TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL: A RECOMMENDATION FOR IMPROVING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN AMERICA

A thesis submitted to the Miami University Honors Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for University Honors

by

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May 2004
Oxford, Ohio
ABSTRACT

This project is intended to address the issue of the increasing rift between the governed and government in the United States. Too Americans today are distrustful about and uninterested in their government. In the view of many Americans, the entire political process is corrupt and beyond their ability to change, as evidenced by their responses to survey questions and by the continually decreasing percentage of citizens who vote in elections. While not attempting to correct all of the problems within the American government system or even to find the ultimate solution to the prevalent disinterest and disengagement, the project suggests a way to awaken the American public to their power to alter the organization they distrust. The suggested method for a long-term solution is to utilize the public education system to reach children at a young age and help them develop an accurate view of the role citizens play in the government. In order to demonstrate how education has been used as a change agent throughout American history, a brief historical account of the public education system is provided. The goal of the project is not to reach a perfect voter turnout record or to get every individual involved in the political process through education but to allow all students to make their own informed decisions about the extent to which they want to participate.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents, Tom and Madonna Jones, for providing me with twenty-two years of love and support. I can never thank you enough. Thanks for always allowing me the freedom to be myself and to choose the college that was right for me. Thanks for (almost) never complaining about the out-of-state tuition! Thanks to my brother and sister, Trent and Laura Tormoehlen, for helping me stay sane through this experience. I would also like to thank my thesis committee- Dr. Patrick Haney, Dr. Donald Pribble, and Rev. Justin Gravitt, who provided guidance in the writing process and administrative support. Special thanks to the University of Texas at San Antonio for allowing me to use their research facilities- albeit unbeknownst to them.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract........................................................................................................ iii
Approval Page................................................................................................ v
Acknowledgements..................................................................................... vii
Table of Contents........................................................................................ viii
List of Tables............................................................................................... ix
Introduction.................................................................................................. 1
Part 1: The Problem....................................................................................... 3
Part 2: A Recommendation.......................................................................... 13
Conclusion..................................................................................................... 40
Bibliography................................................................................................. 44
Tables............................................................................................................. 46
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Efficacy
Table 2: Political Engagement
Table 3: Trust in Government (a)
Table 4: Trust in Government (b)
Table 5: Trust in Government (c)
Table 6: Voter Turnout 1948-2002
INTRODUCTION

A recent encounter with my physician reminded me once again why I decided to study and write on the topic of civic education. During the initial moments of the visit, he opened the conversation by asking me the question every college senior dreads: “What are your plans for next year?” At that point I was still in the decision phase with many different options weighing on my mind, and I wasn’t sure how to answer. What I did know is that I didn’t want to spend half an hour of our $140 an hour examination explaining my deliberations, so I simply said that I wanted to work for state or local level government for a few years before working my way into politics, either as a congressional aide or running for office myself. As soon as the words were out of my mouth, I could tell I’d hit a nerve with him. I watched his facial expression change from one of only slight interest to disgust. With the tact of Howard Dean on a bad day in Iowa, he told me I would need to learn how to lie if I wanted to work on Capital Hill, and if I were ever actually crazy enough to run for office, I’d better perfect my poker face so I could tell people exactly what they want to hear regardless of the truth.

In hindsight, I probably should have said something safer, like I hope to work in the public sector, but I was still shocked by the intensity of this normally composed man’s reaction to my future plans. He really seemed to believe that government officials cannot be trusted, and that is disturbing to me. I wish I could write this exchange off as the tirade of a single disgruntled citizen, but both personal experience and research show that my doctor’s sentiments of cynicism and distrust are endemic. As a student of public administration and as an American citizen, I am not satisfied with standing by while the rift between the governed and the government increases. I began this project with the hopes of advocating real and plausible steps toward closing the gap.
I am also not attempting to correct the myriad of problems with the political system in America or even to find the panacea for the problem of disinterest and disengagement, but to awaken the public to their power as the driving force of America’s representative democracy.

PART 1: The Problem

Where have all the voters gone?

In some ways political scientists are like parents. Much like parents attempting to decipher the seemingly irrational behaviors of her adolescent, political scientists try to study the dynamic political system. Both are often reactive, as parents respond to unacceptable behavior with punishment, and political scientists react to changes in the political landscape with more research and surveys. The most compelling comparison between the two groups, though, is that both all too frequently receive the “and why should I care about this, again?” look in response to what they had considered a convincing speech. The few times I have dared engage my peers and others about the importance of government, I have been met with this withering attitude. Many Americans really believe either that their opinions don’t matter or that politics is too complicated for them to get involved. The National Election Studies (NES) Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior had been tracking public perception of government since 1948, and some of their findings are startling. In 2000 60 percent of the respondents said that they felt government was too complicated for a person like them to understand what’s going on, and this is a consistent pattern from the early 1950s (Table 1). Only 27 percent of respondents to the survey reported being interested in government or public affairs most of the time in 2002 (Table 2). Other indicators of support for the political system also display this trend. When asked, "Do you think that people in the government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or
don't waste very much of it?" 48 percent responded “a lot” and 49 percent said “some” (Table 3). Nearly a third believe that “quite a few” government officials are crooked (Table 4), and 48 percent believe government is “pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves” (Table 5).

Robert Putnam frames this problem with his own research in his book *Bowling Alone*. He found that Americans are disinterested and uninvolved at alarming rates, and the problem is only increasing. While 62.8 percent of the eligible voters cast a ballot for the presidential election in 1960, voter turn out decreased down a dismal to 48.9 percent for the 1996 presidential election (Putman 31-32). The Roper organization conducted surveys each month from 1973 to 1994, asking thousands of Americans about their civic activities. They found that almost every form of civic activities “declined significantly, from the most common- petition signing- to the least common- running for office” (Putnam 40-41). Even the number of people seeking political office has declined by 15 percent at all levels of governance over the last two decades, and the number of citizens attending public meetings on local issues went down 40 percent (Putnam 42).

In some ways, these results should not be that surprising. The United States government was formed by a people dissatisfied with and distrustful of the British government (Skocpol 14), and its very structure demonstrates this. The founders were fearful of a tyrannical leader, so they developed an elaborate system of checks and balances, as well as a divided government structure. While some Americans may bemoan the tension among the houses of Congress and the President and between the states and the federal government, the founders intended this kind of debate and delay. Should it be surprising, then, that Americans today are distrustful of government?
Intervening historical events also contribute to the situation. Various unpopular wars, Watergate, the Iran-Contra scandal, Whitewater, Monicagate, and other scandals are major causes for the erosion of popular support for government. The state of the economy also affects the public’s view of government at any one point in time. Disillusionment has become a factor, as after World War I Americans began to expect more out of the government than the system was ever intended to handle, and government was unable to meet all of the needs and solve every problem. Many Americans today also seem fed up with the corruption and deception they perceive in government, especially at the federal level. Money often seems to buy candidates political office, since many are forced out of the race simply because their “war chest” is not big enough. Americans question whether citizens really get to choose among the best candidates or just among those with the most money. Campaign finance reform has remained a viable issue in recent years for this very reason. Democracy cannot be truly representative if only the rich are able to run for political office. The media certainly does not help this situation by continually covering politics with a negative slant (Skocpol 405), and political parties create the same effect with their thrust of negative campaigning and the popular sense that they control the political system.

However, looking at the situation from a different perspective, the phenomenon of political disengagement seems counter-intuitive. Acknowledging the fact that the foundation of American democracy is distrust of government, many things have changed since the late eighteenth century. At that time, only white male property owners were considered educated enough to vote and participate. The scope and responsibility of all levels of government were dramatically smaller then, and the government was run by the “elites.” Patronage and the spoils system were widely accepted as appropriate ways to staff government positions. Since that time,
much has changed. The doors of opportunity have been opened to many previously
disenfranchised groups. The Nineteenth Amendment, the civil rights movement of the 1960s,
and other patterns of social change have afforded the possibility for more people to participate in
government than at any point in America’s history (Skocpol 1). Public interest groups have
formed to lobby for almost any aspect of society imaginable. The World Almanac lists more than
2,380 such groups on the national level, and that does not even count the state and local interest
groups! (Putnam 48). It appears that these trends would cause a dramatic increase in voter
turnout and other forms of engagement, but the opposite has proven to be true.

Now we have come back to the root of the problem. Why are Americans disinterested in
and distrustful of government at increasing rates when they have unprecedented opportunities for
entry into the system to make changes? No one theory can adequately describe such a dynamic
trend, and there are currently three leading hypotheses. The first is a “social psychological
proposition about the roots of efficient government and social institutions, focusing on the
socialization of individuals into cooperative behavior” (Skocpol 13). This theory hinges on the
idea of social capital. L.J. Hanifan, a reformer of the Progressive Era, was the first person known
to have used the term “social capital,” and he defined it as

“those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good
will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families
who make up a social unit…. The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself…. If he
comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an
accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which
may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living
conditions in the whole community. The community as a whole will benefit by the
cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbors” (Putnam 19).

