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**The Classroom-Kitchen Table Connection:  
The Effects of Political Discussion on Youth  
Knowledge and Efficacy**

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## Executive Summary

Research tells us that systematically incorporating news media into school curricula improves standardized reading and math scores. But there is little research to tell us whether these efforts are effective in increasing students' media use, political knowledge or their sense of being able to understand and influence politics (known as internal political efficacy) – all key elements of civic engagement.

We address this gap in the literature with an experiment involving 361 students in four high schools in New Jersey. After conducting a baseline survey measuring media use, political knowledge, and political efficacy among students, we randomly assigned the students' social studies classes to one of three conditions: a treatment group assigned to read and discuss articles about politics in a newsweekly magazine in class for eight weeks; a treatment group in which students were assigned to read and discuss the same articles at home with their parents, with the students subsequently also discussing the articles in the classroom; and a control group that did not receive the magazine and did not engage in discussion. We followed up with surveys of the students at the end of the eight-week intervention, and then six weeks later to measure for longer-term effects of the experiment. We also conducted telephone surveys with parents of 152 students during the experiment in order to measure the relationship between parent and student levels of media use, political knowledge and political efficacy.

We found that:

- The combination of reading the articles and discussing them at home and school was related to increased information-seeking and political knowledge among students, but only for those who were not in advanced placement or honors classes.
- The combination of reading and discussion at home and at school also was related to an increase in students' internal political efficacy, while the same was not true for the group that discussed the articles only in class and the control group that received no exposure to the magazines.

The effects also varied by parent characteristics. Drawing from the sub-sample of 152 pairs of students and parents, we found that:

- Students who were assigned to discuss the articles at home with their parents, and who had parents who scored low on measures of political knowledge and efficacy, were most likely to have increased scores on both of those dimensions at the end of the experiment. This was true only for students who were not in advanced placement or honors classes.

Taken together, the results indicate that exposing students to news coverage about politics, and having those students discuss what they read with their parents as well as in class, may make students more knowledgeable and efficacious. The effects vary, however, by whether students are in advanced placement or honors classes. The effects also vary based on parents' levels of political knowledge and efficacy. We believe that our results could provide guidance to practitioners looking for ways to enlist potentially powerful allies – parents – in reinforcing what happens in the classroom by extending political discussions to the home as well.

## Introduction

According to *The Civic Mission of Schools (CMS)*, one of the principal goals of civic education should be to help students develop the ability to “obtain information, think critically, and enter into dialogue among others with different perspectives” (2003, 4). Such an education ought to produce students who are “confident in their ability to make a difference, and ready to contribute personally to civic and political action” (CMS 2003, 10).

For most citizens, consumption of news media is the primary mode through which they acquire political information. News consumption is also a behavior that is frequently associated with political discussion, even among young people (Eveland, Hayes, Shah & Kwak, 2005; Garramone & Atkin, 1986; McDevitt & Chaffee, 1998, 2000; Wyatt, Kim & Katz, 2000).

Recent generations of young people have been reaching adulthood without developing news consumption habits (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina & Jenkins, 2002; Lopez et al., 2006; Marcelo, 2007; Mindich, 2005; Patterson, 2007; Pew Center for the People and the Press, 2004). Given the demonstrated link between news consumption and political knowledge and civic engagement (Conway, Wyckoff, Feldbaum, & Ahern, 1981; Garramone & Atkin, 1986; Lopez et al., 2006), this lag in news consumption among youths is worrisome.

In an effort to improve the outcome of civic education for young people, we conducted a quasi-experimental research project that explored whether exposing students to news coverage in high school, and requiring a subset of those students to discuss the news coverage at home with their parents, influenced subsequent news consumption, political knowledge and students’ sense of having the skills necessary to participate in politics (i.e. their sense of internal political efficacy). We also examined the longer-term effects of exposing students to news coverage in school and at home on students’ news consumption, knowledge and efficacy.

## Literature Review

As Putnam (2000) documented, civic participation in America has declined significantly in recent years, with the greatest decline occurring among young people compared to their counterparts in previous generational cohorts. Recent indicators suggest some improvement in the civic engagement of young people.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, a large number of young people are minimally to not at all engaged in the civic and political process and exhibit low levels of confidence in government and low rates of political knowledge (Bennett, 1997; Lopez et. al., 2006; Torney-Purta, 2002). Also, despite steady rates of volunteerism, uncertainty regarding the nation’s economic future seems to be shaking youth’s confidence in the government and their future (Institute of Politics, 2010).

Likewise, the outlook is not promising when it comes to youth news consumption. Unlike older generations, young people demonstrate inconsistent and intermittent news consumption habits (Patterson, 2007) with consumption of news via television, radio,

<sup>1</sup> These positive indicators include improved rates of youth voter turnout (beginning with the 2004 presidential election through to the 2008 presidential contest); survey research indicating that, for some forms of civic participation, young people are quite engaged and are following what is going on in government (Lopez et. al. 2006); and continued youth volunteering despite the recent economic downturn (National Conference on Citizenship 2009).

magazines, and newspapers consistently trending downward among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (Marcelo, 2007). Given the influence of news consumption on the political knowledge and engagement of young people, including expectations among young people that they will vote in future elections (Amadeo, Torney-Purta, & Barber, 2004), these results spark concern.

In response to this crisis in civic engagement, a number of organizations (private and nonprofit), schools, and government agencies have started initiatives to provide and promote civic learning among American youth. For the most part, these initiatives have focused upon the role of the school in fostering civic competence. This is in keeping with the *Civic Mission of Schools'* conclusion that schools are an important institution for instilling civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes (2003, 12). Given research indicating that school-based civic education is an effective method for addressing youth civic engagement (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995), this attention seems justified.

Accordingly, news organizations such as CNN, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *US News and World Report* have gotten into the business of civic education by implementing various classroom programs. Newspapers in Education (NIE) is a program that has been used in large numbers of schools and appears to make a positive impact.<sup>2</sup> Sullivan (2001b) found that, controlling for other factors, NIE programs positively affect students' scores on standardized reading and math tests and that having an NIE program in at least some classrooms increases the overall performance of the school, on average, by about 10 percent.<sup>3</sup>

Although NIE programs may increase standardized reading and math scores, there is little research to tell us whether these efforts succeed in enhancing students' civic skills, attitudes, or knowledge.<sup>4</sup> It is this gap in the literature that our research addresses.

Like schools, students' home environment plays an important role in their civic education, and numerous studies (including Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; Jennings & Niemi, 1968, 1974; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009; Langton, 1969) have explored the role parents play as agents of political socialization. As Verba, Schlozman, & Brady indicated (1995), there are three youth experiences that affect later civic participation: education, "political stimulation in the home," and involvement in high school activities (448). Along these same lines, Niemi and Junn (1998) found that the availability of reading and reference materials in the home is associated with higher levels of political knowledge. Accordingly, our research focuses on both education in the school and political stimulation in the form of discussion of politics at home.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> According to a study conducted by Sullivan for the Newspaper Association of America Foundation (2001a), the number of students served by Newspapers in Education programs grew from 10.8 million in 1992 to 14.4 million in 2000, a 33% increase.

<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Sullivan found that these effects are greater in large metropolitan areas than in smaller communities; are greater at the middle-school level than at other levels; and, other things being equal, that NIE program effects are substantially greater for schools in which most of the students are either minorities or qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

<sup>4</sup> Evidence already exists that exposure to news via television, newspapers, and newsmagazines positively influences the political knowledge of elementary students, lower elementary students in particular (ages 8-12) (Hofstetter, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> The use of media as a tool to spur discussion is premised on a growing body of literature that demonstrates that political discussion, both in the home and the classroom, positively affects the civic maturation of young people. Recent work by McIntosh, Hart, & Youniss (2007) advances previous findings that political discussion in the home influences future political involvement by concluding that parental qualities shape the contours of family discussion and the political knowledge of young people.

Researchers have explored the relationship between school-based interventions and media consumption and political discussion, both in the classroom and in the home. A series of studies (McDevitt & Chaffee, 1998, 2000; McDevitt & Kioussis, 2004; Saphir & Chaffee, 2002) evaluating the effectiveness of the Kids Voting USA curriculum found that the program is an effective method for increasing media use among students and discussion about politics between students and their parents. Moreover, the studies suggest that the positive effects of the program on youth civic engagement are long-lasting.

Similarly, recent research on the effects of the school-based Student Voices curriculum also found that deliberative discussions in the classroom (along with community projects and use of the Internet for informational purposes) have a positive effect on political knowledge and interest (Feldman, Pasek, Romer, and Hall Jamieson, 2007). This work provides further support for the idea that interventions that emphasize classroom discussion and media use promote the political development of young people. Although this work shares common elements with our research (i.e. the role of discussion and use of media through the Internet) its relevance is limited given that the role of the family is not considered and that Student Voices is aimed primarily at urban high schools.

What are the effects on civic engagement when an intervention centers on media usage? Consistent with Sullivan's findings regarding NIE programs, the *Growing Lifelong Readers* study conducted by the Newspaper Association of America (2004) found that 18- to 34-year-olds who said they remembered using a newspaper in school were more likely than those who did not to report regular newspaper reading. Those who recalled school-based newspaper use also were more likely to say they were interested in politics and local government issues. Although the survey measured discussion of news in the home, it was used only as a control variable in determining the relationship between newspaper use in school and current involvement with newspapers. These findings are interesting, but somewhat imprecise in that they assume that people as old as 34 can accurately recall what educational experiences they had in elementary, middle, and high school.

The classroom-based portion of our study assesses the value of a civic education program that uses news media as a focal point. By also testing the relative effectiveness of a similar intervention aimed at the family, we sought to determine whether factors that are associated with higher levels of youth engagement when they emerge independently show similar effects when imposed from outside the home. To that end, we encouraged families to talk about politics and provided students with reading materials upon which to base their discussions.

