

Learning to Participate through Role-Play: Understanding Political Simulations in the High
School Government Course

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigates simulations and role-play as best practices of democratic education. It asks: Do students' situational interest and simulation frequency uniquely contribute to students' commitment to vote in the future? And how might simulations and role-play help create learning environments that support the development of students' situational interest? The study utilizes mixed methods to: quantitatively explore the relationship(s) between simulation frequency, situational interest, and students' commitment to vote in the future; and qualitatively investigate how simulations and role-play work. Findings suggest simulations and role-play can help students engage with political knowledge and processes in important ways. By understanding how simulations and role-play influence students' motivations towards and interests in politics, the dissertation hopes to shed light on how simulations and role-play may impact youth political engagement.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	v
List of Tables	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Dedication	viii
CHAPTER 1: Political Engagement in Democratic Education	1
1.1 Background and a Twofold Problem Space.....	3
1.2 The Study, Problem Statement, and Research Questions	10
1.3 Summary of Findings.....	11
CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature and Conceptual Framework.....	12
2.1 Review of Literature on Education and Political Engagement.....	13
2.1.1 Adult Political Engagement and the Role of Education.....	13
2.1.2 Reasons to Study Youth and Positive Youth Development.....	16
2.1.3 Youth Political Engagement	19
2.1.3.1 Civic Opportunity	22
2.1.3.2 Action Civics	23
2.1.4 Gap in the Literature	24
2.1.4.1 Traditional Government Course	24
2.1.4.2 How Simulations and Role-Play Work.....	25
2.2 Framework for Studying how Simulations Influence Youth Political Engagement	26
2.2.1 Interest Development Theory	28
2.2.2 Community of Practice	30
CHAPTER 3: Methodology.....	36

3.1 Setting and Participants.....	37
3.2 Data Collection	40
3.2.1 Quantitative Measures	41
3.2.1.1 EFA.....	42
3.2.1.2 Scale Reliability.....	44
3.2.2 Qualitative Data	44
3.3 Data Analysis.....	45
3.3.1 Quantitative Analytic Plan.....	45
3.3.2 Qualitative Analysis.....	48
CHAPTER 4: Quantitative Findings	53
4.1 Hierarchical Linear Modeling Findings.....	53
CHAPTER 5: Qualitative Findings	57
5.1 “It’s Like Job Shadowing”.....	57
5.2 “Everybody’s Playing a Role”	67
5.2.1 Drew in Role.....	72
5.2.2 Drew Out of Role.....	73
5.2.3 Drew Trying to Make Sense of a Contradiction	74
5.3 “If You Don’t Know What it Means, Then You Can’t Effectively Vote on It”.....	78
CHAPTER 6: Discussion and Conclusion.....	83
6.1 Discussion.....	83
6.1.1 Why Knowledge Matters	84
6.1.1.1 Knowledge as a Component of Interest Development	85
6.1.1.2 Authentic Intellectual Work.....	86

6.1.2 A Community of Practice Around Politics	86
6.1.2.1 Joint Enterprise	87
6.1.2.2 Mutual Engagement	88
6.1.2.3 Communal Resources	89
6.1.3 Setting the Political Stage (Simulations)	90
6.1.4 Roles as Portals to Plurality	91
6.1.5 Towards Developing Political Interest Through a Community of Practice.....	96
6.2 Conclusion	97
6.2.1 Limitations	98
6.2.2 Future Direction.....	100
References.....	102
Appendix.....	109

List of Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework	109
Figure 2. Student Survey.....	110
Figure 3. Student Interview Protocol.....	114
Figure 4. Survey Items Analyzed in the Quantitative Study	115
Figure 5. Codes Identified in the Qualitative Analysis	116

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Schools	38
Table 2. Total Number of Students, Classes, and Teachers/Schools.....	38
Table 3. List of Student Participants.....	40
Table 4. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for Survey Items, Including Interest	43
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations for Disaggregated Student Data ...	54
Table 6. Hierarchical Linear Modeling Results	56
Table 7. Number of quotes, per student, that mention simulation connecting to real-life politics	58
Table 8. Number of quotes, per student, that mention roles as buffer into discussions	68

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Dedication

To my research family, the Knowledge in Action Team.

CHAPTER 1: Political Engagement in Democratic Education

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a broad overview of this dissertation study. The chapter begins with an introduction that situates the study within the broader aims of democratic education in the United States. This chapter consists of three major sections. The first section provides the rationale behind studying youth political engagement and introduces a two-fold problem space that this dissertation hopes to address. The second section presents a brief description of the study, states a succinct problem statement of the dissertation, and ends with the research questions associated with the study. The final section of this chapter summarizes the findings of the dissertation and outlines the chapters to come.

The lack of political engagement by young people in recent decades has prompted scholars to explore ways of encouraging youth to participate politically. This study privileges the term *political engagement* to distinguish it from a broader term, *civic engagement* (Berger, 2009).¹ Many scholars believe education plays an important role in helping students understand and engage with politics.² This study takes the position that a goal of education should be to help students successfully engage in a pluralistic society. In *Teaching Democracy*, (Parker, 2002) suggests that “idiot (*idiotes*) was a term of reproach in ancient Greece reserved for persons who paid no attention to public affairs and engaged only in self-interested or private pursuits, never mind the public interest—the civic space and the common good” [parenthesis in the original] (p. xv). Parker goes on to say that “to lead a non-idiotic life is to lead the unavoidably connected and engaged life of the citizen, paying attention to and caring for the public household, the common good” (p. 11). A main premise of this study is democratic education ought to help students

¹ This distinction will be further discussed under the subheading “The Problem of Political Engagement” in this chapter.

² See the collection of essays in Gutmann (1999) and Parker (1996)

become citizens who will connect and engage with the public as a common good. To that end, the study seeks to better understand how classroom practices in democratic education can help students lead non-idiotic lives and engage as citizens in a democracy.

I hope to inform the literature on democratic education by examining how simulations and role-play may influence students' interest³ in politics and help them better engage with civil society. While most democratic education studies measure students' political interest as an outcome variable, along with their civic and political engagement (e.g. Kahne & Westheimer, 2006), few studies have sought to understand the development of students' interest around politics in the classroom and its influence on students' future political behavior. Instead, current studies tend to only focus on how best practices can predict certain outcome measures and behaviors. Furthermore, the democratic education literature does not often rely on theories from the learning sciences literature (e.g. Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, Carter, & Elliot, 2000; Hidi & Baird, 1986; Lipstein & Renninger, 2006; Mitchell, 1993) about how motivation and affect (the feeling of needing to return to a domain) may impact students' achievement and future behaviors in certain subject areas. This gap not only overlooks the individual motivations that may determine students' political engagement, but also neglects how classroom practices may influence those motivations (instead of just how they may influence behaviors). In this study, I seek to bridge this gap by better understanding how political simulations and role-play might influence students' future political behavior via the development of students' interest in politics. Specifically, the study uses Interest Development Theory (Hidi & Renninger, 2006), and Communities of Practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as a social systems theory to examine

³ Interest as a concept will be further explored in Chapter Two

how political simulations may function like CoPs that support the development of students' interest in politics.

Background and a Twofold Problem Space

Low political participation by young adults (CIRCLE, 2010) continues to stimulate a healthy flow of research, as scholars seek to understand and boost the participation rate through educational means. The literature that comes out of this interest in democratic education suggests, for adults, the more political knowledge and the more education a person has, the more likely she will engage in political activities such as voting and be interested in politics (e.g. Converse, 1972; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Niemi & Junn, 1998). However, these studies tend to exclude adolescents and youth because they are not old enough to vote. In order to better understand the eventual political participation of young adults, democratic educators have taken to measuring adolescents' commitment to vote in the future and their political interest (e.g. Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001) as proxies for political engagement, since they are not yet old enough to cast a ballot. While adolescents are unable to engage in actual political processes, it is important to note that they have opinions about the rights and duties they will hold as adults in our civil society (Bogard & Sherrod, 2008), and these opinions might influence how they perceive their roles as adults in the future. Because studies have shown that political knowledge and education can predict voting behavior in adults, recent studies in democratic education have emphasized the effectiveness of certain practices in fostering students' knowledge, interest, and commitments to civic and political engagement (e.g. Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2013; Kahne, Chi, & Middaugh, 2006; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008b; Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Richardson, 2007; Torney-Purta, 2002). These practices include an open classroom climate, engagement in service learning, and the use of simulations (see Gibson

& Levine, 2003 for a review). Ultimately, these practices have come to be known and lauded as “best practices” of democratic education (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008a). A twofold problem space emerges from this body of literature.

1. The Problem of Simulations. In this study, I focus on investigating simulations and role-play as best practices in Kahne and Middaugh’s (2008a) report. While simulations and role-play have been a staple practice in Social Studies curriculum since the 1960s (e.g. Cherryholmes, 1966; Guetzkow, 1963; Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967; Verba, 1964), very few current studies have sought to understand why simulations and role-play are effective democratic teaching tools. A brief search revealed that many recent articles on simulations in social studies coursework deal with history education and simulations as a way for students to better engage and obtain historical information/perspective (e.g. Corbeil & Laveault, 2011; DiCamillo & Gradwell, 2012; Schweber, 2003). At the same time, studies that deal with democratic education tend to involve legislative simulations and focus on students’ political knowledge or efficacy at the end of the course (e.g. Baranowski, 2006; Bernstein, 2008; Ganzler, 2010; Parker et al., 2011). Overall, many of these studies examined the effectiveness of simulations as a classroom practice, but not as many looked for ways to explain why simulations may be successful. Williams and Williams’ (2007) study does present a framework for explaining how simulations might help change individual’s behavior, however their study presents a specific simulation design, which may not explain how simulations work generally. Furthermore, studies that have examined students’ political interest as it relates to simulations tend to use a more colloquial understanding of ‘interest’ that does not account for the various developmental phases of interest (e.g. Gehlbach et al., 2008). Given the status of simulations as a best practice of democratic education, it becomes worthwhile to examine how simulations work as a viable way to foster students’ commitment to

future political engagement.

One possible hypothesis⁴, from Interest Development Theory (Hidi & Renninger, 2006), suggests simulations and role-play might help trigger students' interests in politics and may even support the development of their interests by keeping them engaged in learning about politics. Theoretically, simulations and role-play can help create learning environments where students engage in activities that are a part of real Communities of Practice (CoPs) of adult citizens. For example, a simulation that requires students to become members of Congress and abide by the procedures and rules of Congress will not become the real CoP of Congress, but can help students better understand Congressional proceedings. Even though the students are not actually participating in the real CoP of Congress, the simulation creates a space where students behave and speak the way adult citizens do when they engage in political dialogue. In such a way, simulations may help students not only access information about the CoP of Congress, but also function like a reproducing CoP of adult citizens.

Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that a CoP “is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p. 98). Even though these relations are in constant flux, a CoP denotes an “active system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities” (P. 98, Lave & Wenger, 1991). Political simulations have the potential to help students share understandings (that adult citizens have) about political processes and how their actions (or inactions) may influence their communities. In other words, simulations and role-play could function like CoPs around political processes because they create active systems around politics over a period of time, where students can

⁴ This theory will be fleshed out in Chapter Two.

share understandings about the political actions they simulate and what these actions mean for their communities. This CoP around specific adult citizen practices may help support the development of students' interests in the domain by providing ways for them to engage with domain information in positive ways over a period of time. This theory will be further explained in the theoretical framework section of Chapter Two. If simulations and role-play can function like CoPs, they could potentially trigger and maintain students' interests in political processes and political engagement. This development of interest could explain why simulations may influence students' commitment to political action in the future. To this end, the first problem space that the dissertation hopes to address is the "black box" problem of simulations: the democratic education literature suggests that exposure to simulations and role-play can boost students' commitment to political participation in the future, but the question is why?

2. The Problem of Political Engagement. The second aspect of the problem space that I will address in this dissertation is the small number of studies that highlight youth political engagement in the current democratic education literature. Most of the current research in democratic education focuses on examining students' *civic* engagement and only peripherally report their *political* engagement.⁵ In the democratic education literature, youth *civic* engagement is often a catchall phrase for activities ranging from community service and volunteerism to voting or joining an interest group. Expósito (2014) argues that civic engagement has become a less controversial, but problematic, way of discussing citizenship education, because the label has come to mean so many different things to different people. He offers 'political participation' as a more useful concept label for the type of engagement that students may pursue. Additionally, Berger (2009) points out that "like other buzzwords, civic engagement means so many things to

⁵ The subheading "Traditional coursework" in Chapter Two will further address this issue.

so many people that it clarifies almost nothing” (p. 335). Berger proposes a distinction between political, social, and moral engagement, so as to better understand the types of public and private activities that adults and youths engage in.

While Berger (2009) is ready to bury the term *civic* engagement, Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, and Delli Carpini (2006) provide a workable distinction between *civic* engagement and *political* engagement. I adopt their clarification of the two terms in this dissertation. Like Berger, Zukin and colleagues (2006) define political engagement, using Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s definition, as “activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action—either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies” (as quoted in Zukin et al., 2006, p. 6). But unlike Berger’s full dismissal of civic engagement, Zukin and associates (2006) define civic engagement as “voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others” (p. 7). I recognize the value of both civic and political engagement as conceived by Zukin and his colleagues, but emphasize *political* engagement via Verba and associates’ definition in order to specifically address actions that engage with the political system.

Civic engagement has been the focus of many recent studies on how young people engage in a democracy (e.g. Flanagan, 2013; Levinson, 2012; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Youniss & Levine, 2009; Zukin et al., 2006), while political engagement has largely been treated only as one of many peripheral outcome variables (e.g. political knowledge and political interest) in these studies. If a goal of democratic education is to create politically engaged citizens, then it is important to gauge whether students would actually engage with the governmental system in the future and how classroom practices can support them to do so. Some scholars have argued that

millennials⁶ may participate politically in non-traditional ways (e.g. through social media), because traditional political processes (e.g. voting) seem to react too sluggishly (e.g. Zukin et al., 2009). However, a main tenet of our democratic system concerns the role of people in governance: a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In order for the governmental system to reflect and embrace the wishes of young people, it requires formal, or potentially critical, input from those who deem the system archaic (i.e. millennials can petition, or lobby, for social media to be incorporated as legitimate lobbying platforms). Similarly, researchers can investigate if and how millennials engage in traditional political processes to help update the system. While civic engagement (and how adolescents influence their communities) deserves attention and study, if young people continue to skirt traditional political actions, the system will fail to reflect the wishes of a large portion of the rising democratic public.

To summarize, the key distinction between civic engagement and political engagement is that civic engagement includes actions that do not necessarily influence the governmental system (e.g. volunteerism, community organizing, or creating recycling programs), while political engagement only includes actions that are intended to influence the governmental system (e.g. voting, joining an interest group, or lobbying). To focus specifically on youth *political* engagement, in this study, I investigate how political simulations and role-play in the classroom might influence students' political engagement (e.g. commitment to vote in the future) as a way to gauge and understand their willingness to govern themselves and influence the current governing body in a tangible way.

While not many studies have focused specifically on youth political engagement, they have often include political engagement measures as part of the study (e.g. Kahne et al., 2006;

⁶ Refers to individuals born between mid-1970s and mid-1990s.

Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2013). Research on classroom practices and youth engagement has mostly consisted of correlational studies of students' self-reports on surveys. In these studies, researchers have sought to answer whether certain instructional practices influence youth civic engagement, with political engagement taking a peripheral role (e.g. Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Sherrod et al., 2010). They have often relied on Ordinary Least Squares and Multiple Linear Regression modeling to determine correlational relationships between the simulations/role-play and civic and political engagement outcomes. Studies that have sought to understand or explain *how* simulations and role-play influence just youth political engagement have been less common. Some explanatory studies have used Bandura's (1977, 1997) self-efficacy framework to help explain why best practices may boost students' political engagement by supporting their political efficacy (e.g. Levy, 2013; Pasek, Feldman, Romer, & Jamieson, 2008). However, the self-efficacy framework leaves the processes of change unexplained. There are other possible explanations, especially when simulation and role-play are the practices being examined.⁷ One potential explanation that includes a process of change in terms of phases of interest development is that students become more committed to future political engagement because simulations and role-play can boost their engagement in and motivation towards political participation. Similarly, simulations might function like CoPs that support the development of students' interests in politics. In order for democratic educators to create more effective curriculum and instruction for political engagement, it is helpful to examine the process of engagement and have a better understanding of how simulations and role-play can support students' commitment to vote in the future.

⁷ The engagement and motivation literature comes to mind (see Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991), along with Interest Development Theory (Hidi & Renninger, 2006) and identity development (Rubin, 2007).

The Study, Problem Statement, and Research Questions

In this study, I utilize extant data from a larger Design-Based Implementation Research (Brown, 1992; Fishman, Penuel, Allen, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2013) study on the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in advanced high school coursework (Parker et al., 2013). The larger DBIR study examines to what extent is PBL a viable instructional strategy for deep learning in Advanced Placement (AP) high school courses. Using data collected from the larger study, this study uses a fully mixed design, which includes a sample of high school U.S. Government and Politics classrooms that used political simulations throughout the course. The quantitative portion of the study includes analysis of post-course self-reported student surveys. The qualitative portion of the study includes the analysis of multiple student interviews and videotaped classroom observations.

The aim of this study is to better understand the “black box” problem of simulations and role-play as they relate to youth political engagement. Put plainly, I examine the mechanisms behind how simulations and role-play may influence students’ commitment to vote in the future. By incorporating Interest Development Theory and Communities of Practice as a social systems theory into the democratic education literature, I examine students’ motivations and experiences as a way to better understand how simulations and role-play work. To that end, the dissertation study asks:

- Do students’ situational interest and simulation frequency uniquely contribute to students’ commitment to vote in the future?
- How might simulations and role-play help create learning environments that support the development of students’ situational interest?

Summary of Findings

The quantitative findings from this dissertation study suggest both situational interest and simulation frequency uniquely contribute to students' commitment to vote in the future. Furthermore, qualitative findings indicated that interest in political issues could be fostered and supported through classroom activities such as simulations and role-play in political processes. Simulations allow students to experience simulated political processes that help them better understand and engage with genuine political processes. Simulations may also function like a Community of Practice (CoP) (Lave, 1991) around political processes that support students' knowledge of, and engagement with, the structures and functions of politics. Role-play and simulations provide students with opportunities to engage and re-engage with simulated political practices, which may function like CoPs in the classroom around political processes. These chances to re-engage with political knowledge and practices have the potential to support students' budding interests in politics, which can influence their future behaviors (i.e. their commitment to vote in the future).

A broad summary of the current dissertation was given in this introductory chapter. This chapter included a brief rationale for the study, presented the aim of the study to better understand how simulations work, and provided a synopsis of the study and its findings. In order to present the potential contributions of these findings to the current literature on democratic education, Chapter Two will introduce the bodies of literature that the study draws upon and hopes to inform, while Chapter Three will present the methodologies used in the study. Chapter Four will include the quantitative findings of this dissertation study, and Chapter Five will highlight the qualitative findings. Finally, Chapter Six will present the discussion, conclusion, implications, and limitations of this study.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature and Conceptual Framework

This chapter has two main sections. The first main section reviews past literature on education and political engagement. To do so, the first section is subdivided into four subsections: beginning with (1) adult political engagement and the role of education, which leads into (2) reasons to study youth and positive youth engagement. The next subsections introduce (3) literature that touches upon youth political engagement in terms of civic opportunity and action civics; and the (4) gaps in the literature that this dissertation addresses (i.e the traditional government course and how simulations and role-play work). The second section of this chapter provides a framework (through communities of practice and Interest Development Theory) for studying how effective simulations role-play can influence youth political engagement.