Similarly, Putnam defines social capital as “the ways in which our lives are made more productive by social ties.” He believes that when citizens are in regular contact with one another they learn to work out collective problems together, and this social interaction spills over into the way they interact with their government. By interacting with their neighbors, individuals gain trust in social institutions, which makes them more likely to trust in governmental institutions. “Wise public policies, robust economic development, and efficient public administration all flow from such social trust grounded in regular cooperative social interactions” (Skocpol 13). Based on this theory of how good government evolves, Putnam is alarmed by the trends of disengagement in community activities. Even though his research does show that membership in national and local organizations have steadily increased over the last third of this century, these are mainly “mailing list” memberships that do not require any face-to-face interaction. A concurrent trend is an almost fifty percent decrease in membership in active community-based organizations. Americans may still claim to be members of civic organizations, but the reality is that very few actually spend time doing committee work, serving as officers, and attending meetings (Putnam 63-4). For his view of how effective government works, this trend is detrimental, because it shows a continued decrease in social capital.

A second theory comes from the school of historical-institutionalism. This group looks to changing organizational patterns, resources for political activity, and relationships between elites and ordinary citizens to explain the trend (Skocpol 13). One of the leading historical-institutionalism theorists, Theda Skocpol posits that America’s civic society is divided along class lines, as “privileged and well-educated citizens...(are) withdrawing from cross-class
membership federations and redirecting leadership and support to staff-led organizations.” The result is that civic America is run by advocates and highly organized lobby groups, increasing the gap between the elites and ordinary citizens. While the interest group field used to be crowded with civil rights organizations and other groups focused on expanding social rights, these have declined in percentage of total interest groups. At the same time, public affairs associations, the National Right to Life Campaign, the Christian Coalition, the National Education Association, the National Rifle Association, and the AARP have exploded in both membership and influence. Groups have flooded Washington, D.C., where they feel they can have the most impact, taking the work out of the hands of ordinary citizens and placing in staffed positions for lobbying, research and media projects. Skocpol argues that this leads to a withdrawn public that feels out of touch with the very interests they support and advocate strongly. “Voting less and less, American citizens increasingly act- and claim to feel- like mere spectators in a polity where all the significant action seems to go on above their heads, with their views ignored by pundits and clashing partisans” (Skocpol 461-504).

A third theory of why the U.S. has seen a steady decline in civic engagement is called rational choice and offers a very different perspective on political involvement. Rational choice scholars tend to be skeptical as to whether encouraging and creating incentives for civic engagement actually leads to a socially optimal outcome. Morris Fiorina offers a poignant example of how getting citizens involved may not always produce a positive outcome for society as a whole. The town of Concord, Massachusetts, is home to Estabrook Woods, which became the center of a controversy among Harvard University, the Middlesex School, and the town’s Natural Resources Commission (NRC). Harvard offered to preserve the largest section of the woods, which it owned at that time, on the condition that the adjacent 400 acres also be
preserved. Initially, the plan seemed viable, until the Middlesex School made a proposal to the
town’s Planning Board to expand their facilities. The plan included encroaching on twelve of the
fifty-six acres they had previously offered to donate to the Estabrook Woods preservation effort,
raising the ire of the NRC. While this local interest group fought vigorously against the school’s
planned expansion, the majority of the Concord population seemed to be in favor of the plan.
Fiorina interviewed two town officials, and both agreed that the Middlesex proposal would have
passed two or three to one in a town-wide vote.

So while the rest of the town watched the controversy unfold, the NRC continued to
thwart the efforts of the school, calling them “destroyers of the earth.” They eventually denied
Middlesex’s proposal, and the school withdrew their offer to donate their fifty-six acres to the
Estabrook Woods preservation effort. Eventually, the warring sides went to arbitration
procedures, which initially failed, but later produced a plan for the expansion Middlesex sought.
“Thus after five years of activity, two years of intense politics, and thousands of dollars of
expenditures, the land conservation drive had regressed. It was not just back to square one, but
even further back: the Middlesex project would go forward, and the drive was fifty-six acres
poorer than it once had been.” Fiorina points to this as an illustration of how a few individuals
with views not coinciding with the general public are able to “hijack the democratic process” by
imposing “unreasonable costs- fiscal and psychological- on other actors as well as the larger
community” (Skocpol 397-402). To him and other rational choice scholars, situations such as
this one are one reason that some Americans have become disgusted with and distrustful of the
democratic process.

Why does this problem matter?
There are certainly many reasons why so many Americans are choosing not to vote and not to participate at the community and political levels. These three theories of social capital, rational choice, and historical-institutionalism present different views of the problem, but these are by no means all inclusive. They do, however, offer a similar reason why the average American should be concerned about the issue. Simply put, involvement is in every American’s best interest. Returning to the idea of social capital, everyone benefits when individuals decide to become involved in their communities, whether in the form of bowling leagues, PTAs, and crime watches, or by voting and donating to candidates and political parties. Since social capital is built by caring about the community and investing time and energy in bettering it (Putnam 288), increasing social capital would require the efforts of more than just a few but would be in every individual’s best interest. Similarly, based on the historical-institutionalism approach, Americans need to reclaim the control over the interests they hold dear by getting involved at whatever level they can. Realistically, the trend toward staffed interest groups will not easily be changed, but that does not exclude average citizens from helping more grassroots organizations or from forming their own local groups. This will even build social capital in the process.

An example of this comes from the experiences of Resident Assistants at Miami University. Part of their job description is to build community, which could also be called social capital. This is important to the Office of Residence Life not only because it sounds comforting to worried parents, but also because it is a significant aspect of living in a “home away from home” for college students. As stated on the Office of Residence Life website, “Community enables growth, learning, and self-authorship. Community promotes interaction and friendship, respect and inclusion, celebration and fun.” Everyone benefits when individuals value one another and commit to keep it “purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative” (ORL
Residents report higher satisfaction with life in the hall and at Miami in general when they feel connected to the people around them and a vital part of the community. By the same principle, everyone suffers when one person or a few people disengage from that community and choose not to participate, either by avoiding hall activities or by displaying destructive behaviors.

The rational choice approach also leads to a suggestion for improvement. Fiorina cautions about a fraction of the population holding the whole community captive to their interests, and this effect can be curtailed if more individuals and interests insert their views. The more people who add their opinions, efforts, and visions into the political system, the more diverse the perspectives become, and the more options Americans have on the ballot. That 48 percent of respondents to the Roper survey who felt a few big interests run the government need to understand that they have some control over that through their own political choices. It becomes much harder for small factions to gain control of an issue area if many views are heard and considered. This concern over “a tyranny of the minority” is not a new concept; it harkens back to the days before the Constitution was ratified when the Founding Fathers were writing the Federalist Letters in defense of the governmental reorganization. In Federalist #10 James Madison penned,

“It will be found, indeed, on a candid review of our situation, that some of the distresses under which we labor have been erroneously charged on the operation of our governments; but it will be found, at the same time, that other causes will not alone account for many of our heaviest misfortunes; and, particularly, for that prevailing and increasing distrust of public engagements, and alarm for private rights, which are echoed from one end of the continent to the other. These must be chiefly, if not wholly, effects of
the unsteadiness and injustice with which a factious spirit has tainted our public administrations” (Madison online).

In other words, he blamed the public distrust of government on factions, or a group of people who put their own interests above the interest of other individuals or society as a whole. By allowing the sometimes-vocal minority to dictate public policy, the public good is not served and the majority ends up at a disadvantage and disillusioned, as the example from Concord, Massachusetts demonstrated.

Madison’s solution to the faction dilemma was rather surprising. He didn’t advocate eliminating factions, but rather lessening their impact with competing factions. In this way the effect of factions are controlled. Diversity in idea yields a more representative government, and this can only happen through increased participation across all social, racial, and age categories. If more than 0.5-1% of the population of Concord (Skocpol 401) had attended the town meetings about the Middlesex project, the views presented would have been more representative, and thus, more democratic.

