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# Beyond the Classroom: Do the Iowa Civic Virtues Standards Achieve Their Goals?

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**BEYOND THE CLASSROOM:**

**DO IOWA CIVIC VIRTUES STANDARDS ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS?**

A Thesis Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Designation

University Honors

Damien Foster

University of Northern Iowa

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Entitled: Beyond the Classroom: Do Iowa's civic virtue standards achieve their goals?

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University Honors.

Approved by:

Dr. Donna Hoffman, Honors Thesis Advisor

Dr. Jessica Moon Asa, Director, University Honors Program

**Abstract**

Civic education is essential in shaping informed and active citizens, and evaluating its impact is equally as fundamental. This study examines the connection between the Iowa civic virtues standards and the civic behaviors and attitudes of recent high school graduates. Through an online survey of college students in Iowa, findings suggest that while the standards effectively communicate civic values, there is a gap in translating this knowledge into practical engagement, particularly in political participation. Additionally, the rising influence of digital media on students' political decisions highlights the need for enhanced digital data and information literacy education. This study provides many insights into the opportunities for civic education in Iowa, specifically in the importance of bridging the gap between an understanding of civic values versus the practical application of said values to equip students to become active participants in their civic lives.

**Introduction**

As citizens in a democracy, our ability to participate in governmental processes are not just a privilege but a fundamental right. Yet, to effectively engage in civic life, we must first be equipped with the knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of our democratic system. This is where civic education plays a crucial role, particularly in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of young citizens. The goal of this project is to analyze the extent to which recent high school graduates exhibit the behaviors and attitudes that the Iowa civic virtues standards are trying to achieve. To understand how well recent high school graduates are embodying the civic virtues promoted by the standards, many were asked about their engagement with the American political system. This research helps investigate whether or not students are showing the civic behaviors and attitudes the standards seek to reinforce. Based on data gathered, the Iowa civic virtues standards are effective to some extent in achieving their goals. Students demonstrate belief in civic engagement and the importance of it, but there exists a gap between this belief and actual participation. Additionally, the data shows that there is a noticeable shift in influence towards digital sources for political information. Understanding these results highlight areas for improvement in preparing students for active Iowa citizenship.

**Literature**

Political Socialization

In a democratic society, the informed and active participation of citizens is not just desirable but absolutely vital for the decision-making process. Democracy is based upon the principle of self-governance, where the people have the power to shape the policies, laws, and leadership that govern their lives. However, for this system to work effectively, citizens must be well-informed about the issues and candidates on which they are voting (Syvertsen et al. 2009, 34). Political socialization plays a critical role in this regard by ensuring that individuals come to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens. It imparts a deep sense of civic duty, instilling the belief that active participation is not just a choice but an obligation. Without effective political socialization, a democracy may struggle to sustain itself (Syvertsen et al. 2009, 33). For a society to survive there is a baseline of political socialization that must

be achieved. This baseline of socialization will promote an engaged and informed citizenry, armed with a sense of civic duty, critical thinking abilities, and a willingness to engage with diverse opinions (Duke et al. 2009, 163). This is the heartbeat of a functioning democratic system and these qualities encourage democratic processes that are not only carried out, but are also conducted with integrity, wisdom, and the best interests of the society as a whole in mind.

Political socialization is the term used to describe the gradual formation of individuals' political identities, values, and behaviors, which tend to persist throughout their lives. This process of informal learning is virtually universal and begins in early childhood (Neundorf and Smets 2017). While there is currently a little debate on how early these socialization experiences begin, it is clear that they leave a significant impact on one's early years. From a very young age, individuals are exposed to influential factors that shape their political attitudes and identities for years to come (Neundorf and Smets 2017). By the time children reach the age of seven or eight, they become conscious of external influences that demand support, obedience, and respect (Neundorf et al. 2016, 923). Although their understanding of these influences may be somewhat rudimentary, this awareness paves the way for the development of other political ideas from an early age. Parents, friends, educational experiences, and peers all play a crucial role in shaping an individual's political socialization during their formative years (Langton and Jennings 1968, 854). This politicization can manifest in simple ways, such as adhering to traffic laws to avoid the negative consequences of breaking said laws, but it remains effective in laying the groundwork for more sophisticated understandings later in life, such as understanding the reasons behind obeying these laws thus avoiding the consequences of breaking them.