The problem of low voter turn out, especially among young adults in the last few decades, has prompted scholars to examine how education might influence an individual's political behavior (e.g. Converse, 1972; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Niemi & Junn, 1998). Findings from these studies have prompted scholars to look more closely at how education not only influences adults' political behavior but also youth's future political behavior (e.g. Kahne & Westheimer, 2003, 2006; Torney-Purta et al., 2007). In this dissertation, I hope to inform this body of literature by drawing on theories about student motivation and interest.

“The Problem of Political Engagement” section of Chapter One outlined an important distinction between *political* engagement and *civic* engagement that will be carried forward in this chapter. As a reminder, political engagement refers to, using Verba, Schlozman, and Brady's definition, “activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action—either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies” (as quoted in Zukin et al., 2006, p. 6). I adopt

Berger's (2009) stance on treating political engagement as separate from social, moral, and civic engagement in this dissertation, focusing on students' commitment to vote in the future as an indicator of future political engagement. Since political engagement plays an important role in examining the issue of low voter turnout, this chapter will first review the literature on education and political engagement, generally, and then present a conceptual framework developed from learning sciences literature that hopes to bolster the research on youth political engagement, specifically.

Review of Literature on Education and Political Engagement

Chapter One suggests most of the current democratic education research focuses on examining youth civic engagement rather than youth political engagement; however, this does not mean that political engagement has been completely ignored. On the contrary, survey items on political engagement (e.g. voter turnout for adults; commitment to vote in the future for youth) are commonly used as outcome measures in both democratic education and political science studies. However, studies of youth tend to focus on their civic engagement (and reasons for that engagement), while political engagement is generally used as a peripheral measure, with even fewer studies investigating reasons for youth political engagement. Incidentally, because the literature on adult political engagement tends to be fairly robust, it provides evidence for a need to better understanding political engagement for youth.

Adult political engagement and the role of education. Many scholars (from Dewey, 1916 to Parker, 1996) have argued that an aim of schooling should be to shape future citizens for our democracy. Even the first large-scale public school movement (the common school) in the United States had this goal in mind: “For the common school movement, schools were critically important in the effort to build a republic; their *purpose* was political” (Labaree, 2011, p.387). If

educating youth to be future citizens is not only possible but also important, there should be data to support the effects of education on political behavior. While past studies have found data for this connection to be lacking (Langton & Jennings, 1968), more recent studies have found correlations between formal education, along with political knowledge, and political participation in adults (e.g. Converse, 1972; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996). Large-scale studies sought to better understand the relationship between political knowledge and political engagement. They found that education plays an instrumental role in influencing this correlation (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Nie et al., 1996; Niemi & Junn, 1998). This means that education can play a significant role in how much political knowledge individuals acquire, and subsequently, how much they engage politically.

In many of these studies, the independent variable *education* has mainly been understood in terms of educational attainment (Converse, 1972), or the number of years an individual stays in school. At the same time, scholars like Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) argue that the best approach to measuring political knowledge in the mass public is with a set of factual questions, which can be learned in schools. Delli Carpini and Keeter's (1996) book suggests that what Americans know about politics can influence their political engagement, and educational attainment tends to impact what individuals know. However, the study concludes that political knowledge amongst Americans is uneven, which means one potential variable that can explain this unequal acquisition of political knowledge is education.

By examining survey data of a questionnaire on factual political information from the 1990 Citizen Participation Study, Nie and associates (1996) found that higher educational attainment usually correlates with more political knowledge and subsequently more political engagement. In a path analysis attempting to explain the correlation between educational

attainment and political engagement, Nie and his colleagues (1996) offer two possible reasons for this relationship. One theory suggests that schooling elicits an increase in one's cognitive proficiency throughout her formal education. This increased cognitive proficiency allows an individual to better weigh alternative perspectives, which could potentially expose the individual to democratic values that lead to democratic enlightenment (Nie et al., 1996). The idea here is that schools can actually help increase a student's verbal proficiency (vocabulary and fluency), which allows her to easily engage in deliberating alternative points of views. Furthermore, the deliberative process has the potential to expose her to democratic values such as tolerance and respect. However, a caveat of the findings suggests the correlation found between verbal proficiency and political knowledge and engagement can also be explained by the fact that formal school settings not only provide the environment to increase verbal proficiency but also transmit or inculcate democratic values that tend to be socially desirable (Nie et al., 1996).

A second explanation for how education might increase political knowledge and political engagement in adults suggests that "social network centrality" (i.e. being known or recognized by those at the center of social networks) links formal education to a student's responsibility toward the community (Nie et al., 1996). This theory suggests that individuals with higher levels of formal education tend to be found closer to the nodes of politically important networks. Individuals who are closer to the nodes of these networks are usually ones who end up with more access to political information, and therefore participate more in political action (Nie et al., 1996). Within the social network centrality theory, individuals with more educational attainment also tend to be more empowered to affect political outcome, because they tend to associate with more influential individuals.

The verbal proficiency and the social network centrality theories combine to explain why school attendance matters. However, if political theorists are correct in claiming that democratic values should be taught explicitly in classrooms, the development of students as citizens should go beyond just educational attainment. It seems educational attainment's explanations are too thin, since they ignore the nuances of student experiences within the classroom. It is not enough to ensure everyone is educated; the kind of education that individuals receive also deserves examination. One can easily imagine a classroom where even though everyone is in attendance, students do not learn or acquire the necessary political knowledge that might support their political engagement. Students' classroom experiences, especially with engaging classroom practices, must be closely examined if educators hope to find ways to increase students' political knowledge or political engagement through curriculum and instruction. Consequently, a number of studies in the past decade have investigated the role of curriculum and instruction on political knowledge and political engagement. But before delving into these studies, it is important to understand how past studies on *adult* political knowledge and political engagement might influence and inform the research on *youth* political knowledge and political engagement.

Reasons to study youth and Positive Youth Development. While the political science literature touts education as an important predictor of political knowledge and political engagement in adults, does this trend apply to adolescents? More importantly, why should scholars care about adolescents' political knowledge and engagement if they are not yet part of the electorate? As Chapter One points out, adolescents are the future of democracy. Therefore, studying students' political knowledge and engagement may help educators support the development of students' interests in politics. Besides, many of them are on the cusp of casting their very first ballots. While access to tobacco, gambling, and legal decision-making is the

facetious mark of adulthood in the United States, this milestone denotes something else that may or may not be on the minds of high school seniors as they gleefully pronounce adulthood on their eighteenth birthdays: the right to vote. Given that voting (along with many other actions of political engagement such as joining a political party) in the United States is mostly limited to individuals over the age of 18, one begins to wonder why we should care about what youth know about politics and why their commitment to future political participation matters. However, Positive Youth Development (PYD) suggests what youth know about politics and how they feel about political issues can determine how they behave politically as adults. Knowing how youth feel about political issues and what they know about politics is especially important for democracies, where youth are already members of a society that can be shaped and changed by their actions.

In his book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam (2000) claims that while fledgling democracies around the world look to the United States as a model to emulate, our declining social capital (the formation of associations within civil society) leaves much to be desired. Subsequently, he argues that “America could be civically restored in two ways: by encouraging adults to socialize more, join more groups, or volunteer more; and by teaching the young, whose habits are more malleable, to be increasingly socially connected” (Sander & Putnam, 2010, p. 10). If reclaiming America’s social capital requires teaching the young, the examination of political engagement must not be restricted to just citizens over the age of 18. More importantly, an individual’s views on politics and political issues can often be shaped before the arbitrary age of maturity. Furthermore, youth, too, are citizens and considered members of our democratic society. To borrow political theorist Michael Walzer's (1989) definition, a citizen is “most simply, a member of a political community, entitled to whatever prerogatives and encumbered

with whatever responsibilities are attached to membership” (p. 211). If society wishes to educate young citizens to become individuals who are socially responsible for one another and who engage politically, it might be beneficial to look beyond just the voter turnout rate of adults and seek to understand how youth might engage politically in our society, now and in the future. By examining adolescents’ attitudes toward political issues, their commitment to vote in the future, or their experiences with political processes, researchers can help shed light on their proclivities toward political engagement. To be true members of a democratic society, youth need opportunities to experience what it means to be a member of a community so that they might feel compelled and empowered to be a part of, and participate in, governance (Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010). This means that education and classroom practices might help students engage as members of the political community.

Because adolescent behaviors and attitudes can change and shift into adulthood, one way to study youth political engagement is by examining their attitudes and behaviors as a process of becoming members of a community, rather than as set characteristics of traits of individuals. In understanding how youth become members of a community, a life-span perspective allows researchers to examine political engagement and citizenship development from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood. Specifically, a positive youth development (PYD) approach to citizenship development can help identify internal and external assets that help promote youth development (Sherrod et al., 2010). The PYD approach emphasizes the development of six Cs: Character, Competence, Confidence, Connection, Caring, and Contribution, with contribution stemming from the previous five Cs. The first five Cs correspond with engagement (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003), while the sixth C most relates to participation (Lerner, 2004). The development of the 5 C’s outlined by PYD indicates an

individual's engagement and participation within a community. This approach to citizenship development provides a way to understand how youth participate in a community, which may lead to future political engagement, even though they are not yet able to cast a ballot.

Adolescents do have opinions about the rights and duties they will hold as adults in our civil society (Bogard & Sherrod, 2008), and these opinions can influence how they perceive their roles as adults in the future. Given that there is debate amongst political scientists about when political ideas and opinions develop and the extent to which they are malleable later in life (Sears & Levy, 2003), exploring how political opinions develop in youth can actually help us better understand the process of political socialization. However, a PYD approach to this work requires understanding how internal and external assets influence an individual's political socialization. Specifically, it becomes important to understand how assets, such as political knowledge and classroom experiences, can influence political engagement.

Youth Political Engagement. Since political knowledge has been found to increase the quality and quantity of political participation (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996), scholars now measure political knowledge as one indicator of students' political and civic engagement. Political knowledge is defined as a combination of the basic structures of government, current political affairs, and who is involved. Neuman (1986) defines the structures of government as "its basic values, such as citizen participation, majority rule, separation of powers, civil liberties, and its basic elements, such as the two-party system, the two houses of Congress, the role of the judiciary, and the organization of the cabinet" (p. 196). Additionally, Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1986) claim that "the democratic citizen...is supposed to know what the issues are, what their history is, what the relevant facts are, what alternatives are proposed, what the party stands for, what the consequences are" (p. 308). To the two categories of what government is and

what government does, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) add that “citizens should be familiar with where parties and leaders stand on the important issues of the day” (p. 65). Together, these rules of the game, substance of politics, and people and parties are the types of political knowledge that have been found to influence political participation. Specifically, “the more citizens can draw on knowledge from these areas (breadth) and the more detailed the information within each area (depth), the better able they are to engage in politics” (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 65).

Another measure of students’ political engagement is their commitment to vote in the future. Using this measure to predict students’ current political engagement and future political behavior is in line with the PYD framework, which suggests that how adolescents feel about politics can impact how they actually behave politically as adults. Specifically, studies have shown that adolescents who are more committed to vote in the future tend to be more politically engaged as adults (e.g. Fishbein, Ajzen, & Hinkle, 1980; Oesterle, Johnson, & Mortimer, 2004). Recently, many scholars believe measures of political participation must go beyond voting to include social and civic activities (e.g. Flanagan, 2013; Metz & Youniss, 2005; Zukin et al., 2006). Even so, scholars continue to rely on the combination of students’ political knowledge and their commitment to vote in the future as a way to peripherally measure youth political engagement. But more and more, scholars are focusing on social engagement items (e.g. using social media to discuss current events) in their research to measure youths’ *current* engagement in civic and/or political activities as a way to predict future political participation. For the purposes of this dissertation, as discussed in Chapter One and elsewhere in this chapter, students’ commitment to vote in the future will be the focus of this study. Scholars continue to use political interest as an outcome measure alongside students’ commitment to vote in the future.

However, this political interest item only measures students' intrinsic interest (or already developed personal interest) in politics, rather than their budding interests in politics. For this study, *situational interest* becomes an important variable to be fostered in democratic classrooms.

In an effort to better understand how education may affect democratic outcomes, scholars have also studied the impact of certain practices on students' civic and political engagement. Even though they tend to be focused on civic engagement, large-scale studies have found that high-quality democratic experiences in the classroom may lead to more political knowledge and commitment to political and civic engagement (e.g. Campbell, 2005; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008b; Torney-Purta, 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). The classroom experiences in these studies include a variety of practices that have come to be known as "best practices" of democratic education (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008a). The practices originated from Gibson and Levine's (2003) report of six promising approaches to democratic education. The six approaches are (1) classroom instruction in Social Studies, (2) discussion of current issues, (3) service-learning, (4) extracurricular activities, (5) student voice in school governance, and (6) simulations.⁸ Kahne and Middaugh's (2008a) report combines this list with three other practices to form the "best practice" list. The three additional practices are (i) studying issues that students care about, (ii) experiencing an open climate for discussion, and (iii) providing opportunities to interact with civic role models. Research has shown that these best practices of democratic education can help increase civic and political engagement.⁹ Specifically, Kahne, Chi, and Middaugh's (2006) study examined the impact of these practices on civic participation, social trust, and knowledge of social networks. They found that these curricular features have the

⁸ See Gibson & Levine (2003) for a full description of each approach.

⁹ See Kahne & Middaugh (2008) for a list of studies, p. 10.

potential to increase students' dispositions and capacities toward political engagement. In sum, the literature has surfaced a list of well-vetted practices that can help students gain more political knowledge and encourage them to engage in political actions. Armed with codified best practices of democratic education, scholars have sought to alleviate the declining trend of youth political participation by studying the availability and impact of democratic education practices. Two veins of recent research have dominated the literature in this area: civic opportunity and action civics. The following sections present these two popular approaches and reveal areas of research that have recently been overlooked.

Civic Opportunity. Gibson and Levine's (2003) report notes that schools can help students become responsible citizens by giving them the opportunities to experience best practices of democratic education. Without these learning opportunities, students may not experience the type of education that encourages them to be engaged civically and politically even if their educational attainment is high. Subsequently, scholars have studied students' learning opportunities in and outside of the classroom, and they have surfaced a civic opportunity gap along socioeconomic and racial/ethnic divides (Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013). The gap shows that white and affluent students are more likely to experience more "best practices" of democratic education than lower income students of color. Since these learning opportunities are related to current civic engagement and future political engagement (Kahne & Sporte, 2008), the existence of this gap means that marginalized portions of the electorate could become more marginalized over time as political matters continue to elude them. In recent years, scholars have examined ways to bridge this gap as a way of managing the youth political participation decline. This resulted in a body of literature that targets the closing of the civic opportunity gap as one way to bolster youth civic and political engagement (e.g. Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Youniss &

Levine, 2009). Furthermore, Levinson (2010) suggests that the prevalence of a civic opportunity gap perpetuates a civic *empowerment* gap—where differences in political knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors exist between lower income youth of color and their wealthier white counterparts.

Action Civics. While scholars continue to wrestle with the civic opportunity gap, a recent body of research has sought to bridge the civic *empowerment* gap. These scholars seek to accomplish this goal through action civics—a framework created by the National Action Civics Collaborative (NACC) that encourages “student-centered, project-based, high-quality civics education” (Gingold, 2013). The goal of NACC is to create a new model of democratic education that draws upon the PYD framework and civic engagement literature.¹⁰ NACC seeks to study and promote less conventional forms of democratic education such as service learning and youth organizing. However, these forms of learning are not new. Galston's (2001) analysis of democratic education reviewed the promising results of service learning in its beginning stages a decade ago. Similarly, PYD researchers have lauded the political prowess of youth organizing for over a decade (Ginwright & James, 2002). The establishment of the NACC in 2010 was an indicator that real-life civic learning had become an important member of the democratic education community. Research has shown that service learning and youth organizing increases students' civic engagement (e.g. Fox et al., 2010; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Youniss, 2012). Because of this, the NACC encourages schools and communities to take up action civics as a way of empowering youth to participate in political action.¹¹ Much like the studies on the civic opportunity gap, action civics research also examines the best practices of democratic education. However, both veins of study focus mostly on service learning and real-life civic contexts, while traditional classroom practices and experiences (like simulations and role-play) are overlooked.

¹⁰ See Gingold (2013) for a complete description.

¹¹ See NACC website (<http://www.centerforactioncivics.org/>) for detailed goals and missions.

Gaps in the literature. The review of the literature presented in the sections above show that the current literature on democratic education deals largely with how much access students have to best practices of democratic education and the *civic* engagement practices of students through volunteerism and service learning. This review of the literature reveals two gaps in current research on democratic education: (1) traditional school coursework as a platform for students to experience best practices such as simulations; and (2) a deeper understanding of how simulations and role-play influence students' future commitment to *political* engagement.

Traditional government course. To summarize, current research on democratic education has been focused on bridging the civic empowerment gap with more engaging and real-life educational experiences like service learning, volunteerism, and youth organizing in and outside of school environments (e.g. Flanagan, 2013; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Youniss, 2012; Youniss & Levine, 2009; Zukin et al., 2006). Furthermore, studies that deal with the civic opportunity gap often focus only on school-wide *civic* experiences and *social* engagement opportunities (e.g. Kahne et al., 2013; Kahne & Spote, 2008; Youniss, 2011).

Meanwhile, the limelight has sidestepped traditional coursework, especially the U.S. Government and Politics course—a constant in the American high school coursework—and its potential to help students develop political engagement. Bachner (2010) points out that 33 states required a course in American Government/Civics for the graduating class of 2013. Furthermore, the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) transcript study shows that 86% of high school seniors report taking a government, civics, or politics course during high school (NAEP, 2009). A course that is so popular and essential could be a setting upon which students' burgeoning political engagement¹² and their commitment to vote in the future is studied.

¹² Refer back to Chapter One for the rationale to focus on political engagement.

Additionally, most students take the course during their last two years of high school, when they are budding young citizens of seventeen and eighteen—on the cusp of joining the electorate. While it is necessary for the field to examine more non-traditional forms of democratic education (such as volunteerism and service learning), it is also important for research to continue in examining the value and success of traditional democratic education coursework. This is especially true when so many young people experience them.

How simulations and role-play work. A second gap in current research on democratic education is a focus on understanding simulations and role-play as a best practice. The research that does exist on democratic education practices and political outcomes have mostly been correlational studies that look to answer whether certain practices influence students' commitment to vote in the future (e.g. Kahne et al., 2006; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Even studies that specifically examine simulations in the classroom use large-scale NAEP data to determine correlations between simulations and civic or political outcomes (e.g. Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2013). Few studies have examined the mechanisms behind *how* these practices actually promote students' commitment to vote in the future. The studies that have investigated the mechanisms behind classroom instruction in Social Studies (one of the best practices) tend to focus on best practices like discussion of current issues in an open classroom atmosphere (e.g. Hess, 2009; Parker, 2010). On the other hand, simulations and role-play in the classroom have not received as much attention as other best practices of democratic education.