In the same way, all Americans are affected when 52 percent of the eligible voters decide to stay home on Election Day. We all have a vested interest in the betterment of American society, and therefore, we should be concerned when public involvement in civic issues is on the steady decline. “If we want to repair civil society, we must first and foremost revitalize political democracy” (Skocpol 5). A fully functional democracy requires the input of its citizens, so it should concern every citizen that distrust and disengagement are rampant in today’s society.
PART 2: A RECOMMENDATION

What is being done:

To address the problem of political apathy, hundreds of solutions have been proposed and more continue to be formulated by policy specialists. Some advocate more voting drives and extra incentives to vote, such as the Democratic Party’s recent efforts in New Hampshire to entice students to vote by giving out free scoops of Ben and Jerry’s ice cream to those who promised to vote in the primary (Rosenthal A18). Parties are also utilizing more personal entreaties like the tried and true “door-to-door” method. Before the New Hampshire primary, a field coordinator for Senator John Kerry’s campaign gave rides to people to get them to the polls, and in Manchester Dr. Dean’s campaign sent volunteers “to the homes of registered voters who had identified themselves either as supporting Dr. Dean or leaning toward supporting him” (Hernandez A16). Other reformers argue for eased voter registration rules; called motor voter laws, they allow people to register even on the day of the election. Online voting has also been a contentious topic in recent years. Supporters of the idea contend that it would make voting much easier and more appealing for more citizens if they could cast their ballots from their own homes. While these are all interesting and innovative ideas, they do not address the root problem of the issue- lack of trust in the government. Many factors have contributed to this over the years, from scandals to unpopular wars to stories of mismanagement, but this is a cycle that can be stopped. You can bus people around to polls all you want and decrease the opportunity cost of voting all you want, but if we really want to see a more active, involved, supportive public, something additional is needed than just getting people to make the one time action of voting.

To truly move toward a solution, generations and not just individuals must be moved not just to the polls but also toward a more positive impression of government and the positive role
they can play in it. Both the government and the public have responsibility for this process. In fact all levels of government must make it a priority to address the distrust of their particular constituents. Obviously, this leaves the largest burden on the national government, but they also have the most ground to cover in regaining public trust. Although Jefferson once said that the government closest to you is most likely to violate your rights, Americans seem to trust the government closest to them the most. As a microcosmic example of this, a recent survey of the residents of Hanover Township in southwestern Ohio found that 38.2% of the respondents indicated that they disagreed with the statement “Sometimes Township affairs seem so complicated that a resident like me cannot really understand what is going on” versus the average for national government at 32% (Hanover survey). Leaders at all levels must work harder to communicate clearly and honestly with their constituents and to keep their promises. The public belief that public officials routinely lie either during campaigns or once in office can only be changed when the officials make it clear that they are committed to keeping campaign promises and disclosing the truth about government action. Leaders must also accept responsibility when their policies or initiatives fail. Finger pointing and mud slinging may work on the elementary school playground, but they are out of place in the political system. Americans are much more likely to respect and respond to leaders who are willing to admit it when they make mistakes. The worst case scenario for most career politicians may occur if they adopt this approach, i.e. not being re-elected, but when they signed up for the job, their duty was to serve the public and they must accept the fact that sometimes that might cost them personally.

Each American citizen also has a role to play in the solution. They must begin to get involved and realize not only their personal stake in public engagement but also the collective good that results from providing input to the government by joining civic groups, campaigning
for candidates, attending local meetings, etc. Most people probably still need a little help and persuasion to get them to the point of believing the importance of their participation. While many different solutions exist for influencing the public already of voting age, a more long-term solution stands right in front of every community in America. The most effective way of seeing a long-term shift in public opinion and involvement in government is through the public education system.

America has long been committed to educating all of its children, regardless of background or ability to pay for schooling. Education was used as a tool for change and still can be for several reasons. First, schools are in nearly every community in America and every child must attend, creating the far-reaching influence necessary for change in political attitude. Second, schools reach children at an early, impressionable age when their habits and attitudes are still flexible and easy to mold. Third, as children grow and mature, they begin to seek their place in the world and how they can make an impact in something greater than themselves. If they can be convinced at this stage of their lives that they can help people through their influence in the government system, they will be more likely to become involved. Statistics show that the more education individuals receive, the more likely they are to become politically active (Table 6). The history of the public education system in America demonstrates that education has consistently been used as a means of social and political change.

*A Word of Caution:*

The proposal for change advocated is to use the public education system to educate future generations about how government affects their daily lives and how they can play a role in shaping it. This plan operates under the assumption that if Americans are properly educated,
they will make the choice to become involved. However, while Table 6 demonstrates the positive correlation between education and voting percentages, it also shows that not all educated citizens exercise their right to vote. This analysis presents arguments mainly with “should” and “must” statements that attach a certain value to the proposed action. Political participation and community activism are presented as activities that everyone should do. Although at first the ultimate goal of this project may appear to be that every American becomes involved in some capacity, the real aim is slightly different. A balanced view of American democracy and values demands a recognition that Americans have the right to choose whether or not they become involved, either by voting or by some other means. In fact, many consider their non-vote a political statement that cannot be discounted or silenced by an insistence that everyone “should” or “must” vote and become involved in the political system. While this author considers voting an important way of contributing to the political system and voicing opinions and values, others see their non-vote as voicing their dissatisfaction with the system or the options on the ballot, and that opinion is just as valid. The real goal is to bring Americans to the point where they are educated enough about the governmental system that they can make their own informed decisions about whether or not they will become involved. Unfortunately, the country is not at that point now, so more action is necessary. The remainder of this section will address what more can be done through public education.

**History of Public Education:**

From its very inception, education in the region now called the United States was used as a method of religious influence. Community formed one of the highest ideals of many of the earliest colonists in North America. The Puritan community in the Massachusetts Bay Colony
was built around the values of obedience to God, charity, and civic responsibility. Winthrop’s goal was to see the Massachusetts Colony become “like a City upon a Hill” (Davis 66). However, the continuance and the spread of the Puritan lifestyle depended not only on the leadership on John Winthrop and others but also impressing their values on their children. The future of Massachusetts Bay hung on the hope of successful education. As early as 1642 Massachusetts passed a law making elementary school compulsory and providing for investigators to ensure that schools instructed children “to read and understand the principle of religion and the capital laws of this country” (Spring 7). Five years later Massachusetts also passed the “Old Deluder Satan Law,” which required the communities to support schools so that all families could afford to educate their children. The law is named for the first line: “It being the chief project of old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures…” (Spring 7). Parents who could afford the instruction continued to pay for their children to be taught by private tutors, but colonial governments and communities now also provided schooling for those who couldn’t afford their own tutors. This initiative was financed by the first property tax for the operation of the schools in Massachusetts, enacted by legislation in 1648 (Pulliam 22-33).

As more and more settlers began arriving in American and developing their own colonies and lifestyles, the education system varied greatly among them. The colonies in the South took a more “hands-off” approach, leaving it mainly to the individual to educate his own child. Many schools in the middle colonies operated on the “rate bill” system, which asked parents to pay for their children’s schooling according to their ability to pay. The colonies considered part of the Northeast made rules requiring education, but mainly left the administration of schools to local communities.
Around the Revolutionary War era the next major change in education theory began with the acceptance of the ideas of John Locke. His theories about education brought reform as he advocated a shift in focus from religious indoctrination to a focus on citizenship. He conceived of children’s minds as blank slates, which should be written on with concrete, objective, and common sense realities. Societal opinion began to shift more toward Locke’s position and introducing democratic ideas into the schoolroom. Locke argued that public education was necessary for a free, self-governing republic, and this was never more true than immediately following the Revolutionary War. Schools provided a free exchange of ideas and social concepts, and they fostered a national identity (Pulliam 43-51). This sense of commonality among Americans was crucial for the vitality of the new nation.

In the period immediately following the Revolutionary War, educational philosophy was dominated by men like Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson’s views about education were linked closely to citizenship and government, and he felt passionately that no one should be allowed to become a citizen if he were not literate (Conant 11). Without some assistance from state and local governments, though, many people would be excluded from citizenship and full participation in society because they could not afford to educate their children privately. Therefore, Jefferson proposed three objectives for education. First, he wanted three years of free education for all children, a radical concept at the time. He envisioned having elementary schools in every small district within walking distance of most families. Second, Jefferson promoted a selective grammar school that would take the best and the brightest and educate them so that they would be capable of running the government. Third, the best students would go on to university at public expense (Conant 5-8). Education was a way of choosing and training leaders
for government service (Spring 34), and it was also vital if the new nation was going to survive as a cohesive unit as it continued to grow and expand.

However, Locke and Jefferson’s educational ideals were only just beginning to gain widespread acceptance during this time period. No longer considered a religious obligation, the general sentiment toward education at that time was against educating all students at public expense, and especially against having some continue in school longer than others. Most people felt that individual families should be responsible for educating their own children if they could afford the cost. In New York City this resulted in less than fifty percent of children between the ages of four and sixteen being educated (Conant 33). As early as 1786 the family was already considered incapable of properly educating children, illustrated by the writings of Benjamin Rush. “Society owes a great deal of its order and happiness to the deficiencies of parental government being supplied by those habits of obedience and subordination which are contracted in schools” (Spring 37). This attitude began the call for a national system for public education to ensure that all children were being properly controlled and taught the values of democracy (Spring 38).