In addition to our interest in the connection between media usage and political knowledge, we also paid close attention to the effects of the intervention on young

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More recent work focusing on lower-income students of color demonstrates that classroom activities, including the in-class discussion of current events, make an even greater impact on the civic development of young people than political discussion in the home or the civic-mindedness of the students' neighborhood, both important determinants of youth civic engagement (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Kahne and Sporte's recent work builds on Campbell's (2005) earlier finding that the "openness of the classroom environment", the discussion of current social and political issues by teachers and students, positively affects students' political knowledge and political skills even when controlling for the frequency of civics instruction.

people's attitudes toward politics, specifically their sense of internal political efficacy. Evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between efficacy (one's confidence in being able to make a difference in public life) and civic engagement (Almond & Verba, 1963; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Finkel (1985) has even posited that the effects are reciprocal with civic participation enhancing efficacy. Given this link, the impact of a school-based intervention on efficacy deserves attention. At the core of this examination, however, is making clear the distinction between internal and external political efficacy (Balch, 1974). As some scholars have warned (Junn, 2004, Kahne & Westheimer, 2006), the failure to understand this distinction can compromise the success of well-intentioned interventions designed to boost students' confidence in their ability to make a positive difference.

Scholars have concluded that internal political efficacy consists of two components: an individual's sense of being able to understand politics, and the realization that one has the competence to influence government and politics (see Balch, 1974; Finkel, 1985; Iyengar, 1980; Lambert, Curtis, Brown & Kay, 1986; Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). In our research, we seek to test the premise that reading and discussing news coverage on a regular basis will lead students to conclude that they have a strong grasp of politics and that this understanding can aid them in developing the skills they need to be effective citizens.

Previous research has found a connection between media exposure and external political efficacy among adults (Miller, Goldenberg, & Erbring, 1979). External efficacy, as defined by Miller and colleagues and others (see Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991), refers to individuals' perceptions of government responsiveness to their needs and concerns. Miller et al. found that as exposure to news coverage critical of government increased, one's sense of external political efficacy declined.

But the relationship between media exposure and internal political efficacy could be just the opposite: as individuals consume news coverage they could develop a sense of confidence in understanding and being able to influence government affairs. Miller et al. said they were not able to test for the relationship between internal political efficacy and media exposure using their cross-sectional data because of the potentially reciprocal nature of the relationship. A greater sense of internal efficacy could prompt one to seek out news coverage of government and politics, as well as develop a stronger sense of efficacy as a result of media exposure. This research will attempt to disentangle the direction of causality. The pre-test-/post-test features of our experimental research design enable us to address causality by measuring students' internal political efficacy both before and after they consume and discuss news coverage on a regular basis. Our data allow us to use pre-existing levels of internal political efficacy as controls in examining potential changes in those areas following the intervention.

Prior research also has not explored the relationship between media exposure and internal political efficacy among adolescents. Instead, previous scholarship has emphasized the significant role that parents play in passing along their sense of internal political efficacy to their children (Dolan, 1995; Jennings & Niemi, 1974). We seek to build on that research by examining both parental and media influences on the development of internal political efficacy among high school students by examining the effects of requiring students to discuss politics at home with at least one parent.

Our work also sheds light on the best ways to encourage efficacy through school-based interventions. This is especially important in light of warnings sounded by such scholars as



Kahne & Westheimer (2006), who argue that, by not distinguishing between internal and external efficacy, programs designed to promote students' sense of confidence may result in just the opposite. Specifically, programs that overtly promote external efficacy may not effectively address internal efficacy, and programs that focus upon promoting internal efficacy may fail to educate students about the realities of the political world and, thereby, overlook external efficacy (2006, 293).

Although recent research on the effects of the Student Voices intervention, with its emphasis on discussion and Internet use, addresses efficacy (finding that students' levels of political efficacy were positively affected by the program), the measure of efficacy constructed by the researchers does not distinguish between internal and external efficacy. Instead, a three-point scale of political efficacy is utilized that contains measures of both internal and external efficacy (Feldman et. al., 2007). With our research, we've sought to refine understanding of efficacy and the best uses of school-based programs, by considering internal efficacy on its own.

Finally, this research also attempts to measure whether the effects of a classroom intervention involving news media and discussion at home and at school vary by circumstances at home. For a subset of the student sample we also have survey data from interviews with parents. The data include measures of parents' levels of news consumption, political knowledge and internal political efficacy. We use this data to test whether the benefits of the intervention are greater for students whose parents are less knowledgeable and engaged, or whether the greatest effects occur for students whose parents are more knowledgeable, follow the news regularly, and feel efficacious. Variation in these effects based on parental characteristics could either provide encouragement that educators can reach students who might otherwise remain disengaged, or indicate that this type of classroom intervention is most likely to enrich students who are already likely to get involved in civic life due to the example set by their parents.

## Hypotheses

The goal of this project then was to explore whether exposing students to news coverage in school, and requiring a subset of those students to discuss the news coverage at home with their parents, influences consumption of information about politics as well as knowledge about, and attitudes toward, politics. We theorize that while classroom exposure to media will help to increase civic awareness and internal political efficacy, reinforcing what is learned at school through discussion at home will amplify the effects of the classroom intervention. We seek to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Students who read news coverage of politics and policy on a regular basis as part of a classroom assignment will seek out information via other news sources and family to a greater extent than students in the control group who do not receive the classroom intervention.

H2: Students who read news coverage of politics on a regular basis as part of a classroom assignment will become more knowledgeable about politics than students in the control group who do not receive the classroom intervention.

H3: Students who read the news coverage with the understanding that they are to discuss it with their parents at home will emerge with greater knowledge than students who are not instructed to discuss the news coverage at home.

H4: Students who read news coverage on a regular basis will develop a greater sense of internal political efficacy than students in the control group who do not receive the intervention.

H5: Students who read the news coverage with the understanding that they are to discuss it with their parents at home will develop a greater sense of internal political efficacy than students who are not instructed to discuss the news coverage at home.

H6: The beneficial effects of reading and discussing news coverage on a regular basis will persist even after the intervention ends, as individuals get in the habit of paying attention to government and politics.

H7: The beneficial effects of reading and discussing news coverage in a regular basis will be greatest for students whose parents scored lower on scales of news media consumption, political knowledge and political efficacy.

### Research Design

Thirty-four suburban public high schools in central New Jersey with similar size and socioeconomic profiles were invited to participate in the research project. The research team selected four high schools, and a total of 27 social studies classes from the high schools participated in the project. Participants from the four schools consisted of 361 students who completed three surveys in the classroom.<sup>6</sup>

The three surveys measured news consumption, political knowledge, and levels of internal political efficacy as well as a set of demographic questions. Surveys two and three were identical to survey one except they omitted the demographic measures. On each survey, a tracking identification number was printed to ensure that the completed survey was linked to the other surveys that each student completed.

The participating classes from the four high schools were randomly assigned to one of three groups:

- Control Group - students assigned to this group completed three surveys over the course of the study (134 students total).
- Treatment Group #1 – students assigned to this group completed three surveys and read articles selected by the research team from *Time* magazine weekly for eight weeks and discussed the articles in class (106 students total).
- Treatment Group #2 – students assigned to this group completed the three surveys, read *Time* articles weekly for eight weeks, discussed the articles at home with their parents and discussed the articles in class (121 students total).

<sup>6</sup> The participating schools required that parents sign consent forms allowing their children to complete the surveys. Not all parents gave their consent. If non-participating students were in a treatment classroom, they still received *Time* magazine and were encouraged to participate in class discussions. Students who returned completed consent forms received a five-dollar Amazon.com gift card, regardless of whether they received permission to participate. Students who participated in the project received a second five-dollar Amazon.com gift card. Parents who completed consent forms received a five-dollar, pre-paid phone card. Parents who participated in a telephone survey related to the project received a second five-dollar phone card. The research design of the project, including the use of incentives, was approved by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board.

The study was conducted from January to May 2008. The research team administered the first survey to all of the students in the treatment and control groups January 14 – 18, 2008. Students in the two treatment groups then received copies of *Time* magazine each week for eight weeks. Students were assigned to read two to three articles about American politics in each issue. The research team selected the articles and provided discussion guides with suggested questions about the articles each week. The discussion guides for treatment group 1 are reproduced in Appendix A. The guides for treatment group 2 were almost identical to those for treatment group 1. The only difference was that the students in treatment group 2 were asked to discuss the articles at home with a parent or parents before the classroom discussion. At the completion of the eight-week intervention, the research team administered the second survey to all of the students March 17 – 24, 2008. Students completed a third survey six weeks later, April 29 – May 2, 2008, to test whether any effects of reading and discussing the articles were still present. Students in the control group completed all three surveys during the same time period but did not receive *Time* magazine. The research team returned to the schools in late May – early June 2008 to debrief all of the students and present preliminary results of the study.

Parents also completed a telephone survey over the course of the experiment. The survey contained measures of media consumption, political knowledge and internal political efficacy that were identical to those found in the student surveys. Not all parents consented to participate in the survey.<sup>7</sup> Although 361 students participated in the experiment and completed questionnaires, the same was true for only 152 parents of students. The portion of our analysis that addresses parental influence uses that subsample of 152 participating parents and their children. By sheer happenstance, the distribution of parents and students in the control and treatment groups was approximately the same as in the larger sample (36% of the participants were in the control group in the parent-student subsample, compared to 37% of students in the larger sample; 28% of the parent-student subsample were in Treatment Group #1, compared to 29% in the larger sample of students; and 36% of the parent-student subsample were in Treatment Group #2, compared to 34% in the larger sample of students).

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<sup>7</sup> Luce Research of Colorado Springs, CO conducted the telephone interviews. Parents of 275 students who participated in the project signed consent forms in which they agreed to participate in telephone interviews. Using contact information provided by the parents Luce Research completed interviews with parents of 152 students. In instances where both parents signed consent forms, Luce Research selected one parent at random to do the interview. The complete call disposition for the parents is available from the authors upon request.

Table 1 – Characteristics of Study Participants

		Total subject pool	Control group	Treatment 1	Treatment 2
Year	Freshman	26%	46%	30%	0%
	Sophomore	40%	11%	68%	47%
	Junior	2%	0%	2%	3%
	Senior	33%	43%	0%	50%
Gender	Female	47%	52%	42%	46%
	Male	53%	48%	58%	54%
Race	White	87%	84%	91%	88%
	Nonwhite	13%	16%	9%	12%
In an AP or honors class	Yes	19%	30%	0%	24%
	No	81%	70%	100%	76%
Total participants		361	134	106	121

Notes: Percentages are column percentages for each demographic category, and they may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding. The control group simply completed three surveys. Treatment group 1 completed the surveys, read articles about politics from *Time* magazine and discussed the articles in class. Treatment group 2 completed the surveys, read the same articles, and were instructed to discuss the articles at home before discussing them in class.

