

Youth Urban Agenda in the Detroit Metropolitan Area

This paper presents results from a comprehensive evaluation of the Youth Urban Agenda (YUA), a cross-metropolitan civic education program for youth in elementary, secondary, and undergraduate settings. Findings include effects of the project on civic values, as well as formative analysis of relationships between instructional process and civic values.

The overall sample includes nearly 600 students from 28 classrooms at 13 high schools and middle [school](#) sites from across the Detroit metropolitan area. Research design elements include a pre-test, matched comparison classrooms at each site, collection of [family](#) background and civic experience data, and estimation of a multi-level model.

Results indicate that participation in the YUA is positively associated with civic values such as social tolerance, political efficacy, and civic interest. Further, positive attitude change is associated with a classroom instructional process that emphasizes collaborative, small-group work and participation in program elements such as the multi-school YUA convention.

Implications of the study are that schools can provide institutional spaces and experiences that lead to positive change in youth civic values. Furthermore, as an experiential civic pedagogy, these results support an educational approach that emphasizes student construction of civic experiences and their meaning, rather than approaches that emphasize moral exhortation or indoctrination.

Many indicators suggest that youth participation in the political realm, from voting to campaigning, has decreased substantially over three decades (National Association of Secretaries of State 2001). In the informal civic system, youth volunteering and community service is characterized by indifference to the larger analysis of social inequality or political action that could address the need for volunteerism in the first place (Wade and Saxe 1996; W.K. Kellogg Foundation 2001). Further, the withdrawal adults from membership in political,

voluntary, and leisure organizations and a related decline in feelings of social trust (Putnam 2000) suggest an erosion of the institutional environments that might one have supported the development of a [public](#) identity in young adults. Finally, tragic events such as the Columbine shootings have provoked interest in cultivation of core values and community attachment through the schooling process.

In response, many educational networks and institutions have moved to reexamine and reclaim responsibility for the development of youth with civic competency and commitment – representing a reversal of two decades of single-minded focus on academic achievement and service to labor markets (Boyte and Hollander, 2000; Tolo 1998). However, school responses have primarily taken the form of accountability systems (standardized social studies requirements) and requirements for community service hours that are disconnected from the school-based learning process. Can schools provide an integrated civic learning experience that is likely to result in development of a positive public identity with connection to both the formal and informal civic systems? Can schools teach young people how to build civic and political environments in a society where such institutional resources have atrophied to the point of disappearance?

At the elementary and secondary levels, the research record suggests that the traditional stand-and-deliver pedagogy of civic instruction, coupled with poor quality textbooks, has produced [little](#) impact on civic knowledge, values, or action (Ehman 1980; Ferguson 1991; Niemi and Junn 1998). If we accept the fundamental precept of modern approaches to education – that students co-construct learning – then this lack of impact can be seen as an active rejection of the indoctrination approach to social education during the years of mandatory attendance. Evidence of rejection is also clear in higher education arena – sharply declining enrollments in political science courses over the last decade (Mann 1999).

However, in recent years other research has suggested that there may be ways to restructure the grammar of school-based civic education around core experiences that predict later civic behaviors. Political scientists have demonstrated that if you participate in a church or a community organization, you are more likely to gain civic skills and more likely to get asked to use them (Nie et al. 1996; Verba et al. 1995). Studies employing high quality longitudinal data sets have consistently suggested long-term relationships between service experiences and later civic participation (Astin et al.1998; Glanville 1999; Hanks 1981; McAdam 1989). Research in the area of cognitive development and learning (including “brain-based research”) has spawned a grassroots movement committed to active learning, the centrality of affect to education, and the concept of multiple intelligences (Marzano 1998, 2001; National Research council 1999). These threads of research point toward an experiential model of civic education that might dramatically raise the return on resources already committed toward civic learning in schools.

What is the Youth Urban Agenda?

The Youth Urban Agenda (YUA) is a civic education project developed for secondary and undergraduate students and was designed to deliver key civic experiences that support the development of a public identity during adolescence and young adulthood (Chesney & Feinstein 1997, 1993). The YUA model was developed based on three general assumptions about the realities of youth participation in the formal and informal civic systems. First, developers believed that the key civic and political skill for youth is civic environment building. Because the institutions of youth socialization have atrophied – or for many youth never existed – over the past century, the key skill for civic action is to know how to create a space to talk with others about what you might do to influence the civic system. This assumption, in turn rests upon another. That what marks a good citizen is not constant vigilance but capacity. Effective citizens don’t have to be, indeed could not be, well-informed

and active all of the time – just when they need to be and so by giving students successful action experiences we build behaviors that can be drawn upon, if necessary, in the future.