At the turn of the century, education for every child also gained popularity as a way to shape moral character. During this era, change was the biggest constant in American life. “The period from 1812 to the Civil War was a transitional one during which educational leaders…forged the first links in what has evolved as a free, public school system, supported and controlled by the state. The rise of nationalism and Jacksonian Democracy, the Industrial Revolution, and the forces of westward expansion, immigration, and population growth provided impetus to the concept of universal education” (Pulliam 65). This period in American history led to the glorification of the common man, and the Industrial Revolution made occupational
training for boys an economic necessity. Many considered that immigrants needed to be “Americanized,” and as more and more people flooded the eastern seaboard, equality was increasingly valued. Economic considerations in education became important for the first time. Also during this period, though, many children were denied an education because they had to find work to help support their families. *The Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair, not only illuminates the problems with the meatpacking industry, but also that thousands of children were being exploited at alarmingly young ages. These kids did not have the option to get an education to learn the technical skills they needed (Sinclair). Students needed skills in order to secure steady jobs later in life, and some began to learn those skills in public schools. However, even with all of these shifts in education, students still needed to be controlled and molded into moral citizens (Spring 51). The 1830s and 40s are known as the “common school” era, because a more standardized state system was developed to solve economic, social and political problems within the state (Spring 73).

Massachusetts demonstrates the changes well. During the reform periods of 1820-1850, Massachusetts and much of the North saw rapid population growth and urbanization. Massachusetts’ population grew over forty percent during this time, and the number of those involved in manufacture and trades more than doubled. To address the new demands on the education system, the legislature in 1837 formed the State Board of Education and an Education Secretary to collect information from cities and towns. Horace Mann was the first to fill this position, and he inspected the schools, convincing the local authorities to make improvements, while still keeping the overall control in their hands (Jefferson 38).

Mann exerted great influence in shaping the public education system, and the legacy of this time period was threefold: 1) There was a new emphasis on all children being educated
within one schoolhouse, in an attempt to decrease hostility among social classes and to teach the children to appreciate and get along with other children from different backgrounds. 2) Education was now considered a legitimate way for government to impart its policies and to solve the social, economic and political problems of the area. 3) Control became more centralized through the establishment of state agencies to handle education policy. The generally accepted concept in education was that “human nature can be formed, shaped, and given direction by training within organized institutions” (Spring 74). John Dewey’s ideas also contributed to this new format with his emphasis on community. “What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children” (Dewey 7).

By the late nineteenth century, education was taking on even broader social roles as a panacea for the nation’s problems. This was especially true in urban areas as schools began developing health programs, providing school nurses, and offering after-school activities. The major goal of education in this time period was to develop human capital to solve labor market problems, because the need for vocational training was increasing faster than other institutions could deal with it. High schools also began to gain more popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, used mainly as a preparation for the labor market (Spring 197). The influences of home and the church were rapidly decreasing, which created serious negative social externalities and forced schools to take on the role of teaching courtesy, respect, obedience and honesty (Spring 155). Also adding to this aspect of American culture was the increased belief in science as the ultimate answer. Since family influence on a child couldn’t be scientifically quantified and managed, its significance was downplayed. However, there was still considerable debate as to the true place of schools in the life of children.
“To a banker on the Milwaukee board of education in 1910, school organization represented business ethics, and teachers were hired to instill proper values into incipient workers. To members of middle-class women’s organizations, however, schools were humanitarian institutions that sponsored free breakfasts for the hungry and safe playgrounds for guttersnipes. Political radicals and progressive trade unionists, on the other hand, often saw schools as evolving democratic forms that nevertheless required vigilance and continual protection from the serpentine arms of manufacturers and capitalists” (Spring 161-2).

Around this time school buildings also began to be used for community functions and social centers as a way to reestablish community in urban areas. As H.E. Scudder wrote in the Atlantic Monthly, “The common schoolhouse is in reality the most obvious center of national unity” (Spring 169).

The desire for national unity through education and educational buildings conflicted with the more practical function of human capital development, because it brought questions of equality to the surface. Since younger children and high school graduates would need different skills for different jobs, they needed to be taught different things. Yet was it fair to put students in vocational tracts, preparing some for college and some for factory positions? In 1892 the National Education Association’s Committee of Ten recommended that every child should be taught the same, since tracts locked students into social classes, resulting in an undemocratic system. While many schools continued to employ the tract method, others utilized other ways of integrating democracy into the classroom through group projects and an emphasis on teamwork and cooperation (Spring 209). This demonstrates the tension created by the dominant theme in the 19th century- equality of opportunity.
With the dawn of the 20th century came yet another set of problems and a new paradigm for education. The Great Depression had an enormous impact on all factors of society, and public education was no exception. Policy makers began to ask who was responsible for providing youth programs and activities to keep young people busy and out of trouble even as school administrators and educators tried to keep politics out of the classroom. During this time, the national government became increasingly involved in more facets of American life than ever before. Then as the nation entered World War II, the federal government even intervened in the media to increase support for the war effort through radio, movies, and other propaganda. This precedent allowed for the widening of the scope and depth of its involvement in education as well. The era of big government didn’t end with World War II. With the advent of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, education became an even more important aspect of public policy as we raced to keep up with the Soviets in mathematics and science (Spring 261).

The political climate of the 1950s and 60s also influenced the course of public education through both continued competition with other world powers and the civil rights movement. In 1951 President Johnson signed amendments to the Selective Service Act creating deferments for individuals whose academic training was deemed necessary for “national health, safety or security interests” (Spring 324). While the deferments may have seemed like a good idea for keeping up with other world powers in math and science, many complained about the inequality inherent in allowing some to opt out of the draft, and the sheer number of deferments created an “education inflation” as the economic value of a college education decreased in the labor market.

Another set of reformers set their sights on the socialization aspect of education and insisted on presenting basic scientific disciplines as systematic ways of thinking. They fought to include math, science, history, English, and foreign language as the curriculum for high school
students. As education legislation began to take shape in this time period, the emphasis was on seeking help from the federal government to help rebuild schools and provide space in schools for the baby-boomers (Spring 333). In 1958 Congress passed the National Defense Education Act, partly in response to widespread fear created by the Soviets’ launch of Sputnik I. This Act created a national system of testing for high school students and provided incentives for students to pursue careers in the math and science fields. It also allotted $70 million for four years for the upgrade of science and math departments and equipment in local schools. This action only increased the federal government’s role in education through the use of the “carrot-and-stick” approach so common with federal appropriations (Spring 335). Schools only received the money if they jumped through certain hoops.

The civil rights movement also had a huge impact on public education. When the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. The Board of Education* that separate was not equal and ordered desegregation of schools, the fight for equal treatment for all races moved into the classroom. Education again became a hot-button political issue and the impetus for change. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, and this provided for the withholding of federal funds to schools, which refused to comply with the principles of the act. Again, the federal government asserted its financial power to influence the local issue of public education, for the broader goal of equal rights for all people (Spring 342).

The so-called War on Poverty in the 1960s was yet another influence on the public education system. The ideology of the era brought the acceptance of the cyclical effects of poverty. The Heller Report found, “It is difficult to find and follow avenues leading out of poverty in environments where education is depreciated and hope is smothered. Universal education has been perhaps the greatest single force, contributing to both social mobility and to
general economic growth” (Spring 345). Education was the answer to the social problem of poverty.

However clear the connection between education and the eradication of social ills seemed in the 60s, the 1970s brought all of these American values into question. Public schools were attacked as being bastions of oppression and racism. Amid mass student protests for a myriad of complaints they had against the government, the federal government began to take their influence on education behind the scenes by financing research on education rather than education itself. A community control movement started as states and local communities began to demand more accountability and testing to demonstrate measurable improvements (Spring 359).

Since the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*, states and local governments have been exhorted from all sides to increase academic standards, improve the quality of teachers, and revamp the curriculum to allow the United States to compete internationally on an academic level (Spring 363). The federal government has begun a pattern of requiring or “suggesting” new testing methods or teaching methodology in hopes of improving our schools. However, these mandates are almost never accompanied with more federal funding to help states make the improvements to meet the requirements. The 1994 Goals 2000: Educate America Act “reaffirmed the national goals for the 1990s, which sought to: increase children’s school readiness, increase high school students’ completion rate, provide evidence of demonstrated competency at specific grade levels in basic skills and subjects, improve mathematics and science education, increase adult literacy and on-the-job competency, and maintain safe schools, free of alcohol and drugs” (Gutek 293). The emphasis was still on the performance of American children compared with that of students around the world. The No Child Left Behind Act was more of the same kind of intervention that
states have been seeing since the 1980s in federally mandated standards without adequate funding mechanisms.

From the very first public schools until the present situation with a public school in every community, education has been used as a tool of change and influence. While the aim of the influence has evolved from religious to patriotic to social and economic to a more human resource management perspective, the pattern of utilizing education to direct the nation can be seen running throughout the history of the United States. Certainly there have been problems with this approach, but it can be successful today in the right context and administered in the appropriate form.