As presented in Chapter One, few current studies have sought to understand why simulations and role-play are effective democratic teaching tools, even though simulations seem to be a staple of Social Studies classrooms—as evident by a long history of research on simulations in Social Studies going back to Verba's (1964) and Guetzkow's (1963) studies on

simulations and international relations. However, much of the research on how simulations work in Social Studies classrooms are decades old (e.g. Berson, 1996; Walford, 1995; Wentworth & Lewis, 1973; Zuckerman & Horn, 1973). Current research on simulations in Social Studies classrooms tend to be history oriented (e.g. Squire & Barab, 2004), while research on how *political* simulations in the classroom work to further students' political engagement are difficult to find. Furthermore, the reviews of simulations as a teaching tool suggest that it is not always reliable as an effective instructional strategy (Cherryholmes, 1966; Clegg, 1991). Given the status of simulations and role-play as a best practice of democratic education, it becomes worthwhile to examine how simulations and role-play (that are effective) work as viable ways to foster students' political engagement—more specifically, how might they support students' commitment to vote in the future?

Framework for Studying how Simulations Influence Youth Political Engagement

In order to better understand how stimulations and role-play might work to influence students' commitment to vote in the future, I use a conceptual framework drawn from Interest Development Theory and Communities of Practice in this dissertation. Before outlining this framework in full, I return briefly to Delli Carpini and Keeter's (1996) study, which states that political knowledge is still one of the best predictors of political engagement. If political knowledge is a main contributor to political engagement, it is possible that simulations and role-play actually influence students' commitment to vote in the future by helping them gain more political knowledge. Delli Carpini and Keeter's study suggests "political learning is affected by the attention citizens pay to politics, their ability to comprehend and absorb what they are exposed to, and the amount and kind of information made available to them" (p. 216). This means that obtaining political information involves not only some ability but also an amount of

interest. If a best practice, like simulations and role-play, can help increase this situational interest for learning, it is possible that this interest could influence the individual's political engagement in the long run. Specifically, simulations and role-play may provide students with opportunities to access political information and to experience them firsthand, which could support their interest in politics and may increase the likelihood of them engaging with political issues in the future. If so, it would be helpful to know how simulations and role-play help students access more political information and/or motivate them to commit to vote in the future.

To address the gaps presented in this chapter, I investigated simulations and role-play in an Advanced Placement High School U.S. Government and Politics course. Utilizing a conceptual framework that incorporates theories about individual's interests and how they learn in social situations, I hoped to better understand how simulation and role-play may influence students' motivations for political engagement. The framework has two major components.¹³ First, from a sociocultural perspective, I examined political simulations as potential social interactions that can function like a Community of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 2000a) around political engagement in this study. Second, as students engage in this CoP, their experiences may help trigger and maintain their interest in politics. When combined with theories around learning in a CoP, Hidi and Renninger's (2006) interest development framework supports a hypothesis for why simulations and role-play may help students be (and become) more committed to vote in the future. If simulations function like CoPs (with roles, rules, norms, social structures, and specific practice aims), they may support students' interest development (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 2002) in politics, which could contribute to their commitment to vote in the future. In this conceptual framework, instead of seeing *interest* as just another outcome variable, *situational*

¹³ See Figure 1 in the appendix for a visual representation of the conceptual framework.

*interest*¹⁴ becomes a key contributor to political engagement and something that simulations and role-play may influence. Specifically, simulations and role-play may support students' developing interest in politics by asking them to interact in a community that practices political engagement and consumes political knowledge. The following subsections describe Interest Development Theory and CoP in detail, along with how they work together to elucidate why simulations and role-play may influence students' commitment to vote in the future.

Interest development theory. The first component of the conceptual framework for this study uses Hidi and Renninger's (2006) four-phase interest development model to better understand why students might be (and become) more engaged in political processes under certain classroom conditions. The model suggests that environmental factors in a classroom could potentially help students engage, reengage, and participate in certain practices. According to Silvia (2001, as cited in Hidi & Renninger, 2006), interests are defined as:

Self-sustaining motives that lead people to engage in certain idiosyncratic and person-specific activities with certain objects and ideas for their own sake. In addition, interests serve long-term goals of adaptation such as cultivating knowledge and promoting diversified skills and experience. (p. 116)

These skills and experiences can help students engage with the content (or object) of interest; here, the content of interest is politics. This means that as students' interests develop in political processes, issues, and knowledge, not only would they learn more about politics, but they also could be more likely to reengage in activities that help them find out more about politics (e.g. voting, paying attention to politics in the news, or joining an interest group or a political party).

¹⁴ This term will be discussed in the section titled "Interest Development Theory" later in this chapter.

The interest development model provides insight into how classroom activities and practices might help support the development of students' interests in politics.

The four phases of interest development are sequential and distinct: (i) triggered situational interest, (ii) maintained situational interest, (iii) emerging individual interest, and (iv) well-developed individual interest (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Situational interest is generally influenced by external factors while individual interest is usually supported by internal factors. Triggered situational interest is characterized by short-term changes in affect (feelings) and cognitive processing (Mitchell, 1993) and can be brought on by environmental features that appeal to the individual. Therefore, classroom practices, assignments, or activities can all trigger situational interest. In a classroom, political simulations could trigger students' situational interests through an engaging activity or surrounding the activity with engaging political issues or current events. Once this situational interest is triggered, it could move into the second phase of interest development and be sustained or maintained if the tasks and activities continue to be meaningful to the students (Harackiewicz et al., 2000). The maintaining of triggered interest can lead to the development of personal interest, which can influence a person's behaviors and decisions in the long run.

In higher phases of interest development (phases iii and iv), the interaction between knowledge (in terms of how much a person knows about a domain) and affect (the positive feeling one has towards the domain) can lead to an increase in the amount of work students complete in a content area, and also help them reengage with that content in new ways (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). While triggering situational interest depends solely on external environmental factors to spark interest, maintaining the triggered interest depends on how well the learning environment can keep the students interested in the domain. Even though the learning

environment continues to be important, internal motivation and curiosity begins to support interest development during the emerging individual interest phase. By the well-developed individual interest phase, students' motivations for seeking out domain knowledge and participating in domain practices are internalized. But even in this highest phase of interest development, the learning environment can continue to support students' interests. If students have well-developed individual interest in politics, they would exhibit intrinsic curiosity and motivations for seeking out political knowledge and engage politically in various ways. Even though a single classroom may not be able to help students attain well-developed individual interest in politics, it may be able to help begin the process.

Community of Practice. In order to account for the social milieu around political engagement as an interactive process, in this study, I follow the thinking behind Pressick-Kilborn and Walker's (2002) *Research in Sociocultural Influences on Motivation and Learning* chapter by arguing for a sociocultural approach to the conceptualization of *interest*. Pressick-Kilborn and Walker (2002) suggest that the development of interest “needs to be explained in the context of participation in a community of practice that values community activities and supports interest in the process of learning” (p. 171). This portion of the framework contends simulations and role-play can function like CoPs that support students' interests in politics.

From a sociocultural standpoint, learning occurs through social interactions and in communities that engage in certain practices (Vygotsky, Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner, & Souberman, 1978; Wenger, 2000a). Consequently, CoPs are places for learning to occur—especially the learning of specific practices. Wenger (2000a) argues that CoPs are “the basic building blocks of a social learning system because they are the social ‘containers’ of the competences that make up such a system” (p. 229). To that end, a community of practice

requires (1) a sense of *joint enterprise* among the participants, where members have a collective understanding of the community; (2) *mutual engagement* among the members where norms are developed through interactions with one another; and (3) *shared communal resources*, such as language, tools, and routines (Wenger, 2000b). Through these collective components, CoPs “offer an opportunity to negotiate competence through an experience of direct participation” (Wenger, 2000a, p. 229)—meaning individuals can rehearse and master certain practices through participating in a CoP.

Simulations and role-play may foster situations where students (as participants) work together to develop a collective understanding of their simulated community. While this sense of joint enterprise will certainly include how the class might function in a simulation (e.g. how students are graded or assessed), it may also include understandings about the political processes that students are simulating. Furthermore, the roles that students take on in these simulations enable them to mimic individuals who engage in the practices of political deliberation and evaluation like adult citizens. Since a simulation is held accountable to the rules and norms of the political process that it portrays, a sense of joint enterprise in this CoP will include developing a collective understanding of the actual political process, along with how adult citizens behave in specific situations. Similarly, mutual engagement in the simulation will definitely involve norms of the learning environment (i.e. school and classroom rules); however, because students are bound to roles that depict real life individuals, their interactions may go beyond that of students in a class—mirroring how members of Congress, presidential candidates, and well-informed adult citizens engage with one another. Furthermore, students in simulations will not only share the communal resources of their classroom, they may also learn to utilize resources from the political processes that they simulate.

It is likely that students involved in simulations and role-play may become a community of learners who are learning about political processes—or engaging in reproducing a CoP of well-informed adult voters. At the same time, it is also possible that simulations and role-play can help the classroom function like a CoP around reproducing the actual political processes, where students can participate in a joint enterprise around the subject matter (e.g. how Supreme Court of the United States functions and how Supreme Court Justices behave), engage with one another to determine norms and rules of the simulation (e.g. rules and regulations of a Moot Court), and use common vocabulary, routines, and practices throughout the simulation (e.g. “May it please the court”). By helping the classroom function in ways that mirror adult citizen practices, simulations and role-play could support students’ involvement and engagement in classroom activities. From an interest development perspective, Pressick-Kilborn and Walker (2002) assert that interest, like knowledge, is socially constructed and may develop through social interaction in communities of practice. Furthermore, “participation in communities of practice and the active internalization of their cultural meaning and value systems also leads to self-canalization which further contributes to interest development through focus upon certain types of activities, processes, and objects across the communities of practice in which the individual participates” (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 2002, p. 170). This means that simulations, functioning like CoPs, may not only help students unpack and make sense of politics and political processes, but they may also help students internalize more political knowledge and engage more with political issues, which supports their interest development in politics.

Through learning in CoPs, students may also engage in participatory appropriation (Rogoff, 1995), where their understanding of and responsibility for activities are transformed through their own participation (Rogoff, 1995, p. 150). Ultimately, participatory appropriation

through social interactions may transform an individual's way of thinking, acting, and being around particular practices (Herrenkohl & Mertl, 2010). Therefore, simulations and role-play could potentially serve not just as a way to support the development of students' interest in future political engagement, but it could also create social learning experiences in a CoP of adult citizen political practices such as discussing controversial issues, becoming well-informed voters, understanding political processes, and valuing differing perspectives and opinions. Even though students first engage in a simulated CoP through their assigned roles, by acting out and participating in political practices, students may begin to appropriate and internalize some of these behaviors into their own lives. According to Pressick-Kilborn and Walker (2002), these experiences can serve "to canalize students' interest, as the values of their family, classroom, school and other contexts support and foster motivation for certain activities" (p. 176). Specifically, the simulations give students 'bounded'¹⁵ opportunities to interact with the cultural tools and objects of politics (e.g. understand political processes, engage with political action, and negotiate perspectives that are different from their own), which can help support the processes of developing interest.

In CoPs the 'simulatedness' of the simulations may give way to something more authentic. According to Baudrillard (1981/1995), modernity has engaged in a steady procession of simulacra that has overtaken 'reality'. He suggests, in line with Vygotsky's (1978) interpretation of play, simulations occur when imagination and illusions help us fantasize a world like (but not completely akin to) reality. However, Baudrillard argues that in the modern world, the lines between fantasy and reality are blurred to such an extent that simulations "no longer constitute the imaginary in relation to the real, they are themselves an anticipation of the real,

¹⁵ By bounded, I mean opportunities that held accountable to how real political processes occur in real life.

and thus leave no room for any sort of fictional anticipation—they are immanent” (p. 122). This means political simulations have the potential to extend beyond the imaginative and manifest into real actions for students in a CoP. In other words, students’ interests toward politics and motivations for political action could be supported by their participation in a CoP through simulations, even though they are not participating in a ‘real’ community.

In order for emerging individual interest to develop in most learners, triggered interest needs to be maintained for a period of time (Renninger, 1990). This means that environmental factors in the classroom, such as a CoP through simulated experiences, could potentially contribute to the maintaining of students’ personal interests in politics. As students navigate the norms, rules, and resources of adult political behavior through the simulations that function like CoPs, these CoPs can support students’ interest development. One way to explain how simulations and role-play might contribute to students’ commitment to vote in the future is that simulations and role-play can create opportunities (through CoPs) for students to negotiate and engage with the cultural tools and artifacts of politics. By reproducing a CoP of adult citizen behavior, the students in the simulations interact with practices that can help support their developing interest in (i.e. knowledge and affect toward) political action. As they engage in this CoP, they may become more knowledgeable and motivated to behave like well-informed adult citizens who vote.

By providing a review of the research on best practices of democratic education, this chapter revealed gaps in the literature that I hope to address in this dissertation. Furthermore, this chapter provided a conceptual framework for studying how simulations and role-play might influence students’ commitment to vote in the future. Even though some scholars argue that interest is an important part of a person’s identity (Hidi & Ainley, 2002), I purposefully avoid the

use of “identity” as a major concept. The rationale for this is best described by Herrenkohl and Mertl's (2010) introductory chapter, where they claim that identity, as a noun, “gives the impression that it is a product or thing and not a process” (p. 8). Instead, I hoped to study students’ commitment to vote in the future as a dynamic process of how students navigate simulations in this dissertation, rather than misattributing their behavior as a static product of their identity. Similarly, identity has developed an imprecise definition in the field of Social Studies, especially in terms of students’ civic identities. Future work may be needed in order to specifically address notions of civic identity, which is outside the scope of this dissertation. This study combines the two components (Interest Development Theory and CoP) to create a theory of change for students who experience simulations and role-play in their U.S. Government and Politics course. Specifically, the theory of change suggests simulations and role-play can help classrooms function like CoPs that support both students’ interest development in politics and their commitment to vote in the future.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

Chapter Three of this dissertation provides the methodologies used in this study. This chapter is divided into three main sections: (1) setting and participants; (2) data collection; and (3) data and analysis. Since I utilized a full-mixed design in this study, each of the last two sections is subdivided into a quantitative and a qualitative portion. Under data collection, the measures used for the quantitative portion of the study are presented, along with the qualitative data that was collected for the study. In the data and analysis section, both the quantitative and qualitative analyses schemes are described in full.

As a reminder, I examined simulations and role-play as a best practice of democratic education and used extant data collected from a larger study that is studying the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in yearlong Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. Government and Politics courses (Parker et al., 2013). I utilized mixed methods to allow for the combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, and approaches to be used to fully answer research questions in a single study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Specifically, a “fully mixed sequential explanatory design” (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003, p. 223-227) was used for this study. In a sequential explanatory design, quantitative data is collected and analyzed to determine a relationship that the qualitative data and analysis will attempt to explain.

In the quantitative portion of this study, I address the question of whether situational interest¹⁶ and simulation frequency would directly and uniquely contribute to predicting students’ commitment to vote in the future. To account for teacher/school dependencies in the

¹⁶ It is key to remember that situational interest refers to students’ developing interest (triggered or maintained) in the specific domain of politics and government studied in this dissertation study, rather than just general interest.

student data, sequential hierarchical linear models were used to test this research question. *HLM 6* software (Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2004) was employed to conduct these models; descriptive statistics and psychometric analyses were conducted in *IBM SPSS 19* software (SPSS Inc., 2010). The qualitative portion of the study addressed the second research question: How might simulations and role-play help create learning environments that support the development of students' situational interest?

Setting and Participants

The schools, teachers, and students of the study were recruited as a part of the larger effectiveness study on PBL in AP classrooms mentioned above. All of the classrooms involved in the study implemented a PBL APGOV curriculum that had been developed by the researchers of the larger team with teachers as co-designers. The curriculum provided teachers with five political simulations (ranging from four to six weeks long) throughout the year. Furthermore, students were assigned to specific roles as political actors for each of the simulations.¹⁷ However, students' self-reported surveys and classroom observations showed that students experienced varied frequency of simulations and role-play in the classroom, suggesting that some teachers opted out of certain simulations, modified aspects of the simulations, or shortened some of the simulations. To examine the mechanism behind effective simulations, the qualitative portion of the study focused on students in classrooms that had the best record of conducting all the simulations as designed. The quantitative portion of the study included 260 juniors and seniors from 19 classrooms, with 9 teachers, in 9 schools, across 4 school districts. All four school districts are in urban settings of mid-sized U.S. cities: three on the West Coast and one in the Midwest. The nine schools are diverse in ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES), with the rate

¹⁷ This role assignment becomes important for the findings of the study. See 'Roles as Portals to Plurality' under the discussion section in Chapter Six for more detail.

of students eligible for free and reduced lunch ranging from 40% to 100%. Table 1 provides the demographic information for each school and Table 2 displays the numbers of students, class, and teacher/schools per school district.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Schools (%)

School	Reading/English Language Arts Test Performance	Free/Reduced Lunch Rate	White	Black	Asian/ Filipino/ Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Other
School A*	87%	38%	37%	31%	21%	7%	4%
School B*	84%	71%	6%	37%	41%	11%	5%
School C**	55%	81%	34%	23%	8%	27%	8%
School D**	63%	71%	44%	13%	7%	27%	9%
School E**	55%	66%	38%	28%	13%	14%	7%
School F**	66%	59%	60%	10%	4%	17%	9%
School G**	81%	45%	57%	21%	4%	9%	9%
School H***	63%	61%	10%	17%	10%	55%	8%
School I****	88%	41%	46%	6%	20%	20%	8%

*District A; **District B; ***District C; ****District D

Table 2. Total Number of Students, Classes, and Teachers/Schools

School District	Number of Students	Classes	Teachers/Schools ¹⁸
A	44	3	2
B	131	10	5
C	45	4	1
D	40	2	1

¹⁸ Because each school had only one teacher, the school delineation is synonymous with teacher-effects.

A subsample of 11 students from five classrooms participated in the qualitative portion of this study. These classrooms were chosen as focal points for the qualitative study because their teachers showed the most consistency (from classroom observations and teachers' self-reports) in using all five political simulations (as designed) in their classrooms. All 11 students reported experiencing simulations "very often" on the end of the year survey, providing evidence that these participants were in classes that utilized all five simulations from the course. Six of the student participants were from two classrooms in two schools in the Pacific Northwest, while five of the student participants were from three classrooms in three schools in the Midwest. The four female and seven male students were in their final year of high school and were diverse in ethnicity and SES. They were chosen based on a purposeful sampling to capture a range of self-reported political interest and engagement levels, as reported on the initial survey. Specific demographic information for each of the student participants is shown in Table 3.¹⁹

¹⁹ All names of students, teachers, schools, and school districts are pseudonyms.

Table 3. List of Student Participants.

Student	Gender	District	School	Teacher	Initial Political Interest	Ethnicity
Carlos	Male	Midwest	Westland HS	Mr. Matthews	High	Latino
Konah	Female	Midwest	Westland HS	Mr. Matthews	Low	African
Geraldo	Male	Midwest	Southview HS	Ms. Carmichael	High	Latino
Ryan	Male	Midwest	Southview HS	Ms. Carmichael	Mid	White
Wilbur	Male	Midwest	Jefferson HS	Mr. Arnold	Low	Latino
Jamal	Male	PNWest	Truman HS	Mr. Travis	Low	African American
Maya	Female	PNWest	Truman HS	Mr. Travis	Mid	African American
Richard	Male	PNWest	Truman HS	Mr. Travis	High	White
Leah	Female	PNWest	Carter HS	Mr. Biton	Mid	White
Jhino	Male	PNWest	Carter HS	Mr. Biton	Low	Filipino/White
Drew	Female	PNWest	Cater HS	Mr. Biton	High	African American

*note: PNWest = Pacific Northwest; all names are pseudonyms.