The third assumption upon which the project was founded is that the most critical aspect of social reality that young people deal with is metropolitan in nature. That is to say, most people (over 75%) live in large urbanized regions where the national cleavages that we discuss in national politics are present as a matter of lived daily experience. Students travel back and forth across these territorial lines with great regularity, observing each other, but only rarely interacting in substantive ways. Young people see that processes that bring citizens together across the social and territorial lines that divide every urbanized region have greater authenticity than those that do not. Most social issues that are discussed at the national or state level have to do with people who may live only a few miles and the conversation about what “they” need to do or have done to them is always more real when “they” are in the room too.

Finally, the YUA project was originally developed as a model of teaching political science to undergraduates because it was felt that political science text books were confused about the meaning of politics and policy when they framed these ideas in terms of participation/conflict (politics - where the people are involved) and institutional process driven decision-making (policy – where the people are not involved). Typically textbooks describe civic participation in terms of constitutional development, political parties, voting patterns and the media. However, these subjects really represent the policies of participation which are most remote from citizen control. Real meaningful participation might also, and in fact, might more likely occur during the policy cycle between elections which most text books describe as beyond the influence of individual citizens. This is perhaps nowhere more true than in the process of agenda setting. One of the central goals of the YUA is to build capacity in youth to act collectively by giving them experiences in a variety of environments where

young people discuss, strategize and make decisions about how to build youth agenda that encompasses the needs of youth from across the metropolitan area.

In the YUA model, participants bring issues relevant to their own life experiences to group forums where collective agendas are considered and adopted. From these classroom, school and cross-metropolitan agenda building sessions, a common agenda is developed and strategies planned to use the agenda to influence the civic system. Throughout the YUA, students conduct and present issue research, weigh and combine alternative agenda items, and consider avenues for political communication and action related to the final multi-school agenda. The YUA process is broken into four parts: in-class agenda building, in-class agenda research, multi-school agenda convention, and post-convention action on the agenda.

The YUA represents an instructional process that, within variation across classrooms, demonstrates common elements. These elements are discussed and modeled in both teacher-training as well as during the in-class facilitation of an agenda-building discussion by a trained discussion facilitator. Process elements include: (1) brainstorming, (2) safety for all ideas and discussion of personal experiences, (3) mixing individual and whole-group work with a significant portion of small group sizes, (4) using intentional mixes of students that don't always choose to work together, (5) the experience of interactions with other students that the students themselves recognize as diverse, (6) real consequences to the agenda building process through incorporation of the work into graded requirements as well as interaction with real world civic institutions that are to recognize or use the agenda items, (7) reflection on learning that might have occurred during the activity and its meaning. These instructional process elements are well-aligned with recent discussions of preferred practices for adolescent learning environments (National Research Council 2002; High/Scope Educational Research Foundation 2001), and especially well suited to the delivery of experiential education in school settings (Roesner, Eccles, and Sameroff 2000; Battistich, et

al. 1999). Given recent emphasis on the study of relationships between instruction and student outcomes (Cohen et al 2003; National Research Council 2000), evaluation of the YUA represents an opportunity to examine the impact of best-practice social studies instruction on student values.

Summative Modeling: Impact of the YUA on Civic Dispositions

In this section, results from an evaluation of the YUA are reported in an effort to address two research questions. Does the YUA have positive impact on youth attitudes and values? Are the magnitude of these findings of educational significance?

In prior research, civic development was assessed by measuring specific indicators that, in addition to content knowledge, include engagement in the civic system in current and subsequent years, skills and abilities that demonstrate levels of civic literacy, and dispositions. Civic dispositions reflect individual attitudes, values attributed to civic institutions, organizations and persons, and the characteristics of a public self-image. In this evaluation of the YUA, the outcome of interest is a civic disposition construct consisting of seven distinct measures that represent core civic values:

political tolerance, social tolerance, external efficacy, communicative efficacy, participatory efficacy, interest in politics, and desire for future action in politics. Attitude and value change is an important component of the larger civic development process and represents a measurement task that is feasible in a study that is bounded by a school semester. The civic disposition construct represents fundamental value positions that are believed to be important attributes of the developing citizen.

