of this study confirm that membership in school and after-school groups contributes to social trust. Much has been written about the idleness of today's youth, and more needs to be done to involve adolescents in school groups, clubs, and sports teams. Integrating students into group networks can pay a hefty reward in terms of improved social trust. Group membership also has another benefit in that active involvement in school and after-school groups lowers the levels of television viewing. For the middle school students in this sample, the relationship is simple and straightforward—more time in groups means less time in front of the television set. The results of the analysis in Table 6.1 also indicate that parental limits on television viewing can diminish the amount of time that teens spend glued to the television set. Technological innovations such as the V-chip will hopefully allow parents to exorcise the violent televised images that enter their home and contribute to the mean world syndrome and social distrust. Most importantly, parents must not allow television to become the electronic babysitter of their children. If parents allow children to be raised and educated in front of a television set, the consequences can be harmful not only to the child but also to our democratic society.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In the first year of his second term, President Clinton called for an era of big citizenship and a national dialogue on race. There is a growing awareness that integrating youth into community groups and bridging the wide racial gap in this country may be the keys to the future health of our democracy. The results of this study shed light on both of these recent presidential initiatives. For the middle school students in this survey, group membership has a salutary effect on political socialization, particularly in relation to citizenship awareness. The results of this study also reveal profound differences in the racial attitudes of black and white adolescents. Even in the seventh and eighth grade, a Grand Canyon like divide separates black and white students in their perceptions of racial discrimination in society. An investigation of racial attitudes in adolescence can uncover the origins of such attitudes and promote a national dialogue on race. Fundamentally, a return to political socialization research offers the promise of informing the debate on the issues that President Clinton highlighted at the beginning of his second term.

The recent initiatives by President Clinton call our attention to the social forces that exert considerable pressure on teenagers in the 1990s. This research project has been guided by a central concern with how the social environment influences the political socialization process. A focus on the social environment highlights the significance of poverty, family disruption, social groups, race and television. This study explores how the social environment pulls adolescents into the world of politics. A written questionnaire was administered to 942 middle school students in the Oklahoma City Public Schools. The students were surveyed in randomly selected social studies courses in five middle

schools. The survey results confirm that family discussions of politics and group membership can pull students into the world of politics. While family politicization and group membership play a positive role in the political socialization process, television can have a negative influence. With the breakdown of formal authority in contemporary society, a variety of agents compete with one another to influence the nation's youth.

Racial differences in political learning also provide evidence of diversity in the political socialization process. American government textbooks continue to discuss the political socialization process in universal terms. The racial differences highlighted in this study suggest that the textbook view of political socialization is simply wrong. While a barrage of public opinion surveys highlight important racial differences in how adults perceive the political system, these surveys provide an incomplete picture. This study of adolescent political socialization reveals that racial differences in the perceptions of the political and social world are clearly evident in the middle school years.

The following discussion will demonstrate that a return to political socialization research can provide support for the theories articulated by Cook (1985) and Merelman (1986). Furthermore, such research can shed light on current social problems and public policy debates. Finally, this study of adolescent political socialization illuminates avenues for future research efforts.

Theories of Socialization

Cook (1985) calls our attention to the importance of the social environment in the political socialization process. Previous theories of socialization largely focused on the push supplied by the individual in moving development along which underestimates the pull supplied by the social environment (Cook 1985, 1084). Cook (1985, 1086) argues

that "only when politics becomes more central in one's existence would a pull provided by one's environment impel one to a higher level of reasoning and understanding." Several of the key findings in this study confirm that the social environment can provide a pull in the political socialization process.

A politicized home environment can pull an adolescent into the world of politics. Adolescents who are being raised in families that frequently discuss politics are more likely to identify with a political party than students who do not discuss politics in their home. Furthermore, family politicization is related to an adolescent's ability to identify a difference between the political parties. Even occasional discussions of politics in the family can help increase political knowledge and political efficacy levels among the students in this study. Although family discussions of politics help to orient adolescents toward the political world, peer discussions of politics do not have a noticeable impact on basic political orientations. Only 5 percent of the students in this sample report frequently discussing politics with their friends. When teens discuss politics, the conversations may lack the structure and coherence that accompany family discussions of politics.

In addition to family politicization, membership in school and after-school groups has a strong influence on adolescent political socialization. Group membership is most conspicuous in relation to citizenship awareness. Students who are involved in school and after-school groups provide more detailed and articulate definitions of what it means to be a good citizen than teens who lack involvement in such groups. Groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, church groups and the YMCA have the most noticeable impact on citizenship awareness when members and non-members are compared. Group membership also has a positive impact on political interest, political efficacy and political

knowledge. One of the most important benefits of group membership is the growth in social trust that comes from involvement in school and after-school groups.

While family discussions of politics and group membership provide a pull into the world of politics for many adolescents, heavy television viewing can turn teens away from politics. Heavy television viewing among the adolescents in this study is associated with a lack of citizenship awareness. Heavy television viewing also lowers political interest and political efficacy. Students who consume a steady diet of television report high levels of political cynicism. Television viewing has its strongest effect on social trust. Of the middle students who watch five or more hours of television per day, 82 percent believe that "only a few people can be trusted."

The results of this study of Oklahoma City middle school students also provide support for Merelman's (1986) "lateral theory of socialization." Merelman (1986) offers a spirited critique of the four grand theories of politics as they relate to political socialization. Merelman (1986) essentially argues that systems theory, hegemonic theory, pluralist theory and conflict theory all assume a top-down pattern of political socialization in which key agents transmit messages to young people. Given the breakdown of formal authority in contemporary society, young people absorb new social images through a multiplicity of socialization agencies (Merelman 1986, 307-308). In contrast to a top-down pattern of socialization, Merelman's (1986, 307) lateral theory of socialization emphasizes the horizontally connected agents of socialization that "compete with one another to reach the young and, in the process, deliver quite varying images of society."

Merelman's (1986, 308-309) lateral theory of socialization notes that learning is often structured through peer groups and mass media viewing. The findings of this study

not only confirm the important role of group membership and television viewing in adolescent political socialization, they also reveal the varying images of society that are delivered to teenagers. Membership in school and after-school groups promotes citizenship awareness, social trust, political interest, political knowledge and political efficacy, while television viewing has a deleterious impact on social trust, political efficacy, political interest and citizenship awareness. Echoing the lateral theory of socialization, Condry (1993, 272) argues that "television exerts a powerful influence on the young precisely because other institutions that touch American children, at the moment, are functioning so poorly."

A focus on the pull of the social environment and the lateral theory of socialization can shed light on contemporary social problems and public policy debates. Numerous social ills have been linked to the breakdown of the nuclear family, and this study represents one of the first efforts to investigate how changes in family structure influence political learning. A variety of social problems have also been linked to excessive idleness among youth, and the Oklahoma City survey confirms the benefits of group membership. This study of political socialization has important implications for the heated debate on dwindling levels of social capital. Furthermore, this survey of middle school students provides a detailed analysis of racial attitudes in adolescence. The results can be informative for policymakers who are concerned about racial division in society and the resegregation of America. Finally, the analysis of television viewing and political socialization can inform the debate concerning regulation of the content of television programming.

Political Socialization Research, Social Problems and Public Policy

In a 1992 speech, Dan Quayle criticized the show *Murphy Brown* for glorifying an out-of-wedlock birth. Quayle's speech, part of a campaign theme of "family values," sparked a national debate on the decline of the nuclear family and the consequences for society. In an article entitled "Dan Quayle Was Right," Whitehead (1993) reports that children from single-parent families are more likely to be in poverty, to drop out of high school, to get pregnant as teenagers, to abuse drugs, and to be in trouble with the law as compared to children from intact families. Whitehead (1996, 30) notes that "more than half of all American children are likely to spend at least part of their lives in one-parent homes." In the Oklahoma City survey, only 39 percent of the adolescents live with their mother and father. More than one-quarter of the students live in a mother-only family.