The subject pool was distributed across freshmen, sophomores and seniors, but there were fewer juniors in the pool. Large portions of the control and treatment 1 groups were freshmen, while the treatment 2 group consisted of mostly sophomores and seniors. About one-fifth of students in the control group and one-fourth of students in the treatment 2 group were in advanced placement or honors history classes, although none of the treatment 1 subjects were in AP or honors classes. To account for variation across all of these dimensions, we include year, gender, race, and type of course in multivariate analyses of the questionnaire responses.

The sample of parents who completed the survey also varied along demographic lines. The parent sample was: 75 percent female, 91 percent white, 65 percent had at least a college degree, 55 percent had annual incomes of \$100,000 or more, and the average age was 47.9 years old.

### Methods of Analysis

We analyzed the data several ways. We began by first comparing baseline levels of information-seeking, political knowledge and political efficacy (survey 1) to levels of those constructs immediately after the intervention (survey 2) and six weeks after the intervention ended (survey 3). We looked for changes over time, and for larger changes in the treatment groups than in the control group. We tested for these changes by conducting difference of means tests that compared mean levels of each construct for each group from survey 1 to survey 2, and from survey 1 to survey 3.

Although we randomly assigned classes to treatment and control groups, baseline levels of information-seeking, knowledge and efficacy still varied somewhat between the groups. As a result, isolating the effects of the experiment required that we take into account other potential predictors of information-seeking, knowledge and efficacy. We ran multivariate models that controlled for students' gender, race, year in school, and whether the student was in an advanced placement or honors class to filter out those influences.

Given that our dependent variables were scales that were continuous in nature, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression would have been the logical approach for multivariate analysis. But we also needed to take into account the possibility of school-level effects. One of the key assumptions of OLS regression is independence of the observations. That students in the subject pool attended the same school may have violated that assumption, resulting in correlated error terms for data from students within each school. Violating that assumption could lead to standard errors that are smaller than they should be, resulting in Type I errors in interpreting the results (Luke 2004).

For each set of multivariate models, our first step was to determine whether we needed to run multi-level models that controlled for effects at the school level. We ran a series of random intercept models that examined both the between-school and within-school variation for the dependent variables using the intercept and no other predictors (see Luke 2004, Singer 1998 for further explanation of this approach). We found no statistically significant evidence of between-school variation for information-seeking, so we were confident that OLS regression would be an acceptable analytic approach. We did find evidence of slight between-school variation for our other two dependent variables – political knowledge and political efficacy – so we ran multi-level models in which the intercepts in the models varied randomly at the school level while the independent variables provided the fixed effects for the models.

We also examined the possible influences of parental levels of information-seeking, knowledge and efficacy for a subset of students for whom we had comparable data from their parents (N = 152). We ran a series of random intercept models first for these analyses, and found no evidence of school-level effects. Thus we used OLS regression for the analyses in which we tested for parental influences on students' levels of information-seeking, knowledge and efficacy.

## Findings

### Sources of Information for Students

We measured use of sources of political information with nine questions that we repeated in each of the three surveys:

"Out of the last seven days, how many days have you \_\_\_\_\_ for information about government or politics?"

1. Read a local newspaper
2. Read a national newspaper, such as *USA Today* or the *Wall Street Journal*
3. Listened to a radio newscast
4. Watched a local television newscast

5. Watched a national television newscast
  6. Read a news site on the Internet
  7. Read a blog on the Internet
  8. Listened to a podcast on the Internet
9. "Out of the last seven days, how many days have you talked about government or politics with someone in your family?"

In the coding for all nine questions, responses ranged from zero to seven. Students who said they did not know or who did not answer the questions were coded at the mean of the response to each question for each wave to reduce the incidence of missing data.

Our first hypothesis is that use of news sources to get more information about government and politics would increase from survey 1 to survey 2 for the treatment groups but would not change for the control group. We found this to be the case for some news sources, but not others.

**Table 2 – Difference of Means for Use of Information Sources**

		Survey 1 (Pre-test)	Survey 2 (Post-test)	Survey 3 (Post-test)	N
Local newspaper	Control	1.01	1.32**	1.08	134
	Treatment 1	1.08	1.49**	1.24	106
	Treatment 2	1.64	2.05**	1.51	121
National newspaper	Control	0.4	0.68*	0.50	134
	Treatment 1	0.56	0.96**	0.88+	106
	Treatment 2	0.88	1.14*	0.96	121
Radio newscast	Control	1.53	1.75	1.30	134
	Treatment 1	1.26	1.70*	1.36	106
	Treatment 2	1.49	1.48	1.4	121
Local TV news	Control	2.21	2.41	2.00	134
	Treatment 1	2.44	2.27	1.83**	106
	Treatment 2	2.6	2.97+	2.31	121
National TV news	Control	2.35	2.22	1.99+	134
	Treatment 1	1.96	2.08	1.67	106
	Treatment 2	2.67	2.89	2.47	121
Internet news site	Control	1.73	1.88	1.61	134
	Treatment 1	0.73	1.08*	1.21**	106
	Treatment 2	1.97	2.37*	1.93	121
Blog	Control	0.61	0.5	0.38*	134
	Treatment 1	0.33	0.39	0.55+	106
	Treatment 2	0.68	0.54	0.62	121
Podcast	Control	0.04	0.12+	0.26**	134
	Treatment 1	0.14	0.18	0.32	106
	Treatment 2	0.15	0.18	0.17	121

Talk with family	Control	2.65	2.72	2.43	134
	Treatment 1	2.03	2.43*	2.22	106
	Treatment 2	2.76	3.05+	2.46+	121

Notes: Entries are the mean number of days out of the previous seven that students used each source for information about politics. Difference of means between survey 2 or 3 and survey 1 is significant at +  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . (Two-tailed tests.)

To test the hypothesis, we calculated the mean usage of each news source for the treatment and control groups prior to the experiment (survey 1), just after the experiment (survey 2) and six weeks after the experiment (survey 3). Difference of means tests revealed statistically significant increases in use of radio for treatment group 1 from survey 1 to survey 2; viewing of local television news for treatment group 2; and increases in reading of news on the Internet and family conversations to get news about politics for both treatment groups. But both the treatment and control groups showed significant increases in mean usage of local and national newspapers, and the control group showed a slight increase in use of Internet podcasts for information about politics (although the actual incidence of listening to podcasts, as well as reading blogs, was quite low across all groups).

The overall finding indicates that students reported using multiple news sources more frequently in survey 2 compared to survey 1. But did this increase hold up over time? The answer is no. Across all of the groups and all of the categories, the frequency of use of the various sources dropped in survey 3, six weeks after the experiment ended. Although there were net increases from survey 1 to survey 3 in a few categories, most of the mean levels of usage in survey 3 were at or below the levels found in survey 1.

Looking at the patterns of news consumption across individual sources might obscure larger changes in behavior. It is unlikely that students (or anyone for that matter), would rely exclusively on one source for information about politics. Instead, a larger pattern of information-seeking might be a more accurate depiction of behavior. We combined the nine measures of usage of information sources into scales, and measured changes in the scales over time.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 3 – Changes in Information-Seeking Over the Three Surveys**

	Survey 1 (Pre-test)	Survey 2 (Post-test)	Survey 3 (Post-test)	N
Control	12.54	13.6+	11.56+	134
Treatment 1	10.52	12.59*	11.29*	106
Treatment 2	14.83	16.67*	13.83	121

Notes: Entries are means of scales of information-seeking.

The coefficient alpha for the scale was 0.81 for survey 1, 0.80 for survey 2, and 0.83 for survey 3.

<sup>8</sup> The scales were highly reliable. The coefficient alpha for the scale for survey 1 was 0.81, 0.80 for survey 2 and 0.83 for survey 3.

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The difference of means between survey 2 and 3 and survey 1 is significant at +  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . (Two-tailed tests.)

Breaking down the difference in means for the scale from survey 1 to survey 2 showed that, although the mean of the scale increased from survey 1 to survey 2 for both the treatment and control groups, the difference was significant only at the level of  $p < 0.10$  for the control group, while the difference was significant at  $p < 0.05$  for the two treatment groups. The difference in means from survey 1 to survey 2 was also slightly larger for the treatment groups than for the control group. The means for all three groups declined from survey 2 to survey 3, and dropped below the levels found in survey 1 for the control group and treatment group 2. Thus whatever benefit that the experiment may have brought about diminished after the experiment ended.

Comparing means from one survey to another, and across the different groups, may not provide a complete picture. In examining changes over time, it is important to consider other factors that might be at work beyond the treatment conditions. We put our first hypothesis to an additional test by examining the possible effects of other variables on the level of information-seeking before and after the survey. Our multivariate model needs to take into account the potential confounding effects of the demographic characteristics of the students (year in school, race and gender), and student aptitude as reflected by the type of class the student is in (whether the class is an advanced placement or honors class or not).

The models for information-seeking after the magazine intervention (as measured in survey 2) showed some evidence that the intervention prompted students to look to other sources more frequently for information about politics, but only after taking into account both the type of treatment and student aptitude.



Table 4 – Predictors of Information-Seeking Post-Treatment (Survey 2)					
Model 1			Model 2		
	Coefficient	S.E.		Coefficient	S.E.
Intercept	5.59**	1.64	Intercept	4.96**	1.69
Information-seeking pre-test	0.69**	0.04	Information-seeking pre-test	0.69**	0.04
White	-0.75	1.11	White	-0.56	1.12
Female	-0.75	0.75	Female	-0.76	0.75
Year in school	0.17	0.35	Year in school	0.33	0.37
Treatment group 1	0.47	0.95	Treatment group 1	0.58	0.96
Treatment group 2	1.36	0.91	Treatment group 2 in an AP or honors course	-0.49	1.57
			Treatment group 2 not in an AP or honors course	1.78+	0.96
Adjusted R-squared	0.49		Adjusted R-squared	0.49	

Notes: The dependent variable is the scale of information seeking behaviors measured in survey 2 after the magazine intervention. Coefficients are unstandardized Ordinary Least Squares regression estimates.