With this early impact of socialization from a very young age, children start to develop a basic awareness and understanding of political authorities and institutions. These various factors, including societal norms, prevailing political debates, and international concerns, exert significant influence on their political socialization (Neundorf and Smets 2017). Initially, children's awareness of political authorities is, once again, very rudimentary, with the president being a commonly recognized figure (Niemi and Sobieszek 1977, 212). However, this dynamic undergoes a notable shift as children progress through later

grades in elementary school. They start to acknowledge institutions more prominently than individual personalities, leading to a heightened awareness of shortcomings in individual leaders and disparities in the legal system (Niemi and Sobieszek 1977, 212). This trend persists into their teenage years, where adolescents tend to view political figures with a more realistic perspective, as opposed to the idealized perceptions of young children. It is noteworthy that adolescents tend to maintain higher levels of trust and lower cynicism compared to adults. While there may be some debate regarding the endpoint of political socialization, most scholars generally agree that it is an ongoing and lifelong process, with external factors continuing to influence individuals' political identities throughout their lives (Neundorf and Smets 2017). It is clear to see that political socialization shapes individuals' understanding of political authorities and institutions at many points throughout one's life.

## Schools and Political Socialization

Among the numerous factors influencing political socialization, I aim to delve into the impact of educational experiences. This aspect remains a topic of debate among scholars, yet it is generally acknowledged that while family and home environments are often considered primary agents of socialization, schools also hold a significant secondary role in this process (Neundorf and Smets 2017). Education exhibits a strong correlation with political knowledge, interest, voter turnout, and various forms of political participation. In fact, some studies even suggest that schools assume the foremost position in imparting political information to students, surpassing the influence of family, peers, and mass media (Ehman 1980, 101). This highlights the importance of educational experiences in shaping individuals' political socialization. While the evidence in this area may be complex, recent data suggests that the time spent in elementary school has a more pronounced effect on the formation of political ideals compared to middle and high school (Neundorf and Smets 2017). It is possible that when middle and high school courses offer students new information, it may not offer much related to the socialization process. While education can significantly impact political knowledge and interest, it is important to differentiate between political socialization and information gathering. It is the idea that by the time students are in

high school, the information that they are exposed to does little to socialize them further despite increasing their overall knowledge of the subject.

The idea that middle and high school courses have minimal impact on students' socialization is again, a complex topic with inconclusive outcomes. However, there is a large body of research indicating otherwise as instruction in politics, particularly at the high school level, can enhance an individual's sense of political competence and influence their support for democracy (Langton and Jennings 1968, 853). The underlying theory here is that by high school, students possess the cognitive capacity to engage with political concepts beyond the individual or institution. Studies have shown that civics classes have a nearly consistent impact on specific political skills and knowledge (Duke et al. 2009, 166). This is not an outcome that would occur had this coursework not offered any new meaningful information to students to further build upon previous socialization as some scholars have argued. Additionally, an experimental course designed to introduce modern political science in high school classrooms has demonstrated an effect on political knowledge and skill, albeit with less influence on political attitude (Ehman 1980, 103). Various experimental methods have produced observable short-term cognitive and affective changes with similar effects. While the outcomes are a mix of both positive and negative results, it is undeniable that students undergo political socialization during their high school years, regardless of the extent of its impact.

<div align="center">Civic Education</div>

Even with the ongoing debate surrounding the extent of political socialization beyond elementary school, it is evident that civic education fosters increased political engagement in students (Neundorf and Smets 2017). Research suggests that civic education not only increases civic engagement in democratic processes but also contributes to a deeper understanding of democratic principles. In its broadest sense, "civic education" encompasses all the processes that shape people's beliefs, commitments, abilities, and actions as members or potential members of communities (Adler and Goggin 2005, 238). Civic education is a necessary piece in the complex puzzle that creates a sense of civic duty and responsibility among individuals and encourages them to actively participate in democratic processes. For the purposes of this

project, "civic education" pertains to deliberate instructional programs within schools or colleges, as well as other forms of citizen preparation that extend beyond the formal classroom setting (Adler and Goggin 2005, 239). This definition encompasses a broad range of experiences designed to build civic knowledge and attitudes among students. In addition to traditional classroom instruction, civic education may include extracurricular activities, community service, and experiential learning opportunities. Civic education also wields a substantial influence on the political interests and orientations of young individuals, as schools are entrusted with a vital role in cultivating and upholding civic equality (O'Connor 2012, 13). Much like political socialization, civic education within schools is indispensable for the proper functioning of a democracy. It is imperative for citizens to have an understanding of the foundations and workings of our governmental system in order to actively participate in it (Syvertsen et al. 2009, 53). Civic education builds upon socialization to develop those attitudes and habits which promote civic participation and an understanding of democratic principles.