This diversity in family structure provides an excellent opportunity to explore how changes in family composition influence political learning. Although sociologists have linked single-parent families to a variety of social problems, the impact of family structure on political learning is not as dramatic or deleterious. Teens from mother-only families report family discussions of politics at the same level as adolescents from two parent families. Levels of family politicization are roughly equivalent across the different types of families. It is possible that family discussions of politics have become less frequent in two parent families which accounts for the similar levels of family politicization. Political efficacy and political cynicism do not vary significantly by family structure. One explanation may be that adolescents from single-parent families are just as involved in school and after-school groups as teens from two parent families.

Family structure does have an impact on social trust. Social trust is clearly lowest among adolescents from mother-only families. About 61 percent of adolescents in mother-only families believe that only a few people can be trusted. Only 36 percent of the students in two parent families believe that only a few people can be trusted. This finding lends support to McLanahan's (1994) observation that children living apart from their father have a diminished sense of commitment and trust. One study of divorced children found that close to half of the children had not seen their father at all in the past year (Whitehead 1993, 65). The disappearance of the father might have a crippling effect on social trust. The decline in social trust can have important ramifications for political behavior. This study finds that social trust is associated with political trust. Putnam (1995a) notes that social trust is a key ingredient in civic participation during adulthood.

Much like the breakdown of the nuclear family, excessive idleness in adolescence is related to a variety of social ills. A recent task force organized by the Citizens League of Central Oklahoma notes that idleness in adolescence has been linked to substance abuse, unintended pregnancy, academic failure, juvenile crime and gangs (Growing Good Citizens Task Force 1997, 7). The task force report (1997) argues that after-school activities are a key weapon in fighting these social problems and helping to "grow good citizens." Based upon the results of this study of adolescent political socialization, the task force report (1997) concludes that after-school activities help to inculcate the value of being a good citizen for teenagers. The task force report (1997, 12-15) calls on community and civic leaders, educators, religious leaders, employers and governmental leaders to expand the opportunities for Central Oklahoma teenagers to become involved in community groups and after-school activities.

Although most scholars agree on the salutary effects of group membership, a heated debate has emerged concerning the levels of social capital in contemporary society. While Putnam (1995a, 666) laments that "America's stock of social capital has been shrinking for more than a quarter century," Ladd (1996, 1) argues that "a huge volume of readily available information says otherwise." Ladd (1996, 5) contends that an impressive body of survey data "tell a story of high and increasing engagement" among adult respondents. Although Ladd (1996, 5) is encouraged by the robust rates of volunteering among teenagers, the data indicate that 43 percent of teens admit to no volunteer activity over the past twelve months (Ladd 1996, 15). Furthermore, almost one-third of 12 to 17 year olds report no involvement in a youth group (Ladd 1996, 15). In the Oklahoma City survey, almost 30 percent of the middle school students are not involved in after-school activities. Given the strong link between adolescent group membership and adult political activity (Hanks and Eckland 1978; Verba et al. 1995), scholars should pay special attention to the levels of social capital among America's next generation of civic and political leaders.

This study of political socialization provides powerful support for Putnam's (1995a) argument that heavy television viewing undermines social trust. Although a Pew Research Center (1998b, 5) survey of Philadelphia area residents finds that television viewing is related to some measure of social trust, the relationship is dismissed because the demographic profile of heavy television viewers (younger, less educated and less affluent) accounts for the effect. The link between heavy television viewing and social distrust should not be casually dismissed. In the Oklahoma City survey, television viewing exerts a powerful influence on social trust even after controlling for factors such as age, gender,

race, poverty and group membership. This study of Oklahoma City middle school students also finds that social distrust can breed political cynicism.

As President Clinton discovered with his national dialogue on race, racial divisions in society remain one of the country's most intractable social and political problems. The results of this study reveal that sharp racial differences are evident even in the middle school years. A substantial majority of black students (61 percent) perceive high levels of racial discrimination in society, while only 7 percent of white students perceive high levels of discrimination. For black adolescents, perceptions of discrimination are strongly correlated with political cynicism. White middle school students exhibit higher levels of political interest and political knowledge than black students. In relation to political interest, black teenagers are more likely to admire civil rights leaders as opposed to governmental leaders. The admiration of civil rights leaders among black teens may reflect an "outside looking in" feeling towards governmental institutions and processes.

Several of the most interesting findings of this study relate to adolescent attitudes about segregation. The good news is that three-quarters of the students prefer attending an integrated school and two-thirds prefer living in an integrated neighborhood. Despite the preference for integration, sizable percentages favor some form of segregation. Heavy television viewing has a strong correlation with a preference for school and neighborhood segregation. This finding may be explained by the continued segregation evident in the casts of many television shows. Black males appear to have the strongest preference for school and neighborhood segregation. One of the most troubling findings is that attending an overwhelmingly black middle school reinforces the preference for school and neighborhood segregation among black adolescents. Quite expectedly, as black teens

become racially isolated from the rest of society they demonstrate a preference for a segregated environment.

A difficult public policy question is how to combat racial isolation in adolescence. School busing appears to be a politically untenable option in the current political environment. Many black mayors in large urban areas are now calling for an end to expensive school busing schemes (Leland and Smith 1997, 56). In fact, the Oklahoma City Public School Board recently voted to end busing in the middle schools. Factors such as white flight and an explosion in the number of private schools have created urban schools that are 90 to 95 percent black. Based upon the two years that he visited schools and spoke with children in approximately 30 neighborhoods across this country, Jonathan Kozol (1991, 2-3) remarks that "what startled me most—although it puzzles me that I was not prepared for this—was the remarkable degree of racial segregation that persisted almost everywhere. Like most Americans, I knew that segregation was still common in the public schools, but I did not know how much it has intensified." Although this study involves only one school district, the results offer hope that integrated schools can establish a preference for an integrated social environment. As politicians dismantle busing plans and the courts allow "neighborhood schools" that are overwhelmingly minority in composition, we must at the very least consider how these changes influence adolescent attitudes about integration. If school choice and voucher plans can help produce integration, they might serve as replacements for highly unpopular busing plans.

Adolescent perceptions of discrimination are also related to segregationist views. Among the black students in this sample, perceptions of discrimination increase the probability that a student will favor school and neighborhood segregation. For white

students, perceptions of discrimination increase the likelihood that a student will favor school and neighborhood integration. These findings create a dilemma for policymakers. A national dialogue on race that highlights continued racial discrimination in society might promote a preference for integration among whites, but it might also reinforce the desire for racial separatism among blacks.

While the good news is that a majority of the students in this survey support integration, the bad news is that many adolescents are cynical about the future of race relations. Almost 47 percent of white students and 44 percent of black students believe that relations between blacks and whites will get worse in the future. More than half of black adolescents, 51 percent, agree with the statement that "whites want to keep blacks down." Approximately half of white students (48 percent) in this study agree with the statement that "whites want blacks to get a better break." Many of the black middle school students perceive a high level of white hostility. Given the strongly socialized racial attitudes in this sample, a national dialogue on race must include discussions with adolescents. It is the teens of today who will be asked to bridge these racial divisions in the twenty-first century.

A final public policy issue concerns the regulation of the content of television programming. Of the numerous relationships analyzed in this study, the correlation between heavy television viewing and social distrust stands out as the strongest. A growing body of literature notes that viewing large amounts of television can lead to an exaggerated sense of fear and distrust (Gerbner et al. 1980; Dworetz 1987; Condry 1993, Murray 1995). Putnam (1995a) laments that a steady diet of television has eroded levels of social trust among adults over the last several decades. The Oklahoma City survey

confirms the deleterious impact of television on social trust even among seventh and eighth graders. The debate over the V-chip reveals that societal concerns about televised violence have worked their way into the realm of public policy. Centerwall (1993, 69) argues that "limiting children's exposure to television violence should become part of the public health agenda, along with safety seats, bicycle helmets, immunizations, and good nutrition. Part of the public health approach should be to promote child-care alternatives to the electronic babysitter, especially among the poor."