Regardless of their relationship to later civic engagement, it is significant to know if a civic education program can make students more accepting of others who are different from them in appearance, talk, or ideas. It is important to know if a civic education program makes

students feel more confident about their own abilities to influence events, even if they are not yet old enough to vote. Further, it is important to recognize that the short-term civic skills and abilities learned in educational programs, and that make civic engagement possible, are rooted in core values (“confidence, character, connections”) that lead citizens to act for right reasons (Pitman cited in Gibson 2001). Finally, positive civic dispositions are believed to support adolescent and young adult civic engagement – one of the ultimate purposes of civic education. Young people with more positive civic dispositions are believed to participate in politics more. Contrary to purely rationalist models of political behavior, it has become increasingly clear that affect – strongly held beliefs and feelings – drive much purposive activity related to the civic system (Marcus, Neuman, and Mackuen 2000). Thus, student dispositions related to the civic-self and civic-system are important outcomes of effective civic education.

Sample

The school sample for the study consists of 28 classrooms at 13 school sites representing a wide mix of school types from across the Detroit metropolitan area. At the student-level, the 13 sites represent 528 subjects: 195 in the full-intervention group, 111 in the partial-intervention group, and 228 in the no-intervention group. For the regression models estimated in this chapter, the percentage of subjects not included due to missing data ranged from 8% to 20%.

Methods

Efficacy of the intervention. For the study semester, a curriculum document was assembled, entitled the Urban Agenda Steps Guide (Smith, Singer, and Sammadar 2000) to guide teachers through a series of eight sequential steps. All teachers were brought together for three days of training on the Steps Guide and use of the in-class assessments. The Steps

Guide calls for in-class facilitation by a YUA trainer during the first and third steps, so project staff were directly involved in monitoring and supporting classroom progress in implementing the curriculum.

Research Design. These analyses model the effects of the treatment against a no-intervention counterfactual condition by using same-site matched comparison classrooms, a pre-test, and student and family background data for purposes of statistical control. Eight regression models were estimated on seven dimensions of civic development and a combined scale.

Outcome Measures. The civic disposition measures are seven multi-item scales: social tolerance, political tolerance, communicative efficacy, external efficacy, participatory efficacy, civic interest, and civic action.

Pre-test and Intervention-Dummy Variables. The pre-test measures were modeled as independent variables rather than included in the dependent variable as a calculated gain score (Mohr 1995; Cohen and Cohen 1983). The circumstance of the intervention dictates the use of a two-level intervention variable. Despite participation in the YUA, some students were not able to attend the YUA agenda convention due to absence, other school demands during the day, or limitations on transportation. The full-treatment (FT) group participated in both the classroom and out-of-school YUA convention day activities. The partial-treatment (PT) group participated only in the classroom-based activity and did not join in the convention day program.

Because the YUA convention is the penultimate component of the YUA process, consolidating student experiences and preparation for several weeks prior, it is critical to distinguish convention attendees (FT) from those who participated only in the classroom-based components (PT). Further, the three-level intervention variable provides additional

formative information pertaining to the importance of the convention to the overall YUA process. The level-of-intervention measure consists of two dummy variables for students that participated in the full YUA program and those that only participated in the classroom-level portion but not the convention (each coded 1=participant, 0=comparison group). In regression models, coefficients on these dummies are interpreted as intervention effect between the T=1 group and the no-program comparison group (Cohen and Cohen 1983). For both the FT and PT groups, the comparison is with the no-program group only.

Results

The magnitude of effect of the treatment on each of the civic disposition scales was assessed as a change in R-square for each OLS regression model, as blocks of variables were entered. In each case, the strategy was to explain as much variance as possible with contextual factors, and then to enter the block of intervention dummies. The order of entry was from most distal to most proximate, representing a theory of civic development whereby developmental influences become more closely related to the dependent variable as their influence becomes more proximate to these attitudes and values in both time and space. The culturally structured factors age (school grade), gender, and ethnicity constituted the first block. The household-level variables parent education and home political socialization were entered second. Measures of the student-level factors civic experience and academic motivation were entered as the third block. The pre-test measure, block four, represented the most proximate measure of attitudes and values related to the dependent measure and was assumed to be the most powerful explanatory variable in the models. Block five consisted of the FT and PT intervention dummies.

In addition to the seven dimensions of civic development discussed so far, one additional model was estimated as a more comprehensive measure of civic development. The

COMP scale ($\alpha = .79$) represented a summed scale of all items in the social tolerance, political efficacy, and civic interest scales. These three scales were selected because they demonstrated the greatest overall effect in the multivariate analysis.