Despite the positive impact of civic education, numerous young individuals do not come from politically active families, placing them at a disadvantage in developing political preferences and becoming engaged in politics (Neundorf et al. 2016, 924). However, civic education may serve as a powerful counterbalance to this disparity, with research indicating that it effectively mitigates inequalities in family-based socialization concerning political engagement (Neundorf et al. 2016, 924). Taking a broader perspective, national samples reveal that civic education taught in the classroom emerges as a more influential agent of socialization, particularly benefiting lower socioeconomic status groups (Ehman 1980, 103). These findings offer encouraging insights, underscoring the positive impact of civic education classes on the political engagement of young citizens, even beyond their secondary education.

Civic virtues encompass a set of moral and ethical qualities that individuals practice to promote the improvement within their communities and society as a whole. Civic virtues play a pivotal role in maintaining functioning democracy, as they encourage citizens to actively engage in the political process, aid their fellow citizens, and foster a sense of social cohesion (Fitz 2022, 50). By upholding civic virtues, individuals not only enhance their own lives but also the lives of all those around them. In high school,

teaching civic virtues is essential to instill in students the values and habits necessary for active and responsible citizenship (Fitz 2022, 61). Creating a sense of civic duty and encouraging active participation in the democratic process can give students the tools to become responsible and engaged members of society.

## Iowa High Schools

In Iowa, civic education is predominantly imparted through the compulsory half-unit course in American government required for high school graduation. This course encompasses a wide array of topics related to the American political system, as defined by the National Council for the Social Studies (2013). Under the Iowa core standard 9-12, titled "Apply Civic Virtues and Democratic Principles," four 21st-century skills constitute the core of this standard, serving a focal point for this project. Table 1 below provides a list of these standards directly from the Iowa Core Standards.

Table 1: 9-12 Civics and Government

| Apply Civic Virtues and Democratic Principles |
| --- |
| **SS-Gov.9-12.19.** Evaluate the effectiveness of political action in changing government and policy, such as voting, debate, contacting officials, campaign contributions, protest, civil disobedience, and any alternative methods to participation. |
| **SS-Gov.9-12.20.** Explain the significance of civic values to a well-functioning democracy including concepts such as conviction vs. compromise, majority rule vs. minority rights, state interests vs. individual interests, rights vs. responsibilities, and other related topics. |
| **SS-Gov.9-12.21.** Explain the mechanisms of political socialization in American democracy such as the effects of the family, school, community, and media in influencing one's political decisions. |
| **SS-Gov.9-12.22.** Identify and evaluate the contributions of Iowans who have played a role in promoting civic and democratic principles. |

Note: **SS-Gov.9-12.22.** will not be assessed in this project
Source: Iowa Department of Education (DoE). 2017. *K-12 Iowa Core in Social Studies*. Accessed November 10th, 2023. https://history.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/history-education-pss-socialstudiesstandards.pdf.

Educational standards serve as the guiding path for the why and how of student learning. It is not an endpoint in itself as the aim of a curriculum, including adherence to educational standards, is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for their success in life (Stabback et al. 2011, 2). Educational standards form an integral part of this process, providing a framework that

ensures a consistent and comprehensive educational experience. The true measures of curriculum success are discernible in the quality of learning attained by students and the ways in which they apply that learning to their personal growth and to foster positive social change while incorporating these educational standards (Stabback et al. 2011, 2). Educational standards serve as benchmarks, offering clear expectations for what students should know and be able to do at various stages of their educational journey. By aligning curriculum with their standards, educators can better tailor their instructional approaches, ensuring that students not only meet but also exceed academic benchmarks. In the case of the civic education standards, the primary objective is to empower young individuals to cultivate the capability to make informed and rational decisions as active citizens in a culturally diverse, democratic society within an interdependent global context, as articulated by the National Council for the Social Studies (2013). These conceptual underpinnings, in conjunction with Table 1, provide a contextual framework for understanding a part of the goals of the Iowa social studies standards.