Particular attention must be paid to the impact of excessive television viewing on black children and adolescents. National surveys indicate that black children are heavy television viewers, and the students in the Oklahoma City survey are no exception. Around 41 percent of the African-American students in this study admit to watching seven hours or more of television each day. Only 22 percent of white students watch seven hours or more of television per day. Verba et al. (1993) note that African-Americans can be at a disadvantage in terms of political participation because of a deficit in politically relevant resources such as education, time, money and organizational skills. The problem is only compounded by the fact that many black children and adolescents are being raised in front of a television set. Television not only has a deleterious impact on political learning but it erodes social capital. The social distrust produced by television has the potential to disconnect black youth from their community and government before they ever reach adulthood. Every effort should be made to strengthen and expand organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club which provide valuable after-school activities for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Child-care tax credits or government subsidized after-school programs might prevent many black children from

spending most of their spare time in front of a television set. The public policy directive is very simple: an expansion of after-school activities and programs means that American youth will spend less time glued to a television set.

Congress can require V-chips in new television sets and the F.C.C. might attempt to limit the number of acts of violence that appear in television programs, but the ultimate responsibility for limiting the negative influence of television rests with parents. It is disheartening that 40 percent of the students in this study admit that their parents place no limits on television viewing. Parents must be educated that television is not a harmless babysitter of their children. Condry (1993, 270) is correct to declare that television was never meant to be a tool for the socialization of the young. Television can be a dangerous source of information and a terrible instrument for socialization. Since many parents have been raised by television, it will be a great challenge to make them aware of the need to limit the amount of television that their children watch. While the results of the Oklahoma City survey shed light on the aforementioned social problems and public policy concerns, this study also suggests directions for future research.

Future Research Agenda

Future studies of political socialization should emphasize diversity in the selection of the samples. Previous studies have suffered from the limitations of examining all white samples or students from affluent schools. A strength of this study is the racial diversity and the diversity of family composition. Despite this diversity, more research is needed in relation to Hispanic political socialization and political learning in father-only families. Hispanic students comprise 10 percent of this sample, and they demonstrate the lowest levels of political efficacy and political knowledge. Given Census Bureau estimates that

25 percent of the nation's population will be Hispanic by the year 2050 (Morganthau 1997, 59), this group is certainly worthy of further study. Among adolescents being raised in father-only families, political knowledge levels are highest. Since only 5 percent of the students in this sample live in father-only families, this finding must be interpreted with caution. A recent study by the National Center for Education Statistics (Henry 1997, A1) notes that children and adolescents do best in school when their fathers take an active role in the educational process. The study reveals that "more single fathers are involved than fathers in two-parent families, 46% vs. 31%" (Henry 1997, A1). Single fathers who are raising a child might also be most involved in the political socialization process, but further research is clearly called for.

An insightful research project would involve surveying teenagers and their parents. The Oklahoma City survey reveals the important role of family discussions of politics in the political socialization process. A survey of parents could illuminate the content and context of family discussions of politics. Such a research design might analyze the similarity between parent and child in terms of party identification, political knowledge, racial attitudes and issue positions. A survey of adolescents and their parents might also explore how parental media consumption habits influence the media exposure of teenagers.

An exciting research project would be to survey the students of this study when they are seniors and juniors in high school. Almost two decades have passed since the last longitudinal study of political socialization was conducted. A longitudinal study of Oklahoma City students could explore the evolving pattern of party identification. The middle school students in this study have a very immature sense of partisanship. Do

adolescents demonstrate a stronger sense of party identification by the end of high school? Will the students be better able to identify differences between the political parties?

A longitudinal study could also explore changes in political interest. For the seventh and eighth graders in this study, the mean political interest score is 5.25 on a scale from 0 to 16. Does this rather low level of political interest increase in the high school years? The Oklahoma City survey also measures political interest by asking students to name two famous Americans whom they admire a lot. The most common response among middle school students is to name a cultural figure such as an athlete, entertainer, model or artist. This is not surprising given the celebrity obsessed culture in which we live. A longitudinal study could explore if students are more likely to name political figures as opposed to cultural figures in the high school years.

A longitudinal study might examine changing attitudes about the meaning of a good citizen in adolescence. Among the seventh and eighth graders in their sample, Hess and Torney (1968, 46) note that the most popular definitions of a good citizen are "votes and helps others to vote" and "interested in the way the country is run." In the Oklahoma City survey, only 7 percent of the good citizen definitions mention concepts such as voting, exercising your rights, following current events or caring what happens in government. Do political concepts become more salient to citizenship awareness by the end of high school? Among the middle school students in this study, a popular definition of citizenship is active involvement in the community such as helping neighbors, taking care of the community, recycling, and keeping the Earth clean. Does a sense of community activism remain in the high school years and does it correlate with civic or political involvement?

The eighth graders in this study will be seniors in high school in the year 2000. As they prepare for adulthood and a new century, it would be informative to consider their levels of political knowledge, political efficacy, political cynicism and social trust. Do they remain as addicted to television as evidenced in the middle school years? Our children are a reflection of ourselves and our hope for the future. An understanding of adolescent political socialization is not only of importance for political scientists but also educators, community leaders and politicians. This study demonstrates the value of studying how adolescents navigate their way through the political world, and scholars must continue to examine teenagers on this journey.

Notes

Chapter 1 In Defense of Political Socialization Research

1. Sears (1990) reviewed six major journals that publish work on political behavior: The American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, Public Opinion Quarterly, Political Behavior, Political Psychology, and American Politics Quarterly.

2. Another critique of this entire body of literature is that the research conclusions are only applicable to a specific historical period. Sigel (1989, 463) argues that research largely done during the Eisenhower presidency "yielded an image of a politically naïve but very trusting, idealistic, and even super-patriotic youth. From this the researchers concluded that youth—at least in the U.S.—respects, trusts, and perhaps even idealizes our government and its authorities." Sigel (463) further observes that "research done a decade or two later—during the Vietnam and Watergate periods—yielded a very different picture, that of a much more critical and disillusioned young population, showing that even young people are sensitive to historical events transpiring around them." Sigel (1989) and Sapiro (1987, 6) warn against "reaching conclusions about political change on the basis of single-time relationships." Merelman (1972, 139) concludes that "the origins of political socialization committed the nascent field to a subtly biasing series of theoretical assumptions and methodological decisions based partly upon an atypical period of American politics. In time, these problems would return to plague researchers."

3. In relation to party identification, Sears and Valentino (1997, 46) argue the lifelong openness view asserts "that individuals' party identification is continually and 'rationally' adjusted through adulthood in response to such aspects of current political life as poor government performance (Fiorina 1981), newly emerging issues (Franklin 1984; Markus 1979; Niemi and Jennings, 1991), political campaigns (Allsop and Weisberg 1988; Brody and Rothenberg 1988), macroeconomic changes (Markus 1992), or the specific office being contested (Fiorina 1996). The 'impressionable years' account, too, left room for a rational response to current issues in early adulthood (see Beck and Jennings 1991; Markus 1979; Niemi and Jennings 1991)."

4. Vaillancourt (1973, 377) explains that "stability, for the purposes of this paper, is defined operationally as the tendency for those who give a response to a question to give the same response at a later point in time. From this definition, we can see that low stability would accompany minimal development of attitudes."

5. Weissberg and Joslyn (1977, 78-80) recommend the use of a technique that is an extension of factor analysis. The method generates orthogonal factor structures with the identical variables for each group. The method then equates the origins and factor-vector orientations of the two structures to determine the overall degree of structural similarity. In more understandable terms, the technique compares the

patterns of response and allows for a more appropriate analysis of subcultural differences (Weissberg and Joslyn 79). Regardless of whether or not a researcher adopts the techniques recommended by Weissberg and Joslyn, they offer a valuable critique that making intergroup comparisons based upon visual inspection of the data can be quite hazardous.