N = 361

+  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$  (Two-tailed tests)

The model controlled for previous levels of information-seeking by using the data gathered in the first survey. We also controlled for race, gender, and year in school. We used dummy variables to distinguish between students who were in the treatment 1 group, which only discussed the magazine articles in class, and the treatment 2 group, which discussed the articles at home with at least one parent and in class. The control group served as the omitted reference category for the dummy variables. We also ran a second model in which we accounted for whether the student was in an AP or honors class. No students in treatment group 1 fell into this category, but 24 percent of students in treatment group 2 were in an AP or honors class. So we separated students in treatment group 2 into one of two categories based on whether the students were in an AP or honors class.

It was not surprising that information-seeking habits from before the treatment were the strongest predictor of information-seeking after the treatment in both models. No other

variable in Model 1 exerted a statistically significant effect. Further analysis, however, revealed an interesting finding for the combination of treatment and aptitude. In Model 2, when we broke down the members of treatment group 2 by whether or not they were in an AP or honors course, we found that students who were not in an AP or honors course reported an increased level of information-seeking after the treatment relative to students in the control group ( $p < 0.10$ ). There was no significant change associated with treatment 2 students who were in an AP or honors class. This suggests that the combination of reading the magazine articles and discussing them at home and at school had a beneficial effect for students outside of the AP/honors track.

### Student Political Knowledge

We also hypothesized that the magazine intervention would affect political knowledge in two ways. We expected that students who read news coverage of politics on a regular basis as part of a classroom assignment would become more knowledgeable in those areas than students in the control group who did not receive the classroom intervention (hypothesis #2). We also expected that these gains in knowledge would be greater among students who were assigned to discuss the articles at home with their parents as well as in the classroom, with the two sets of discussions reinforcing the effects of each other (hypothesis #3).

We measured political knowledge by repeating seven questions in each of the three surveys:

“Next we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers and the like.

1. Nancy Pelosi. What job or political office does she now hold? (Open-ended responses were coded 2 if students identified Pelosi as speaker of the House, 1 if they identified her as a member of Congress, and 0 for all other responses.)
2. Dick Cheney. What job or political office does he now hold? (Open-ended responses were coded 1 if students identified Cheney as vice president, and 0 for all other responses.)
3. Vladimir Putin. What job or political office does he now hold? (Open-ended responses were coded 1 if students identified Putin as president or leader of Russia, and 0 for all other responses.)
4. John Roberts. What job or political office does he now hold? (Open-ended responses were coded 2 if students identified Roberts as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, 1 if they identified Roberts as a Supreme Court justice, and 0 for all other responses.)
5. Which political party has the most members in the U.S. House of Representatives? (1 = correct response, 0 = incorrect response)
6. Which political party has the most members in the U.S. Senate? (1 = correct response, 0 = incorrect response)

7. Of the two political parties, which one is more conservative than the other?" (1 = correct response, 0 = incorrect response)

The scale ranged from 0 to 9 points. The coefficient alpha for the scale was 0.60 for survey 1, 0.65 for survey 2, and 0.68 for survey 3.

We found that knowledge did, indeed, increase from survey 1, before the intervention, to survey 2, after the intervention.

**Table 5 – Changes in Political Knowledge Over the Three Surveys**

	Survey 1 (Pre-test)	Survey 2 (Post-test)	Survey 3 (Post-test)	N
Control	2.46	3.04**	3.08**	134
Treatment 1	1.97	2.4**	2.52**	106
Treatment 2	2.93	3.87**	3.97**	121

Notes: Entries are means of scales of political knowledge.

The coefficient alpha for the scale was 0.60 for survey 1, 0.65 for survey 2, and 0.68 for survey 3.

The difference of means between survey 2 and 3 and survey 1 is significant at +  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . (Two-tailed tests.)

Knowledge increased for the entire sample with statistically significant gains occurring not just in the two treatment groups but in the control group as well. The initial levels of knowledge as measured in survey 1 were higher in the control group and treatment group 2 compared to treatment group 1, possibly due to the AP and honors students in those groups. The greatest increase occurred among treatment group 2, with the average score going up by almost one point from survey 1 to survey 2. Levels of knowledge remained higher across all groups after the experiment as well, with gains in knowledge persisting for all three groups when comparing results of survey 3 to results of survey 1.

As we did for our model of news consumption, we tested for between-school variation in the data before running multivariate models, and we found slight evidence of such variation. The intraclass correlation between the between-school variance and within-school variance of the dependent variable was 0.05, suggesting that between-school variation accounted for five percent of the variance in the data. While this level of between-school variation is low, we took the conservative approach of running a random-intercept model to examine the effects of existing levels of knowledge, the treatment, demographics and student aptitude on the scale of political knowledge in the second survey. The model allowed the intercept to vary randomly at the school level to account for the between-school variation in the data.

**Table 6 – Predictors of Political Knowledge  
Post-Treatment (Survey 2)**

Model 1			Model 2		
	Coefficient	S.E.		Coefficient	S.E.
Intercept	1.63**	0.43		1.33*	0.54
Political knowledge pre-test	0.85**	0.4	Political knowledge pre-test	0.86**	0.04
White	0.07	0.19	White	0.08	0.19
Female	-0.26+	0.13	Female	-0.26*	0.13
Year in school	-0.29*	0.12	Year in school	-0.17	0.19
Treatment group 1	-0.58*	0.21	Treatment group 1	-0.60**	0.22
Treatment group 2	0.66**	0.18	Treatment group 2 in an AP or honors course	0.28	0.47
			Treatment group 2 not in an AP or honors course	0.68**	0.19
Log-likelihood	-586.3205 with 9 df		Log-likelihood	-585.9629 with 10 df	

Notes: The dependent variable is the scale of political knowledge measured in survey 2 after the magazine intervention. Coefficients are fixed effects in a random intercept model using maximum likelihood estimation.

To test for model fit, we compared the log-likelihood of an unrestricted model, in which we assumed the treatment conditions had no effect on political knowledge, to Models 1 and 2, in which we assumed the treatments had an effect on political knowledge. A likelihood ratio test showed that including the treatment group variables in Model 1 provided a statistically significant improvement in the fit of the model to the data ( $p < 0.01$ ). Including the treatment group variables in Model 2 also provided a statistically significant improvement in the fit of the model to the data ( $p < 0.01$ ).

N = 361

+  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$  (Two-tailed tests)

As with our analysis of information-seeking, we ran two models for political knowledge, with Model 1 examining the effects of treatments 1 and 2 compared to the control group, and Model 2 isolating the effects of treatment group 2 for students in AP or honors class and students who were not in those classes.

In both models, political knowledge as measured in survey 1 was the strongest predictor of political knowledge in survey 2. Gender and year in school also were significant. Females had lower levels of political knowledge than males in survey 2 (at the level of  $p < 0.10$ ) and knowledge increased for students who were earlier in their high school studies. In Model 1, the dummy variables for treatment 1 and treatment 2 were both statistically significant at the level of  $p < 0.01$ , but the coefficients ran in opposite directions. Students

in treatment group 1 had a lower level of political knowledge in survey 2 compared to students in the control group. Students in treatment group 2 had a higher level of political knowledge than the control group. This suggests that something in addition to the treatment was driving political knowledge in the groups. It may have been that students in the control group also were learning because of the time in which the survey was conducted, even controlling for other factors. Disaggregating the honors versus non-honors students in Model 2 showed that it was the non-honors students who benefitted from treatment 2. Those students had a higher level of political knowledge in survey 2 than did students in the control group, holding all other factors in the model constant. AP and honors students in treatment 2 did not have a statistically significant difference in political knowledge compared to the control group.

### Student Political Efficacy

We also hypothesized that students who received the magazine intervention would emerge with an increased level of internal political efficacy compared to the control group (hypothesis #4), and that the greatest gains would occur among students who were instructed to discuss the articles at home with a parent or parents as well as in the classroom (hypothesis #5).

We measured internal political efficacy using a scale of three items from the American National Election Study:

1. I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics. (1 = disagree strongly, 2 = disagree somewhat, 3 = neither agree nor disagree / don't know, 4 = agree somewhat, 5 = agree strongly)
2. I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country. (1 = disagree strongly, 2 = disagree somewhat, 3 = neither agree nor disagree / don't know, 4 = agree somewhat, 5 = agree strongly)
3. I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people. (1 = disagree strongly, 2 = disagree somewhat, 3 = neither agree nor disagree / don't know, 4 = agree somewhat, 5 = agree strongly)

The scale ranged from three to 15. The coefficient alpha for the scale was 0.80 for survey 1, 0.82 for survey 2, and 0.81 for survey 3.

We found that levels of internal political efficacy increased from survey 1 to survey 2, but only for the treatment 2 group.

**Table 7 – Changes in Internal Political Efficacy Over the Three Surveys**

	Survey 1 (Pre-test)	Survey 2 (Post-test)	Survey 3 (Post-test)	N
Control	8.94	9.1	9.54**	134
Treatment 1	9.27	9.33	9.3	106
Treatment 2	9.33	10.02**	10.07**	121

Notes: Entries are means of scales of internal political efficacy.

The coefficient alpha for the scale was 0.80 for survey 1, 0.82 for survey 2, and 0.81 for survey 3.

The difference of means between survey 2 and 3 and survey 1 is significant at +  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . (Two-tailed tests.)

Difference of means tests found that internal political efficacy remained the same for treatment group 1 in each of the three surveys. The control group saw a statistically significant increase, but only in survey 3 compared to survey 1. Internal political efficacy increased significantly for treatment group 2 from survey 1 to survey 2, and efficacy remained significantly higher in survey 3 compared to survey 1 for this group. Treatment group 2 showed the largest overall increase of the three groups across the three surveys.

We then examined the difference in internal political efficacy from before and after the intervention using a multivariate model. Prior to running the model, we checked for between-school variation in the data, and found an intraclass correction of 0.02. That meant that two percent of the variance in the data was due to the schools that the students attended. Although this is a small amount of variance, once again we took the conservative approach and ran a random-intercept model, allowing the intercept to vary randomly for each school to account for the between-school variation in the data.