Testing the Standards

The purpose of this project was to assess the extent to which the Iowa high school social studies standards achieves its objectives concerning civic virtues. To carry out this analysis, data was gathered from recent Iowa graduates who have been exposed to the civic virtue standards. Through a survey, it was gauged to what extent they exhibit desired behaviors and attitudes as outlined in the standards. These questions addressed three standards that are the civic virtues standards, and a combination of both quantitative and free response questions have been employed to ensure a comprehensive dataset for analysis. Finally, the data was categorized into two groups: those who demonstrate the behaviors and attitudes advocated by the standards and those who do not. Categorizing respondents based on their alignment with these standards is to answer the research question: To what extent do recent Iowa high school graduates exhibit the civic behaviors and attitudes that the civic virtue standards are seeking to achieve?

**Methodology**

To address the research questions at hand, my approach involved gathering data from a diverse pool of college students across Iowa through an online survey. This survey was a convenience sample circulated through the University of Northern Iowa with help from faculty members who have connections to me, my faculty advisor Dr. Hoffman, and those within the social studies field. I articulated the purpose and scope of this research to these faculty members, while simultaneously seeking their support in sharing the survey among their students to ensure a comprehensive and varied dataset. Additionally, I shared the survey informally among peers to enhance the scope and diversity of responses.

The survey itself was administered using Qualtrics software, chosen for its user-friendly interface and compatibility across various devices, including laptops, tablets, and mobile devices. This choice ensured a seamless and accessible survey-taking experience for participants, while also affording me a range of data collection and analysis tools for more accurate data interpretation. The survey opened with two demographic questions, inquiring whether respondents attended an Iowa high school and specifying their high school graduation year. These initial questions served the purpose of refining the dataset by excluding data that falls outside the project's scope. Individuals who did not attend an Iowa high school or graduated before 2018 were not impacted by the standards under examination and, thus, were not included in the dataset. Subsequently, the survey incorporated a combination of closed ended and open ended questions that align with the three Iowa civic virtue standards under assessment (see Appendix).

The process of actually dispersing the survey was rather simple. I spent the first two weeks of the Spring 2024 semester communicating with various professors who had agreed to disperse this survey to their classrooms.  This was done in order to create cohesion and familiarity with the process and expectations before sharing it with students. Then, there was then an 18 day period between February 4th and February 22nd where the survey was open to collect responses. As previously mentioned, during this period, informal promotion targeting a diverse student demographic was executed.

<div align="center">Hypothesis</div>

I hypothesize that the majority of students will demonstrate the attitudes and actions that the three civic virtues standards being evaluated aim to accomplish. This will occur despite the fact that the three

distinct standards are being evaluated using methods that differ only slightly from one another. Based upon the Civic Virtues standards there is going to be a desired answer for every question, however this survey is not examining what is the so called "right or wrong" answer to said questions and should not be placed in that framework. Table 2 provides a linkage to where each standard is being assessed on the survey along with each individual hypothesis:

Table 2: Standard-Survey Connection

| Hypothesis by Standard | Connection to Survey Question # |
|---|---|
| **SS-Gov.9-12.19.** Students will be able to recognize and assess the impact of various forms of political action. | 1, 2, 3 |
| **SS-Gov.9-12.20.** Students will be able to recognize the importance of civic values in maintaining a well-functioning democracy. | 4, 5 |
| **SS-Gov.9-12.21.** Students will be able to recognize the processes of political socialization in their lives. | 6, 7 |

**Results**

The survey had 93 full responses that could be relied upon for an accurate spread of data. Below is an analysis of the responses with both a visualization and numerical breakdown of results. Based on the data collected from the survey, it can be argued that the Iowa civic virtues standards are effective to some extent in achieving their goals. The survey results show that a majority of respondents engage in discussions about voting choices and believe in the importance of civic participation, which aligns with my hypothesis that students will be able to analyze and assess the impact of various forms of political action. This is seen in Table 3, question 1, where 65% of students reported that they do discuss with others on who to vote for. This suggests that the standards are successful in instilling the values of civic responsibility and active citizenship among students.