Data Collection

Data for the study were collected as a part of the larger PBL AP study mentioned above. The larger data set included pre and post-course student surveys, pre and post-course teacher surveys, student interviews, teacher interviews, classroom observations, and student fishbowl interviews. Student and teacher surveys were self-reported and collected on surveys administered by the larger research team at the beginning and end of the year during class time. Interviews were audio-recorded and collected by various members of the larger research team before school, after school, or during students' off periods. Classroom observations and fishbowl interviews were videotaped and conducted by the various members of the larger research team at the end of the year during class time.

The data sets for the current analyses included the student post-course survey, student interviews that were audio-recorded and conducted by me, and classroom observations. The

survey items included in this study were students' commitment to vote in the future plus several items associated with interest (further discussed under the section "Quantitative measures") that were on the self-reported survey at the end of the course. In addition to the quantitative data, data gathered from the self-reported pre-course student survey were used to select focal students (with low, mid, and high initial political interest) in classrooms that conducted all five simulations. These students were interviewed three times throughout the course: once at the beginning of the year, once in the middle of the year, and once at the end of the year. This process yielded 33 interviews (three sets of interviews per participant). Classroom observations that featured the focal students were also examined in this dissertation study. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Classroom observations and surveys were used to corroborate student responses.

Quantitative Measures. The quantitative portion of this study included one dependent variable and two independent variables. The dependent variable in this study was students' commitment to vote in the future. For the study, commitment to vote in the future was measured on a single self-reported item using a 5-point bipolar agreement scale (where 1=Strongly Disagree: 5=Strongly Agree): "When I am old enough, I plan on voting regularly." This individual item²⁰ has been widely used for over a decade as a measure of students' commitment to traditional political engagement (e.g. Torney-Purta, Lehman, Oswald, & Shultz, 2001; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013).

The independent variables in this study were students' year-end reports of situational interest and the frequency of simulations and role-play (denoted as "simulation frequency") they experienced in the classroom. Situational interest was chosen as a way to measure students' developing domain interest during class, rather than to simply measure their intrinsic interest in

²⁰ See limitations section in Chapter Six for further discussion about this single item.

politics. The description of the interest development model provided a rationale for choosing situational interest (rather than intrinsic political interest or general interest in class) as an independent variable, because I was looking to see if situational interest and simulation frequency uniquely contribute to students' commitment to vote in the future. As a reminder, situational interest is generally influenced by external factors such as classroom practices or assignments. Situational interest was measured by eight items on surveys collected at the end of the year, using the same 5-point response scale. A sample²¹ of the items is as follows: "I was usually interested in what we were doing"; "I really got into the activities." Some of the items used in this study mirrored the items used in Mitchell's (1993) study. The second independent variable, frequency of simulations, was measured with a single 4-point frequency scale where 1=Never; 2=Sometimes; 3=Often; and 4=Very Often: "I participated in political or legal role-plays. (For example, mock elections, campaigns, trials, press conferences, lobbying events, or budget meetings)". This single item has also been widely used as a way to gauge students' exposure to simulations and role-play in the classroom as a best practice of democratic education²² (e.g. Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013).

Exploratory Factor Analyses of Survey Items. An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of eight post-course student self-reported survey items showed a 3-factor solution fit the data well. There are many choices in EFA estimation and rotation algorithms. I used maximum likelihood estimation (i.e., "maximizing the probability that the observed item correlations are sampled from the model-implied parameters" [Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006, pp. 636]) and a Varimax orthogonal rotation in this study. Orthogonal rotations for EFAs preserve estimated item-item relationships, while helping in the interpretation of results by shifting axes simultaneously so that

²¹ See appendix Figure 2 for all items on the end of year survey.

²² See full description of the Civic Opportunity Gap in Chapter Two.

factor to item relationships are as close as possible to the respective factor axes. Additionally, Varimax is recommended because it minimizes the complexity of factors by maximizing the variance of the item to factor relationship (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006, pp. 637-639).

Two out of the 8 items were reverse coded because of the wording of the items. Results (in Table 4)²³ showed that a 3-factor model fit the 8 survey items well, $\chi^2(7) = 7.02, p > 0.05$. In comparison, a 2-factor model did not fit the data well, $\chi^2(13) = 42.45, p < .001$. The rotated loadings showed that items 1 and 3 crossloaded onto two different factors, so I assigned the items to factor based on absolute magnitude.²⁴ The last 2 items loaded positively onto what can be considered ‘situational interest’ factor, the middle 3 items load heavily onto what can be called the ‘agency’ factor, and the first 3 items load onto what can be labeled as the ‘flow’ factor. In this study, I am most interested in items that measure students’ situational interest, so the quantitative analyses focused on the two items that loaded onto Factor 3.

Table 4. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for Survey Items, Including Interest

<i>Item</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>Initial Communalities</i>	<i>Factor1: Flow</i>	<i>Factor2: Agency</i>	<i>Factor3: Interest</i>	
1	I was usually interested in what we were doing	3.62	0.76	0.47	0.42	0.22	0.66*	
2	I usually really got into the activities	3.53	0.90	0.38	0.31	0.30	0.53	
3	I actively participated	3.53	0.90	0.46	0.18	0.53	0.44*	
4	I had opportunities to share my opinion	3.57	0.76	0.54	0.16	0.98	0.14	
5	I usually felt like my ideas mattered	3.37	0.78	0.36	0.15	0.54	0.19	
6	Time usually passed quickly in class	3.12	1.03	0.32	0.54	0.15	0.23	
7	I wish class would end (reverse)	2.88	1.04	0.49	0.84	0.15	0.16	
8	My mind usually drifted in class (reverse)	3.05	0.99	0.49	0.68	0.17	0.30	
					<i>Factor1</i>	<i>Factor2</i>	<i>Factor3</i>	$\chi^2(7)$
<i>Unrotated Variance Accounted For</i>					29%	25%	5%	
<i>Varimax Rotated Variance Accounted For</i>					23%	22%	14%	7.02

Note. N=260 students from 9 teachers/schools. Raw scores used for all items on 5-point bipolar agreement rating scales with 1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree. Significant loadings ($> \pm .326$ for $N = 260$ per Stevens [2001, p. 394]) are in boldface.

* For these crossloads, item 1 was assigned to the Interest factor and item 3 was assigned to the Agency factor.

²³ Figure 4 in the appendix provides the 8 items shown in Table 4.

²⁴ See limitations section in Chapter Six for implications of crossloading on factor decisions.

Scale reliability. Since the study uses ‘situational interest’ as a variable, reliability estimates for the two items that loaded onto this factor were obtained by calculating its internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha). The rule of thumb for modest reliability is .70, because the squared value of Cronbach’s alpha shows the percentage of variance that is shared by the items (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994, p. 265). The Cronbach’s alpha was estimated at $\alpha = .70$. Therefore, the mean of the two items was computed for each student as the Interest variable. Using this mean item rating allowed for easier interpretability of the scale while preserving the variation in the original data (DiStefano, Zhu, & Mindrila, 2009).

Qualitative Data. Student interviews and classroom observations of selected individuals from the larger PBL AP research study were the focus of the qualitative portion of this dissertation study. I conducted three interviews per student with eleven students throughout the year: once during the first month of school, once right before midterms, and once at the end of May. These interviews were conducted before school, after school, or during students’ off-periods. The interview protocols asked students to elaborate on their responses to self-reported survey items about political interest and commitment to vote in the future; their current political interest and engagement; their perception about political and governmental issues; and their experiences with role-play and simulations in class. A sample²⁵ of the questions include: “I’m curious about what you said on the survey, can you tell me a little bit more about why you answered the way you did”; “how does it feel to be put in roles”; “how are the simulations going in class”; “what are some things that make this class interesting”; and “what advice would you give students taking this class next year?”

²⁵ See appendix Figure 3 for the interview protocol.

Classroom observations of entire political simulations (approximately four to six weeks long) were filmed in two simulations for the larger PBL AP study: An introductory simulation on the Founding of the Constitution called Founders' Intent, where students were assigned roles as delegates to the Constitutional Convention; and a simulation on the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS), where students were assigned roles as lawyers and justices. Each of the filmed observations spanned the entire class period, and the camera and microphones followed the previously identified focal students as much as possible. Additional classroom observations were made sporadically throughout the course. Other members of the larger study team also collected some classroom observations and created brief observation memos after each observation. When I did not personally conduct the classroom observations, I relied on these detailed memos to identify when the focal students were observed on film. The study focused on analyzing student interviews to reveal major categories and themes. At the same time, film footage of focal students in classroom interactions were analyzed to triangulate and corroborate themes that surfaced from the student interview data.

Data Analysis

Since the study utilized a fully mixed sequential explanatory design, quantitative data were analyzed first to test for the presence of the predicted relationship. Qualitative analysis was then used to explore the mechanism behind those relationships.

Quantitative Analytic Plan. To help answer the first research question (do situational interest and simulation frequency uniquely contribute to students' commitment to vote in the future?) the quantitative analysis asked two other sub-questions:

- What are the direct relationships between situational interest, simulation frequency, and students' commitment to vote in the future?

- Do these results replicate prior findings in the literature on simulation frequency being positively related to students' commitment to vote in the future?

The analysis plan for the quantitative portion of the study included examination of direct relationships as well as unique (non-redundant) relationships between the two independent variables, simulation frequency and situational interest, and the dependent variable, commitment to voting. Disaggregated zero-order correlations were the starting point for determining direct, one-to-one relationships (e.g., whether each predictor had any relationship with the outcome) but these may be misleading since they do not account for dependencies in the data. Hence, most of the focus for testing the quantitative research questions is on the hierarchical linear model results, which did account for nested data.

To determine the appropriate hierarchical modeling strategy for these data, two preliminary analyses were conducted. First, I tested whether there were any mean differences among the four districts in student responses on commitment to voting using a fixed-effects one-way analysis of variance. Those results showed no significant effect of district, $F(3, 5) = 0.34, p > .05$. Hence, district was dropped from subsequent modeling. Second, a 3-level model in which students (Level 1) were nested within classrooms (Level 2) within teachers/schools (Level 3) was specified to determine whether there was significant variance among classrooms within teachers on student voting commitment (recall that some teachers who participated had a handful of classrooms participate whereas others only had one classroom, with a range of one to five classrooms per teacher). Those results showed that classroom membership accounted for a mere 0.4% of the variance (non-substantial and non-significant), and subsequently 'classrooms' as a level in the hierarchy was dropped from analyses in addition to district membership (comparatively, teacher/school membership accounted for 4% of the variance in student

responses). This simplified final analyses to 2-level models in which students (Level 1, $N = 260$) were nested within teachers/schools (Level 2, $N = 9$).

With nesting structure determined, I conducted a series of hierarchical models in which (a) the intraclass correlation was estimated (intercept-only, or empty model with no predictors), (b) direct relationships between each of the two predictors and the outcome, after accounting for non-independence in the data (two models, one predictor each), and (c) the unique relationships between each of the two predictors and the outcome, after accounting for their shared variance with each other. In all models, the outcome was left in its original 5-point scale (with higher scores indicating greater commitment to vote in the future) and the predictors were standardized in Z -scores for ease of interpretation. All predictors were at the student level. The models were specified as follows.

$$\text{Model 1: } \textit{CommitVote}_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + U_{0j} + r_{ij}$$

$$\text{Model 2: } \textit{CommitVote}_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10} * \textit{ZSituationalInterest} + U_{0j} + r_{ij}$$

$$\text{Model 3: } \textit{CommitVote}_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10} * \textit{ZSimulationFrequency} + U_{0j} + r_{ij}$$

$$\text{Model 4: } \textit{CommitVote}_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10} * \textit{ZSitInt} + \gamma_{20} * \textit{ZSimFreq} + U_{0j} + r_{ij}$$

Across all the models above, the commitment to vote for the i th student nested in the j th teacher/school is equal to the sum of the estimated mean commitment level on a 5-point scale (γ_{00}), plus the effect of the predictors (Models 2-4), plus the deviation of the j th teacher/school to the grand mean (U_{0j}) plus the deviation of the i th student to the j th teacher/school group mean (residual, r_{ij}). The effect of the predictors in Models 2-3 are estimated as direct relationships with the outcome, in points per standard deviation increase; the effect of the predictors in Model 4 are estimates as *unique* relationships with the outcome (again, in points per standard deviation

increase in each predictor), after adjusting for shared relationships among the two predictors themselves.

Qualitative Analysis. I used a ‘grounded theory’ approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) to better understand how simulations might support students’ situational interest and commitment to future political engagement. Focal students were selected from classrooms that conducted all five simulations. The analysis consisted of coding transcribed data, developing categories, and highlighting recurring patterns in the data. In the open coding phase, I analyzed the beginning of the year student interviews using the constant comparative method “to look for instances that represent [a] category and to continue looking (and interviewing) until the new information obtained does not further provide insight into the category” (Creswell, 2007). Even though I coded with existing theories in mind during open coding, I considered codes that did not fit existing theories and created new codes accordingly.

I also used Rogoff’s (1995) three plane approach to CoP as an initial framework for analyzing the beginning of the year student interviews. The three planes include personal, interpersonal, and cultural processes that can contribute to the three main components, and initial codes, of CoP (i.e. joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and common tools). While the three planes can be distinct, Rogoff (1995) argues that they must be considered together when attempting to understand how people participate and change their participation within social interactions. During the analysis, the attention was often on one plane, while considering the implications of the two other existing planes. This means that instead of just focusing on either the personal plane (students’ own perspective), the interpersonal plane (how students interact with one another), or the community plane (how students behave within the larger context of the political process that is being simulated), the analytic framework allowed me to consider all three

foci with different points of focus at different times. This process provides an opportunity to study “the efforts of the individual, their companions, and the institutions they constitute and build upon to see development as grounded in the specifics and commonalities of those efforts, opportunities, constrains, and changes” (Rogoff, 1995, p. 159). Initial categories included these three planes; however, the coding process showed that the three planes existed within multiple contexts. For example, the community plane could refer to how students behaved within the larger context of classroom norms, how they behaved within the context of their cultural communities, or how they behaved within the context of being a citizen of their state or nation. Therefore, codes were created to account for the various contexts (e.g. Env (Auth) – context of ‘real’ communities such as home, state, or nation; Env (Sim) – context of the classroom or within simulations; Env (Bleed) – where a plane intersected both the classroom and the real world.²⁶ Then, I paid special attention to quotes and incidences where plane codes intersected with CoP codes and context specific codes. The intersection of these codes provided incidences where students interacted with one another or the larger context of different settings to exhibit at least one of the three components of CoP within various contexts.

To further investigate how simulations and role-play might support interest development, I used Hidi and Renninger’s (2006) four-phase interest development model to analyze interviews and observations for moments that suggest students’ situational interests in politics were triggered or maintained as they participated in simulations and role-play (e.g. tonal, postural, or substantive changes in students’ affect, engagement, or knowledge around political processes). Since well-developed individual interest may lead to knowledge acquisition and future behaviors in the domain (Hidi & Renninger, 2006), analyzing moments when students’ situational interest

²⁶ See Figure 5 in the appendix for a full list of codes.

in politics is triggered or maintained via simulations and role-play may help explain why simulations and role-play in the classroom can influence students' commitment to vote in the future. The initial codes for situational interest included *Affect*:²⁷ students' affect (or change in affect) towards the domain; *Class Task (TI)*: when the classroom environment triggered students' interest for completing classroom tasks; *PAction (TI)*: when classroom environment triggered students' interest for engaging politically; *Knowledge Feelings*: students' feelings about political knowledge; *Correct Knowledge*: when students exhibited correct political knowledge; and *PAction (EPI)*: when students showed emerging individual interest in finding out more about political issues or engaging with politics.

Initial categories were considered using the interest development model since the study hoped to examine how simulations and role-play might influence students' political interest development. However, categories began to emerge from the intersection between interest development codes and CoP codes within various personal, interpersonal, and community planes codes. A sample of these emerging categories included: (1) Simulation influencing real understanding, where students speak enthusiastically about their roles and then flow seamlessly into exhibiting an accurate understanding of how real life politicians interact and behave; (2) Role-play influencing real perspective changes, where students reflect on how their personal opinions about politics and political issues have changed due to interacting with one another in roles; and (3) Classroom/Simulation norms helping students understand governmental processes, where students discuss how simulated processes help them understand and engage with real political processes.

²⁷ The italicized terms in this list are code labels. See Figure 5 in the appendix for list of codes.

However, before categories were fully established, I spent extra time in the open coding stage so that I could focus on what was really happening in the data and allow other potential categories that I had not originally considered to emerge. Some of these categories included the importance students placed on being knowledgeable about politics and political processes; students reflecting on the importance of seeing different sides of an issue; and students' sense of community in the class. To help ensure that I did not become inundated with an overwhelming number of initial codes, I kept memos of my analytic thoughts throughout the process. The memos helped me streamline the open coding process with existing theories in mind as I developed themes and categories. Categories and themes were finalized when no new properties or dimensions emerged from the codes. Once initial categories and core variables were established, I applied axial and selective coding to the remainder of the transcribed and observational data to develop theoretical propositions that could explain the relationships found by the quantitative data. Even though the categories and variables were established, I was mindful of additional data that could modify the set themes. This process continued as an iterative process until the themes fully emerged.

While coding the student interviews, I revisited the classroom observation memos of all the researchers (from the larger project) who conducted (and filmed) observations in the larger project. I kept analytic memos of their notes so as to identify classroom footage for analysis. Once I had compiled a list of observations that included the focal students, I spent time watching, transcribing, and coding the video footage. Only portions of the video that included the focal students were transcribed verbatim. After transcribing the videos, I coded the video segments using the same coding themes and categories that were developed from the interview analysis. At the same time, I paid special attention to (and made analytic notes on) sections of video where

the focal students supported or contradicted their interview responses with their actions and behaviors in the classroom. Overwhelmingly, the classroom observations corroborated students' interview responses about simulations and role-play.

This chapter presents the analysis of the data structure from the post-course student survey data, which focused on testing the relationships (direct and unique) between situational interest and simulation frequency and students' future commitment to voting. Extant data from the larger PBL study provided the data sources for the analyses that was done in this dissertation. Quantitative analysis was conducted on students' post-course self-reported survey to determine a relationship that the qualitative analysis went on to explore using student interviews and classroom observations. Since I used a fully mixed research design in this study, Chapter Four will present the findings from the quantitative portion of this study, while Chapter Five will present the major findings from the qualitative section of the study.

CHAPTER 4: Quantitative Findings

This chapter presents the analyses on the post-course student survey data in terms of the relationship between simulation frequency and students' commitment to vote in the future. These analyses address the first research question (do situational interest and simulation frequency uniquely contribute to students' commitment to vote in the future?) along with the sub-questions outlined in Chapter Three (i.e. what are the direct relationships between situational interest, simulation frequency, and students' commitment to vote in the future? And do the results replicate prior findings in the literature on simulation frequency being positively related to students' commitment to vote in the future?). Major findings of this chapter include: (1) situational interest, simulation frequency, and students' commitment to vote in the future are significantly correlated to one another; (2) confirming findings in the literature, simulation frequency is positively related to students' commitment to vote in the future; and (3) even though situational interest and simulation frequency do not uniquely contribute to students' commitment to vote in the future, their correlation suggests simulation frequency may influence students' situational interest.

Hierarchical Linear Modeling Findings

Analysis to address the first research question was conducted once situational interest scores were obtained for each participant (per the EFA findings in Chapter Three). In order to answer the first research question (do situational interest and simulation frequency uniquely contribute to students' commitment to vote in the future?), analyses of the data was conducted to address the two sub-questions listed above.