6. One of the most popular American government textbooks, Government By The People (Burns et al. 1997, Ch. 8), examines political socialization in terms of the agents of political socialization. The discussion is universal in its tone and the chapter fails to cite any of the research on racial differences in political socialization. Another leading textbook, The Challenge of Democracy (Janda et al. 1997, Ch. 5), also discusses political socialization in terms of the agents of socialization and makes no mention of racial differences. Patterson's The American Democracy (1993, 218-223) analyzes political socialization in universalistic terms and basically cites research based upon all white samples. In their analysis of political socialization, Edwards et al. (Government in America 1997, Ch. 6) emphasize parent-child agreement on party identification. Edwards et al. (1997, 154) note that the United States will have a "minority majority population" in the near future and this presents a challenge for political socialization to transform "people of diverse cultural backgrounds and beliefs into American citizens." This comment seems to suggest that political socialization is a universal process that moves all citizens down the same path of political learning. Greenberg and Page's The Struggle for Democracy follows the standard pattern of analyzing the agents of political socialization. Greenberg and Page (1997, 154) note that "black students seem to respond more than white students to civics instruction." The authors rely upon research from the early 1970s to support their claim. In the same chapter, Greenberg and Page analyze racial differences in adult public opinion. The chapter highlights the problem for contemporary political science: we have extensive research on racial differences in adult attitudes but we know very little about potential racial differences in preadult political opinions. In contrast to the other leading textbooks, Ginsberg et al. (We the People 1997, Ch.6) discuss racial differences in their analysis of political socialization. The discussion relies upon evidence from public opinion surveys and highly publicized events such as the O.J. Simpson trial. The authors correctly note that if dramatic differences appear in the political opinions of adults, different patterns of socialization may exist across racial groups. Because of the lack of current research on adolescent political socialization, Ginsberg et al. must infer differences in political socialization based upon adult survey data.

Chapter 2 Research Methodology

1. In the Oklahoma City public schools, students take their first civics course in the seventh grade. The seventh grade social studies curriculum consists of eighteen weeks of geography and another eighteen weeks of civics. Seventh grade students that had completed the civics curriculum were coded 1. Seventh grade student that had not completed civics were coded 0. There is some measurement error in this variable.

Since the questionnaire was administered throughout the spring, some of the students coded 0 had been covering civics for several weeks. For the students that had not completed the civics curriculum, it would have been ideal to survey them before they started the civics curriculum. The timing of the survey did not allow for surveying students prior to any exposure to the civics unit.

2. Principals in each of the middle schools furnished a list of seventh and eighth grade social studies courses in their schools. The courses were entered into an SPSS data file. SPSS for Windows provides an option to randomly select cases from a data file. An equal number of seventh and eighth grade courses were selected from each school.
3. This research project was also reviewed by an IRB of the University of Oklahoma. The University of Oklahoma IRB also approved the general design and questionnaire for this study. Neither the OU nor the Oklahoma City IRB recommended that any questions be reworded or deleted.

4. Several studies of political socialization have administered written questionnaires in the classroom and also gathered information on student aptitude tests and demographic data from the student's school files. Given the student's right to privacy, this study involves only the administration of an anonymous written questionnaire.

5. The Oklahoma City school board recently voted to end busing in the middle schools. Beginning in the fall of 1997, about 2,000 of the district's 8,000 sixth to eighth grade students will attend schools closer to their home (Associated Press 1996, 6).

6. In questions 30 and 31, the response category "allow to speak" is coded 1. The response category "not allow to speak" is coded 0. "Don't know" is given a midpoint score of .5 for each question.

7. The PC factor analysis of questions 30 through 33 raised troubling questions about combining all four questions into an index of political tolerance. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 1.3 and question 30 had a factor loading of .78 and question 31 had a factor loading of .70. The second factor had an eigenvalue of 1.09 and question 32 had a factor loading of .81 and question 33 had a factor loading of -.62. Since questions 30 and 31 appear to tap the same concept, the political tolerance index includes only those two questions.

8. If the factor analysis of the index produced several distinct factors, concerns would be raised about the unidimensionality of the index. For each of the indexes, a principal components factor analysis revealed only one factor with an eigenvalue in excess of 1.

Chapter 3 The Tie that Binds: The Influence of the Family on Adolescent Political Socialization

1. Sigel and Hoskin (1981, 224-225) measured "the politicized environment" based upon a five-variable scale. The first two variables explored the levels of political

discussion with family and friends. A third questions asked if Watergate had been discussed in school. A fourth question examined how many social science courses the student had taken in school. The final question focused on the frequency of following current events in the news.

2. Beck and Jennings (1991, 746) measure parent politicization by relying on parental reports of political interest and activity. The measure contains three indicators of political participation: whether or not the parent voted for president, was the parent active in politics beyond voting, and did the parent participate frequently in political affairs. The measure also includes political interaction among family members: regular discussion of politics with the spouse and attempts by the parent to persuade family members to vote a certain way.

3. The difference of means test utilized a t-test. It produced a t-value of 4.26 which is significant at $p<.01$.

4. In the case of white adolescents, the means of 7.89 and 10.17 were compared. The difference of means test produced a t-value of 3.36 which is significant at $p<.01$. In the case of black adolescents, the means of 8.59 and 9.90 were compared. The difference of means test produced a t-value of 2.00 which is significant at $p<.05$.

5. Hispanic adolescents who do not discuss politics in the home have a mean score of political cynicism of 13.81. Hispanic adolescents who very often discuss politics in the home have a mean score of 13.06. A difference of means test produced a t-value of .81 $p=.43$. American Indian adolescents have a high level of political cynicism (mean of 15.1) among those that do not discuss politics at all. The level of political cynicism declines to a mean score of 12.57 for American Indian students that very often discuss politics. The difference of means test produced a t-value of 1.7 $p=.09$. While the decline in cynicism for American Indian students appears substantial, the decline fails to achieve statistical significance because of the limited number of cases being compared. Only 7 American Indian students are classified in the category of "very often" discussing politics.

6. If a student mentioned a materialist concern as the most important problem he received a score of 3, a score of 2 for mentioning a materialist concern as the second most important problem and a score of 1 for mentioning a materialist concern as the third most important problem. The remaining topics would be scored 0. This would produce a total score of 6. If the student mentioned a post-materialist concern as the most important problem he received a score of -3, a score of -2 for mentioning a post-materialist concern as the second most important problem and a score of -1 for mentioning a post-materialist concern as the third most important problem for government. The remaining topics would be scored 0 for a total score of -6. Cronbach's alpha for the six items (three materialist and three post-materialist) is a respectable .66.

7. The difference of means test between stepfamilies and mother-only families produced a t-value of 2.35 which is statistically significant at $p<.05$. The difference of means test between two parent families and father-only families produced a t-value of 2.20 which is statistically significant at $p<.05$.

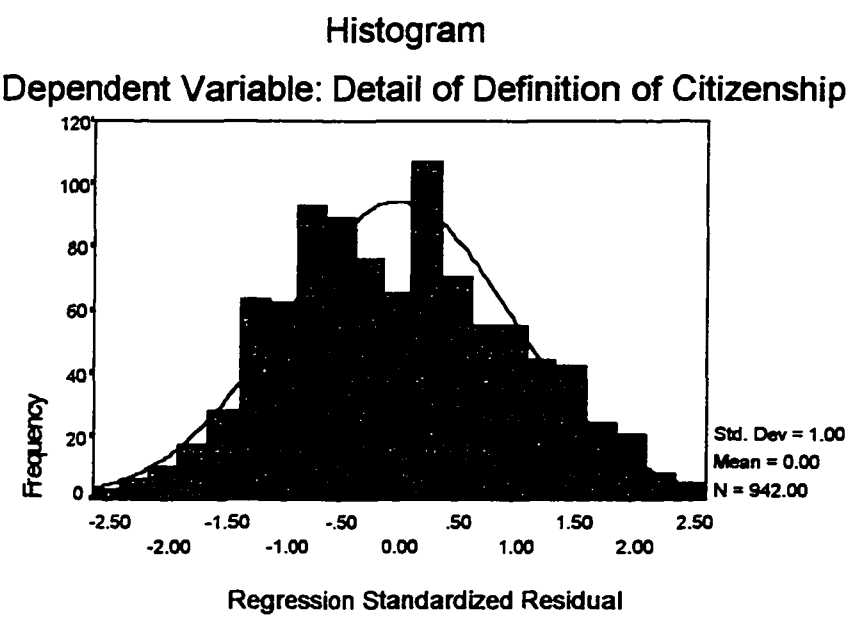
Chapter 4 Peer Groups and Political Socialization: The Importance of Social Connectedness

1. 460 students report that they are a member of an athletic team. 96 students are members of a cheerleading team or pep club. 87 students are members on a debate or speech team. 304 students take part in band or chorus. 119 students work on the student newspaper or student yearbook. 74 students are part of student council or student government. 136 students are members of a science or language club. 102 students are members of the National Honor Society or their school's honor society. No students are members of the Future Farmers of America.