Table 3: Political Action
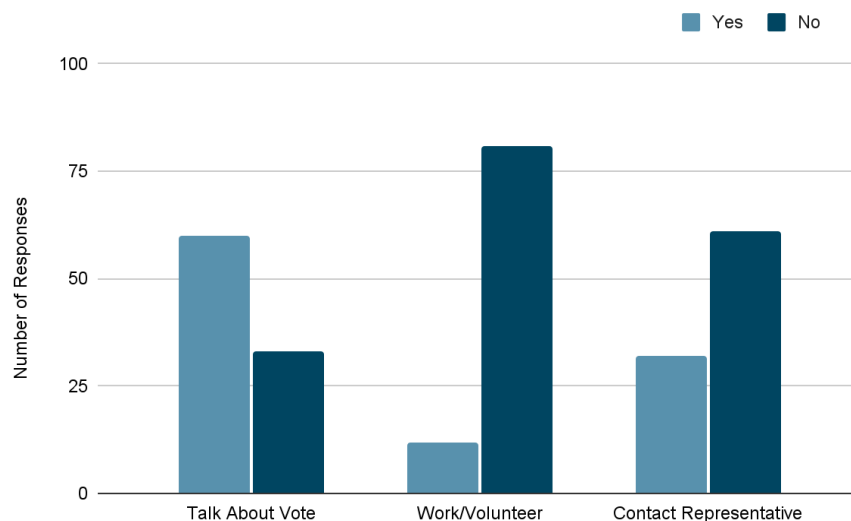


Additionally, the survey results indicate that recent Iowa high school graduates demonstrate a strong belief in the importance of civic engagement in maintaining a functioning democracy, such as voting and community service, further indicating that the standards may be having a positive impact on students' attitudes towards civic values. These results can be found at Table 4, where 85% of students reported that they believed it is more important to be civically active than for one to "do their own thing" and ignore those responsibilities. This indicates that my second hypothesis, that students will be able to recognize the importance of civic values in maintaining a well-functioning democracy has been met to a notable extent as well.
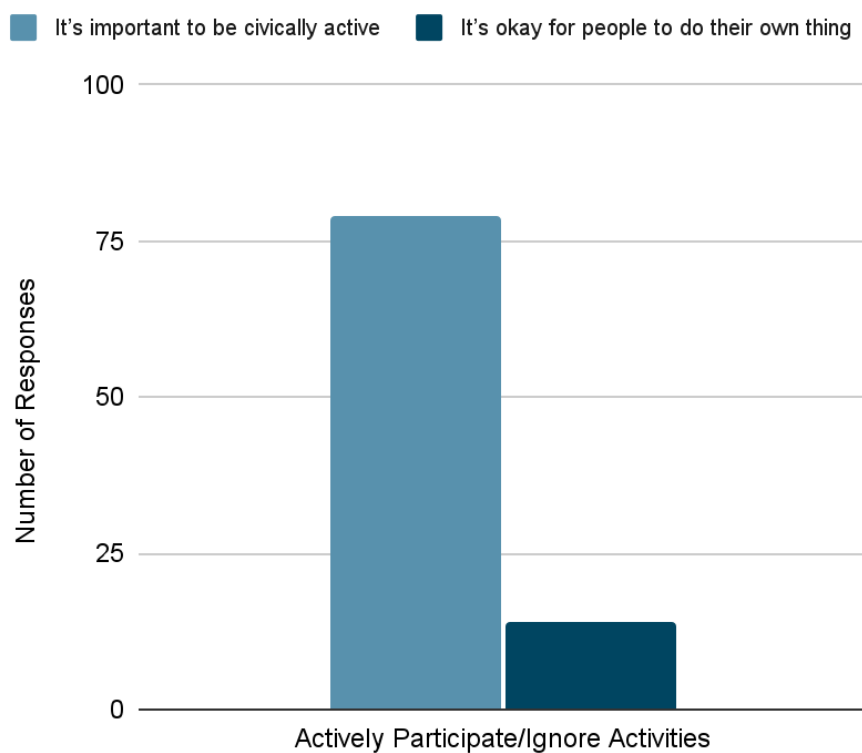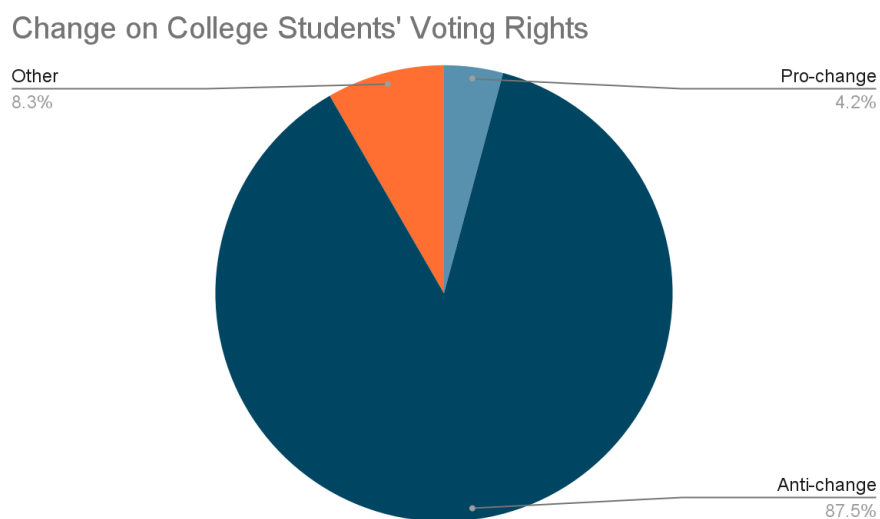
Table 4: Civic Values