Table 8 – Predictors of Internal Political Efficacy Post-Treatment (Survey 2)					
Model 1			Model 2		
	Coefficient	S.E.		Coefficient	S.E.
Intercept	2.61**	0.55	Intercept	2.77**	0.57
Political efficacy pre-test	0.74**	0.04	Political efficacy pre-test	0.74**	0.04
White	-0.31	0.31	White	-0.34	0.31
Female	0.01	0.21	Female	0.006	0.21
Year in school	0.05	0.10	Year in school	0.01	0.10
Treatment group 1	0.01	0.27	Treatment group 1	0.01	0.26
Treatment group 2	0.59*	0.25	Treatment group 2 in an AP or honors course	1.03*	0.44
			Treatment group 2 not in an AP or honors course	0.50+	0.26
Log-likelihood	-751.2996 with 9 df		Log-likelihood	-750.6255 with 10 df	

Notes: The dependent variable is the scale of internal political efficacy measured in survey 2 after the magazine intervention. Coefficients are fixed effects in a random intercept model using maximum likelihood estimation.

To test for model fit, we compared the log-likelihood of an unrestricted model, in which we assumed the treatment conditions had no effect on political efficacy, to Models 1 and 2, in which we assumed the treatments had an effect on political efficacy. A likelihood ratio test showed that including the treatment group variables in Model 1 provided a statistically significant improvement in the fit of the model to the data ( $p < 0.05$ ). Including the treatment group variables in Model 2 also provided a statistically significant improvement in the fit of the model to the data ( $p = 0.08$ ).

N = 361

+  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$  (Two-tailed tests)

Internal political efficacy in the first survey is the strongest predictor of internal political efficacy in the second survey in both models 1 and 2. Treatment 2 was the only other statistically significant predictor in Model 1. Students who discussed the magazine articles at home with their parents as well as in the classroom scored higher on the internal efficacy scale in survey 2 than did the students in the control group, controlling for pre-existing levels of internal efficacy in survey 1. Treatment 1 had no significant effect on internal political efficacy in survey 2 when holding all other variables constant.

Breaking out the students in treatment group 2 by whether they were in an AP or honors class showed that the effect of the treatment varied by the aptitude of the students. Model 2 showed that while both sets of students in treatment group 2 scored higher on political efficacy in survey 2 than students in the control group, the AP and honors students showed gains that were nearly twice as large as treatment 2 students who were not in an AP or honors class. Also, the statistical significance of the effect of treatment 2 on the AP and honors students was less than 0.05, while the significance of the effect for the other students in the treatment was less than 0.10. It is possible that the rich get richer, so to speak, in that the AP and honors students may have derived a greater benefit from the treatment than their counterparts in other classes. It may be that the more advanced students were more receptive to the citizen-building effects of reading about and discussing politics, with the added benefit of reinforcement at home.

### Parental Influence

The concept of the rich getting richer is an important consideration in this research. If the greatest benefits accrue to the most advanced students, then the intervention may be of less value than if all students benefit, or if less advanced students profit most from the intervention. The data presented here suggest that that the intervention involving parents was most helpful to students outside of AP and honors classes when it comes to media consumption and political knowledge, and that advanced students derived the greatest benefit in terms of internal political efficacy.

Another way of measuring the impact of the intervention centers on the home environment and whether the effects of the intervention vary based on whether students' parents are frequent consumers of media, knowledgeable about politics and highly efficacious when it comes to politics. If the benefits vary by parental characteristics, are the benefits greater for students with informed and engaged parents or for students whose parents are less knowledgeable and efficacious? If the greater benefits occur for students in the latter group, then the value of the intervention would be higher given the widely accepted educational goal of creating a more informed, knowledgeable and engaged citizenry.

We attempted to measure the effects of the home environment by surveying parents of students who participated in the experiment. We were able to complete telephone interviews with a parent of 152 of the 361 students who participated in the experiment. The parent surveys contained identical measures of media consumption, political knowledge and internal political efficacy. We calculated parent scores on the scales for media use, knowledge and efficacy, and we used the scores to categorize students as having parents who scored high or low on the various scales compared to the overall pool of parents. We calculated both means and medians for the parent scores, and used the median as the cut point because the scores on each scale had distributions that were skewed slightly toward the upper ends of the scales. Parents who scored at or below the median on each scale were considered to be in the low group for that scale, while parents who scored above the median were classified as being in the high group for that scale.

We re-ran the models predicting student scores in wave 2 for media consumption, political knowledge and internal political efficacy and divided the sub-sample based on whether students had parents who scored high or low on the relevant dimension in question (media use, knowledge or efficacy). This exercise allowed us to gauge whether



the experiment's benefits varied by whether students had a parent strong or weak on these dimensions. Drilling down to this level, however, also resulted in small sub-samples (ranging from 66 to 86 students) and larger standard errors, making it potentially more difficult to find significant predictors of student media use, knowledge and internal efficacy in wave 2.

Once again, we tested for school-level effects in the subsample of students for whom we had parent data by running random intercept models with the intercept as the only predictor. For each dependent variable – student media use, student knowledge and student political efficacy in wave 2 – we could not find evidence of school-level effects that would require the use of multi-level models. As a result, we used Ordinary Least Squares regression for each of the analyses involving parent data.

Table 9 – Predictors of Student Information-Seeking Post-Treatment (Survey 2) – Subsamples with Parent Data					
Model 1 – Students With Parents Low in Information-Seeking			Model 2 – Students with Parents High in Information-Seeking		
	Coefficient	S.E.		Coefficient	S.E.
Intercept	1.53	3.68	Intercept	4.79	3.30
Information-seeking pre-test	0.68**	0.07	Information-seeking pre-test	0.61**	0.09
White	-0.90	2.63	White	-0.90	2.54
Female	-0.04	1.54	Female	0.06	1.51
Year in school	1.24	0.79	Year in school	2.05*	0.82
Treatment group 1	1.31	1.86	Treatment group 1	-1.66	1.94
Treatment group 2 in an AP or honors course	-0.52	3.02	Treatment group 2 in an AP or honors course	-6.29*	2.93
Treatment group 2 not in an AP or honors course	1.79	2.14	Treatment group 2 not in an AP or honors course	0.80	2.15
Adjusted R-squared	0.58		Adjusted R-squared	0.52	
N	77		N	75	

Notes: The dependent variable is the scale of information seeking behaviors measured in survey 2 after the magazine intervention. Coefficients are unstandardized Ordinary Least Squares regression estimates.

+  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$  (Two-tailed tests)

In terms of media use in wave 2, the experiment had no measurable benefits for students whose parents scored low on media consumption. The strongest predictor of student

information-seeking in wave 2 was student information-seeking in wave 1, and there were no significant effects for students in treatment group 1, the AP/honors students in treatment group 2, and the non-AP/honors students in treatment group 2. The same was true for students whose parents scored high on information-seeking, but with one exception. Advanced placement and honors students in treatment group 2 who had parents who used media frequently had lower levels of media use in wave 2 compared to students in the control group whose parents used media frequently. This is a counter-intuitive result suggesting that some other factor beyond the experiment was influencing media use for these students.

Analyses of student political knowledge in wave 2, however, revealed some interesting results. The effects of the intervention in this case appeared to vary by whether students had parents with low or high levels of political knowledge.

Table 10 – Predictors of Student Political Knowledge Post-Treatment (Survey 2) – Subsamples with Parent Data					
Model 1 – Students With Parents With Low Levels of Political Knowledge			Model 2 – Students with Parents With High Levels of Political Knowledge		
	Coefficient	S.E.		Coefficient	S.E.
Intercept	1.10+	0.57	Intercept	2.15*	0.81
Political knowledge pre-test	0.86**	0.08	Political knowledge pre-test	0.96**	0.10
White	-0.22	0.42	White	-0.22	0.60
Female	-0.41	0.26	Female	0.17	0.35
Year in school	0.02	0.14	Year in school	-0.32+	0.19
Treatment group 1	-0.18	0.32	Treatment group 1	-0.98*	0.46
Treatment group 2 in an AP or honors course	0.09	0.58	Treatment group 2 in an AP or honors course	0.47	0.64
Treatment group 2 not in an AP or honors course	1.27**	0.41	Treatment group 2 not in an AP or honors course	-0.64	0.44
Adjusted R-squared	0.72		Adjusted R-squared	0.65	
N	86		N	66	

Notes: The dependent variable is the scale of political knowledge measured in survey 2 after the magazine intervention. Coefficients are unstandardized Ordinary Least Squares regression estimates.

+ p < 0.10, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01 (Two-tailed tests)

Among students with parents who had low levels of political knowledge, students in treatment group 2 who were not in an AP or honors course scored higher on political knowledge in wave 2 while controlling for their levels of political knowledge in wave 1. The same was not true for advanced students in treatment group 2. This suggests that the intervention had the greatest effect for students with the potentially greatest level of need – students who were not in an advanced course, and whose parents scored low on the scale of political knowledge. The intervention made no measurable difference for students in treatment group 2 whose parents scored high on the knowledge scale. Students in treatment group 1 whose parents scored high in political knowledge, however, actually had lower levels of political knowledge in wave 2.

Analyzing student efficacy while taking into account parent efficacy also generated evidence that the intervention may have offered the greatest benefit to those students in greatest need.

<b>Table 11 – Predictors of Student Internal Political Efficacy Post-Treatment (Survey 2) – Subsamples with Parent Data</b>					
Model 1 – Students With Parents With Low Levels of Political Efficacy			Model 2 – Students with Parents With High Levels of Political Efficacy		
	Coefficient	S.E.		Coefficient	S.E.
Intercept	0.64	1.37	Intercept	4.26**	1.06
Political efficacy pre-test	0.76**	0.09	Political efficacy pre-test	0.66**	0.07
White	0.63	0.72	White	-1.77**	0.64
Female	0.22	0.40	Female	0.02	0.41
Year in school	0.14	0.21	Year in school	0.65**	0.24
Treatment group 1	0.41	0.53	Treatment group 1	0.34	0.49
Treatment group 2 in an AP or honors course	0.96	0.73	Treatment group 2 in an AP or honors course	-1.07	0.90
Treatment group 2 not in an AP or honors course	1.19*	0.56	Treatment group 2 not in an AP or honors course	-0.50	0.57
Adjusted R-squared	0.53		Adjusted R-squared	0.60	
N	84		N	68	

Notes: The dependent variable is the scale of internal political efficacy measured in survey 2 after the magazine intervention. Coefficients are unstandardized Ordinary Least Squares regression estimates.