2. Since Cub Scouts and Brownies apply to elementary school children, a decision was made to allow students to place an X mark next to organizations which they currently belong to or belonged to in the past. The number of students involved in each organization is as follows: Boy Scouts/Cub Scouts=94; Girl Scouts/Brownies=126; Camp Fire=33; YMCA/YWCA=275; 4-H Club=11; Church group=369.

3. Starting RIGHT! is a project of the Community Council of Central Oklahoma and is funded by a federal Community Partnership Demonstration Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. The 1992 study surveyed 250 adolescents with a margin of error of +/- 7 percent. The 1995 survey contacted 400 teens with a margin of error of +/- 5.1 percent. Both surveys were "random-digit dialing" telephone surveys. The question concerning after-school activities asked how much time the respondents spend involved in sports, clubs or other after-school activities.

4. Auxiliary R^2s are calculated by regressing each independent variable on the remaining independent variables. For all the independent variables in Table 4.2, the auxiliary R^2s are all below .10. The following distribution of the standardized residuals from the regression reveals a reasonably symmetric distribution and no obvious outliers.



5. The difference of means test between 4.23 (0-1 group) and 5.34 (2-3 groups) produced a t-value of 4.88 which is statistically significant at $p<.001$. The difference of means test between 5.34 and 6.41 (4 or more groups) produced a t-value of 4.21 which is statistically significant at $p<.001$. Finally, the difference of means test between 4.23 and 6.41 produced a t-value of 7.85 which is statistically significant at $p<.001$.

6. Following the methodology of Hanks (1981, 215-216), the following activities were defined as instrumental groups: school newspaper or yearbook, student council or student government, science club or a language club, National Honor Society or your school's honor society, Future Farmers of America, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, YMCA or YWCA, and 4-H Club. The following activities were defined as expressive groups: athletic teams, cheerleading or pep club, debate or speech, band or chorus, and church group.

7. Since only a total of 41 students have frequent discussions of politics with friends, the sample size of students that very often discuss politics with friends for each minority group is extremely small. Although the increases in political cynicism for Asian and Hispanic adolescents appear substantial in Figure 4.21, the small number of cases in the category of "very often" discusses politics with friends renders the difference of means tests statistically insignificant.

Chapter 5 Racial Differences in Adolescent Political Socialization

1. The difference of means test between white students (1.82) and black students (1.55) produced a t-value of 3.02 which is statistically significant at $p<.01$. The difference of means test between white students (1.82) and Hispanic students (1.35) produced a t-

value of 3.48 which is also statistically significant at $p<.01$. Finally, the difference of means test between white students (1.82) and American Indian (1.38) students produced a t-value of 2.78 which is statistically significant at $p<.01$.

2. The students were asked the following questions: who is the Vice-President of the United States now; how many judges are there on the U.S. Supreme Court; Boris Yeltsin is a leader in what country; who is the governor of Oklahoma now; are the Republicans or the Democrats the majority party in Congress; once the president is elected, about how many years does he serve? Incorrect answers, leaving the answer blank or answering "don't know" were given a score of zero for each question. Correct answers were scored one.

3. The difference of means test between white students (2.46) and black students (1.87) produced a t-value of 5.29 $p<.001$. The difference of means test between white students (2.46) and Hispanic students (1.75) produced a t-value of 4.02 $p<.001$. The difference of means test between white students (2.46) and American Indian students (1.94) produced a t-value of 2.64 $p<.01$.

4. The difference of means test between white students (-.95) and black students (3.22) produced a t-value of -16.01 which is statistically significant at $p<.001$. The difference of means test between white (-.95) and Hispanic students (2.50) produced a t-value of -7.99 which is statistically significant at $p<.001$. The difference of means test between white students (-.95) and American Indian students (2.92) produced a t-value of -7.63 which is statistically significant at $p<.001$.

5. The political knowledge index was divided into the categories of low, medium and high levels of political knowledge. For the students in the low category of political knowledge, 47 percent identify "try to make our cities and countryside more beautiful" as an important problem. In the medium political knowledge category, 39 percent identify with the statement "try to make our cities and countryside more beautiful." 40 percent of the adolescents in the high political knowledge category identify with the statement.

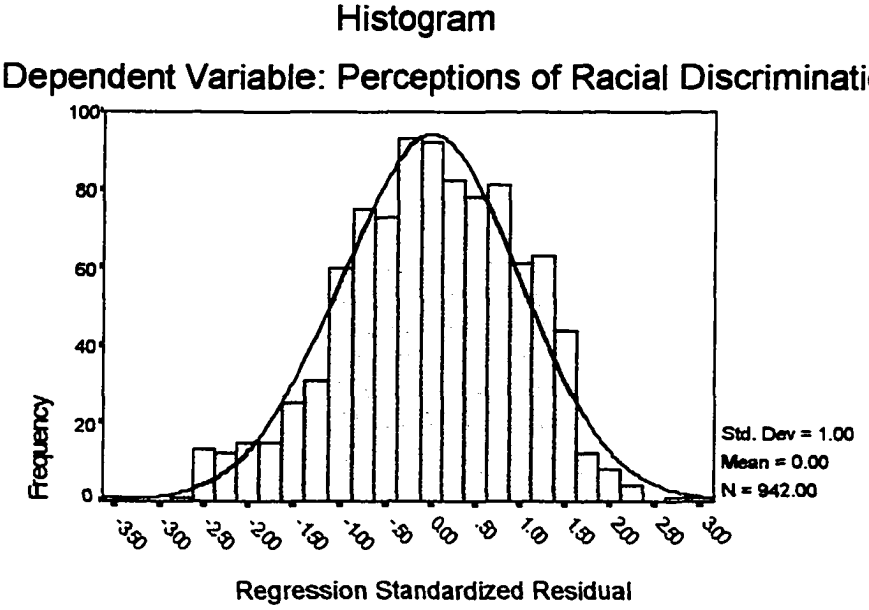
6. For all the independent variables in Table 5.4, the Auxiliary R^2's (calculated by regressing each independent variable on the remaining independent variables) are all below .10. Furthermore, an analysis of the standardized residuals from the regression reveals no problem with outliers.

7. Long (1976, 285-287) measured perceptions of political reality through five scales. The first scale measured the extent to which adolescents viewed the political system as being racially discriminatory. The second scale examined the existence of economic discrimination. The third scale measured the extent to which the respondent blamed the political system rather that blacks for the plight of blacks. The fourth scale measured the extent to which the adolescent viewed the political system as unresponsive to the needs and demands of blacks. The final scale ascertained the

degree to which the adolescent perceived the political system as lacking justification for black trust.

8. On the perceptions of racial discrimination scale, values 0 through 7 were classified as low (26.6% of respondents), values 8 through 11 were classified as medium (42% of respondents) and values 12 through 16 were classified as high perceptions of discrimination (31.4% of respondents).

9. For the independent variables in Table 5.5, the Auxiliary R^2's are all well below .10. The following distribution of the standardized residuals from the regression reveals a symmetrical distribution and no obvious outliers.



10. Aldrich and Nelson (1984,12) explain that a fundamental assumption of regression is that the dependent variable is assumed to be continuous. Y_i must be free to take on any value from negative infinity to positive infinity. If the dependent variable can take on only two values (say zero and one), it is an egregious violation of this assumption.

11. Aldrich and Nelson (1984, 50-51) explain that "the conceptual difference between OLS and MLE is that OLS is concerned with picking parameter estimates that yield the smallest sum of squared errors in the fit between the model and data, while MLE is concerned with picking parameter estimates that imply the highest probability or likelihood of having obtained the observed sample Y." The authors (54) also note "the point of probit and logit analysis is to measure the relationship between the exogenous variables, X, and the dependent variable, Y. Reported coefficient estimates are the asymptotically unbiased and efficient point estimates to be used for this purpose. Estimated standard errors provide the usual measure of the likely variation in the estimated coefficient that one might anticipate to arise from sample to

sample."