It's important to be civically active    It's okay for people to do their own thing

Table 5: Civic Values #2



Change on College Students' Voting Rights

Other
8.3%

Pro-change
4.2%

Anti-change
87.5%

The free response data shows that students can adequately recognize the sources and effects of political socialization in their lives, thus aligning with my third hypothesis. The literature states that the

most active agents of political socialization in children growing up are family, schooling, and friends. When asked where their ideas and beliefs about politics come from, per Table 6, 53% of students reported that family was one of if not the defining most important factor. This response was followed by high school and personal research as agents of political socialization, both hovering at about 30% of responses. The data collected is reflective of what the literature states should happen, therefore, these responses in the free response section show that students accurately recognize where the sources of political socialization in their lives have been.

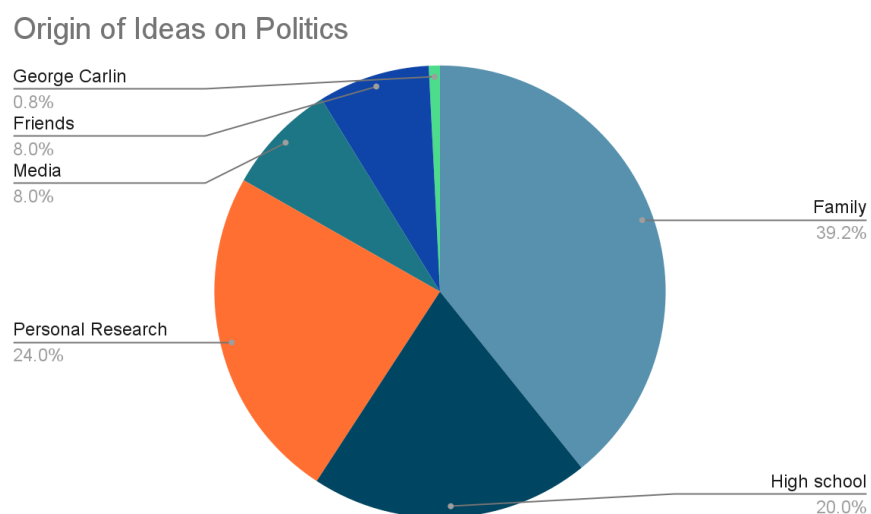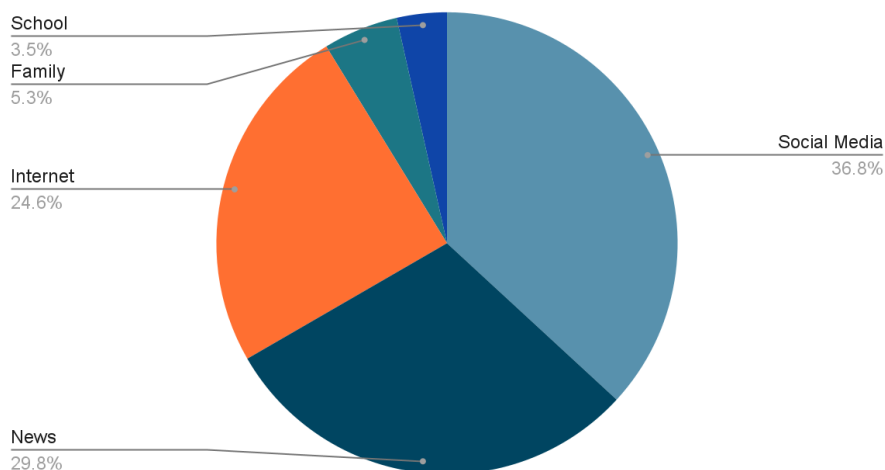Table 6: Political Socialization

Origin of Ideas on Politics

| | |
|---|---|
| George Carlin | 0.8% |
| Friends | 8.0% |
| Media | 8.0% |
| Family | 39.2% |
| Personal Research | 24.0% |
| High school | 20.0% |