+ p < 0.10, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01 (Two-tailed tests)

Among students whose parents scored low on the scale of internal political efficacy, students in treatment group 2 who were not in an advanced class scored higher on the efficacy scale in wave 2 when controlling for their feelings of efficacy in wave 1. This suggests that reading about politics and discussing that information with parents may help strengthen students' sense of efficacy, even when their parents do not have high levels of efficacy themselves. The intervention had no measurable effect on students whose parents scored high in political efficacy.

Taken together, the results indicate that exposing students to news coverage about politics, and having those students discuss what they read with their parents, may make students more knowledgeable and efficacious, but the effect is limited to students whose parents score low in measures of their own knowledge and efficacy. To the extent that these traits may be passed on from parent to child, an intervention like the one tested here could counteract those parental influences and lead to students who are more informed and engaged.

These results, while promising, are still somewhat speculative given the small sample sizes. But, at a minimum,, the evidence begs for further research in this area to confirm that this type of intervention may succeed in reaching the very students who could benefit the most – students outside of advanced classes whose parents score low on measures of political knowledge and efficacy.

## Discussion and Conclusion

We found support for many of our hypotheses in the multivariate analyses. We predicted that students who were in the habit of reading and discussing articles about politics each week would be more likely to seek out additional information about politics using media and family members (hypothesis #1). This was true for students in treatment group 2, who discussed the articles in class and at home with their parents. The effect was significant only for students in the treatment group who were not in AP or honors classes however.

We expected that knowledge about politics would increase for students in both treatment groups as a result of the intervention (hypothesis #2) and that the greatest gains would occur among students in treatment group 2 due to the reinforcing effects of discussing the articles at home and in school (hypothesis #3). We found that knowledge rose in both treatment groups, as well as in the control group, from survey 1 to survey 2, and remained at the increased level in survey 3, six weeks after the experiment ended.

It is worth pointing out that the experiment coincided with the 2008 presidential primary and caucus season. The across-the-board increases for all three groups may have been due in part to the timing of the experiment, with students overall paying more attention to politics during the period covered by the three surveys. Repeating the knowledge measures across the three surveys also may have contributed to a learning effect among all three groups. Even with those two caveats, however, there is still evidence of a greater benefit occurring among the students assigned to discuss the magazine articles with their parents. When we broke down the treatment 2 group by whether the students were in an AP or honors class, the benefits of the treatment fell exclusively to those students who were not in an AP or honors class, suggesting that the more advanced students were already relatively knowledgeable about politics going into the experiment.

We also hypothesized that the intervention would make students more confident about their grasp of politics, and that internal political efficacy would increase among students in the two treatment groups (hypothesis #4). We predicted that the effect would be strongest among those students who discussed the articles at home with at least one parent and in school (hypothesis #5). We found evidence of an increase in internal political efficacy, but only for treatment group 2. Also, the greatest gains occurred among students who were in AP and honors classes, suggesting that there was something about those students' aptitude or view of themselves as citizens that made them more receptive to the benefits of reading about and discussing politics at home and at school.

Returning to the classroom six weeks after the intervention ended, we had expected to find that the treatment groups would have experienced a longer-term benefit from reading and discussing the articles (hypothesis #6). This was not the case when it came to information-seeking. The scale of media use and interpersonal discussion dropped for all three groups from survey 2 to survey 3, falling below the levels that had existed before the experiment for the control group and the treatment 2 group. Political knowledge, on the other hand, increased for all three groups from survey 1 to survey 2 and remained higher in survey 3 compared to survey 1. That this occurred even for the control group may have been due to the timing of the research, during the presidential primary and caucus season, as well as the presence of honors and AP students in the control group. The greatest gains, however, occurred among treatment group 2, and those gains persisted in the third survey. In terms of internal political efficacy, only treatment group 2 saw a gain from survey 1 to survey 2, and that gain persisted in survey 3. Although the control group did not see a gain in political efficacy from survey 1 to survey 2, there was a statistically significant gain for the control group from surveys 1 and 2 to survey 3. We can only attribute that gain to factors outside the research design.

Taking into account parental influence added nuance to the findings. We hypothesized that students whose parents score low on measures of information-seeking, political knowledge, and political efficacy would be more likely to benefit from the experimental intervention than would students whose parents scored high on those dimensions (hypothesis #7). We found this to be the case for political knowledge and efficacy, but only for students who were not in an AP or honors class. Thus the students who potentially could benefit the most from the intervention did so. The small samples in these analyses prompt us to temper our conclusions here with some caution, but the evidence suggests that this is an area worthy of future research.

A theme that recurs in these findings is that, even with random assignment in an experiment, all students are not created equal, and therefore the benefits of the intervention varied along an important dimension. Among the entire pool of 361 students, those who were not in an AP or honors class were most likely to increase their level of information-seeking and learn more about politics as a result of reading the articles and discussing them at home and in class than their more advanced counterparts. But the students in the AP and honors classes were more likely to grow in their feelings of internal political efficacy as a result of reading and talking about the material at home and in school.

These are valuable lessons, not only for scholars, but also for practitioners. If our schools are to build a more informed and engaged citizenry, we need to be mindful that the effects of those efforts will not be uniform across students. This suggests the need for more careful designs of curricula involving news media to increase the chances that more

students realize the maximum benefit of media use and discussion. Educators may want to raise the bar when it comes to the level of sophistication of the readings for advanced students to increase their political knowledge. On the other hand, educators might consider spending more time relating media content to students' views about themselves and their role in civic life to build efficacy among students who are not in advanced courses. It also seems clear that short-term interventions tend to yield short-term benefits. To increase the probability of altering levels of information-seeking, knowledge and efficacy over the long term, educators should be mindful that media use needs to be habitual, extending beyond one unit of a social studies course or even one course in high school.

We offer these findings with the qualification that the results are from one experiment involving four suburban high schools in a Northeastern state. The students who participated in the experiment did not necessarily constitute a representative sample of high school students across the country, or even in their own schools. Also, the timing of the experiment coincided with a period in which the public in general, as well as the students involved in this experiment, were paying close attention to the presidential nominating process. The effects of the intervention may have been different during another period in American politics. For example, the contrast between the treatment and control groups might actually be greater during a period in which people are not following presidential politics.

These qualifications do not overshadow the differences that emerged among the students during the experiment. Assigning students to read and discuss articles about politics had a beneficial effect, especially when parents were involved. The more educators can do to build and maintain that connection between school and home, the greater the likelihood that educators and parents can work together to create a more knowledgeable and efficacious citizenry.

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## Appendix A – Student Questionnaire



## Introduction

Thanks for helping us with this survey. We are conducting a confidential survey of high school students, and would very much like to include your opinions. Please circle the response that best reflects your answer to each question. All answers are completely confidential, and your participation is voluntary. As thanks for taking the time to complete the survey, we are offering students a \$5 Amazon.com gift card. The survey should take you 10 – 15 minutes to complete.

1. **Are you currently registered to vote at the address where you now live or not? (Please circle a response)**

No  Yes

2. **Out of the last seven days, how many days have you read a local newspaper for information about government or politics? (Please circle a response)**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Don't know

3. **Out of the last seven days, how many days have you read a national newspaper, such as *USA Today* or the *Wall Street Journal*, for information about government or politics? (Please circle a response)**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Don't know

4. **Out of the last seven days, how many days have you listened to a radio newscast for information about government or politics? (Please circle a response)**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Don't know

5. **Out of the last seven days, how many days have you watched a local television newscast for information about government or politics? (Please circle a response)**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Don't know

6. **Out of the last seven days, how many days have you watched a national television newscast for information about government or politics? (Please circle a response)**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Don't know

7. Out of the last seven days, how many days have you read a news site on the Internet for information about government or politics? (Please circle a response)
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Don't know
8. Out of the last seven days, how many days have you read a blog on the Internet for information about government or politics? (Please circle a response)
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Don't know
9. Out of the last seven days, how many days have you listened to a podcast on the Internet for information about government or politics? (Please circle a response)
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Don't know
10. Out of the last seven days, how many days have you talked about government or politics with someone in your family? (Please circle a response)
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Don't know
11. In the past four weeks, how many weeks have you read a newsweekly magazine, such as *Time* or *Newsweek*, to get information about government or politics?
- 0 1 2 3 4 Don't know

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Please circle a response)						
12. I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Don't know
13. I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Don't know
14. I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people.	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Don't know
15. Public officials don't care much what people like me think.	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Don't know

16. Over the years, how much attention do you feel the government pays to what people think when it decides what to do -- a good deal, some, or not much? (Please circle a response)

A good deal                      Some                      Not much                      Don't know

17. How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right – just about always, most of the time, only some of the time, or none of the time? (Please circle a response)

Just about always

Most of the time

Only some of the time

None of the time

Don't know

18. Do you think that people in the national government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it? (Please circle a response)

A lot                      Some                      Not very much                      Don't know

Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers and the like.

19. Nancy Pelosi. What job or political office does she now hold? (Please write a response in the space below)
20. Dick Cheney. What job or political office does he now hold? (Please write a response in the space below)
21. Vladimir Putin. What job or political office does he now hold? (Please write a response in the space below)
22. John Roberts. What job or political office does he now hold? (Please write a response in the space below)
23. Now, thinking of the three branches of government, whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not? Is it the president, the Congress or the Supreme Court? (Please circle a response)

President                      Congress                      Supreme Court                      Don't know

24. Which political party has the most members in the U.S. House of Representatives? (Please circle a response)	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Don't know
25. Which political party has the most members in the U.S. Senate? (Please circle a response)	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Don't know
26. Of the two political parties, which one is more conservative than the other? (Please circle a response)	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Don't know

27. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

28. What is your gender? (Please circle a response)

Female

Male

29. What is your year in school? (Please circle a response)

9<sup>th</sup>

10<sup>th</sup>

11<sup>th</sup>

12<sup>th</sup>

30. Are you of Latino or Hispanic origin, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or some other Spanish background? (Please circle a response)

Yes

No

31. Are you white, black or of Asian origin? (Please circle a response)

White

Black

Asian

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

*That concludes our survey. Thank you very much for your time.*

## Appendix B – Parent Questionnaire

*CIRCLE Parent Telephone Survey*

Sample: Parents participating in Eagleton's study of the effects of political discussion on youth knowledge and efficacy

<b>Consent</b>
----------------

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling on behalf of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. Rutgers is conducting a study of civic engagement among high school students and their parents. Your son or daughter's school sent home information about the study recently. This survey should take no more than nine minutes to complete, and all answers are completely confidential. May I please speak to [INSERT NAME FROM SAMPLE]?