The significance tests in Table 5.6 are based upon the t-statistic, just as in the usual regression case. The test statistic is defined as $t_k=b_k/s_k$ in which b_k is the parameter estimate and s_k is the associated standard error (Aldrich and Nelson 1984, 54-55)

12. Percentage of households on public assistance in the attendance area of a middle school has performed well as a measure of poverty in many of the regression models in this dissertation. Percentage of households on public assistance is not included in the logit analysis because of its high correlation with percentage of a school's population that is black (Pearson r of .50). For the subsample of African-American students, the correlation between percentage of households on public assistance and the percentage of a school that is black is .62. For the entire sample, median household income has a more modest correlation with the percentage of a school's population that is black. Median household income certainly captures some of the factors representing poverty (the correlation between median household income and percentage of households on public assistance is -.72).

13. Aldrich and Nelson (1984, 55-56) explain that in logit and probit the chi-square statistic (likelihood ratio statistic) "tests the hypothesis that all coefficients except the intercept are 0, which is exactly the hypothesis that is tested in regression using the 'overall' F statistic."

14. Harris (1994, 42) observes that a strand of literature insists "that black religion promotes an otherworldly orientation, functioning as an instrument of political pacification and fatalism (Reed 1986; G. Marx 1967; Frazier [1963] 1974; Myrdal 1944; Lane 1959)."

Chapter 6 The Mass Media and Political Socialization: Is Television the Vast Wasteland?

1. For all the independent variables in Table 6.1, the Auxiliary R^2's (calculated by regressing each independent variable on the remaining independent variables) are all below .08. Furthermore, an analysis of the standardized residuals from the regression reveals no problem with outliers.

2. The political interest scale is based upon the following four questions: "some people think about what's going on in government and public affairs very often, and others are not that interested. How much interest do you take in such matters?" "do you hear anyone in your family talk about politics, voting and things like that?" "do you and your friends ever talk about politics, voting, and things like that?" "do you ever ask anyone in your family questions about politics and government?" The scale ranges from 0 to 16 with a mean of 5.24.

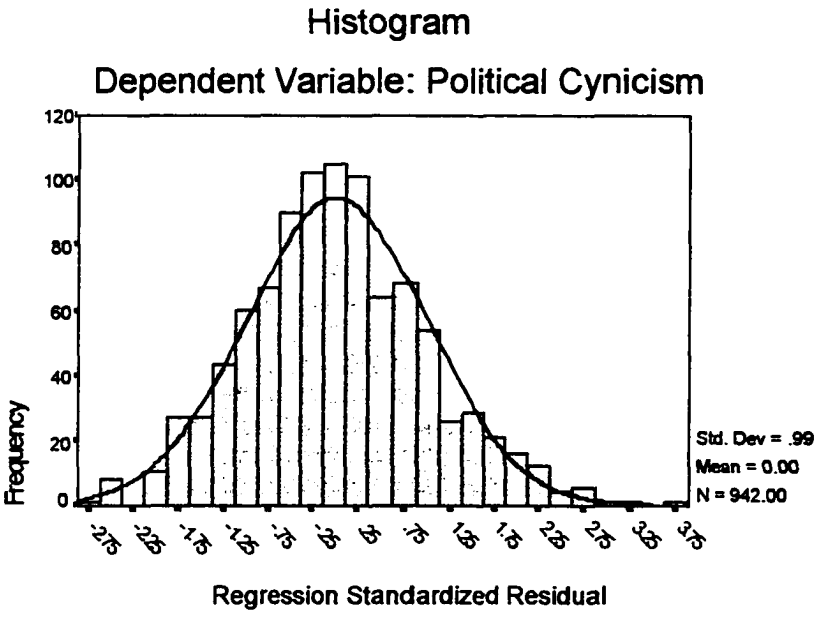
3. Conway et al. (1981, 168) measure news media use as the frequency of consuming three different news media: television news, political and public affairs news in newspapers, and news magazines such as Time and Newsweek.

4. Chaffee and Tims (1982, 741) measure media exposure as "the number of days within the past week that the person had watched network evening news on television or had read a daily newspaper, and the number of magazine articles about national politics the person had read in the past week."

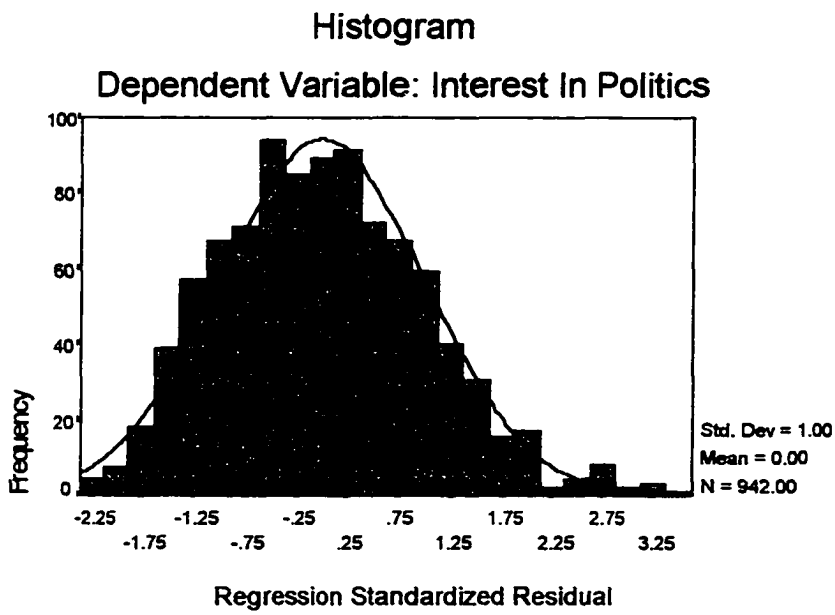
5. If a model assumes reciprocal causation between two variables, there is the potential for the explanatory variables to be correlated with model disturbance terms (Conway et al. 1981, 169). Two-stage least squares is appropriate in such cases. The model in Figure 6.9 does not assume reciprocal causation between the variables.

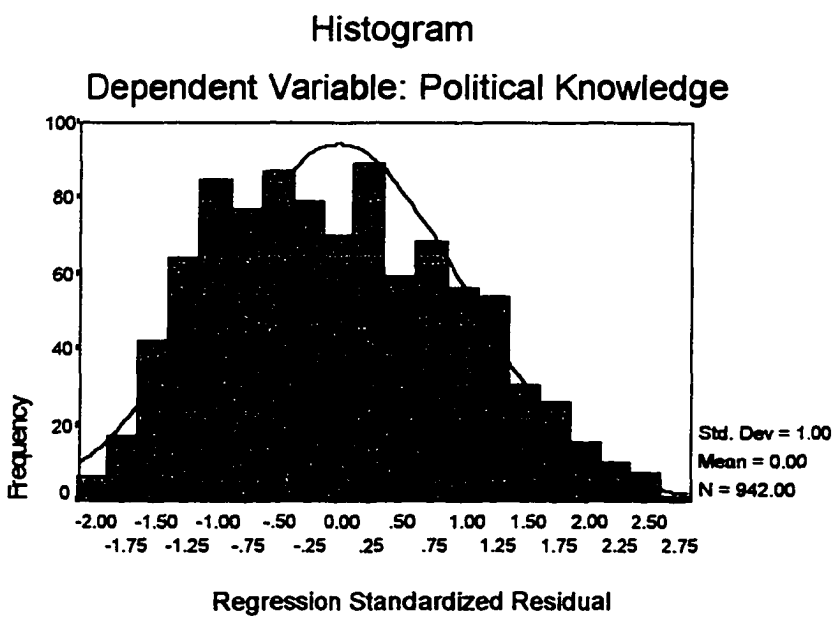
6. As noted in Chapter 2, students were surveyed in randomly selected social studies courses. 11.9 percent of the total sample were surveyed in honors courses. The variable is coded 1 for students who were surveyed in an honors social studies course and 0 for students who were not surveyed in an honors course.