Table 7: Political Socialization #2

Most Influential in Making Political Decisions

School
3.5%
Family
5.3%

Internet
24.6%

Social Media
36.8%

News
29.8%

**Discussion**

This data set indicates in some ways a lack of support in the effectiveness of the Iowa civic

virtues standards. For example, there may be a gap between the perceived importance of civic

engagement and actual participation in political activities. This can be seen in the data from Table 3,

questions 2 and 3, where only 13% of students reported ever volunteering for a political party, campaign,

or candidate, and only 34% reported ever contacting an elected representative. While respondents express

a strong belief in the value of civic participation, there is a disconnect due to the low level of direct

involvement in political campaigns or volunteering. These results imply that while the Iowa civic virtues

standards may effectively convey the importance of civic engagement, they may not fully address the

practical aspects of how individuals can engage in political activities. This could indicate a need for more

comprehensive education on the practical aspects of political engagement, such as how to register to vote,

how to volunteer for campaigns, or how to contact elected representatives. Conversely, the low level of

direct involvement in political affairs may also reflect broader societal trends, such as a shift towards

digital activism or a preference for non-traditional forms of political engagement. This could indicate a

need for updated approaches to civic education that reflect the changing nature of political participation in

the digital age. Another rationale for this could be due to the sample demographics however, as college

students have less time to be engaged compared to other adult demographics in spite of understanding its importance. Whatever the barrier may be, understanding and addressing them will be crucial for encouraging greater civic engagement among young adults in Iowa.

The data suggests there is a perception from respondents that family and school both play a minuscule role in how students access information regarding politics in high school. When asked what is most influential in helping to make decisions regarding politics, Table 7 shows that social media, the news, and the internet all received more responses than family and school combined. The immediate conclusion is that family and school are recognized as being important agents in influencing political identity early on, while simultaneously having less of an impact in making those political decisions through early adulthood. This shift in influence towards digital sources reflects the changing landscape of information consumption in the digital age. Social media, in particular, has emerged as a powerful tool for political communication and engagement, providing users with instant access to a wide range of perspectives and information. This suggests a potential need for schools to spend more time on data and information literacy in the classroom to help equip students with this better understanding as they enter voting age.

While the Iowa civic virtues standards appear to be effective in instilling the values of civic responsibility and active citizenship among students, there are still areas where improvements can be made. The Iowa civic virtues standards should focus on bridging the gap between the theoretical understanding of civic engagement and its practical application. This could entail integrating hands-on experiences into the curriculum such as community service projects and interactions with local officials. Moreover, creating partnerships with community organizations and local governments can give students opportunities to engage directly with civic life, acting as an example of the importance of their role in the community. Additionally, incorporating digital literacy and media literacy components into civic education can help give students the skills needed to navigate the complexities of the digital age, where information is abundant but at times unreliable. By addressing these challenges, the Iowa civic virtues standards can better prepare students to be informed and active citizens.

**Limitations**

While this study provides valuable insights into the civic behaviors and attitudes of recent Iowa high school graduates, there are several areas that could be improved in future research. The study's primary reliance on self-reported data presents a significant limitation in directly measuring the impact of the Iowa civic virtues standards on students' civic behaviors and attitudes. Self-reported data is subject to biases, where respondents may provide answers that they perceive as socially acceptable rather than reflecting their true behaviors and attitudes. This limitation raises questions about the accuracy and reliability of the findings regarding the effectiveness of the civic virtues standards. Future research could consider incorporating objective measures, such as observational data or standardized assessments, to provide a more comprehensive and reliable assessment of the impact of civic education initiatives. Moreover, the study's reliance on self-selection for survey participation may introduce response bias, where individuals with a particular interest in civic engagement are more likely to respond. This could skew the results towards individuals who are already more civically engaged, potentially exaggerating the effectiveness of the civic virtues standards. To account for this inherent bias, future research could try randomized sampling techniques to ensure a more complete sample of recent high school graduates in Iowa.

Building on the limitations of self-reported and selected data, the study's sample bias towards college students further generalizes its findings. College students are not representative of all recent high school graduates in Iowa, as they may possess different levels of civic engagement or exposure to civic education. Further, we know students who choose to go get a college education participate at higher rates than those with just a high school diploma. This limitation hinders the study's ability to draw broad conclusions about the effectiveness of the Iowa civic virtues standards across the entire population of high school graduates. To address this limitation, future research could seek to include a more diverse sample of participants, including those who went directly into the workforce or military service as well, to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of civic education on recent graduates. Finally, the limited analysis from the free response section in this study represents a unique limitation, as it may have

overlooked insights that could provide a deeper understanding of students' civic behaviors and attitudes. While the survey included free response questions, the analysis focused significantly on closed ended data as well, which may not fully capture the complexity of students' experiences and perspectives. This survey was only up for a few weeks and designed to be accessible to students through any digital format which again could have limited the complexity of student's experiences and perspectives.