[IF RESPONDENT HAS TO COME TO THE PHONE, RE-READ THE CONSENT STATEMENT. IF RESPONDENT IS NOT AVAILABLE, SCHEDULE A CALLBACK.]

[WHEN RESPONDENT IS ON THE PHONE]

Your participation is completely voluntary, you may end your participation at any time, and you may skip questions you do not want to answer. May I ask the first question?

A. Gender (BY OBSERVATION)

- 1 Male
- 2 Female

<b>Voter registration</b>
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Registration

RL1. Are you currently registered to vote at the address where you now live or not?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 9 Don't Know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

<b>Media consumption</b>
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M1. Out of the last seven days, how many days have you \_\_\_\_\_ for information about government or politics?

- A Read a local newspaper
- B Read a national newspaper, such as USA Today or the Wall Street Journal
- C Listened to a radio newscast
- D Watched a local television newscast
- E Watched a national television newscast
- F Read a news site on the Internet
- G Read a blog on the Internet
- H Listened to a podcast on the Internet

- 0 0 days
- 1 1 day
- 2 2 days
- 3 3 days
- 4 4 days
- 5 5 days
- 6 6 days
- 7 7 days
- 9 Don't Know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

M1A1. Out of the last seven days, how many days have you talked about government or politics with someone in your family?

- 0 0 days
- 1 1 day
- 2 2 days
- 3 3 days
- 4 4 days
- 5 5 days
- 6 6 days
- 7 7 days
- 9 Don't Know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

M2. In the past four weeks, how many weeks have you read a newsweekly magazine, such as Time or Newsweek, to get information about government or politics?

- 0 Haven't read a newsweekly magazine in the past four weeks
- 1 One week
- 2 Two weeks
- 3 Three weeks
- 4 Four weeks
- 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

### Political efficacy

EF1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- A I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.

- B I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.
- C I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people.
- D Public officials don't care much what people like me think.

- 1 Agree strongly
- 2 Agree somewhat
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Disagree somewhat
- 5 Disagree strongly
- 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

EF2. Over the years, how much attention do you feel the government pays to what people think when it decides what to do -- a good deal, some, or not much?

- 1 A good deal
- 2 Some
- 3 Not much
- 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

### Trust in government

TR1. How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right – just about always, most of the time, only some of the time, or none of the time?

- 1 Just about always
- 2 Most of the time
- 3 Only some of the time
- 4 None of the time
- 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

TR2. Do you think that people in the national government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?

- 1 A lot
- 2 Some
- 3 Not very much
- 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

### Political knowledge

Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers and the like.

KN1. Nancy Pelosi. What job or political office does she NOW hold? (DO NOT READ RESPONSE CATEGORIES)

- 1 Correctly identifies as Speaker of the House of Representatives

- 2 Correctly identifies as a member of Congress  
 3 Identification is incomplete or wrong  
 9 Don't know/Refused to respond
- KN2. Dick Cheney. What job or political office does he NOW hold? (DO NOT READ RESPONSE CATEGORIES)
- 1 Correctly identifies as Vice President  
 2 Identification is incomplete or wrong  
 9 Don't know/Refused to respond
- KN3. Vladimir Putin (Pronounced Poo-tin). What job or political office does he NOW hold? (DO NOT READ RESPONSE CATEGORIES)
- 1 Correctly identifies as president of Russia  
 2 Identification is incomplete or wrong  
 9 Don't know/Refused to respond
- KN4. John Roberts. What job or political office does he NOW hold? (DO NOT READ RESPONSE CATEGORIES)
- 1 Correctly identifies as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court  
 2 Correctly identifies as a Supreme Court justice  
 3 Identification is incomplete or wrong  
 9 Don't know/Refused to respond
- KN5. Now, thinking of the three branches of government, whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not? Is it the president, the Congress or the Supreme Court?
- 1 President  
 2 Congress  
 3 Supreme Court  
 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)
- KN6. Which political party has the most members in the U.S. House of Representatives?
- 1 The Democratic Party  
 2 The Republican Party  
 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)
- KN7. Which political party has the most members in the U.S. Senate?
- 1 The Democratic Party  
 2 The Republican Party  
 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)
- KN8. Of the two political parties, which one is more conservative than the other?
- 1 The Democratic Party  
 2 The Republican Party

9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

### Voter characteristics

PID1. We're almost finished. We have just a few more questions to help us understand our survey results.

In politics today, do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or something else?

- 1 Democrat
- 2 Republican
- 3 Independent
- 4 Something Else / Other
- 9 Don't Know / Refused (DO NOT READ)

IDEOL. Regardless of the political party you might favor, do you consider yourself to be liberal, conservative, or somewhere in between?

- 1 Liberal
- 2 Conservative
- 3 Somewhere in between
- 4 Other (DO NOT READ)
- 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

### Demographics

D2. What was the last grade in school you completed?

- 1 8TH GRADE OR LESS
- 2 HIGH SCHOOL INCOMPLETE (GRADES 9, 10 AND 11)
- 3 HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETE (GRADE 12)
- 4 VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL SCHOOL
- 5 SOME COLLEGE
- 6 JUNIOR COLLEGE GRADUATE (2 YEAR, ASSOCIATES DEGREE)
- 7 4 YEAR COLLEGE GRADUATE (BACHELOR'S DEGREE)
- 8 GRADUATE WORK (MASTERS, LAW/MEDICAL SCHOOL, ETC.)
- 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

D3. What was your age on your last birthday?

/ / / (ENTER AGE: 98=98+, 99 = DK/REFUSED)

D3a. [IF DK/REFUSED IN D3, ASK:] Is it between...?

- 1 18 - 20
- 2 21 - 24
- 3 25 - 29
- 4 THIRTIES (30 - 39)
- 5 FORTIES (40 - 49)

- 6 FIFTIES (50 - 59)
- 7 60 - 64
- 8 65 OR OVER
- 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

D4. Are you of Latino or Hispanic origin, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or some other Spanish background?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

D5. Are you white, black or of Asian origin?

- 1 White
- 2 Black
- 3 Asian
- 4 (VOL) Hispanic / Latino
- 5 (VOL) OTHER, SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Don't know/Refused (DO NOT READ)

D6. So that we can group all answers, is your total annual family income before taxes: Under \$35,000; between \$35,000 to just under \$70,000; between \$70,000 to just under \$100,000; or \$100,000 or more?

- 1 Under \$35,000
- 2 \$35,000 to \$69,999
- 3 \$70,000 to \$99,999
- 4 \$100,000 or more
- 9 (VOL) Don't Know / Refused

***That concludes our survey. Thank you very much for your time.***

## Appendix C – Weekly Discussion Guides<sup>9</sup>

### Eagleton Institute of Politics In-Class Discussion of *Time* Articles

#### Week 1 Discussion Guide Jan. 21 – 25, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

Your classes have been randomly selected to be in **treatment group #1** for the study. That means that your students will receive *Time* magazine each week for the next eight weeks. We ask that your students read the assigned articles each week, consider the “thought questions,” and discuss the articles in class.

In this first week of the study, we would like your students to read the following three articles from the enclosed issue of *Time* magazine:

1. “How Hillary Learned to Trust Herself,” by Joe Klein on p. 22.
2. “Fight for the Party Faithful,” by Michael Scherer on pp. 38-39.
3. “McCain’s Independent Streak,” by Ramesh Ponnuru on p. 41.

Ideally, the students would get this assignment along with the following thought questions and have a night or two to do the reading and think about the questions before the in-class discussion. The in-class discussion should take about 20 minutes, and should be completed by **Jan. 25**. If you could write the questions on the board for the students, that would be helpful as well.

Thought questions:

1. (Regarding the Joe Klein article) – Barack Obama was expected to win New Hampshire, and Hillary Clinton was expected to lose. Given the actual results, what lessons can we learn about the role of the news media in setting expectations in elections?
2. (Regarding the Michael Scherer article) – Do you think candidates campaign differently in different states based on voters’ concerns in those states? How might a candidate campaign differently in New Jersey than in South Carolina?
3. (Regarding the Ramesh Ponnuru article) – Why do so many voters identify themselves as Independents? Thinking about Ramesh Ponnuru’s commentary, what might the Republican Party have to do to win over Independents?

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<sup>9</sup> Note: Teachers of the Treatment 2 groups received discussion guides with the same reading assignments and questions. The only difference was that the Treatment 2 discussion guides included the following instructions: We ask that your students read the assigned articles each week, consider the “thought questions,” and discuss the articles at home with one or both parents and then in class as well.

Eagleton Institute of Politics  
In-Class Discussion of *Time* Articles

Week 2 Discussion Guide  
Jan. 28 – Feb. 1, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

Your classes have been randomly selected to be in **treatment group #1** for the study. That means that your students will receive *Time* magazine each week during the eight-week period of the study. We ask that your students read the assigned articles each week, consider the “thought questions,” and discuss the articles in class.

In this second week of the study, we would like your students to read the following two articles from the Jan. 28, 2008 issue of *Time* magazine:

1. “Getting Back to Business,” by Michael Duffy and Karen Tumulty, p. 29.
2. “Breaking Down the Black Vote,” by John Cloud, p. 34.

Ideally, the students would get this assignment along with the following thought questions and have a night or two to do the reading and think about the questions before the in-class discussion. The in-class discussion should take about 20 minutes, and should be completed by **Friday, Feb. 1**. If you could write the questions on the board for the students, that would be helpful as well.

Thought questions:

1. (Regarding the “Back to Business” article) – The economy is becoming a top concern of voters as they look ahead to the 2008 presidential election. How are the various candidates addressing the issue of the economy? Is one political party doing a better job than the other at addressing voters' concerns?
2. (Regarding the “Breaking Down the Black Vote” article) – As candidates have begun to campaign in states such as Nevada and South Carolina, race has become an important issue. Why has race become important? Discuss how candidates' messages change based on the state in which they are campaigning.
3. (Regarding the “Breaking Down the Black Vote” article) – In 2008, the Democratic Party has the potential to nominate either the first African American presidential candidate or the first female presidential candidate. Would race or gender make voters more or less likely to support a candidate? Why?