To obtain the preliminary relationships between the three variables, zero-order correlations were calculated. Table 5 shows that both predictors were significantly correlated to

the outcome, but the relationship between the predictors themselves was larger ($r = 0.25$) than their relationships with the outcome ($r = 0.17$ and 0.16 , respectively). This indicates, at a preliminary level, each predictor may overlap too much with each other to uniquely predict the outcome. But since the zero-order correlations do not take into account classroom membership, these are preliminary relationships that the HLM model hoped to address.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations for Disaggregated Student Data

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.
Commitment to Vote	3.93	1.00	--		
Simulation Frequency	3.28	0.85	0.17**	--	
Situational Interest	3.62	0.76	0.16*	0.25***	--

Note. $N = 260$ students from 9 teacher/schools. Raw scores used for all measures. Raw scores used for all analyses (Commitment to Vote and Situational Interest on 5-point bipolar agreement rating scales with 1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree; Simulation Frequency on a 4-point frequency rating scale with 1=Never and 4=Often). Pearson's r used on disaggregated data.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Results from the multilevel analysis of data in Models 1-4 are presented in Table 6. As a reminder, Model 1 showed the intercept-only model without predictors (i.e. grand mean commitment to vote, adjusted for nesting, was 3 points on a 5 point scale). Analysis of Models 2-3 revealed that once teacher/school differences were accounted for both situational interest ($d = 1.16$) and simulation frequency ($d = 0.58$) directly predicted students' commitment to vote in the future. Specifically, Model 2 (direct relationship) showed that for every standard deviation of situational interest, we would expect 0.34 points greater commitment to vote in the future. Similarly, Model 3 (direct relationship) showed that for every standard deviation of simulation frequency, 0.17 points increase in commitment to vote is expected, replicating the relationship between simulation frequency and commitment to vote that has been previously found in the literature (e.g. Kahne & Middaugh, 2008b). In other words, both situational interest and simulation frequency directly contributed to students' commitment to vote in the future.

However, the analysis of Model 4 showed that neither situational interest ($d = 0.44$) nor simulation frequency ($d = 0.33$) *uniquely* predicted students' commitment to vote in the future (similar to the preliminary findings via zero-order correlations). Since situational interest's effect size was larger than simulation frequency in both the direct relationship modeling and unique relationship modeling, situational interest might be an important predictor of students' commitment to vote, more so than simulation frequency. Furthermore, once simulation frequency was accounted for, a trend of situational interest predicting commitment to vote can be seen ($p = 0.07$). This suggests situational interest in Social Studies classrooms is a variable that deserves further examination in future research. These quantitative findings show a relationship between situational interest and students' commitment to vote in the future that I hope to better understand in the qualitative portion of this study.

This chapter presented the findings from the quantitative analysis of this dissertation study. Analysis of the data determined that even though neither predictor *uniquely* predicted students' commitment to vote in the future, each predictor did have a *direct* relationship with the outcome. Furthermore, the shared variance between the two predictors provides rationale for an in-depth qualitative study on how simulations and role-play might support the development of students' situational interest.

Table 6.
Hierarchical Linear Modeling Results

<i>Fixed Effect</i>	Model 1						Model 2						Model 3						Model 4						
	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d*</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d*</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d*</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d*</i>	
Intercept (Mean Commitment to Vote)	3.94	0.09	44.25	8	<.001		3.25	0.07	44.11	8	<.001		3.94	0.09	44.20	8	<.001		3.94	0.09	44.19	8	<.001		
Situational Interest							0.34	0.07	4.73	258	<.001	1.16							0.14	0.08	1.83	257	.069	.44	
Simulation Frequency													0.17	0.07	2.31	258	.022	.58	0.12	0.09	1.37	257	.171	.33	
<i>Random Effect</i>	<i>Var</i>	<i>chi</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>			<i>Var</i>	<i>chi</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>			<i>Var</i>	<i>chi</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>			<i>Var</i>	<i>chi</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>			
Teachers/Schools	0.04	16.38	8	.037			0.02	16.75	8	.032			0.04	16.67	8	.033			0.04	16.73	8	.033			
Residual	0.97						0.65						0.95						0.95						

Note. N = 260 students from 9 teacher/schools.

d* is an approximate Cohen's d computed by dividing the mean difference (for categorical predictor) or +1SD (Z score predictor), by the pooled estimated SD
pooled estimated SD = SE/(sqrt(2/(0.5N))), where N=total sample size

CHAPTER 5: Qualitative Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings from the qualitative data analysis conducted in this dissertation study. The chapter is divided into three main sections; each one represents a finding of the qualitative study. The qualitative study analyzed student interviews, classroom observations, and fishbowl interviews to examine students' experiences with simulations and role-play. Hoping to better understand how simulations and role-play may support students' situational interest, the analysis turned to students' self-reported experiences with simulations and role-play and classroom observations of students' experiences in roles and simulations.

Two primary claims include: (1) Political simulations in the classroom can function like a Community of Practice (CoP) of authentic political behaviors, providing them with common language, understanding, and experiences that mirror real-world CoPs around political processes. Or as one student puts it: "It's like job shadowing"; and (2) Role-play can act as a *portal to plurality*, providing students with low-stakes entry points into contentious debates about which they may or may not already have a developed opinion. Essentially, roles give students a safe space to "try out" an opinion or political position, and access to more political information, without having to declare their personal opinion. Or as one student recalls: "Everybody's playing a role". As a secondary finding, in concurrence with Interest Development Theory, students see knowledge as an important contributor to their confidence and interest in political engagement: "If you don't know what it means, then you can't effectively vote on it".

"It's Like Job Shadowing"

Analysis of student interviews and classroom observations throughout the year reveal students view the political simulations in class as chances to practice real-life political processes.

If simulations function by simulating adult CoPs, students have opportunities to learn and become interested in the political practices of those CoPs. Even though students in the study fully recognized the simulatedness of their class projects, they still saw these experiences as practice for a real CoP, where adults engage in political processes. All 11 students interviewed mentioned this phenomenon throughout the interviewing process. Table 7 shows the number of incidences, per student, where they reported finding a connection between simulations in the classroom and real-life political processes.

Table 7. Number of quotes, per student, that mention simulations connecting to real-life politics.

Student ²⁸	Carlos	Konah	Geraldo	Ryan	Wilbur	Jamal	Maya	Richard	Leah	Jhino	Drew
# of Quotes	12	5	9	6	3	3	10	5	4	11	4

Jhino’s sentiments conveyed this idea particularly well when he responded to a question about the use of simulations in his APGOV class:

It's like job shadowing almost and you get a lot of hands on experience, I mean of course this isn't the real government, like we're in a classroom, but we're also seeing, I guess, a whole other side of things that we wouldn't see if we just read it in the textbook. (Jhino, mid-year interview)

Jhino’s explanation showed that students recognize the bounds of the simulations as classroom activities; at the same time, the simulations gave students a way to experience real-life situations and practice the communal resources (such as vocabulary and norms) of real political processes.

He clarified what he meant when he said:

What we're doing is super short—²⁹run down of the basics. Um, so I know it's, it's really different {from real life}, but the simulations still encapsulate the same

²⁸ All names are pseudonyms that reflect students’ ethnicity and aspects of their real names.

²⁹ Transcript conventions: dashes=pauses in speech, ellipses=deletion, braces=clarifications, brackets=observed actions or gestures.

ideas—the general principles of the thing, so I can understand now, when I see presidents, like presidential candidates, debating or when they're trying to elect a representative from each party, and then seeing other people—I didn't know that there were two main parties, like going head to head and then everyone else is like the, uh, smaller parties, and the interest groups. And so now when I see like picket signs, like oh, blank for president 2008, oh, they were probably either in the same party but not the main candidate, or they were an interest group, and so I'm making those connections now, it's pretty cool. (Jhino, mid-year interview)

In this quote, Jhino expressed his new understanding of real-life electoral complexities. By recognizing the common tools in political processes (e.g. interest groups, political parties, and connections of party politics to elections), Jhino felt able to parse, understand, and engage in the U.S. electoral process.

Seeing the real-world value of simulated political processes is an important theme in the student interviews, as students got a taste of what it really means to be a politician, activist, or lawyer and mutually engage in those roles. This seems to be especially true when teachers had real State Supreme Court Justices come to play the role of Supreme Court Chief Justice during the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) simulation. Konah shared her thought on working with the Justice in the interview when she said:

You get to experience what it's actually like, with like the whole being a lawyer thing. Mr. Matthews had a real Justice come here and it was REALLY hard especially for ours. Cuz when we did the moot court, our {student} Justices weren't asking that many questions, which Mr. Matthews, he wanted us to ask like hard questions but they weren't. But when *she* [referring to the real Justice] did it,

she went—she attacked some people—and then like [Konah laughs] it was like, whoa...[states proudly] but I got it! (Konah, End of year interview)

In Konah’s case, the SCOTUS simulation became all too real when a State Supreme Court Justice entered the classroom and transformed a class project into a serious courtroom, where lawyers had to stay on their toes to answer difficult questions about the Constitutionality of certain laws. As Konah and her classmates mutually engaged under the norms and rules of the simulation, they also got a sense of the joint enterprise of a *real* courtroom in the presence of a *real* Justice. Even though the experience caused Konah to be nervous, her ability to “get it” at the end brought a *real* sense of pride to her memory of the experience. It is as if she, a seventeen year old, took pride in fully capable of being a lawyer, wielding the tools and routines of a lawyer, who could argue a case of Constitutionality in front of a *real* Justice.

This phenomenon of playing out authentic political processes can also be seen and corroborated by classroom observations. In the episode below, Richard played the role of Chief Justice in a teacher-created case about affirmative action: *Meeting Equal Opportunity v. Northwest School District*. Meeting Equal Opportunity is a fictitious interest group that has sued Northwest School District because the School District partners with ‘Youth Scholars,’ a program that supports the academic success of primarily African American students. The case was created to mirror real-life reverse discrimination, affirmative action, cases such as *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Fisher v. Texas*. While students studied the real cases, along with other precedent SCOTUS cases like *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, Mr. Travis created the case because he thought an affirmative action case in a High School setting might engage more students. The transcript picks up as the Richard and the other Justices interrupted a lawyer team with questions about the legitimacy of the program, in order to determine whether it violated the 14th Amendment:

Justice 1:³⁰ So are you saying that it's ok for those social barriers to keep happening?

Lawyer 1: No, but the admission statement of the organization is not to break down the social barriers, it's to further the level of education of young African American students.

Justice 1: So what's your—the compelling state interest³¹ to increase diversity again?

Lawyer 2: The compelling state interest is that there's a lot of African American students that do not get the education that they need—let me show, let me give you some statistics alright? [Class laughs] I've got some statistics for you guys...

Richard: [Says sarcastically] Ah, yes, please.

Lawyer 2: In [State], the black male graduating is 55% [Richard interrupts: graduating rate?] yes that is the graduation rate. Now the white male, their graduation rate is 74%, that's a huge gap, 19%, what Young Scholars is doing is promoting education and resources for these Black students, now let me tell you...

Justice 2 [Attempts to interrupt]: hold on—

Lawyer 2: Let me just give you this statistics, alright? [Justice 2 Relents] 100% of students that participate in—100% alright!? that participate in this program graduates, and 99% of those students, they move on, and they apply to 2nd or 4

³⁰ Focal student names are pseudonyms; other students are identified by role label only.

³¹ In SCOTUS precedents, compelling state interest is required if a state-funded programs wishes to adopt or administer affirmative action policies that benefit only subgroups of the population.

year colleges, that's a huge, huge statistics, not a lot of programs can say that, but this one can—

Justice 1: For only 30 people? participants?

Lawyer 2: 30 people is a lot of people—it's this classroom, imagine the person next to you will walk with you during graduation.

Justice 2 [Picks up his original reason for interruption]: What about Latino students and, uh, Asian students also seeing similar benefits?

Lawyer 2: Theirs can—

Justice 2: Yes, but those programs aren't as effective as Young Scholars

Lawyer 2: True [Justice 2: As you said] true, but Latino students and Asian students do have the right to join this program, if you look at the application, like {Lawyer 1} said, there is no point [or qualifications] system in this program.

Richard [unconvinced]: Sure, but if you look at the application for a Laundromat license in *Yick Wo* {referring to the case *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*}, there wasn't—there wasn't really—a qualifica—

Lawyer 2 [interrupts]: But that was a social issue—a

Richard: Yeah, but so is this, this is a social issue too!

Justice 2 {Continues Richard's prior argument}: And even if there are no explicit limits, you can't deny the fact that 100% of the constituents of Young Scholars are African American. (Classroom observations, Spring 2014)

In this mildly heated interaction, the video recording showed indicators of Richard's situational interest as he physically leaned into the conversation, furrowed his brows, and paid close attention to the conversation as a Supreme Court Justice, as were the other Justices and lawyers

in the simulation. The group had a sense of joint enterprise and collective understanding of their roles as Justices and lawyers, even as their peripheral, but accurate, understanding of the goals and actions of real SCOTUS oral argument was being shaped. Their usage of Constitutional reasoning and precedent cases to establish *stare decisis*—while rough, unpolished, and taking on an adolescent candor—mirrored some of the same logic that SCOTUS Justices use in many of their arguments, opinions, and dissents. The case ended with the Justices finding in favor of the Northwest School District, the lawyer team that they questioned so brashly in the episode seen above. Even though the case was a simulation of a ‘fake’ case³² that Mr. Travis created, Richard and his peers participated genuinely, attempting to imitate what Justices and lawyers would do in the situation. While their play-acting was amateurish at best, the simulation provided Richard and his peers an opportunity to try out Constitutional argumentation language, use precedent cases as evidence, and caught a glimpse of how *real* Justices make decisions in a SCOTUS CoP.

In the same vein as Richard’s interaction with his peers, the following episode shows Jhino working with a partner (Mahdi)³³ to prepare their oral arguments as lawyers representing Kuhlmeier et al. in *Hazelwood School District et al. v. Kuhlmeier et al.* The two students were focusing their attention on the 1st Amendment, because the case dealt with freedom of speech. In the following excerpts, Jhino and Mahdi engaged in a joint enterprise and mutual engagement around the practice of constitutional argumentation as part of their SCOTUS simulation:

Jhino: How are we interpreting the Amendment?

Mahdi: Well the Amendment says, {reads} “the Supreme Court interprets the extent”—wait hold on, where was I—{continues to read} “The 1st Amendment

³² The relevance of a real versus fake court case is further discussed in Chapter Six.

³³ Pseudonym used for this student, who was consented as part of the larger study.

has been interpreted by the courts as applying to the entire federal government.”

[Looks over to Jhino] So if they get federal funding, they're included.

Jhino: So the school is, this is a public school, right?—It's in the school district.

Mahdi: So that's one.

{moments later}

Mahdi: Oh, also the 14th Amendment comes in and says that states can't interfere with 1st Amendment.

Jhino: What's in the 14th Amendment?

Mahdi: Oh, [reads from a copy of the Constitution on his phone] it's, uh, 14th Amendment as the protection of the rights in the 1st Amendment.

Jhino: [Smiles] Isn't that what the 1st Amendment does?

Mahdi: [Smiles back at Jhino] No, it's like you have the 1st Amendment, and then if the states decide to go against that, and violates that, then the 14th...

Jhino: {finishes Mahdi's sentence} The states have to obey {Mahdi: Yeah} by the 1st Amendment rules. Ok, so let's read these cases and see how they benefit or hurt us. (Classroom observation, January 2014)

As Jhino and Mahdi set out to ‘become’ successful Respondent lawyers in their *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* moot court simulation, they imitated real lawyers by zeroing in on the key Constitutional amendments in question. It is obvious that their understanding of the Constitution and various amendments were in the process of being shaped. But this episode captures a moment when Jhino and Mahdi were able to reaffirm their understanding of the incorporating nature of the 14th Amendment. Understanding this point becomes a key for using the 14th Amendment as grounds for selective incorporation. While the students prepped for the oral

argument by unpacking the meaning of the 1st Amendment as it relates to the 14th Amendment, they realized the need to find precedent cases that can help their case:

{Students read *Cantwell v. Connecticut*}

Jhino: Oh! So, this is where they looked at local law, where it doesn't match up with the 1st Amendment and what's that called? That's probably judicial review right?

Mahdi: Yes

Jhino: Oooo! {reads} "The court held that the local law restricting solicitation based on religious grounds violated both the 1st and the 14th Amendments [stops to underline]. The court also held that an interest to maintain public order, could not be [underlines and emphasizes] **COULD NOT BE USED**, to justify the suppression of free communication of views." So like him {the principle in Hazelwood} trying to suppress their views is a violation, it's not—it can't be used to {reads again} "justify the suppression of the free communication of views."

Woo, that's good for us! (Classroom observation, January 2014)

In this scene, Jhino and his partner attempted to use legal language from precedent cases to frame their Constitutional arguments. Much like the episode with Richard, Jhino and Mahdi's engagement with the content indicated their situational interest in the constitutional issue of their case. Even though their understanding of the subtlety between *Cantwell* and their case was incomplete, they were satisfied to find that they found key arguments from a prior case that can help their argument. Much like the episode with Richard, Jhino and his partner were obviously teenagers playing a part, but their tasks in the simulation required them to imitate authentic political processes that real lawyers and justices have to negotiate. By approximating the

language and strategies of constitutional lawyers, students constructed a sense of the real CoP around SCOTUS through the simulations. As an important note, even though Hazelwood was a *real* SCOTUS case and Meeting Equal Opportunity was a fictitious case,³⁴ simulating the cases and preparing for them helped both Richard and Jhino see how SCOTUS works and functions.

Besides giving students a sense of joint enterprise and access to communal resources of a CoP around certain political processes, the simulations trigger and maintain students' interest in these processes. When asked about his feelings toward simulations, Carlos suggested simulations provided him ways to peer into real CoPs around political processes:

Simulations are pretty fun, it lets me see, like, what people are actually thinking, like, it basically, it opens a small window for you to see into what everything is actually like, in like, everything...if you're working, you know, at the capitol and you want to get this thing passed for {a state}, then you can actually see how it would actually get done, and then after, if it interests you, it actually like helps you pick what you want to do with your life. (Carlos, Mid-year interview)

Carlos' impressions of simulations and Konah's sense of pride in the quote above alluded to something about the affect (i.e. a desire to return to the domain) that students feel around simulations. For many of the students interviewed, these simulations feel like games that students want to win—or games they get heavily involved in. When students reported affect towards the simulations, it was often because the experience gave them a glimpse into what really happens in CoPs around political processes, as Jamal suggests:

³⁴ Implications of this difference are discussed in Chapter Six, under 'setting the political stage' in the discussion section.

It's cool, cuz you never, like, try something like this before, and it just gives you that, like oh I'm actually, like in politics this time—you actually get to see how politics work, basically. (Jamal, End of year interview)

These excerpts show how simulations give students peripheral opportunities to shadow (or try out) authentic political roles. In a way, simulations provided students chances to see what real CoPs around political processes can be like. These ‘job-shadowing’ opportunities tended to also be fun or enjoyable for students as they try their hand at using common political language, understanding the broader context and community of politics, and honing their political skills through mutual engagement.