<div align="center">**Future Research**</div>

Further research could delve into the specific mechanisms through which family background and community environment impact students' civic behaviors and attitudes. By conducting qualitative studies researchers could explore the ways in which socialization, community norms, and access to civic resources shape an individual's sense of civic duty and engagement. Also, comparative studies across different communities or regions could reveal how variations in family and community factors contribute to differences in civic virtues among students. Understanding these influences could aid in the development of interventions to promote civic engagement among students, regardless of their background. Additionally, research could focus on testing the application of the civic virtue standards in real-life situations to assess their effectiveness in preparing students for active citizenship. This could involve implementing simulations or community-based projects that require students to apply the principles of civic virtues in practical scenarios. By evaluating students' performance and decision-making in these contexts, researchers can gain insights into the extent to which the civic virtue standards translate into meaningful civic action.

This research could explore the role of social media in shaping students' attitudes of civic virtues. With the increasing influence of social media platforms on public discourse and political participation, understanding how young people interact with and are influenced by social media in the context of civic education is an avenue with untapped potential. Studies could investigate the impact of social media literacy programs on students' ability to critically evaluate information and participate in civic activities online. Additionally, comparative studies across different social media platforms could provide insights into the most effective strategies for promoting digital citizenship among students. Lastly, future research

focusing on digital citizenship education could significantly contribute to enhancing civic education programs. By exploring strategies for integrating digital literacy and digital citizenship education into civic education curriculum, it can help prepare students to navigate the complexities of the digital information age. Understanding how this media influences student's civic behaviors and attitudes, as well as identifying best practices for promoting responsible online behavior, can inform the development of effective educational interventions.

## Conclusion

This study delves into the civic behaviors and attitudes of recent Iowa high school graduates, building upon a foundation that has been laid by the literature on civic education and political socialization. While student behavior indicates that standards are conveyed effectively, there is a disconnect between this perceived importance and actual participation in political activities. This suggests a need for more comprehensive civic education that includes both the practical aspects of political engagement but also a basis of political participation in the digital age. Additionally, the study highlights the influence of family, school, and digital media on students' regarding political decisions. These findings coupled to suggest that there is a need for schools to focus on data and information literacy even more in the classroom. However, the study's reliance on self-reported data and sample bias towards college students are limitations that leave room for future research. In spite of these limitations, this study provides an array of insights into the challenges and opportunities for civic education in preparing students to be both informed and active citizens.

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**Appendix 1**

This survey received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which was required to ensure ethical compliance in research involving human subjects. The IRB evaluates research proposals to ensure that they meet ethical standards and protect the rights and welfare of participants. This approval process was essential for maintaining the integrity and credibility of the research, as it demonstrated that the study has been carefully reviewed and is being conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines.

(Note: The standard to which the question corresponds to was not included in the final survey.)

Did you graduate from an Iowa high school? (choose one)

Yes     No

Did you graduate in or after the graduating class of 2018? (choose one)

Yes     No

1.) SS-Gov.9-12.19. Do you talk to people about who to vote for? (choose one)

Yes     No

2.) SS-Gov.9-12.19. Have you ever worked or volunteered for a political party, campaign, or candidate? (choose one)

Yes     No

3.) SS-Gov.9-12.19. Have you ever contacted an elected representative? (choose one)

Yes     No

4.)  SS-Gov.9-12.20. Do you believe it's important for people to actively participate in civic activities, such as voting or community service, or do you think it is okay for people ignore those activities? (choose one)

It's important to be civically active      It's okay for people to do their own thing

5.) SS-Gov.9-12.20. Currently, college students in Iowa may either register to vote where they attend college, or they may register at their permanent address. If the Iowa legislature favored restricting

the ability of college students to register to vote where they attend college, what would you think of this change on college students' voting rights? (short response)

_____

6.) SS-Gov.9-12.21.  Thinking about your ideas on politics, do you think that your beliefs came more from your family, from things you might have learned in high school, or somewhere else? (short response)

_____

7.) SS-Gov.9-12.21. Today, when you think about how you access information, what would you say is most influential in helping you make decisions regarding politics? (short response)

_____