Using the Mechanism of Public Education

In considering how to most effectively utilize public education to address the lack of trust in government, it is wise to consider this quote by Joseph Wood Krutch. “It is…sometimes easier to head an institute for the study of child guidance than it is to turn one brat into a decent human being” (Daintith 104). It is much easier to discuss molding society through successive generations than to actually guide a child into embracing his civic responsibility. We must now consider how to use the mechanism of public education to realize the change in public attitude, action, and knowledge that is desirable for the nation. While the purpose of education in its early forms was first to perpetuate a religious state and then to create national unity and an educated public to participate in the political system, the goal of a public education has changed dramatically since that time. I’m not advocating a reversal to that state, but many lessons from that time period can be applied to the contemporary system. Today government or civics is considered a distinct class and is compartmentalized from the rest of the school day. Most
students have government class for perhaps one hour a day for two or maybe three years out of their entire experience in American schools. For example, the state of Ohio recently updated their academic standards for all subject levels for grades K-12. The standards display the desire for children to start learning about democracy through national symbols and holidays as early as kindergarten and by grade 12 to apply what they have learned, focusing the classroom learning on current events and recent history (“Academic” online).

As the current teaching standards and practices include using textbooks to teach students, even civics and government classes are using this method. Textbooks work well in teaching facts and can be a great resource for teachers, but far too often they are the sole way students are taught. Teachers need to continually challenge themselves to go beyond merely asking students to regurgitate facts and to teach them how to think critically about the subject.

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement and the National Center for Education Statistics conducted an international study in 1999 to assess the civic knowledge and engagement of fourteen year-olds from twenty-eight countries around the world. The results for the United States showed some interesting patterns. Seventy percent of the schools reported having civics-related class for ninth grade students, but only sixty-five percent of students said they have a social studies class every day, and the majority of ninth graders spend less than an hour a week studying for social studies classes. Over fifty percent of students also reported spending most of their time in those classes doing reading textbooks or filling out worksheets rather than writing letters to local officials or talking with government leaders (Baldi online). One of the most interesting statistics was that nearly eighty percent of the surveyed ninth grade students reported that voting in every election and showing respect for their government leaders were important for being a good citizen (Baldi online). What happens
between ages fourteen and eighteen, when students are old enough to vote and yet only around half of them do? (Table 6). The method of teaching civics finally catches up to us. While the ninth graders may theoretically believe it is important for good citizens to vote, this head knowledge does not translate into action textbooks have been over utilized. To illustrate the problems I see with this, let’s take a critical look at one of the most widely used government textbooks.

**Critique of Text:**

*Magruder’s American Government* is the high school level textbook of choice for many school districts, including Talawanda, and according to the publisher, it has been the number one textbook civics-text since 1917 (Walker online). Weighing in at six pounds and boasting 844 pages, the 2002 edition of the text is enough to intimidate even the most ambitious of students. Rob Walker recently wrote an article for *Slate* magazine offering a possible explanation for the *Magruder’s* mammoth size. He argues that state commissions making the decisions on texts are heavily influenced by outside groups trying to push their agendas for multiculturalism, religion, et cetera, so in order to satisfy the commissions and subsequently the interest groups, textbooks have expanded into the “800 pound gorilla” (Walker online) we have now. One expert astutely observed “no one punishes a publisher for having too much material in a textbook” (Walker online). Perhaps someone should start! No teacher should be expected to get through over eight hundred pages of material in a year, and no student can realistically be expected to absorb and fully comprehend that much information. Getting beyond the strictly textbook knowledge is key to active learning, and mandating a textbook as long as *Magruder’s* is only setting everyone up
for failure. *Magruder’s* efforts to be thorough are laudable, but reality dictates that hard
decisions be made between vital and non-vital information.

After overcoming the initial feeling of being overwhelmed and actually opening the text,
the immediate reaction is to want to shut it again. Not only were there fifteen pages outlining all
the information contained in the text, but each page within the twenty-five chapters was literally
covered with pictures, comics, quotes, charts, maps, questions, and some text as well. Walker
seems to agree: “My main impression as I went through *Magruder's* was of all the distractions
from the text. I don't think there's a single unbroken page of words in the whole book… And
maybe there's a lesson even in that: If the kids can figure out how to filter out the distractions of
polls and sound-bite-sized debates now, they'll have learned an extraordinarily useful skill”
(Walker online). While it is certainly a useful skill to be able to pick out the important things
from the abundance of information that bombards us everyday, hopefully students would find the
classroom to be a haven from over stimulation and not just another source of it.

One good aspect of the textbook is the attempt to emphasize application through the
summary before every section about why the material found in that section matters. However,
these short sentences are too broad and still leave the reader wondering, “So what?” The
explanation for why chapter one section one matters reads, “Government is essential to the
existence of human beings in a civilized society. What any particular government is like and
what that government does have an extraordinary impact on the lives of all people within its
reach” (McClenaghan 4). If only it were that simple, to just tell students government has an
impact on their lives and have them believe you and act on that knowledge! One of the reasons
America is in the position it is today with disinterest and distrust in government is because
Americans do not believe that government really impacts their daily lives, but simply reading
that sentence in the text is not going to convince anyone. This assertion needs to be backed up with examples and evidence of how and why it impacts everyone, and these facts are not found in the section. What does it mean to the student personally? Why can’t they drive as fast as they want down the highway? Why are they forbidden to vote until they turn eighteen? The obvious reason is that the government has established rules governing these behaviors, and students need to start thinking about this connection between government and regulations.

The editor might have attempted to address the issue with a tiny box called “You can make a difference” at the end of every chapter, but the placement is horrible if McClenaghan really wanted students to read the section and act on the information. It is on the very last page of the chapter with the chapter assessment; in other words, students would be looking at this page while studying for an exam on the chapter. Few students concerned about learning the information for a test is going to take the time to read a paragraph explaining that he should be doing something about what he has read. He is busy enough trying to memorize the fifty-some pages of the chapter for the test! He is most likely not in the mindset at the time to seriously consider action. The application of the information in the chapters need to be integrated into the chapter better so that students begin to think about their responses before they stress about the test. For example, the “You can make a difference” section for chapter fifteen is wonderful, asking the students to consider which government agencies and commissions affect their local community and to attempt to interview someone affiliated with the agency to learn more about the agency-community interaction (McClenaghan 443). However, the student already has twenty-two vocabulary words to memorize, and five sections of the chapter to learn. This text proves unequal to the task of mobilizing students, one of the main purposes of civic education.
Another problem with *Magruder’s* is that in all 844 pages, only 134 are dedicated to state and local government issues. Not only does it comprise a miniscule percentage of the total text, it is relegated to the last two chapters of the book, virtually assuring that no teacher will ever get far enough during the year to actually cover those chapters. Local government provides the easiest way to influence government and actually see how the students’ actions affect their lives and the lives of their friends and family. Take for example, the sixth-grade class at Bryan Elementary School in Morris, Alabama. The students were presented with the problem of attempting to get a traffic light installed near their school after a parents group and the school administration had failed to get results. Their teacher challenged them to take on the project, and they eventually contacted the local city council, the police department, the county sheriff’s office, the county planning office, and the state department of transportation. Even after completing the project and presenting their recommendations to the city council and police chief, they still had no traffic light. Displaying true civic virtue and understanding the spirit of American governance, the class did not give up there, but called the public officials every week until they got their light. (Quigley online) These students did not have the resources or the influence to affect such change at the national level, but they experienced for themselves what a little time and effort can do at the local level, and they saw tangible results. As Tip O’Neill once said, “All politics is local,” and students need to realize the potential of their enthusiasm and interest at the local level of government. This topic *must* be covered in government textbooks and not as an after-thought in the last two chapters of a book.

Another major flaw in *Magruder’s* textbook is that the only type of political participation it deals with directly is voting, although interest groups are also given a nod. It does include a whole chapter on voters and voter behavior, but there is a real problem when students are taught
that voting is their only means of input into the system. This is not to say that voting isn’t important; voting should be encouraged in the classroom. Voting is absolutely essential in the kind of representative democracy we have in the United States, and students should be encouraged to vote. Part of the impetus for this research project is that too few Americans exercise their hard-earned right to vote. Voting enhances national unity and power and enhances the relationship between the ruled and rulers by giving citizens a means to benefit from the ruler’s power (Ginsburg 27). Evidence: powerful congressional incumbents like the Speaker of the House are nearly undefeatable because the citizens know they are benefiting from their representative holding such an influential position in Congress. Voting also reminds citizens that they are the ones controlling state power (Ginsburg 42).

However, there are also problems with the voting system that all citizens must take into consideration, and students must begin to understand. Voting is the least demanding form of participation, and it shifts the agenda setting power away from the citizens into the hands of the state (Ginsburg 50). Americans have been taught for too many generations that civic engagement equals voting. This is simply not true. Input can be given in many other ways, through letter writing campaigns, working on election campaigns, attending community meetings, etc. By emphasizing voting to the exclusion of other forms of participation, schools and society have essentially limited their own influence. Elections formalize the character of popular influence, and they limit the scope of political participation. Intensity of opinion is lost by converting civic engagement from a “means of asserting demands to a collective statement of permission” (Ginsburg 183). Citizens cannot give input on anything not on the ballot, so agenda setting power becomes even more important. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the glorification of voting at the expense of other forms of participation is that it lulls citizens into
the belief that if they have punched their ballot, they have done their part. Participation becomes a once a year event instead of a continual process, yet in reality, they have given very little input into the political system besides supporting a particular candidate or referendum. While better than nothing, true civic engagement involves much more than making a few punches on a card once a year. Teaching students that voting is the main means of political participation is not helping the crisis of civic disengagement.