“Everybody’s Playing a Role”

Students were assigned to specific roles in each of the simulations that teachers implemented in the classroom, which means every student had a role to play during all the political simulations. The student interviews and classroom observations surfaced role-play as a low-stakes avenue for students to engage in contentious debates. The roles provided an anonymity that allowed students the freedom to seek out information about controversial issues and engage with varying perspectives, without being labeled by their peers. The mental exercise of arguing in a different role also exposed students to perspectives that may challenge their own views. Even though reports of role-play being a buffer into discussions appeared less frequently than the previous finding on “job shadowing”, all of the students commented on how the roles gave them an opportunity to engage with ideas that they would not have otherwise sought out. Table 8 shows the number of quotations associated with roles as a buffer, per student.

Table 8. Number of quotes, per student, that mention roles as buffer into discussions.

Student ³⁵	Carlos	Konah	Geraldo	Ryan	Wilbur	Jamal	Maya	Richard	Leah	Jhino	Drew
# of Quotes	5	5	6	4	4	2	5	5	2	8	6

When asked how it feels to be put into roles, Maya discussed how roles helped her enter into the conversations and summarized her thoughts in this way:

It was kinda hard to, like, remember that people are playing a role. Cuz sometimes they say things where they're radical and I'm like, what are you talking about? But it was like you have to remember everybody is playing a role and that we're all just trying to get both sides of every issue and stuff like that. So it was really interesting to see what republicans think about this and democrats think about that, and um, I really liked it. (Maya, End of year interview)

Maya's sentiment shows how the roles can act as a buffer in the classroom discussions. When students engaged in discussing contentious topics, the roles gave them room to explore all different perspectives, even the "radical" ones, without students shutting down or making judgments about opinions that were different from their own—or at least not making judgments about the students presenting the ideas. The roles were able to not only triggered students' situational interest by catapulting them into a discussion, they also gave students more reasons to find out more about the issue by creating engaging conversations. Richard articulated this same phenomenon in a different way when he said:

It's interesting to not ever feel like you're offending anybody by disagreeing with their point of view, because it's not their point of view necessarily, it's somebody else's so like, you—you know, you can kind of debate with them on a more

³⁵ Focal student names are pseudonyms; other students are identified by role label only.

interesting level when you're not worried about calling them out on stuff like that.

(Jhino, End of year interview)

The role-buffer not only allowed students to debate issues at a more interesting level without emotionally upsetting students with different views, it also provided space for certain topics that may be too controversial to discuss in a class. This helped students engage with a key communal resource of informed adult citizenship: considering varying perspectives. Jhino expressed this sentiment when he responded to how he felt about role-play in the class:

It was easier because we all knew we were pretending. Um, even if you agreed or didn't agree with the roles, everyone knew that it wasn't necessarily what you agreed with. Um, and when it comes to hard topics, people tend to have really strong emotions tied to it. And so when you're playing your own [views], it can have pretty nasty effects, I would say, if we were to just play off of what we believed. But by stepping into roles, it allowed us to feel comfortable with just, just acting, like just trying to learn instead of trying to argue, um, cuz there are cases where we dealt with immigration and it didn't {personally} impact some people, and it did impact others. (Jhino, End of year interview)

While the topic of immigration did not personally impact everyone in Jhino's class, he thought the issue of immigration would have been too difficult to discuss in the class for students with immigrant backgrounds, like him. However, the roles offered a safe space where students could explore all sides of the immigration debate without inadvertently calling out certain students in the class. The safety of roles helped students engage in political simulations that may otherwise made them feel uncomfortable, which can help maintain their situational interest.

Besides engaging students in CoPs around political discussions by creating space for the discussion of controversial issues, roles can help students engage with a viewpoint without being embarrassed or self-conscious. When Leah was asked about pretending to be in the roles, she showed a willingness to engage with something she would have otherwise dismissed and said:

It's just like things that I don't believe in, and it's weird because I feel like people are judging me because that's like "my" belief, but it's really not, but everybody knows that you're in your role so it's like, it's not too bad. (Leah, End of year interview)

While Leah seemed to simply tolerate this out of body experience of arguing for something she did not believe in, the experience at least helped maintain some of her interest by keeping her engaged in the activity. At the same time, the experience could sometimes have more profound consequences. Geraldo articulated his out of body or inner struggle experience when he said:

Now being in this role, it's made me see the Republican side of the deal. And now I feel like I'm more in the center and more stable in what I believe in. And so the role has gotten to a point where it's kind of made me contradict myself and I realized one of my mistake was like, yeah why do Democrats do that, it sounds like a good deal, but why? (Geraldo, End of year interview)

Coming from a home with strong Democratic leanings, Geraldo played a Republican candidate in the Elections simulation. More than just exposing him to more information about the political landscape and the electoral process, his Republican role prompted him to question his own political views and to find out more about both sides of the political platform. This evaluation of ones' beliefs and being open to other perspectives is a key communal resource of informed adult citizens. The roles seemed to provide opportunities for students' opinions to be challenged,

which in this case, gave Geraldo a desire to return to the issue for more information. Not only did the roles help Geraldo engage with CoPs around political discussion, they have also helped trigger and maintain his interest in differing political ideologies.

Even when roles do not ignite internal identity crises, they can have a subtle effect on shy students, like Wilbur, by helping them see different perspectives held by informed adult citizens. When Wilbur was asked about the influence of role-play in the course on his thinking, he said:

You could be playing a role and people would—I believe, like {classmate}, I believed that at first, I was like, he's like this and he's like that—really conservative, but then as soon as he puts his own opinion out, you know, it just kinda changes your mind about the issue. (Wilbur, End of year interview)

Wilbur was describing a shift in perspective-taking that happens when the teacher asked students to drop their roles. These political autonomy moments (PAMs) gave students a chance to express what they really think, outside of their roles. Since the roles offered students a low-stakes opportunity to try on opinions and perspectives, the PAMs gave them an opportunity to revisit or air their own ideas. While the simulations gave students opportunities to see what real CoPs around political action can be like, PAMs helped students experience a CoP around discussing their own real opinions. For some students, like Geraldo, shifting between the role and his real opinion broadened his perspective on certain issues; however, for a less outspoken student like Wilbur, just observing one of his classmates express two radically different views (one in role and one out of role) broadened his understanding of politics. He expressed this by confessing:

Learning about what...Republicans want and things like that and knowing that there's an actually moderate side, you know, it just kinda made me change my mind [about Republicans]. (Wilbur, End of year interview)

This balancing act between perspectives (Roles v. PAMs) maintained students' interest in political issues by giving them multiple opportunities throughout the course to fully consider and reconsider their own views from different standpoints—sometimes in their own heads. In the sequence of episodes below, Drew's interactions with her peers illustrates this internal balancing act, as Drew participate in a modern debate at the beginning of the year on the Constitutionality of the Arizona Immigration Bill in three parts: (1) Drew in role; (2) Drew out of role; (3) Drew trying to make sense of a contradiction.

(1) Drew in role. In this first interaction, Drew participated in a discussion with her peers while pretending to be Thomas Jefferson, an Anti-Federalist, who was ardently against Federal regulations and therefore supports Arizona's right as a state to govern its own borders. The role triggered Drew's interest and helped her gain a sense of the CoP around the Constitutional debate. Drew presented her argument about the Constitutionality of Arizona's law in this way:

Drew [in monotone and barely makes eye contact]: So basically, me as an Anti-Federalist think that this law is constitutional because [purses lips and tilts head to the side] according to Amendment 14, it says you have to be a citizen to be protected by the Constitution {hints at the fact that illegal immigrants are not protected by the Constitution}. The federal immigration law takes priority. Um, the law gives strict guidelines to prevent racial profiling. Um, it's constitutional because it respects the citizen's privileges.

Drew {continues moments later}: And, look at the map over there [points to map on the wall], Arizona's like closer to the border, and it makes sense for there to be a law specific to a state that's closer to the border about immigration, people

coming up, rather than like it would—Arizona is right there and it—it's a bordering state so it makes more sense for them to have a law about it rather than Washington. (Classroom observation, September 2013)

As Thomas Jefferson, Drew articulated an Anti-Federalist perspective on the fear of big government and the importance of State's Rights. She clearly argued that the Arizona law was constitutional because Arizona had every right to uphold Federal immigration guidelines that were being overlooked by Federal Border Regulatory Agencies. Drew engaged with the Anti-Federalist perspective by presenting a case with well thought out arguments that were supported with evidence from the Constitution.

(2) Drew out of role. In this second interaction, Drew engaged in the same discussion in the same small group, but no longer as a Constitutional delegate; instead, she was in the PAM with her personal opinions. As the transcript begins, Drew's physical appearance perks up:

Drew: [makes a sweeping motion with arms and speaking quickly] Ok, I'm dropping my role, I think this law is total bullsh*t! I do not enjoy it! And I think that it shouldn't be constitutional because—it isn't constitutional because it violates all these human rights. Not just American citizen rights, but just like rights as a person, just like, dignity as a person, like, anyway—so that's how I feel about it if I drop my role, I do not agree that it is constitutional!

Student 1: So you agree with [hesitates and speaks slowly] federalists?

Drew: [sheepish smile] I don't want to call it that, I just wanna say that I agree...

Student 2: You agree with us, if I were in my role. I understand where you're coming from.

[Drew props her head on her fist with her elbow on the desk]. (Classroom observations, September 2013)

This second episode showed Drew's interests being maintained, even though it showed a very different Drew, one who argued passionately against the Arizona Immigration Bill. Her arguments continued to be on the grounds of constitutionality (i.e. Drew continued to draw on the same communal resources as the CoP that the simulation imitates), but this time, instead of focusing on State's Rights, Drew zeroed in on racial profiling and the violations of Human Rights. It is clear that Drew's own opinions about the Arizona Bill did not match up with her role's opinions. However, the mismatch also exposed an internal struggle, because Drew self-identified as being against 'the man' and the federal government 'machine'. Drew's political identity revolved around criticizing federal bureaucratic oversight and promoting state and local decision-making processes. From her self-proclaimed perspective, she should agree wholeheartedly with Thomas Jefferson. However, the Arizona Bill had her contradicting her own views. This uneasiness maintained her interest by causing her to dig deeper into the debate.

(3) Drew trying to make sense of a contradiction. In this final episode we see Drew's internal struggle surface, when her peers and the teacher, Mr. Biton, comment with disbelief about Drew's alignment with the Federal Government. The transcript picks up as Mr. Biton comes to check on the group discussion:

Mr. Biton [Walks up to the group]: Agree or disagree?

Drew: Disagree...

Mr. Briton [Sits down with the group]: You disagree with the law for the most part? [The whole group nods. Meanwhile, Mr. Biton turns to Drew and

sarcastically states her usual stance on these topics] Drew's like I don't know about big brother coming in taking my state's rights away...

Drew: [Smiles sheepishly from the teasing] I mean, I don't think this law is good.

Mr. Biton: Even—OH MY GOSH! [Laughs with disbelief] she's against state's rights here?!

Group Member [joins in the disbelief]: Yeah!? Right?

Mr. Biton [with disbelief at Drew]: You're for big brother!?

Drew: [Smiles sheepishly and attempts to answer] I mean—[taps her pen on the desk nervously and pauses] it's not so much—[hand gesture] big brother...

Group Member: She doesn't want to call it that.

Drew: But I mean—[hesitates and eventually says softly] I just feel like it violates a bunch of human rights that shouldn't be violated.

{moments later}

Mr. Biton: But what about the principle of like should states be able to handle problems when the federal government doesn't do a good job of handling it? [silence] so like if, like, the federal government is responsible for handling immigration, right, and if you live in Arizona and you have millions of people coming in and they're not doing anything about it.

Drew [with resignation]: Yeah

Mr. Biton: What are you suppose [sic] to do?

Drew: [hesitates] You're suppose to take it into your own hands I guess, but...

Mr. Biton: This may not be the best way to do it...

Drew [says quietly]: No...

[Conversation fades as Mr. Biton stands to address the whole class] (Classroom observation, September 2013)

Through the interaction, Drew's peers and Mr. Biton were shocked to find Drew siding with her sworn enemy: 'big government'. As Mr. Biton teased Drew about this new development, Drew attempted to engage with the conversation but eventually falls silent. What is not evident in the transcript, but can be seen in the video, was Drew's facial expression and body language, an obvious contortion of discomfort as she contemplated this contradiction: she clearly, and morally, disagreed with the Arizona Immigration Bill, but she also held valid critiques about the Federal Government exercising supreme oversight. This brought up a conundrum for Drew: if she believed that State and Local Governments had the right to make their own decisions, then shouldn't Arizona be allowed to decide on its own immigration enforcement laws? Since this episode was from the beginning of the year, Drew did not resolve this contradiction by the end of class. At the same time, this conundrum maintained Drew's interest by giving her reasons to revisit the debate to find out more information so as to refine her own opinions and understandings. Similarly, the experience did not discourage her, and she continued to practice perspective taking by considering the multiple perspectives that her roles afforded her throughout the year. By the end of the year, Drew had this insight to give about roles:

When I drop my roles and I'm just good ol' Drew, I still have the way I think about stuff, but then like, when someone disagrees with me or like when someone with opposite views as me disagrees with me, I understand what they're seeing when they disagree with me rather than just, like, oh you disagree with me, blah—it's like oh, I understand that you think *this* and I think *that* so—there's that.
(Drew, End of the year interview)

And Drew said this about her experiences with perspective taking:

Now I think about both sides of the argument more now I think, since we're in those roles. I think about like, oh this is what I think, but like I wonder why some people think this, when I try to think or try to understand where other people are coming from—which is like—in a political way that's pretty cool, but just like in a way to understand people {and} where they're coming from and why they think certain things. (Drew, End of the year interview)

Even though Drew may never find ways to resolve the contradictions in her views, the roles gave her opportunities to maintain her interest on political issues by surfacing new contradictions or provide novel ways for her to examine her own opinions.

The excerpts above show how roles help students access various sides of contentious issues by acting as a buffer for emotional strife, an entry point into an issue, and a way to reconsider their own personal perspectives. These were ways the roles and simulations helped students maintain their triggered interest by providing them with conundrums and discomforts that cause them to return to the domain of interest. At the same time, roles helped students engage with the CoPs that the simulations attempt to imitate by giving them relevant roles (e.g. lawyers, media outlets, and political advisors) to play within the CoP. While emotions around controversial topics are important and deserve their own spaces for validation, the roles help students ease into a topic, so that they might fully develop an opinion before participating in a PAM to voice their own ideas. Additionally, these quotes illustrate students' feelings around roles. The excerpts above show how even the students who did not participate flamboyantly in their roles had affective feelings toward playing a part. Overall, students describe role-playing as “fun” or “interesting”, which could help support developing interest in politics.

“If You Don’t Know What It Means, Then You Can’t Effectively Vote On It”

Besides the two primary claims, student interviews also revealed a secondary theme: knowledge seemed to influence students’ confidence and situational interest in political engagement. Many of the students reported a lack of knowledge at the beginning of the year as the reason why they were not as interested in political issues or participating in politics. As one example, when asked why his interest in politics has increased through the course, Jhino replied:

Originally, I didn't have that much background knowledge with politics, um, and what I've been—like it came from my parents and such is that, oh politics is dumb, oh we don't wanna get invested in that. But actually, I think it's changed, ever since the start of the school year, um, just taking this class, cuz I think government has changed from, “oh it's a bunch of, uh, really old white guys, just deciding our lives”, to “oh these are actual people who maybe I actually could invest in and see actual changes”. And I think I had {said I’m not interested} because of strong parental influence and lack of real knowledge about it. (Jhino, End of year interview)

Jhino’s response to a change in his political interest shows how a lack of knowledge deterred him from engaging with political issue before the class. However, it seems that the class helped him become more informed about politics, which not only helped him mutually engage with his peers with communal resources but also piqued his interest. In a similar way, Leah, who reported not being interested in politics at the beginning of the year in the survey and interview, felt that the class helped her get more into politics:

Before, I thought, like, politics was really boring and like, it was, like, for old men. But I don't know, now, I think it's like a little more interesting. Like it's not like

the most interesting thing, but I feel like, I don't know, I notice more things about them, and I notice them more and I think they're more interesting. (Leah, End of the year interview)

Even though Leah still did not think politics was super interesting during the end of the year interview, obtaining more information about political processes at least helped her see that some aspects of politics are interesting and that politics is not just for “old men”.

Besides influencing students' interest in politics, students seem to abide by the same rationale as political scientists (e.g. Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996) by seeing knowledge as a precursor to effective political engagement in their interviews. When Richard was asked why he thought it was important for people to know things about politics, he answered:

If you don't know what you're voting for, then it's just random chance that you're gonna make a decision that you might actually benefit from. Like, if you don't understand how taxes work, then, when, you know, you're working a minimum wage job and just trying to keep your car payments up and they throw up a, you know, 90% increasing car tax or something like that and if you don't know what that means then you can't effectively vote on it. (Richard, Mid-year interview)

Richard seems to suggest that knowledge plays an important role in helping someone carry out effective political action. In a similar manner, Ryan discussed how learning about politics and how the government works in the course had shaped his own views about the value of political engagement:

Since I've been in government, AP Gov, I've really seen that uh, our government really does control basically everything that's done in this country and too many people take a back seat and complain when they're not actively looking at what's

going on around them. And that's not who I wanna be, I wanna be someone that's actually going to events that are going on, I wanna be somebody that's actively reading the newspaper, looking up information on the websites. (Ryan, End of the year interview)

More than just linking knowledge to effective participation in political processes, Ryan expressed how new information influenced his interest in being politically active.

This finding about how students view political knowledge can be further divided into two types of knowledge: information about political issues and current events; and information about the structures and functions of how government works. Nine out of the 11 students felt that information about political issues and current events helped them stay up to date and engaged in politics. These communal resources seemed to help them mutually engage with one another more effectively in the simulations. When asked about how things he has learned about political issues have influenced his thinking, Ryan responded by saying:

The more I've learned about the way the government's ran and everything over the year, just small little things Ms. Carmichael has taught us, I really do see how—I'm not proud of the way the government runs and the only way it's gonna change is if the people say they want to change they actually do something. And because, I just don't like the way it's run, I feel it's really corrupt right now. I mean, the politicians are just looking out for themselves at this point...it feels like at least, I don't know what goes through their head, but it feels like they care about themselves and not the people. So, I feel like the people really need to voice their opinion and get them out of office and get new people in office, and slowly start

to change it back to what democracy was suppose to be. (Ryan, Mid-year interview)

Even though Ryan’s sentiments reflect a hint of youthful naivety and romanticism of the past, what he has learned about government through the course sparked his motivation to create change in a system that he now sees as being flawed. By giving Ryan the opportunity to peer into the CoP around politics, the simulations gave him more information about how politics works. While Ryan reflected on how knowing about political events influenced his actions, Richard talked about how gaining knowledge about the structures of government shaped his thinking:

We talked about, you know, bureaucracy can outlast a president by just kind of sitting and not doing very much until they get someone that they like better. And it's like the more and more things we learn like that and the shockingly little that government can actually do because there's so many different cogs grinding against each other, like, I think even more and more now I believe that you HAVE to vote, because otherwise, we get stuck in an endless loop of despair and nothing will ever happen again, like [takes a deep breath] that might be overstating it [laughs] but you know, that's kind of the way that I feel about it, it’s like, if no body—if we become apathetic, then nothing will ever happen. (Richard, End of year interview)

For a student like Richard, who was already interested in political issues at the beginning of the year (per beginning of the year interview), finding out more about how the government actually works strengthened his convictions about acting for change.

While not all students were as motivated and proactive as Richard or Ryan in seeking out new information about government and politics, for eight out of the 11 students interviewed, the

knowledge that they gained through simulations helped sustain their political interests by giving them knowledge about political processes, opportunities to mutually engage with one another to refine their own opinions about politics, and a sense of joint enterprise around political agendas. Even the three students who were not as interested in politics, like Leah, expressed how ‘knowing more’ helped them get more interested in politics.