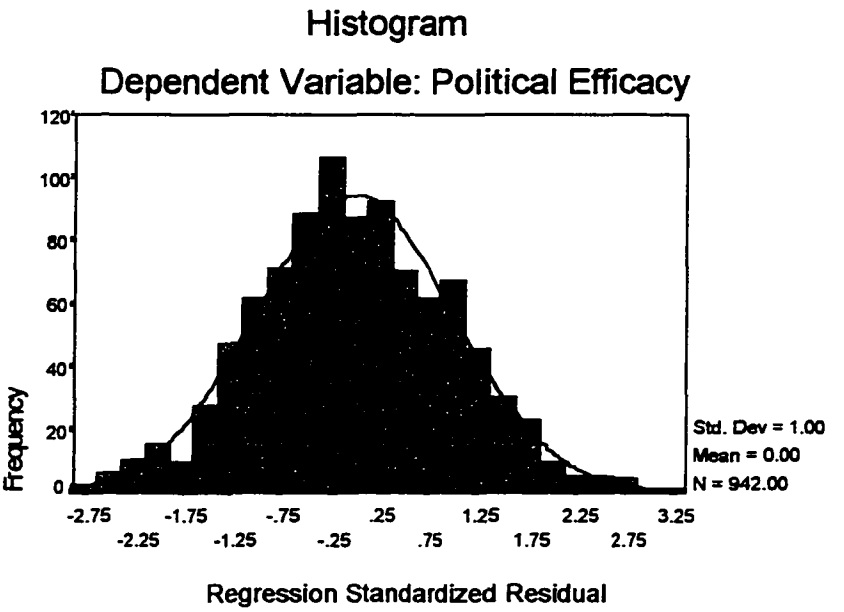
7. In the equation with political cynicism as the dependent variable, all of the exogenous and intervening variables are included as predictors. Despite the inclusion of all these variables, the Auxiliary R^2's (calculated by regressing each independent variable on the remaining independent variables) are all below the adjusted R^2 of .21 for the overall model. The following histogram reveals a symmetrical distribution and no obvious outliers.



For the three intervening variables in Figure 6.9, the following histograms reveal no significant problem with outliers.







8. The Auxiliary R^2's for the independent variables that appear in Table 6.3 are all below .13.

9. The difference of means test between students who believe that only a few people can be trusted (14.3) and students who believe that some people can be trusted (12.38) produced a t-value of 11.91 which is statistically significant at $p<.001$. The difference of means test between adolescents who believe that only a few people can be trusted (14.3) and those who believe that most people can be trusted (10.7) produced a t-value of 11.82 which is statistically significant at $p<.001$. Finally, the difference of means test between students who believe that some people can be trusted (12.38) and those who believe that most people can be trusted (10.7) produced a t-value of 6.91 which is statistically significant at $p<.001$.

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APPENDIX

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

DEAR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT:

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN A STUDY OF STUDENT OPINIONS ABOUT GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS.

THIS IS NOT A TEST.

PLEASE BE SURE TO ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS SURVEY.

PART ONE

First, here are some questions about your interest in public affairs.

1. Some people think about what's going on in government and public affairs very often, and others are not that interested. How much interest do you take in such matters?

   [ ] very great interest
   [ ] a lot of interest
   [ ] some interest
   [ ] very little interest
   [ ] no interest at all

2. Do you hear anyone in your family talk about politics, voting, and things like that?

   [ ] yes, very often
   [ ] yes, occasionally
   [ ] no, not at all

3. Do you and your friends ever talk about politics, voting, and things like that?

   [ ] yes, very often
   [ ] yes, occasionally
   [ ] no, not at all

4. Do you ever ask anyone in your family questions about politics and government?

   [ ] yes, very often
   [ ] yes, occasionally
   [ ] no, not at all

5. Please name two famous Americans whom you admire a lot.

   _____ _____

Here are some statements about government. Please check the one answer in each question which comes closest to your opinion.

6. What happens in government will happen no matter what citizens do. It is like the weather, there is nothing they can do about it.

[ ] strongly agree
[ ] agree
[ ] no opinion
[ ] disagree
[ ] strongly disagree

7. There are some big, powerful people in the government who are running the whole thing, and they do not care about us ordinary people.

[ ] strongly agree
[ ] agree
[ ] no opinion
[ ] disagree
[ ] strongly disagree

8. My family doesn't have any say about what the government does.

[ ] strongly agree
[ ] agree
[ ] no opinion
[ ] disagree
[ ] strongly disagree

9. I don't think people in the government care much what people like my family think.

[ ] strongly agree
[ ] agree
[ ] no opinion
[ ] disagree
[ ] strongly disagree

10. Citizens don't have a chance to say what they think about running the government.

[ ] strongly agree
[ ] agree
[ ] no opinion
[ ] disagree
[ ] strongly disagree

PART TWO

Next are some more general questions.

11. If you could register to vote, would you be a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent?

    [ ] Democrat
    [ ] Republican
    [ ] Independent
    [ ] Don't know
    [ ] Don't know what Republican and Democrat means

12. Do you think there are any important differences in what the Republicans and Democrats stand for?

    [ ] Yes, there are important differences
    [ ] No important differences
    [ ] Don't know

13. If you think there are important differences between Republicans and Democrats, name an important difference.

    _____

14. Would you say that most people can be trusted, some people can be trusted or only a few people can be trusted?

    [ ] most people can be trusted
    [ ] some people can be trusted
    [ ] only a few people can be trusted
    [ ] don't know

15. People have different ideas about what being a good citizen means. How would you describe a good citizen in this country?

PART THREE

Next are some questions about how blacks and whites are treated in this country.

16. Some people say that whites and blacks are treated the same in this country. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

[ ] strongly agree	[ ] agree	[ ] no opinion	[ ] disagree	[ ] strongly disagree

17. Some people say that business people cheat black people more than they do white people. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

[ ] strongly agree	[ ] agree	[ ] no opinion	[ ] disagree	[ ] strongly disagree

18. Some people say that the police treat blacks worse than whites. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

[ ] strongly agree	[ ] agree	[ ] no opinion	[ ] disagree	[ ] strongly disagree

19. Some people say that most laws treat blacks worse than whites. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

[ ] strongly agree	[ ] agree	[ ] no opinion	[ ] disagree	[ ] strongly disagree

20. If you had a choice, would you rather go to school with just black students, both black and white students, or mostly white students?

[ ] just black students
[ ] both black and white students
[ ] mostly white students
[ ] don't know

21. If you had a choice, would you rather live in a black neighborhood, a mixed neighborhood, or a white neighborhood?

[ ] black neighborhood
[ ] mixed neighborhood
[ ] white neighborhood

22. Do you think most white people want to see blacks get a better break, or do they want to keep blacks down, or don't you think they care either way?

[ ] whites want blacks to get a better break
[ ] whites want to keep blacks down
[ ] whites don't care
[ ] don't know

23. As you look to the future, do you think that the relations between blacks and whites will improve in America, stay the same, or get worse?

[ ] relations will improve
[ ] stay the same
[ ] get worse
[ ] don't know

PART FOUR

This section asks some questions about government and current events. If you know the answers write them in the spaces provided. Don't worry if you don't know all the answers.

24. Who is the Vice President of the United States now? _____

25. How many justices are there on the U.S. Supreme Court? _____

26. Boris Yeltsin is a leader in what country? _____

27. Who is the Governor of Oklahoma now? _____

28. Are the Republicans or the Democrats the majority party in Congress? _____

29. Once the President is elected, about how many years does he serve? _____

PART FIVE

This section asks some questions about situations that might occur and what you think about them.

30. If a person wanted to make a speech in your school against churches and religion, should that person be allowed to speak?