A Professional Opinion:

Besides the previous observations of Magruder’s shortcomings, a recent study by Jon Roland found several substantive errors in the text. Mr. Roland is president of the Constitution Society, a “private non-profit organization dedicated to research and public education on the principles of constitutional republican government” (Constitution Society online). In his testimony before the Texas State Board of Education, he noted first of all, that chapter three of the text addressed the “informal amendment” process (Roland online). In fact, there is no informal amendment process; the Constitution can only be amended through four specific methods. The five ways of informal amendment the text presents of congressional legislation, actions by the President, Supreme Court decisions, political party activity, and custom (McClenaghan 79) may influence the way we interpret the Constitution or apply it, but these processes certainly do not actually change the written Constitution. It is dangerous and absolutely false to give students the impression that the Constitution can change on the whim of political parties!

Mr. Roland also points out that the text uses the phrase “living Constitution” to mean a departure from compliance with the written Constitution at times (Roland online). Even the
concept of a living Constitution is controversial, as some people believe that the Constitution should be interpreted and applied as the Founders meant it to be and others feel it should adapted to the times. For example, commerce meant something very different when the Constitution was written than it does now. One ideology would argue that when interpreting the “commerce clause,” we must return to the original meaning, while another says the clause should be interpreted to apply to the current definition of commerce. Currently there is no consensus among scholars and practitioners as to which theory is correct. Students should be made aware of the debate before phrases like “living Constitution” are thrown around without context and proper definition.

*Magruder* even has problems defining terms as fundamental as constitutional rights found in the Bill of Rights. In chapter four the text reads, “First, the Constitution denies some powers to the National Government in so many words- expressly. Among them are the powers to levy duty on exports; prohibit freedom of religion, speech, press, or assembly…” (McClenaghan 91). The only problem with this statement is that part of it is false. The first amendment does not forbid the national government from prohibiting the freedom of religion but from enacting laws that establish a religion, a subtle but important distinction (Roland online). In discussing presidential powers, Chapter 14 also presents executive agreements as though they had the same force of law as treaties (McClenaghan 400), which is simply not true. Executive agreements are binding for those directly under the President, but they are not law and cannot be treated as such (Roland online).

The evaluation of the textbook could go on, but the point has been made; even disregarding the aesthetic problems with the book, many substantive problems remain. In their defense, the publishers of *Magruder’s* have addressed the issues presented by Mr. Roland in their
written response to the Board of Education. Regarding the “informal amendment” process presented in the text, the publishers have agreed to change the wording to say,

“Informal amendment is the process by which, through custom and practice, changes have been made over time in the interpretation of the Constitution. It does not involve adding actual amendments or any other written changes, nor is it specifically provided for in the Constitution itself. In addition, some Americans argue that this process is not in keeping with the intents of the Framers. Nevertheless, these informal "amendments" have developed as the result of the day-to-day, year-to-year experiences of government under the Constitution” (“Formal Response” online).

Likewise, in response to Mr. Roland’s concern about the definition of commerce at the writing of the constitution and the way it is interpreted now, they have agreed to include the fact that at the time, commerce was likely defined simply as trade (“Formal Response” online). While it is wonderful that Prentice Hall is willing to admit their mistakes and make improvements where necessary, the sad fact is that it is too late for the thousands of students who have been and will be taught untruths about American governance. The publisher may be able to come out with new editions every year with additions and corrections, but most schools cannot afford to replace their textbooks at the same rate. Therefore teachers for many years to come will have to use this book in a valiant effort to produce knowledgeable and engaged citizens. They deserve better, and so do American students. What can be done to improve the civic education system?

Recommendation:

Even with all of the problems and inadequacies in using textbooks, and specifically *Magruder’s American Government*, to teach government principles, textbooks are a good
resource for teachers to present the material in a systematic manner, and textbooks allow students a visual presentation and a guide for studying. In the final analysis, it is not the textbook that matter so much, but the way in which it is utilized. It is important to understand the damage that can be done in the critical years between fourteen and eighteen if texts are the only teaching tool utilized, especially if the information presented in the text is inaccurate. The high school years are critical, because somewhere in there students start to lose their interest in government and their sense of efficacy. They seem to have it at fourteen (Baldi online), and then it disappears after high school, so what happens?

During these years of any student’s growth and development, he begins to challenge things he previously would have accepted without question. Why should he care what the 3/5 Compromise was about or how bills are passed through Congress? Now is the time to show him why government matters to him by getting him involved in community improvement projects like the sixth graders in Alabama. Let him see that he really can make a difference at the local, state, and eventually national level by his involvement and engagement in the political process. Use the textbook, but supplement it with other activities and projects.

As their studies progress, students are also beginning to realize that this country does not employ a direct democracy method. A great way to demonstrate what representative democracy encompasses to use a student council or class governing body as a “real live” example. Have the students get involved either in helping to run another student’s campaign, or running for a position themselves, or working with student council to make some improvement in the school. Student councils are scaled-down model democracies that can’t exactly represent “real world” democracy, but they are still an important way for students to see the connection between their
action and changes in issues they care about and in their environment. This is the key to future civic engagement.

In addition to integrating project, activities, and experience with democracy on large or small scales, states and local school systems would be wise to consider expanding the “We, the People…” program facilitated by the Center for Civic Education. The mission of the Center is “to promote an enlightened and responsible citizenry committed to democratic principles and actively engaged in the practice of democracy in the United States and other countries” (Center online). The “We, the People…” program is a class for high school students, and it promotes the mission statement of the Center by teaching students constitutional and governmental principles and then asking them to use that knowledge to develop answers to questions regarding constitutional issues. The class is divided up into six units, each specializing in a different aspect of the Constitution and corresponding to the six units in the textbook published by the Center for Civic Education. While all students study each of the six units in the beginning of the year, once they have completed the text, they begin to focus on one specific area of the Constitution, from the philosophical and historical foundations of the American political system (Unit 1) to how the values and principles in the Constitution shape American institutions and practices (Unit 3) to what roles citizens play in American democracy (Unit 6). The Center sponsors competitions at the local, state, and national level that allows the students to use their answers to the questions as an opening statement. The format of the competition at all levels resembles a congressional hearing with five minutes allotted for the opening statement and then either five, seven or ten minutes for follow-up questions from the judges, depending on the level of competition. Here are two examples of the type of question students are asked to answer at the national level.

Unit Four: How Have the Protections of the Bill of Rights been Developed and Expanded?
“There are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but also a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that ‘an unjust law is no law at all.’”*

Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote those words from Birmingham City Jail in defense of the idea of civil disobedience. Do you agree or disagree with his reasoning? Why?

- What is the relationship of the doctrine of civil disobedience to the natural rights philosophy?
- What limits, if any, should be placed on protests that use civil disobedience?

Unit Six: What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?

In an influential book, Robert Putnam issued this challenge to his fellow Americans: “Let us find ways to ensure that by 2010 many more Americans will participate in the public life of our communities—running for office, attending public meetings, serving on committees, campaigning in elections, and even voting.” How do you think we can meet that challenge?

- Compare Putnam’s ideas of good citizenship with those of Alexis de Tocqueville.
- In what ways, if any, is the fulfillment of one’s private interests connected to one’s participation in public, political life? (We the People online).

Not only does this format for civic education facilitate and require critical thinking about American governance, it gives students the opportunity to showcase their knowledge and understanding to practicing judges, lawyers, lawmakers, and others who agree to evaluate the competitors. Students must improve their public speaking and quick thinking skills in order to
excel in these competitions, and the challenge stimulates students in ways few classes taught purely from textbooks can. Participating in this program is what first sparked my interest in government and politics, it is the reason I am currently majoring in public administration, and I have seen it affect numerous other students in the same way. The Honorable Joseph Lieberman had this response upon meeting students involved in the competition: “When I first had the opportunity to meet with these Trumball high schoolers, I was struck by the students’ optimism and thoughtfulness about our great constitutional democracy. Their strong sense of civic responsibility provides me with a great sense of hope for our future” (Center online). While I realize this program may not fit the academic needs and capabilities of all students, a wider implementation will help more students find their potential and interest in civics. For the classes in which the program would be inappropriate, the aforementioned principles of integrating hands-on projects and applications with the facts learned from the textbook should be utilized. By enabling all students to have closer contact with the government and to see for themselves how their time and effort makes a difference, I also see hope for our future.
CONCLUSION: Trickle-Down Theory

In his First Inaugural Address in 1861, Abraham Lincoln said, “This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it” (Daintith 150). By nearly all accounts, the country is a very different place today than the world Lincoln lived in and led, especially in regard to the political climate. The nation has been through two world wars, a severe depression, several extended and controversial military conflicts, and scandal, not to mention that today’s politicians are hardly expected to keep their campaign promises. It is no wonder that far from exercising their right to revolution when dissatisfied with government, the majority of Americans do not even make it to the ballot box on election day. Participation in political parties, civic organizations, and other forms of engagement in the political process have all been decreasing for several decades. Public trust in government has followed the same downward pattern. These trends are troubling, because they have led to a decline in social capital and the perception that government is run by the minority instead of way the government was meant to function with majority rule and equal rights for the minority. Political disengagement also contributes to the isolation of public officials. They can easily become out of touch with the will of the people when they receive no input from their constituents. This is not the situation Lincoln envisioned for the future of America, and it is not the way representative democracy was intended to operate.