Eagleton Institute of Politics  
In-Class Discussion of *Time* Articles

Week 3 Discussion Guide  
Feb. 4 – 8, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

Your classes have been randomly selected to be in **treatment group #1** for the study. That means that your students will receive *Time* magazine each week during the eight-week period of the study. We ask that your students read the assigned articles each week, consider the “thought questions,” and discuss the articles in class.

In this third week of the study, we would like your students to read the following three articles from the Feb. 4, 2008 issue of *Time* magazine:

1. “The Phoenix,” by James Carney, p. 32.
2. “Will Rudy Shine?” by Michael Scherer, p. 38.
3. “The Black/Brown Divide,” by Gregory Rodriguez, p. 39.

Ideally, the students would get this assignment along with the following thought questions and have a night or two to do the reading and think about the questions before the in-class discussion. The in-class discussion should take about 20 minutes, and should be completed by **Friday, Feb. 8**. If you could write the questions on the board for the students, that would be helpful as well.

Thought questions:

1. (Regarding the “The Phoenix” article) – Despite concerns among conservatives, John McCain is seen as the frontrunner for the Republican nomination. What does the success of the McCain campaign tell us about the unity of the Republican Party? If McCain wins the Republican nomination, will conservative voters support him?
2. (Regarding the “Will Rudy Shine?” article) – Although the primary season began in early January in Iowa and New Hampshire, Rudy Giuliani spent most of this time campaigning in Florida. What were the reasons behind this campaign strategy? Should Giuliani have stayed in the race until Super Tuesday so that he could have run in the New Jersey and New York primaries?
3. (Regarding the “The Black/Brown Divide” article) – Nomination contests in such states as Nevada and California point to the role of Latino voters in the nomination process. Why do Latino voters play such an important role in choosing the presidential nominee? Will Latino voters support a Black candidate? Why or why not?



Eagleton Institute of Politics  
In-Class Discussion of *Time* Articles

Week 4 Discussion Guide  
Feb. 11 – 15, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

Your classes have been randomly selected to be in **treatment group #1** for the study. That means that your students will receive *Time* magazine each week during the eight-week period of the study. We ask that your students read the assigned articles each week, consider the “thought questions,” and discuss the articles in class.

In this fourth week of the study, we would like your students to read the following two articles from the Feb. 11, 2008 issue of *Time* magazine:

1. “It’s Their Turn Now,” by David Von Drehle, p. 34.
2. “Endorsement Politics,” by Karen Tumulty, p. 50.

Ideally, the students would get this assignment along with the following thought questions and have a night or two to do the reading and think about the questions before the in-class discussion. The in-class discussion should take about 20 minutes, and should be completed by **Friday, Feb. 15**. If you could write the questions on the board for the students, that would be helpful as well.

Thought questions:

1. (Regarding the “It’s Their Turn” article) – In states such as Iowa and New Hampshire, young people have supported Barack Obama over the other Democratic candidates. Why do you think young voters are attracted to Obama? What has the Obama campaign done to reach out to young people and why does the outreach make a difference?
2. (Regarding the “It’s Their Turn” article) – The presidential campaign has focused attention on the importance of the youth vote. With that in mind, what issues are important to young voters? Why are those issues important?
3. (Regarding the “Endorsement Politics” article) – Senator Edward Kennedy recently announced that he endorsed Barack Obama for President. Why do candidates seek endorsements and why do they matter? What does the Kennedy endorsement of Obama tell us about the unity of the Democratic Party?

Eagleton Institute of Politics  
In-Class Discussion of *Time* Articles

Week 5 Discussion Guide  
Feb. 18 – 22, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

Your classes have been randomly selected to be in **treatment group #1** for the study. That means that your students will receive *Time* magazine each week during the eight-week period of the study. We ask that your students read the assigned articles each week, consider the “thought questions,” and discuss the articles in class.

In this fifth week of the study, we would like your students to read the following two articles from the Feb. 18, 2008 issue of *Time* magazine:

1. “Why Not Both?” by Michael Duffy, p. 32.
2. “A Right Fight,” by Michael Grunwald, p. 37.

Ideally, the students would get this assignment along with the following thought questions and have a night or two to do the reading and think about the questions before the in-class discussion. The in-class discussion should take about 20 minutes, and should be completed by **Friday, Feb. 22**. If you could write the questions on the board for the students, that would be helpful as well.

Thought questions:

1. (Regarding the “Why Not Both?” article) – How likely is it that Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama would run on the same ticket in the fall? Would either candidate be willing to run for the vice presidency after losing the nomination to the other? Why or why not? Would a Clinton-Obama or Obama-Clinton ticket help or hurt the Democrats’ chances to win the White House in November? Why?
2. (Regarding the “A Right Fight” article) – John McCain still faces opposition from conservatives in his party. Will conservatives, unhappy about McCain’s nomination, simply not vote in November? Would it be easier for McCain to unite the Republican Party if Hillary Clinton is his opponent, or if Barack Obama is his opponent? Why?

Eagleton Institute of Politics  
In-Class Discussion of *Time* Articles

Week 6 Discussion Guide  
Feb. 25 – 29, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

Your classes have been randomly selected to be in **treatment group #1** for the study. That means that your students will receive *Time* magazine each week during the eight-week period of the study. We ask that your students read the assigned articles each week, consider the “thought questions,” and discuss the articles in class.

In this sixth week of the study, we would like your students to read the following two articles from the Feb. 25, 2008 issue of *Time* magazine:

1. “Finding Their Faith,” by Amy Sullivan, p. 38.
2. “The Barack Blowout,” by Joe Klein, p. 23.

Ideally, the students would get this assignment along with the following thought questions and have a night or two to do the reading and think about the questions before the in-class discussion. The in-class discussion should take about 20 minutes, and should be completed by **Friday, Feb. 29**. If you could write the questions on the board for the students, that would be helpful as well.

Thought questions:

1. (Regarding the “Finding Their Faith” article) – This article is an excerpt from a book by Amy Sullivan called *The Party Faithful*. Sullivan argues that current Democratic presidential candidates are addressing issues of religion very differently than past Democratic candidates. What has been the conventional wisdom among the Democratic Party regarding the use of religion and faith in presidential campaigns? What lessons did the party learn in 2004?
2. (Regarding the “Finding Their Faith” article) – As author Amy Sullivan points out, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton both seem to embrace religion on the campaign trail. Should voters focus on candidates’ religious beliefs in choosing a president? Why or why not?
3. (Regarding the “Barack Blowout” article) – In his column, Joe Klein argues that the Obama campaign has been better managed than the Clinton campaign. What are some qualities of a well-organized presidential campaign? Is it still possible for Sen. Clinton to win the Democratic nomination? Why or why not?

**Eagleton Institute of Politics  
In-Class Discussion of *Time* Articles**

**Week 7 Discussion Guide  
March 3 – 7, 2008**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

Your classes have been randomly selected to be in **treatment group #1** for the study. That means that your students will receive *Time* magazine each week during the eight-week period of the study. We ask that your students read the assigned articles each week, consider the “thought questions,” and discuss the articles in class.

In this seventh week of the study, we would like your students to read the following two articles from the March 3, 2008 issue of *Time* magazine:

1. “Changing the Script,” by Michael Scherer, p. 32.
2. “Courting Joe Six-Pack,” by Peter Beinart, p. 31.

Ideally, the students would get this assignment along with the following thought questions and have a night or two to do the reading and think about the questions before the in-class discussion. The in-class discussion should take about 20 minutes, and should be completed by **Friday, March 7**. If you could write the questions on the board for the students, that would be helpful as well.

Thought questions:

1. (Regarding the “Changing the Script” article) – Michael Scherer points out that John McCain will provide strong competition for the Democrats in the fall because of his appeal to independent voters. Why do you think independents find McCain to be such an attractive candidate? Among the two Democrats – Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama – who would have the best chance against McCain? Why?
2. (Regarding the “Courting Joe Six-Pack” article) – Are there really such groups as “Beer Democrats” and “Wine Democrats”? What are the key differences between the two groups? Of the two leading Democrats – Clinton and Obama – who would do a better job of uniting Democrats? Why?
3. (Regarding the “Courting Joe Six-Pack” article) – The article argues that John McCain may have trouble uniting Republicans because of his support for a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants. How important will the issue of illegal immigration be in the presidential election? Do you think the issue is more, or less, important in New Jersey than in border states like Arizona? Why?

Eagleton Institute of Politics  
In-Class Discussion of *Time* Articles

Week 8 Discussion Guide  
March 10 – 14, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

Your classes have been randomly selected to be in **treatment group #1** for the study. That means that your students are receiving *Time* magazine each week during the eight-week period of the study. We ask that your students read the assigned articles each week, consider the “thought questions,” and discuss the articles in class.

In this eighth week of the study, we would like your students to read the following two articles from the March 10, 2008 issue of *Time* magazine:

1. “Does Experience Matter In A President?” by David Von Drehle, p. 26.
2. “The Bitter Half,” by Karen Tumulty, p. 34.

Ideally, the students would get this assignment along with the following thought questions and have a night or two to do the reading and think about the questions before the in-class discussion. The in-class discussion should take about 20 minutes, and should be completed by **Friday, March 14**. If you could write the questions on the board for the students, that would be helpful as well.

Thought questions:

1. (Regarding the “Does Experience Matter” article) – How much weight should voters give to experience when choosing a presidential candidate? What specific types of experiences might be most helpful? A background in business? Serving as a governor? Serving as a member of Congress? Why?
2. (Regarding the “Does Experience Matter” article) – Presidential historian Richard Norton Smith is quoted as saying that character – “not just what they’ve done, but how they’ve done it, and what they learned from doing it” – is just as important as experience for a president. What character traits do you think are most important for a president? Why?
3. (Regarding “The Bitter Half” article) – Has former President Bill Clinton helped or hurt his wife’s candidacy? How has he helped her candidacy? How has he hurt her candidacy? Have the other candidates’ spouses had similar effects, or is this unique to the Clintons? Why?

CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) conducts research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25.

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