    [ ] Allowed to speak
    [ ] Not allowed to speak
    [ ] Don't know

31. Do you think the United States should allow speeches against democracy?

    [ ] Yes, allow
    [ ] No, not allow
    [ ] Don't know

32. Do you think a racist should be allowed to run for President?

    [ ] Yes, allow
    [ ] No, not allow
    [ ] Don't know

33. Do you think a homosexual should be allowed to teach in a college or university?

    [ ] Yes, allow
    [ ] No, not allow
    [ ] Don't know

34. If you were a member of the government, what problems in this country would you try to fix? Place a <u>one (1)</u> by the most important problem that you would try to fix, a <u>two (2)</u> by the next most important problem and a <u>three (3)</u> by the third most important problem.

    ____ Create more jobs

    ____ Try to make our cities and countryside more beautiful

    ____ Make sure that this country has a strong army

    ____ Fight against crime

    ____ Protect freedom of speech

    ____ Give people more say in the decisions of government

Here are some more statements about government. Please tell whether you personally believe them to be correct. Check the one answer in each question which comes closest to your opinion.

35. Do you think that some of the people running the government are dishonest?

[ ] most of them are dishonest
[ ] quite a few are dishonest
[ ] some are dishonest
[ ] hardly any are dishonest
[ ] none at all are dishonest
[ ] don't know

36. How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?

[ ] almost always
[ ] often
[ ] sometimes
[ ] seldom
[ ] almost never
[ ] don't know

37. Do you feel that the people running the government are smart people who usually know what they are doing?

[ ] they almost always know what they are doing
[ ] they usually know what they are doing
[ ] they sometimes know what they are doing
[ ] they seldom know what they are doing
[ ] they almost never know what they are doing
[ ] don't know

38. Do you think the government wastes a lot of tax money?

[ ] nearly all tax money is wasted
[ ] a lot of tax money is wasted
[ ] some tax money is wasted
[ ] a little tax money is wasted
[ ] almost no tax money is wasted
[ ] don't know

PART SIX

39. How old are you? _____

40. Are you male or female?

[ ] male [ ] female

41. What is your race?

[ ] white

[ ] black

[ ] hispanic

[ ] American Indian

[ ] Asian

[ ] other

42. Who do you currently live with?

[ ] mother and father
[ ] mother and stepfather
[ ] stepmother and father
[ ] mother only
[ ] father only
[ ] grandparents
[ ] other

43. Place an X next to each of the following school activities that you are involved in:

_____ athletic teams

_____ cheerleading or pep club

_____ debate or speech

_____ band or chorus

44. Place an X next to each of the following groups that you are a member of:

_____ school newspaper or yearbook

_____ student council or student government

_____ science club or a language club (French club, Spanish club)

_____ National Honor Society or your school's honor society

_____ Future Farmers of America

45. Place an X next to each of the clubs or organizations which you belong to now, or which you belonged to in the past:

_____ Boy Scouts (or Cub Scouts)

_____ Girl Scouts (or Brownies)

_____ Camp Fire

_____ YMCA or YWCA

_____ 4-H Club

_____ church group

_____ I do not belong to any club or organization outside of school

46. How often do you go to Mass, Church, Temple, or Sunday School?

[ ] every week
[ ] almost every week
[ ] once or twice a month
[ ] a few times a year
[ ] never

47. How often do your parents limit the amount of time you can spend watching TV?

[ ] often
[ ] sometimes
[ ] rarely
[ ] never

48. How often do you read a newspaper?

[ ] every day
[ ] several times a week
[ ] once a week
[ ] several times a month
[ ] never

49. How often do you watch the news on TV?

[ ] every day
[ ] several times a week
[ ] once a week
[ ] several times a month
[ ] never

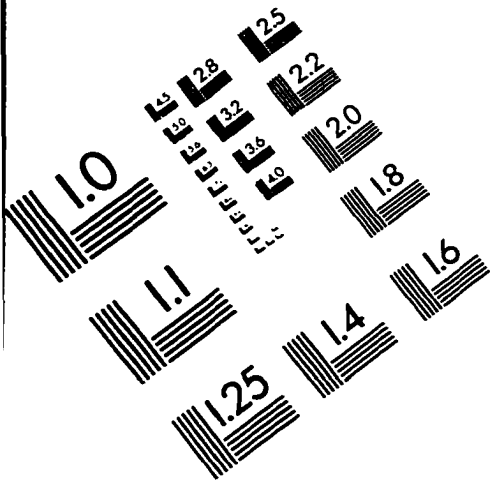
50. How many hours each day do you watch television?

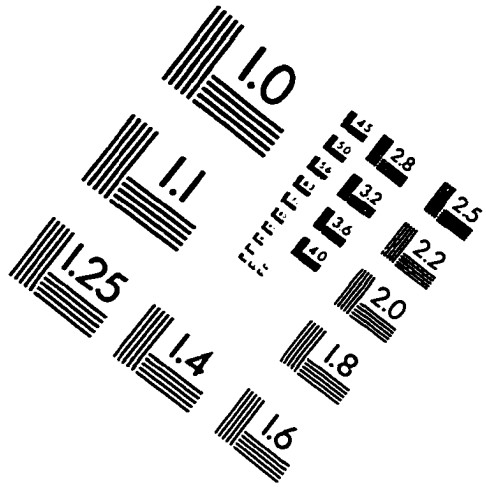
[ ] one hour or less per day
[ ] two hours per day
[ ] three to four hours per day
[ ] five to six hours per day
[ ] seven or more hours per day

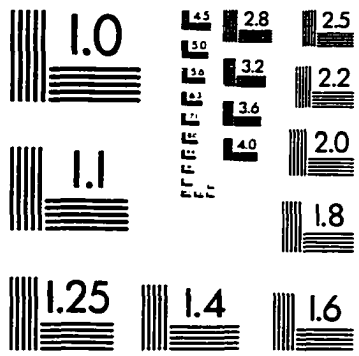
END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

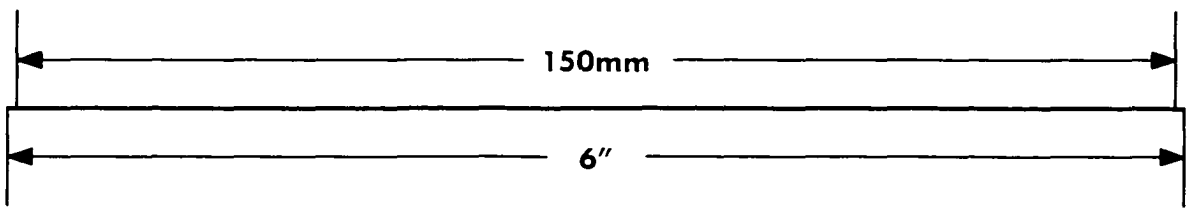
Thank you very much for your cooperation.

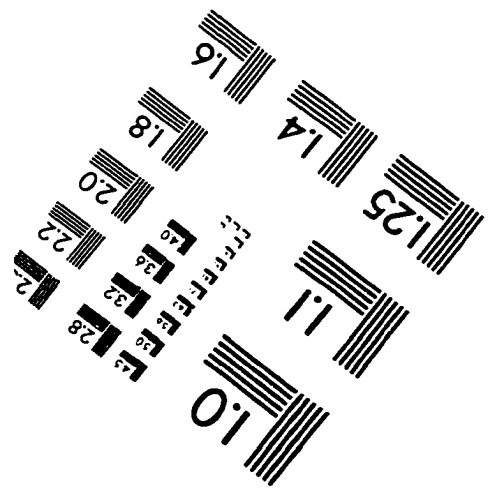
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

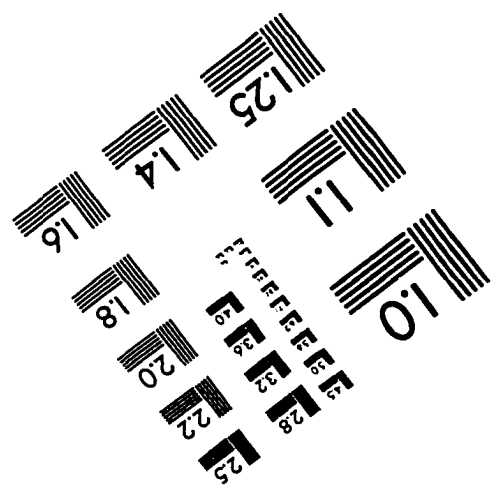












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