The downward slide does not have to continue. With both public officials and citizens doing their part, America can move toward a democracy that represents more of its citizens’ opinions
and values. As the leaders of the nation, politicians must make the first strides in repairing the relationship. They must be more responsive to the input they do receive. They must improve the communication mechanisms between officials and constituents. They must commit themselves to running positive campaigns and following through on campaign promises. They must also be responsible about admitting their mistakes, because they will make mistakes. No one can reasonably expect perfection from any public official, but Americans can expect honesty and integrity. This is what they will have to receive, as well, if they are to begin trusting government again and making the sacrifice of their time and effort to stay informed and politically engaged.

However, politicians and civil servants can only take the process so far. The American public has to do their part by making those sacrifices and getting involved. Opportunities abound; they can join a community activism group, help on a political campaign, attend public meetings, write letters or e-mails to representatives, and the list goes on. The only limit to the possibilities is their imaginations. Honestly, though, it will probably take more than a commitment from a few public officials to improve to convince the majority of American adults that the government really is progressing. The pattern of broken promises is so engrained in the American psyche that they are likely to distrust even the improvement they see.

While not giving up hope for this generation, a more effective approach for a long-term solution to the problem is through educating the next generation of voters and politicians. The public education system has been used as a vehicle for change and imparting values since its inception before the United States was an independent nation. The influence was at first for religious purposes, then patriotic, then social and economic, then for human resource management, but the basic pattern has continued through the centuries.
Public schools can also be used as an effective tool for change today. This can come specifically through changing the way students are taught about the government and their role in it. American citizenship is not passive, so civic education should not be taught passively. Textbooks, while serving an important function, should not be the primary means students learn about American democracy. This is especially true for high school students, since between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, students seem to lose their sense of efficacy and interest in participating in the political system. High school students should be encouraged to become involved in their communities and should be given opportunities to see how their involvement can affect issues they care about. The “We, the People” program sponsored by the Center for Civic Education is an excellent way for more advanced students to put their knowledge about the government and civics to work in a competitive setting.

Civic education can also be improved by decreasing the emphasis on voting as the only mechanism for input and by increasing the emphasis on state and local government. These levels of government affect the students more directly, and they can more easily see the impact they can have at the state and local level. This approach will produce positive results for the future, because by the time students reach the age for high school and college, their ideas and conceptions about government are being cemented. If they are not educated about the positive role they can play in the government at these stages, it will be much harder later to convince them that political participation is in their best interest. On the other hand, with a clear view of how they can be an influence in their own governance, young Americans can lead the way toward a more active populace. Once one generation is provided a full opportunity to realize their efficacy, they can pass these values on to their children who will also have the benefit of the
improved civic education system. If even though this approach will not achieve a perfect voter turnout, it will at least give everyone the chance to make an informed decision.

This “Trickle-Down Theory” focuses our resources and attention on the next generation of potential voters and activists, because the effects of it will be not only immediate but will be felt by generations yet to come. In this way, through the use of civic education, America can recover from its downward spiral of negativity and distrust. I have hope for the future, and it rests in the hands of our youth. Let us teach them well.
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### Table 1: Efficacy

**Politics is Too Complicated 1952-2000**

|       | '52 | '54 | '56 | '58 | '60 | '62 | '64 | '66 | '68 | '70 | '72 | '74 | '76 | '78 | '80 | '82 | '84 | '86 | '88 | '90 | '92 | '94 | '96 | '98 | '00 |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Agree | 71  | **  | 64  | **  | 59  | **  | 67  | 69  | 71  | 73  | 74  | 72  | 71  | 72  | 70  | **  | 71  | **  | 70  | 66  | 66  | 65  | 63  | 73  | 60  |
| Disagree | 28  | **  | 36  | **  | 41  | **  | 32  | 27  | 29  | 26  | 26  | 27  | 26  | 28  | **  | 29  | **  | 21  | 24  | 27  | 25  | 28  | 20  | 32  |
| Neither | -   | **  | -   | **  | -   | **  | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | **  | -   | **  | -   | 8   | 10  | 7   | 9   | 10  | 7   |
| Don't Know, Depends | 1   | **  | 0   | **  | 0   | **  | 1   | 4   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 1   | 2   | 2   | **  | 0   | **  | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |

**PERCENTAGE WITHIN STUDY YEAR**

Table 5B.1

Source: The National Election Studies

Link to the ASCII text version of this table

**QUESTION TEXT:**

"Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on."
Table 2: Political Engagement

General Interest in Public Affairs 1960-2002

|                      | '60  | '62  | '64  | '66  | '70  | '72  | '74  | '76  | '78  | '80  | '82  | '84  | '86  | '88  | '90  | '92  | '94  | '96  | '98  | '00  | '02  |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Hardly at All        | 37   | 42   | 11   | 17   | 18   | **   | 11   | 11   | 12   | 17   | 15   | 15   | 14   | 15   | 15   | 16   | 11   | 14   | 13   | 12   | 16   | 9    |
| Only Now and Then    | -    | -    | 17   | 18   | 19   | **   | 16   | 14   | 18   | 25   | 23   | 21   | 23   | 24   | 25   | 23   | 21   | 23   | 26   | 25   | 29   | 22   |
| Some of the Time     | 42   | 42   | 42   | 30   | 31   | **   | 36   | 36   | 31   | 34   | 35   | 35   | 36   | 35   | 37   | 33   | 41   | 35   | 39   | 37   | 36   | 42   |
| Most of the Time     | 21   | 16   | 30   | 35   | 33   | **   | 36   | 39   | 38   | 23   | 26   | 29   | 26   | 26   | 22   | 27   | 26   | 28   | 21   | 27   | 20   | 27   |
| Don't Know           | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | **   | 0    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    |

PERCENTAGE WITHIN STUDY YEAR
Table 6D.5
Source: The National Election Studies
Link to the ASCII text version of this table

QUESTION TEXT:

1964 AND LATER: "Some people seem to follow (1964: think about) what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?"

1960, 1962: "We'd also like to know how much attention you pay to what's going on in politics generally. I mean from day to day, when there isn't any big election campaign going on, would you say you follow politics very closely, fairly closely, or not much at all?"
Table 3: Trust in Government (a)

Do People in Government Waste Tax Money 1958-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'58</th>
<th>'60</th>
<th>'62</th>
<th>'64</th>
<th>'66</th>
<th>'68</th>
<th>'70</th>
<th>'72</th>
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<th>'96</th>
<th>'98</th>
<th>'00</th>
<th>'02</th>
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<td>47</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>78</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some :</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Not Very Much:</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know :</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PERCENTAGE WITHIN STUDY YEAR
Table 5A.3
Source: The National Election Studies
Link to the ASCII text version of this table

QUESTION TEXT:

"Do you think that people in the government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?"
Table 4: Trust in Government (b)

Are Government Officials Crooked 1958-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'58</th>
<th>'60</th>
<th>'62</th>
<th>'64</th>
<th>'66</th>
<th>'68</th>
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<th>'92</th>
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<th>'96</th>
<th>'98</th>
<th>'00</th>
<th>'02</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quite a Few:</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Many:</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly Any:</td>
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<td>**</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know:</td>
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<td>**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PERCENTAGE WITHIN STUDY YEAR
Table 5A.4
Source: The National Election Studies
Link to the ASCII text version of this table

QUESTION TEXT:

"Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are (1958-1972: a little) crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked (1958-1972: at all)?"
### Table 5: Trust in Government (c)

**Is the Government Run for the Benefit of All 1964-2002**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'64</th>
<th>'66</th>
<th>'68</th>
<th>'70</th>
<th>'72</th>
<th>'74</th>
<th>'76</th>
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<th>'92</th>
<th>'94</th>
<th>'96</th>
<th>'98</th>
<th>'00</th>
<th>'02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few Big Interests</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit of All</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know, Depends</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PERCENTAGE WITHIN STUDY YEAR**