This chapter presented the three major qualitative findings of this dissertation study. Specifically, simulations seem to function like real CoPs around political processes that provide students opportunities to obtain communal resources, practice mutual engagement around political action, and foster a sense of joint enterprise around politics. Furthermore, role-play seems to support students’ experiences in the simulations by allowing them to safely engage in the simulations and refine their own political perspectives. At the same time, knowledge seems to play an important role in supporting students’ interest and affect towards political action. As simulations help students see what CoPs around real political action can be like, role-play and obtaining new political information maintains their interest by giving them reasons to re-engage in the simulations so as to refine their own political opinions and understandings. The following chapter will discuss these findings, along with the quantitative findings, and conclude the dissertation with limitations of the study and future directions for research.

CHAPTER 6: Discussion And Conclusion

This final chapter of the dissertation will discuss findings from Chapters Four and Chapter Five, summarize their implications for democratic education research, present limitations of this dissertation study, and suggest future directions for research on youth political engagement. This chapter is divided into two major sections: discussion and conclusion. The discussion section includes five subsections. The first subsection presents explanations for why political knowledge matters, as a component of interest development and through authentic intellectual work. The second subsection explores the creation of a community of practice around politics in a simulation. The third subsection discusses simulations as the setting for a political stage, while the fourth section describes role-play as portals to plurality. The last subsection pulls all the findings together to clarify how political interest might be developed through a community of practice. The second major section of this chapter is divided into two parts. The first part presents the limitations of the current study, while the second part provides future research directions.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest some implications for Social Studies research, especially as it pertains to democratic education. Much like existing claims in the Political Science literature, findings in this study show that political knowledge seems to contribute to individual's political behavior. At the same time, effective political role-play and simulations seem function like CoPs that promote the development of interest around political engagement.

The quantitative findings of this study, as presented in Chapter Four, show that both simulation frequency and situational interest *directly* predict students' commitment to vote in the future. While each predictor did not *uniquely* predict the outcome, their shared variance suggests

a relationship that deserves future research. At the same time, the quantitative study show simulation frequency is positively related to students' commitment to vote in the future. This finding confirms a relationship that has been presented in previous studies on simulation frequency and students' commitment to vote in the future (e.g. Kahne & Middaugh, 2008b). At the same time, findings of this study show that there may be an important relationship between students' commitment to vote and situational interest.³⁶ As shown by Interest Development Theory, the development of interest can encourage students to seek out and re-engage with the domain in meaningful ways (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). This means that if students' experiences in the classroom can help support the development of their interest in political action, these experiences might lead to the acquisition of more political knowledge and potential political action. Before discussing how these experiences might support the development of political interest, an important note about political knowledge needs to be addressed.

Why knowledge matters. The title of Delli Carpini and Keeter's (1996) book boldly proclaimed a line of inquiry for political scientists and democratic education researchers: *What Americans Know About Politics and Why it Matters*. The authors of the study assert that political knowledge is important in a democratic society because "democracy functions best when its citizens are politically informed" (p. 1). Furthermore, it is important for political knowledge to be equitably distributed amongst a broad array of citizens, since the vibrancy of a liberal democracy depends on the actions and voices of its pluralistic citizenry. From this 1996 study, democratic education researchers claimed that formal education was the best predictor of political knowledge and that knowledge is "an instrumental good that helps to enlighten one's

³⁶ As a reminder: situational interest refers to students' situational interest in the specific U.S. Government and Politics course studied in this dissertation study, rather than just general interest in *any* class.

self-interest and to translate it into effective political action” (p. 218). In short, political knowledge provides citizens in a democracy a way to view, understand, and enact politics.

Knowledge as a component of interest development. At the same time, the conceptual framework of the present study suggests that political knowledge is more than just a way to enlighten and enact one’s self-interests. Knowledge, as a component of interest development, may also help citizens develop personal interest in political matters and political actions. The quantitative results show that developing interest in a U.S. Government and Politics class can predict students’ commitment to vote in the future. At the same time, students tended to report being more likely to engage politically if they had adequate political knowledge on the issue or topic. It seems that “what one knows” may be a factor (or threshold) for determining and predicting both whether one will partake in political action and the types of action one might engage in. The literature on interest development suggests that a recursive process exists between the more informed a citizen is about politics and the more likely she will want to engage politically, as long as the process of obtaining political knowledge is associated with affect. From the perspective of Interest Development Theory, political knowledge can be a powerful resource in supporting students’ interest in politics, and in fostering their commitment to vote in the future. Perhaps a future book on Youth Political Engagement may be aptly named: *What do Students Know About Politics and How it Builds Political Interest*.

While determining the explanatory flow between political knowledge, affect, interest, and political engagement is outside the scope of this dissertation, findings show that knowledge continues to be an important factor in understanding youth political engagement. Democratic education curricula should continue to pursue the increase of students’ political knowledge, but

perhaps in novel ways: such as through Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) (Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001) supported by simulations and role-play.

Authentic Intellectual Work. Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) is characterized by “the application of knowledge (facts, concepts, theories, and insights) to questions and issues within a particular domain” (Scheurman & Newman, 1998, p. 1). Instead of just needing to *know* important information for the domain, AIW asks students to actively interact with the information in order to apply it to new situations in appropriate ways. If simulations and role-play are forms of AIW in the domain of government and politics, students become the active creators and manipulators of information and knowledge instead of passive receivers of important facts. Through simulations, students would learn to construct meaningful knowledge within constraints of political simulations—which provide the rules and norms of real political engagement. Through AIW, important information becomes meaningful information. Instead of needing to memorize facts and information about political issues, AIW may allow students to engage with political knowledge in authentic ways—the ways that are outlined by Delli Carpini and Keeter about the behavior of informed citizenry. It is unclear whether simulations and role-play ought to be considered a form of AIW; however, the findings of this study show that simulation and role-play have the potential to provide learning environments where AIW can be supported. The remaining portions of this discussion section will address how simulations and role-play may help support these learning environments for political knowledge acquisition and political interest development.

A community of practice around politics. Findings from the qualitative portion of this study, as presented in Chapter Five, suggest students feel an authenticity about simulations that can seem counterintuitive: even though it’s fake, it feels real. It is as if students are getting a

glimpse into a *real* Community of Practice (CoP) around political actions and politics. A CoP is a set of relations between people, activities, and the world that involve three components around a specific practice: joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and communal resources. Findings show that simulations help students engage in all three aspects of a CoP where well-informed adults engage politically. In turn, engaging in this CoP may help support the development of students' interests in politics. The following subsections will describe how students engage in each aspect of a CoP around politics.

Joint enterprise. Joint enterprise denotes moments when members of a CoP share a collective understanding of the community. In this study, students seemed to develop a sense of joint enterprise around political processes and actions through the simulations. It seems that they adopt a collective understanding of both how to engage with the U.S. political system that is created by the simulation and how adult citizens behave in politics. For example, in the Supreme Court (SCOTUS) simulation, students are placed into roles as lawyers and Justices that argue in or hear a SCOTUS case. For students to successfully participate in the simulation, they are required to understand the norms of SCOTUS (e.g. how Justices make decisions, how lawyers draw upon precedent cases and the Constitution for their arguments, the controversies around the cases that are discussed, and how cases are heard or won). The excerpts in Chapter Five show that students take these roles very seriously and aim to gain an understanding of how SCOTUS functions. Another example is in the Elections simulation, where students had to come to a collective understanding about the role of the media, political parties, and interest groups. Everyone in the simulation needed to have not only a good grasp of the electoral process, but the same understanding of how the process works in order to fully participate in the simulation. Through the Elections simulation, Jhino realizes how much politicians work to appease all the

different stakeholders in an electoral process. By providing the norms and rules of how political processes work, these political simulations give students a better sense of the collective understanding of not just the simulated community of learners but of the actual community of practice around political processes and political engagement. It is evident through classroom observations that students develop not only a mutual understanding about the norms of the class in these political simulations, but they also develop a collective understanding of the communities that they are simulating.

Mutual engagement. At the same time, students learn to negotiate the norms and rules set by the political simulation through mutual engagement. To recap, mutual engagement signifies when norms are developed through interactions with one another in a CoP (Wenger, 2000b). The findings of this study suggest political simulations feel real to the students because they are constantly interacting with one another *in their roles*. It is not uncommon for students to interact with one another in class, especially through group work. From these interactions, they can develop norms through which they mutually engage. However, the political simulations push this process further, requiring students like Richard to interact not only with his peers, but to interact with them in the *role* of a Supreme Court Justice, who treats his peers like they are *real* lawyers arguing in court. Richard is able to lean on artifacts like real proceedings from SCOTUS argument transcripts, decisions, and dissents to help guide his interactions, but as he plays out his role with his peers (who are in other roles), they renegotiate the norms of their simulated courtroom. Furthermore, the addition of experts in the room ups the ante of the simulation. For example, Konah is no longer just interacting with her peers to renegotiate the norms of their simulated courtroom when she interacts with an actual State Supreme Court Justice. Instead, this interaction becomes a *real* negotiation of norms when the Justice treats Konah like a real lawyer.

The mutual engagement that occurs in these simulations can elucidate not just norms of the class (or a community of learners), but norms of a real courtroom, giving student an opportunity to understand and experience what a community of political actors might be like.

Communal Resources. However, the political simulations can lose their authenticity and connection to a community of political actors if students do not utilize communal resources provided by the simulation, such as proper use of legal language, utilizing the Constitution as a main source, and abiding by the strict campaign finance rules when conducting a campaign. As a reminder, communal resources refer to language, tools, and routines that are used by members of a CoP (Wenger, 2000b). The routines of meeting in groups to plan campaign strategies, discussing controversial issues, analyzing the Constitution for specific insights, or working in congressional committees to successfully pass a bill through Congress are all examples of communal resources that students learn to navigate in the political simulations. When students begin a court hearing by stating, “may it please the court”, it is not because the students wish to be courteous, but rather, they are channeling a routine held by SCOTUS since its inception. Or when a student, who plays a presidential candidate, begins a well-tailored speech with “my fellow Americans”, it is to echo the tone and gravity of presidents (and presidential candidates) of the past. The student interviews reveal students tend to engage well with the language and tools of political simulations, so long as these communal resources had specific purposes in the classroom activities and simulations. Findings also suggest when communal resources are joined by a sense of joint enterprise and mutual engagement, students report authenticity in the simulations. It seems political simulation have the potential to help create these authentic learning environments, especially when they connect students with the real-life practices of a community of adult citizens who participate in politics. Furthermore, the simulations seem to set

the context and boundaries within which students can play out their assigned roles in these communities.

Setting the political stage (Simulations). Much like Baudrillard's (1981/1995) claim that the line between make-believe and reality can be blurred, students recognize the simulatedness of their classroom activities, but sense real emotional and intellectual (sometimes even physical) connections to the political simulations in class. This realness is so acute that students report feeling like they are being prepared (like apprentices) for real political participation in the future. Students' engagement in political simulations offer chances for participatory appropriation (Rogoff, 1995), where their experiences shape their understanding about the topic and situation. Even though the political simulations are obviously constructed and manipulated by the teacher, students still feel authentic tensions in political debates, anxiety in political scandals, conflict in ripe social-justice issues, and struggle in taking a political stance within the constraints of the U.S. political machine. One example of this authenticity is the difference between the court cases that Mr. Travis and Mr. Biton chose to simulate in class.

Mr. Travis fabricates a case (on affirmative action) based on existing tensions around reverse discrimination and the use of quota systems in public universities. Mr. Travis chooses to create a fictitious case, because he can include information that is more pertinent to his students (e.g. Using the schools' demographics data and targeting an existing program in the school that supports minority student populations). He believes these familiar references will help students find more relevance in the case. On the other hand, Mr. Biton decides to simulate a real SCOTUS case to help his students gain authentic historical perspective on controversial issues faced by the Courts. While the teachers have very different (and valid) rationales for choosing which court cases to simulate, their students' experiences and reports suggest both political

simulations had very similar effects. Both allow students to engage with what lawyers and Justices actually do in a SCOTUS courtroom; both cases require students to understand precedent court cases and constitutional rationale for their arguments; and both provide students opportunities to authentically engage in extremely controversial political conversations.

The SCOTUS simulation example shows the communal resources and norms that are prescribed by the political simulations give students a palpable sense of what it might be like to be an active participant in the democratic process. Because the parameters of the simulations are set by actual rules and norms of real political action and behavior, students associate an authenticity with the classroom activity that mirrors real political engagement. This means that a well-crafted political simulation has the potential to foster joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and communal resources around political engagement. To put it differently, borrowing Goffman's (1959) metaphor of life as dramaturgy, the political simulations provide not only the stage and settings upon which the student acts, but also a hand-picked audience (of other student-actors) to view and react to the play. These CoPs have the potential to support the development of students' interests in politics and political processes, so long as students continue to find enjoyment in engaging with political processes. Findings suggest role-play may provide students with enjoyment and engagement in the simulations.

Roles as portals to plurality (Role-Play). A main finding in Chapter Five suggests roles provide a low-stakes entry point for students to engage in contentious debates. Students typically find it difficult to engage with controversial issues, partly because they do not want to be judged for their own opinions on a topic, but also because many students do not yet have opinions about political topics. Either way, these reasons become a barrier to contentious debates because many students simply do not know what to say to one another when faced with a controversial issue.

Similarly, Hess's (2009) book on *Controversies in the Classroom* points out many teachers avoid teaching controversial issues in the classroom because they either want to protect students from the discomfort and awkwardness that may arise if the topic is mentioned, or they wish to protect themselves from potential parental retaliation. At the same time, Hess suggests that despite the discomfort and potential backlash from parents and school administrators, discussing controversial issues in the classroom is essential to the health of a democracy:

Democratic education without controversial issues discussions would be like a forest without trees, or an ocean without fish, or a symphony without sound. Why? Because controversies about the nature of the public good and how to achieve it, along with how to mediate among competing democratic values, are intrinsic parts of democracy. If there is no controversy, there is no democracy. It is as simple as that. If we want democratic education to be both democratic and educational, then we have to teach young people about controversial political issues. (Hess, 2009, p. 162)

Fortunately, these findings suggest that roles can help students engage with contentious debates and skirt some of the discomfort that they may feel about the topic. This may be especially helpful for low-income urban schools that tend to lack resources to provide best practices of democratic education in class.³⁷ It is important to recall that all students in the study are assigned a role in each of the political simulations conducted in class. These roles become life rafts in the political simulations when students are not quite sure what to say, since they can always default to considering what their assigned character would say in each situation. By lowering the threshold for entry into discussions about controversial topics, the roles can both

³⁷ See discussion of Civic Opportunity Gap in Chapter Two

trigger students' situational interest in politics and make contentious debates easier to manage for teachers. Students find the roles enjoyable and fun—seeing them as a way to keep class interesting. Therefore, students tend to get into the roles and let their excitement about the roles flow into the simulations and class. Over time, the roles become a vehicle through which students' triggered interest can be maintained. Because students have a role to play throughout the simulation, they were more engaged in simulations. For the sake of the “play” and the political simulations (not to mention the sense of community that has been built in the classroom), students tend to maintain their assigned personas throughout the simulations. In this way, roles become more than just the fun “hooks” that trigger students' interest; they also have the potential to keep students interested in the political simulations over time. As students continue to engage in political simulations through their roles, they have the opportunity to experience participatory appropriation: to understand political processes better as they experience them firsthand. Even though the processes are simulated, students report that the simulations show them how they can engage with and utilize political processes in the future.

While creating and assigning roles may take extra planning time on the part of the teacher, they do not necessarily require extra resources and can help student engage with democratic practices in meaningful ways. In a sense, the role acts as a *portal to plurality*—a gateway into the contentious debates of a pluralistic liberal democracy, where students can learn to engage in controversial topics at low stakes. The stakes are especially low because everyone is assigned a role, and students feel like they can try on an opinion behind the safety of their roles without needing to “out” their own opinions about a topic. At the same time, students who already have strong opinions find that they can try on an opposing opinion just for fun—to see what it is like to be on the other side. Through this portal, students can shed their own

preconceived notions about political processes and mutually engage in the norms and communal resources established by the bounds of the political simulation. Essentially, the roles give students a way to enter into the conversation—as if they are given access to a script on how to behave in a given situation. Together, the simulations provide the setting and context (or norms and rules) of the play-acting, while the roles function like characters that students can lean on when they are unsure of what to say, what stance to take, or how to express an opinion. Because the roles that students take on in this study are modeled from real individuals (e.g. Supreme Court Justices, presidential candidates, and members of Congress), they are able to channel these individuals, through the Internet and other media sources, as they act out their roles.

Like method actors, students can become engrossed with their characters' positions and ideas so that when a contentious debate presents itself in the classroom, they know how their character might behave and what they might say. This is especially helpful for students who do not already have an opinion on the issue, since the role gives them a way to enter the conversation. This play-acting allows students to experience the controversial issue, the differing opinions on the issue, and implications of the debate. At the same time, because the teachers in the study ask students to drop their roles after these debates, students have an additional opportunity to reflect on the issues and to assess their *real* opinions on the topic. This political autonomy moment (PAM) of dropping their roles is extremely important to the success of roles to act not only as *portals* to plurality, but for students to fully immerse in the complexities of a pluralistic democratic society. Without the PAM, roles only provide portals into an imaginary plurality, where students can easily disregard the issue and not think deeply about the topic at hand. But because students need to assess their own *actual* opinions on a topic through the PAM, they have the opportunity to reconcile their own beliefs with the realities of pluralistic thinking

that their roles present. This reflective and metacognitive process completes the role's purpose as a portal into the nuanced conflicts of a pluralistic society—offering students a way to engage with controversial issues not just in roles, but also as themselves.

The roles give students a unique opportunity to think differently—not necessarily to traverse in someone else's shoes, but at least for students to be in shoes that they would not typically choose to wear.³⁸ Each journey that students take in their roles becomes a chance for students to broaden their perspective. Even in classrooms where the student population is not particularly diverse, teachers can use authentic roles to introduce legitimate opinions that are different from the 'norms' of the class and the community. This widening of horizons is an essential aspect of pluralistic democratic society, where differences of opinions abound. As Arendt (1998) points out, "Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live" (p. 8). This sameness in our differences drives us and conditions us, in such a way that our actions are what make us human. At the same time, "though the common world is the common meeting ground of all, those who are present have different locations in it, and the location of one can no more coincide with the location of another than the location of two objects" (Arendt, 1998, p. 57). These varying positionalities in the world complicate and enrich our human experiences, and it is by being exposed to these different positions that students can better understand the responsibilities of a citizen in a pluralistic democratic society. Or as Parker (2002) asserts, "A plurality of social perspectives is a social good and a deliberative asset, not a

³⁸ Gadamerian scholars may argue that one can never walk in another's shoes, since it is impossible to tap into another person's experiences. Rather, role-playing experiences would serve as distinct experiences of their own, where students' perspectives can potentially be broadened through 'being pulled up short' (Kerdeman, 2003) by unexpected encounters with their role or in their roles that cause them to reassess their understandings.

problem to be overcome” (p. 95). The difference of opinions within a community can allow for a genuine deliberative decision making process, which is at the heart of democratic society.

Therefore, role-play can become an important instructional strategy for teachers who wish to not only include more discussions of controversial issues in their classrooms, but also to help students practice what it means to participate in a democracy.