Table 5A.2

Source: The National Election Studies

Link to the [ASCII text version of this table](#)

### QUESTION TEXT:

"Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?"
Table 6: Voter Turnout 1948-2002

PERCENT AMONG DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS WHO RESPONDED:  ‘Yes, voted’

| % OF GROUP:          | '48 | '52 | '54 | '56 | '58 | '60 | '62 | '64 | '66 | '68 | '70 | '72 | '74 | '76 | '78 | '80 | '82 | '84 | '86 | '88 | '90 | '92 | '94 | '96 | '98 | '00 | '02 |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Males                |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Females              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| '48 '52 '54 '56 '58 |   69|    80|  ** 80|  80|   67|   84|   64|   80|   65|   78|   62|   76|   56|   77|   55|   73|   63|   74|   53|   72|   49|   77|   57|   74|   52|   75|   68|
| '70 '72 '74 '76 '78 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| '80 '82 '84 '86 '88 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| '90 '92 '94 '96 '98 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| '00 '02              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Whites               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Blacks               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Grade Sch./Some High Sch. | '48 | '52 | '54 | '56 | '58 | '60 | '62 | '64 | '66 | '68 | '70 | '72 | '74 | '76 | '78 | '80 | '82 | '84 | '86 | '88 | '90 | '92 | '94 | '96 | '98 | '00 | '02 |
| High School Diploma  |   56|    62|  ** 60|   49|   67|   51|   68|   52|   60|   49|   58|   42|   60|   48|   59|   45|   58|   45|   50|   36|   55|   36|   52|   49|   51|   56|
| Some College, no Degree | '79 | '87|  ** 90|   70|   88|   72|   89|   69|   79|   71|   84|   59|   83|   62|   76|   67|   81|   56|   78|   53|   83|   61|   79|   53|   77|   61|
| College Degree/ Post Grad | ** 93 | ** 89|   77|   93|   72|   88|   81|   89|   83|   90|   75|   87|   72|   91|   77|   91|   72|   92|   67|   93|   79|   89|   72|   92|   85|
| Income 0-16 Percentile | '48 | '52 | '54 | '56 | '58 | '60 | '62 | '64 | '66 | '68 | '70 | '72 | '74 | '76 | '78 | '80 | '82 | '84 | '86 | '88 | '90 | '92 | '94 | '96 | '98 | '00 | '02 |
| Income 17-33 Percentile | '55 | '69|  ** 65|   46|   71|   47|   73|   54|   66|   54|   63|   49|   65|   46|   68|   54|   69|   46|   59|   42|   68|   46|   61|   43|   69|   **|
| Income 34-67 Percentile | '61 | '76|  ** 76|   59|   81|   62|   79|   63|   79|   56|   70|   50|   71|   56|   72|   66|   74|   53|   71|   47|   77|   55|   71|   53|   70|   **|
| Income 68-95 Percentile | '74 | '85|  ** 83|   71|   85|   68|   86|   72|   87|   72|   86|   65|   80|   61|   81|   68|   84|   63|   82|   57|   88|   67|   86|   59|   86|   **|
| Income 96-100 Percentile | '82 | '95|  ** 90|   91|   94|   84|   88|   82|   93|   78|   90|   75|   91|   73|   87|   68|   91|   65|   96|   58|   90|   82|   97|   80|   88|   **|
| '48 '52 '54 '56 '58 |   69|    80|  ** 80|  80|   67|   84|   64|   80|   65|   78|   62|   76|   56|   77|   55|   73|   63|   74|   53|   72|   49|   77|   57|   74|   52|   75|   68|
| '70 '72 '74 '76 '78 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| '80 '82 '84 '86 '88 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| '90 '92 '94 '96 '98 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| '00 '02              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Professionals        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| White Collar         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | ** 84 | ** 84|   64|   90|  ** 86| ** 85| ** 85|   73|   85|   70|   85|   68|   86|   72|   87|   71|   86|   61|   88|   71|   87|   70|   84|   **|     |     |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Blue Collar             | **   | 76   | **   | 71   | 57   | 80   | **   | 75   | **   | 69   | 55   | 69   | 45   | 66   | 47   | 64   | 54   | 65   | 42   | 54   | 39   | 68   | 47   | 64   | 46   | 66   | **   |
| Unskilled               | **   | 54   | **   | 56   | 63   | 71   | **   | 63   | **   | 65   | 45   | 57   | 30   | 58   | 37   | 68   | 53   | 60   | 25   | 60   | 38   | 59   | 44   | 45   | 33   | 57   | **   |
| Farmers                 | **   | 72   | **   | 70   | 67   | 78   | **   | 71   | **   | 68   | 46   | 76   | 59   | 68   | 61   | 62   | 57   | 63   | 44   | 69   | 45   | 63   | 50   | 61   | 41   | 68   | **   |
| Housewives              | **   | 70   | **   | 68   | 47   | 69   | **   | 75   | **   | 73   | 53   | 67   | 47   | 65   | 54   | 67   | 57   | 70   | 51   | 69   | 45   | 67   | 53   | 68   | 54   | 66   | **   |
| Union Households        | 73   | 76   | **   | 76   | 61   | 77   | **   | 83   | 63   | 76   | 60   | 75   | 50   | 77   | 57   | 75   | 65   | 79   | 55   | 75   | 53   | 85   | 65   | 82   | 66   | 77   | 62   |
| Non-Union Households    | 62   | 73   | **   | 72   | 57   | 80   | **   | 76   | 62   | 76   | 59   | 72   | 54   | 70   | 54   | 71   | 59   | 72   | 52   | 69   | 46   | 73   | 54   | 71   | 49   | 72   | 63   |
| South                   | 48   | **   | 53   | 37   | 66   | 47   | 62   | 53   | 68   | 47   | 61   | 42   | 64   | 48   | 69   | 55   | 66   | 44   | 57   | 36   | 65   | 47   | 65   | 38   | 70   | 55   |
| Nonsouth                | **   | 81   | **   | 79   | 64   | 83   | 66   | 82   | 65   | 79   | 64   | 77   | 57   | 74   | 57   | 72   | 63   | 77   | 57   | 76   | 52   | 80   | 60   | 77   | 59   | 74   | 66   |
| Born 1975 or later      | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   |
| Born 1959-1974          | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | 26   | 57   | 29   | 53   | 29   | 49   | 26   | 65   | 42   | 64   | 42   | 68   | 61   |
| Born 1943-1958          | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | 48   | 38   | 61   | 41   | 66   | 38   | 62   | 43   | 63   | 56   | 74   | 47   | 73   | 50   | 78   | 63   | 77   | 58   | 79   | 75   |
| Born 1927-1942          | 41   | 58   | **   | 58   | 36   | 70   | 49   | 71   | 58   | 75   | 58   | 77   | 53   | 79   | 61   | 78   | 68   | 80   | 66   | 77   | 62   | 83   | 69   | 81   | 76   | 82   | 77   |
| Born 1911-1926          | 61   | 73   | **   | 74   | 60   | 83   | 62   | 83   | 69   | 84   | 66   | 79   | 66   | 79   | 68   | 82   | 73   | 83   | 72   | 81   | 61   | 81   | 70   | 86   | 69   | 80   | 74   |
| Born 1895-1910          | 70   | 78   | **   | 78   | 66   | 82   | 68   | 82   | 67   | 76   | 65   | 73   | 63   | 74   | 61   | 76   | 60   | 69   | 64   | 70   | 50   | 72   | 62   | 81   | 49   | 59   | 100  |
| Born before 1895        | 64   | 77   | **   | 76   | 67   | 78   | 66   | 77   | 57   | 62   | 61   | 55   | 56   | 47   | 73   | 50   | 43   | 100  | 0    | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   | **   |
| Democrats (incl leaners)| **   | 72   | **   | 73   | 59   | 79   | 60   | 76   | 62   | 75   | 58   | 73   | 54   | 73   | 55   | 72   | 64   | 74   | 56   | 69   | 50   | 78   | 54   | 73   | 53   | 74   | 62   |
| Independents & Apoliticals | **   | 49   | **   | 55   | 32   | 57   | 36   | 55   | 45   | 58   | 45   | 51   | 29   | 55   | 33   | 49   | 30   | 54   | 26   | 45   | 22   | 56   | 34   | 43   | 36   | 48   | 34   |
| Republicans (incl leaners)| **   | 83   | **   | 78   | 63   | 87   | 69   | 87   | 71   | 82   | 69   | 81   | 63   | 79   | 67   | 80   | 67   | 80   | 57   | 77   | 50   | 79   | 64   | 80   | 56   | 79   | 69   |

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(underline) indicates 50 or fewer total respondents within group

** indicates question not asked or no cases within group

Table 6a.2.2
Source: The National Election Studies
Link to the ASCII text version of this table.
NOTE: variable used for race grouping has changed. See Table 1A.3

(Table generated: 13SEP03)