As students step through the portal to plurality, their interests in politics and political processes are not only maintained, they also learn to mutually engage in a joint enterprise around discussing contentious topics with differing opinions at the table. This is a process practiced by members of Congress, Supreme Court Justices, presidential candidates, and well-informed adult citizens everywhere. By deliberating controversial issues with people who hold different perspectives, students are prompted to engage in a community of practice around the political process of making decisions (Hess, 2009). As students practice deliberation with one another, they have the potential to develop the political virtues of civility and tolerance, of reasonableness and the sense of fairness. These virtues are important not only to a community of learners in a Government and Politics course, but also to a democratic community, where citizens hold the political power to determine the future of society.

Towards developing political interest through political simulations. The literature around communities of practice, as outlined in Chapter Two, suggests active participation and engagement in a community of practice (CoP) can help individuals develop a sense of belonging towards that community or the practice. Furthermore, Pressick-Kilborn and Walker's (2002) work asserts that interest development can be supported through the social interaction of students within a learning community. This means that engaging in a CoP has the potential to support the development of interest in the specific domain of the practice. Findings of this dissertation study

show that simulations do a decent job of creating learning environments that function like CoPs around political actions and political issues. Essentially, political simulations give students a taste of how a community of adult citizens behave and engage in political action. Furthermore, the assigned roles and PAMs that are built into the political simulations give students an opportunity to practice participatory appropriation, where their experiences in the simulation influence their own ideas and thoughts around political issues and processes. By giving students the opportunity to ease into perspective taking and opinion formation, the roles and the simulations not only serve as fun ways to trigger students' interest in politics, but they can also help students engage and re-engage with issues of governance around how people should live together in a pluralistic society.

Additionally, students report positive feelings towards participating in the simulations. This means students are not only learning more about political issues and processes through the simulations, they are also enjoying the experience. Based on the phases of interest development, the combination of knowledge and affect in a domain has the potential to support the development of interest in that domain. This means that the political simulations may help support the development of students' interest in politics and political issues. The findings around simulations show that political simulations with assigned roles and PAMs are promising tools for teachers to use in the classroom if they wish to support the development of students' interest in politics.

Conclusion

This concluding section begins by addressing the introductory section of this dissertation. If the goal of democratic education is to help students become more well-informed and engaging citizens in an era when young people are becoming more and more disenchanted with politics, it

is important for scholars and researchers to discover ways to help young people better understand and engage with the political processes that they are sidestepping (e.g. voting and joining interest groups). While simulations and role-play may seem like common occurrences in Social Studies classrooms with uneven or minimal impact on student learning, findings of this dissertation shows the potential of well-crafted political simulations in helping students become more engaging citizens.

Simulations and role-play may help students understand how to engage with political processes and develop a personal interest in political issues and political action. Specifically, in this dissertation, I hope to contribute to the research on best practices of democratic education by incorporating Interest Development Theory into how Social Studies researchers think about the impact of classroom practices on students' political and civic behavior over time. By studying how classroom practices can influence students' interest in politics, researchers may be able to better understand why and how some classroom practices actually influence students' political behavior in the future. At the same time, this dissertation presents simulations and role-play as viable ways of functioning like CoPs that can help support students' developing interest in political action and political processes. Instead of focusing on how young people engage civically *outside* the existing political system (per Flanagan, 2013; Levinson, 2010; Zukin et al., 2006), I purposefully considered how simulations can help students better engage *within* the political system in this dissertation.

Limitations. Even though the findings of this study show the potential of political simulations and role-play in helping students develop interest in politics and political engagement, these findings should be tempered with a few limitations in mind. First, this study only used a single item to measure political engagement. While this one item (students'

commitment to vote in the future) has been well used in the literature, it is often used in conjunction with other survey items. Multiple items on political engagement are needed in order to more fully measure political engagement as a construct. Second, there were two crossloading items in the EFA. While factor assignment was determined by magnitude, the crossloadings are large enough to deserve future attention. It seems that the two items are not specific enough to tease out interest, agency, and flow independently. In the future, more items will be developed in order to better tease out each factor. Lastly, it is commonly recommended for factors to include at least three items, the factor of focus (situational interest) only included two items. At the onset of the study, it was thought that an item on political interest would be included in the analysis as a part of the measuring situational interest. Even though this additional political interest item loaded onto the situational interest factor at 0.66, it was thought that the general political interest item could represent intrinsic interest and may not sufficiently measure situational interest. In order to ensure that the factor of situational interest was actually measuring students' situational interest, rather than their general proclivity for politics, the third political interest item was dropped from analysis. For these limitations, I was unable to modify the survey to include items that better measured each factor, because the study was conducted using extent data collected from a larger study. Recognizing this setback, multiple items will be developed and used to help measure situational interest for future studies.

Similarly, the study's design is exploratory and correlational in nature and is unable to establish any causal links (or pathways) between simulations and role-play and interest development, nor simulations and students' commitment to vote in the future. Furthermore, constraints of extant data result in a limited sample size and dataset, which includes potential selection bias within the sample. Specifically, the sample represents a population of students who

are part of the PBL-AP curriculum, which limits the generalization of the findings of the study to the types of simulations and role-play conducted in this particular course. Additionally, the research design does not fully examine the slope of situational interest as a function of aggregate simulation exposure or vice versa. This means that the study cannot comment on the moderating nature of simulation frequency on situational interest, nor how situational interest might moderate the relationship between simulation and commitment to vote in the future.

Finally, since all eleven students who were part of the qualitative portion of the study reported experiencing simulations *very often* in the classroom, it is possible that the sample provided biased perspectives on simulations and role-play. Given the uneven nature of the simulation frequency experienced by students (as reported on the end of the year survey), it is possible that simulations and role-play were less effective for students who did not feel like they were part of the simulations. Because the qualitative study sample happened to yield eleven students who felt simulations were a large component of the course, their experiences of simulations and role-play may not be representative of everyone else in class, let alone the experiences of students who might engage in other types of simulations and role-play.

Future Direction. A future study that uses better survey measures (i.e. pre-post political interest, along with interest development items throughout the course) is needed in order to better understand the influence that simulations and role-play may have on the development of students' interest in politics. The study will also need to include a broader population of students, if it hopes to comment on political simulations in Social Studies classrooms generally.

While the sample of students interviewed for this study were selected based solely on their survey responses about political interest, the sample is extremely diverse in terms of their ethnic background and immigration status. Based on Callahan and Muller's (2013) findings,

students' (and their family's) immigration status could potentially influence how they perceive and are influenced by democratic education. Because democratic education tends to have a larger impact on immigrant youth, students' immigration status may impact how they respond to political simulations in the classroom, especially when the issue of immigration comes up quite often in the simulations. Further inquiry into how topics such as immigration in political simulations impact students from immigrant homes is required. Political simulations and role-play may help create a different type of portal for students from immigrant homes.

Lastly, role-play and simulations in the classroom can also be studied through the analytical lens of dramaturgy. By examining how students step in and out of roles in PAMs as dramaturgy, a future research direction can seek to comment on the social construction of simulations and how it influences the development of students' identities as novice citizens.

In returning to the theme outlined in the first paragraph of this concluding section, educating students for citizenship is an important part of sustaining a democratic society. For students to lead non-idiotic lives, they must engage with public interests that are inevitably inundated with differing viewpoints. Even though simulations and role-play have been a staple of Social Studies curricula for the last few decades, findings from this study show the potential of well-crafted political simulations in helping students engage deeply with the issues and processes of a pluralistic democracy. Because a strong and stable democracy requires a constant influx of active voters, researchers who examine generational replacement trends in political participation wonder what the future holds as younger generations continue to skirt the voting booth (Zukin et al., 2006). Still, scholars are optimistic about the role that democratic education plays in boosting youth political engagement. This dissertation hopes to be an example of that optimism.

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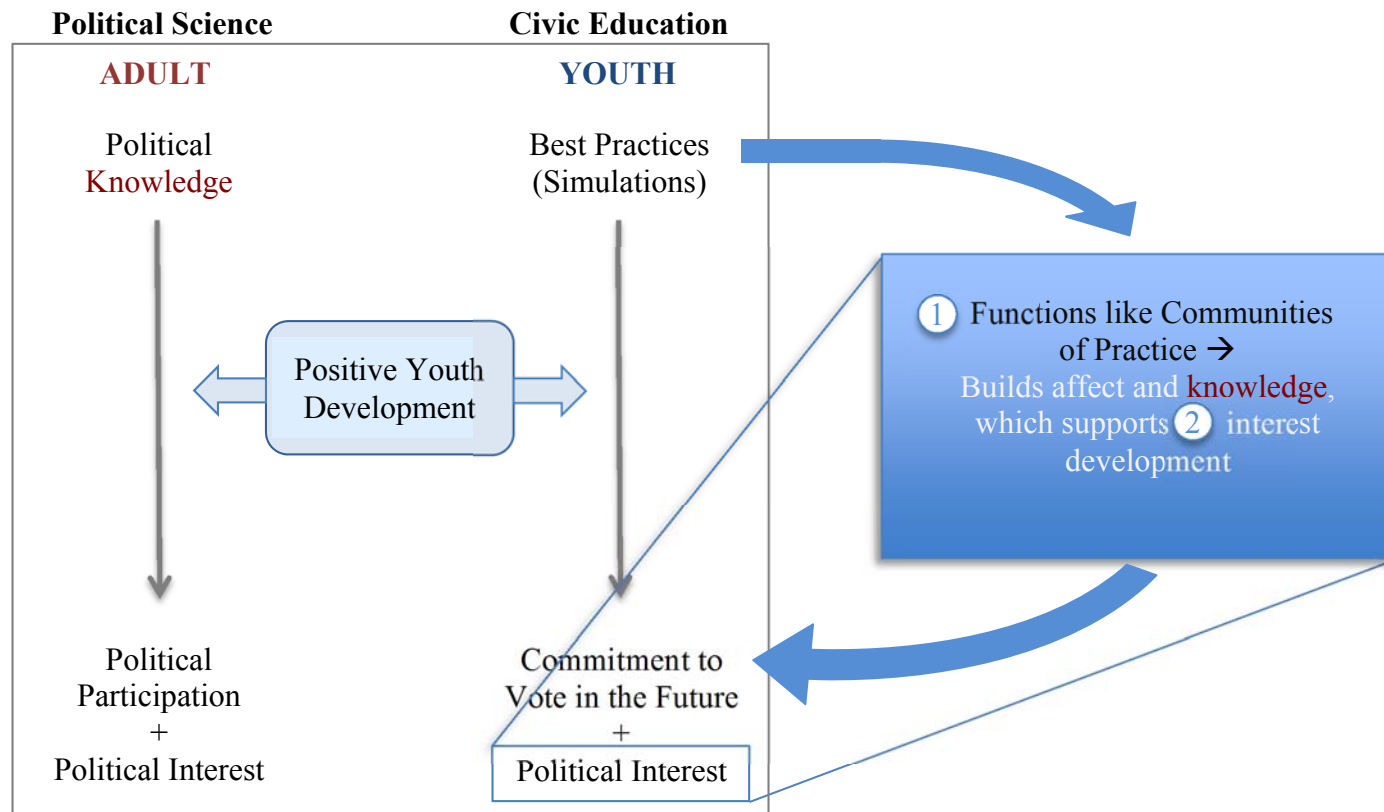
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Appendix

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Lit Review: Currently literature mostly includes correlational studies that examine what practices may increase participation

Gap: Dem-Ed Lit does not incorporate learning science theory on how motivation and affect impact achievement and future behavior

- Problem Spaces: Specifically look at simulations and political engagement

Questions: Do situational interest and simulation frequency uniquely predict students' commitment to vote in the future?

How might simulations and role-play help create learning environments that support the development of students' situational interest?

How My “AP+ US Government and Politics” Class Went

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey today. We’re interested in learning more about your experiences in this class so we can make improvements to future classes. All of your answers on this survey will be kept confidential.

1. What is the proper role of government in a democracy?

2. Briefly explain your answer to the question above

3. Rate the following statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Put an X in the bubble for the number that best represents your opinion

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am interested in political issues. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Once I am 18 I expect that I will vote regularly. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
I believe people like me can make a difference. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
I had many opportunities in this class to share my own -----> opinions on political issues.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
This class really changed the way I make -----> decisions in the world.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

4. Please explain, how this class has changed the way you make decisions in the world.

5. I participated in political or legal role-plays. (For example mock elections, campaigns, trials, press conferences, lobbying events, or budget meetings). Fill in the bubble for the answer that best represents your opinion.

Never

Sometimes

Often

Very often

6. What job or office is held by Joe Biden? Please fill in the bubble for the best answer

Secretary of State

Vice President

Chief Justice of Supreme Court

House Majority Leader

I don't know

7. Who are the US Senators representing your State? PLEASE GIVE TWO ANSWERS.

1. _____

2. _____

8. What career or field/s of study are you planning to pursue?

9. Has this changed since the beginning of the year? If so, do you think this course contributed to that change? If so, how?

10. How confident are you feeling about being successful in college? Fill in the bubble for the answer that best represents your opinion.

Not at all confident

Somewhat confident

Very confident

11. Has your opinion about your chances of success in college changed since the beginning of the year? If so, how and why?

12. Rate the following statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Put an X in the bubble for the number that best represents your opinion.

In this class...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I was usually interested in what we were doing. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Some big ideas came up over and over again. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
We often moved on to a new topic before we really understood the old one. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
I usually really got into the activities. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
I often wished class would end. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Things I learned early in the year helped me understand later material. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

In this class...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I was often confused about why we had to learn certain things in this course. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
I actively participated. ----->	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Mistakes were OK, as long as we learned from them. -----→	①	②	③	④	⑤
I usually felt like I contributed to our learning. -----→	①	②	③	④	⑤
I usually felt like my ideas were important to our learning. -----→	①	②	③	④	⑤
My mind often drifted away from what we were doing. -----→	①	②	③	④	⑤
When students worked together we usually learned more. -----→	①	②	③	④	⑤
I learned more working by myself than working with others. -----→	①	②	③	④	⑤
The teacher encouraged us to think for ourselves. -----→	①	②	③	④	⑤
We did a lot of “busy work” that didn’t help us learn. -----→	①	②	③	④	⑤
We usually got to apply what we learned right after -----→ we learned it.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Time passed really quickly. -----→	①	②	③	④	⑤
We learned how to solve problems on our own. -----→	①	②	③	④	⑤

Figure 3.

University of Washington
Knowledge in Action Study

Political Engagement Student Interview Protocol
2013-2014

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'm interested in hearing about your experiences in this class. In previous years students' input was used to help improve the course. I want to hear about your experiences and get your suggestions on how we can improve this course for other students in the future.

I also want to explain that everything you share with me is confidential. Your name will not be used. This interview will be audio recorded. You may ask me to stop recording at any time, or you may stop the interview at any time when you feel uncomfortable.

1. First, do you remember taking the beginning of the year survey? I'm curious about what you said in that survey.
 - a. Show students their answers to first question. Can you tell me a little bit more about why you answered this way?
 - i. When you read this question, what did you think politics referred to? What does politics mean to you? Why do you think that?
 - ii. What about democracy?
 - b. It says here that you thought voting was X; tell me a little bit about why you think that.
 - i. Based on what you said about politics, where does voting fit?
 - c. What about making a difference, on the survey you said that people like you ____ make a difference. Tell me more about that.
 - i. How does your actions impact or not impact "politics" as you defined it?
2. I know you've only been in class for a few months, but you've already completed an entire project cycle. Tell me about the project that you're in or you just completed.
 - a. Some people think that these projects are simulations, what do you think?
 - b. How is being in a role different than not being in a role?
 - i. Do you have to make many decisions (in/out of roles) in class?
 - c. Have there been ah-ha moments associated with something you've experienced in class (whether in simulations or not)?
 - i. Why did these moments stand out for you?
3. Let's talk a little more about the roles you were in. There were times in the project when your teacher asked you to drop your roles and even write your thoughts in a notebook. Do you have it with you?
 - a. One of the questions you were asked after you dropped your role was whether you personally thought the Arizona bill was Constitutional. How did you answer? Why?
 - i. Is this the same or different from when you had to answer this question in your role? Why?
 - ii. Tell me more about what made you decide the way you did in your role versus when you made it outside of your role?

Figure 4. 8 survey items analyzed in the quantitative study.

Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

(1) I usually felt like I contributed to our learning

(2) I actively participated

(3) I believe people like me can make a difference

(4) I often wished class would end (negative coding)

(5) My mind often drifted away from what we were doing (negative coding)

(6) Time passed really quickly

(7) I was usually interested in what we were doing

(8) I usually really got into the activities.

Figure 5. Codes identified in the qualitative analysis.



Codes:'Code'Book

Number of Codes: 34, commented: 16

Code'Info	Comment	Author
Ac4on'5Responsibility	[no entry]	Jane Lo
Affect	Students feeling positive about Political Action, Political Knowledge, or combination of both	Jane Lo
Apathy	[no entry]	Jane Lo
Class'Ac4on'(TI)	[no entry]	Jane Lo
CoP'Suppor4ng Classroom'Engagement	[no entry]	Jane Lo
Common'Tool	Students sharing common tool as a link to the 'community'	Jane Lo
Deeper'understanding	[no entry]	Jane Lo
Env'(Auth)	Environment (Authentic) - Students talking about or engaging with authentic disciplinary environments	Jane Lo
Env'(Bleed)	Environment (Bleed) - S mentioning or reacting to/with environment that's both simulated AND authentic. Or S moving between simulated and authentic environment	Jane Lo
Env'(Sim)	Envrionment (Simulated) - S talking about or engaging with simulated political environment	Jane Lo
Feeling'about'knowledge	[no entry]	Jane Lo
Ini4al'Interest	[no entry]	Jane Lo
Joint'Ent	Students working together for common disciplinary (simulated or not) goal	Jane Lo
Know'(Correct)	Student displaying correct or appropriate understanding of political knowledge	Jane Lo
Mutual'Eng	Student engaging together (or talk about engaging together) on disciplinary topic	Jane Lo
Need'to'know	[no entry]	Jane Lo
None'poli4cal'Ac4on	[no entry]	Jane Lo
PAc4on'(EPI)	Action - Emerging Personal Interest (Grounded in personal belief and intrinsic motivation)	Jane Lo
PAc4on'(TI)	Action - Triggered Interest (prompted by external motivation or environment)	Jane Lo

Persp (Bleed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perspective (Bleed) - Students talking about or displaying perspective taking bleeding between roles and self 	Jane Lo
Persp (Role)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perspective (Role) - Student talking about or displaying perspective taking in roles 	Jane Lo
Persp (Self)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perspective (Self) - Student talking about or displaying perspective taking as themselves 	Jane Lo
Plane (I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rogoff's Interpersonal Plane - How students behave with one another 	Jane Lo
Plane (P)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rogoff's Personal Plane - how students perceive oneself 	Jane Lo
Plane (c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rogoff's Community (cultural) Plane - how students behave in larger context 	Jane Lo
Pol Opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [no entry] 	Jane Lo
Potential backfire of TI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [no entry] 	Jane Lo
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [no entry] 	Jane Lo
Role Versus Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [no entry] 	Jane Lo
Supports Interest Development Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [no entry] 	Jane Lo
USE: Knowledge lead to action / no knowledge no action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [no entry] 	Jane Lo
USE: Roles (Low Stakes/Percep/Know More)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [no entry] 	Jane Lo
USE: Sim->Authen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [no entry] 	Jane Lo
low stakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [no entry] 	Jane Lo