Table 4 presents results across multivariate models used to assess impact of the YUA on student civic development. Outcome variables are listed across the top of the table and regression coefficients are listed in the columns (standardized coefficients in parentheses). Independent variables are listed in the rows, grouped by the blocks used to enter variables into the OLS equation. Following each block, the R-square and R-square-change are reported as indicators of effect-size. The bottom row also provides the p-value for an F-test of the significance of the R-square change for the final intervention dummy block.

This impact analysis of the YUA intervention exhibited mixed results. Participation in the YUA appears to be associated with small but positive effects on social tolerance, external efficacy, participatory efficacy, and civic interest. Participation does not appear to be positively associated with political tolerance, communicative efficacy and the desire to take civic action. In fact, the sign on these coefficients was consistently negative, although none of the coefficients for the FT group reach statistical significance at the .05 level.

The largest increment of R-square added to the model came from the pre-test variable. Although the overall explained variance for each of the models was substantial (24% to 47%), the increment added with the final intervention dummy block was small, ranging from 1% to 2%. When these increments are considered as a percentage of total variance explained, they represent increments between 4.3% and 8.3%. For the COMP variable, a combined scale of the three scales demonstrating statistically significant positive effects, the proportion of explained variance accounted for by the intervention dummy block was 7.1%. For the COMP

scale, the standardized coefficient on the FT dummy was nearly one-quarter of the size of the Beta on the pretest, and was larger than any of the other control variable Betas.

The pretest explained one-third to one-half of the variance in post-test scores across the models. Parent education, parent socialization, student civic experience and student academic motivation were significant predictors until the pre-test was entered, suggesting that most of the variation in the dependent measures was shared with the pre-test, rather than unique to the socialization variables. Indeed, this makes intuitive sense if a causal sequence is imagined where parent socialization conditions a set of behaviors and dispositions which are concretized as children begin the process of civic development where the emergence of their own attitude structure, represented by the pre-test, attenuates more external forces of socialization.

High-performing classrooms

The school sites used in the summative analysis reported in Table 4 represent very different school-types and student characteristics, and the significant coefficients on school grade and ethnicity suggest that this variation is important to civic development outcomes. Further, the project was implemented by teachers with varying amounts of expertise, ability, administrative support, and in-class time to dedicate to the project. Given this variation, it would be surprising if intervention effects did not vary across classrooms.

An ANCOVA was conducted with site as a factor to facilitate discovery of intervention-by-site interaction in the multivariate context. The site factor was significant ($p=.000$, $F=3.624$) in the full model. The four highest performing sites were selected out and the full regression model for the COMP dependent measure was rerun. These sites represented a wide mix of achievement levels and household incomes so the designation of higher performing does not appear to favor one type of site over another (e.g. urban versus

suburban). The increment change in R-square as a result of entering the intervention dummy block increased to 6% of total variance in the COMP measure, with a significant F-test for change in R-square ($p=.003$). Both the FT ($p<.01$) and PT ($p<.05$) coefficients were significant and positive. The size of the raw FT coefficient increased from 1.3 scale points in the whole-sample model to 2.6 scale points in the high-performing sites model. These findings suggest that it possible to achieve greater effects with more attention to implementation.

Magnitude of program effects

One way to gain perspective on the magnitude of program effects is to consider the meaning of the raw regression coefficients which are interpretable in terms of the scale on which the outcome variable was measured. The social tolerance scale combined six four-point items for an 18-point range from very intolerant to very tolerant. The coefficient on the FT dummy variable for the social Tolerance model was 0.49, meaning that participation in the YUA raised scale scores by one-half-of-one point over a potential range of 18 points. For the External Efficacy model, the raw coefficient was 0.45 (of a scale point) on a nine-point range. For civic interest the raw coefficient was 0.39 (of a scale point) on a nine-point range. This way of describing the magnitude of effect associated with the treatment lacks a value criterion for interpretation since it would help to know specifically where on the scale a subject advances to, e.g., from intolerant to tolerant on the social tolerance scale. However, it does provide a general picture of what these small to medium-sized effects look like in terms of the scales on which they were measured. A more informative way to consider the magnitude of effects is to consider them in the context of other evaluations of civic education treatments.

Table 5 summarizes findings across several quasi-experimental studies that are comparable to the YUA treatment and which reported findings in sufficient detail to convert

into a common F-equivalent across studies. In the table, the original effects statistics from the studies are translated into a common F-statistic equivalent and then converted into a percent of variance (PV) estimate. The F-equivalent conversions take into account both the number of subjects and the number of factors in the treatment condition. Column three presents the original test-statistic or effect size presented in each study. Column four presents the F-equivalents for the findings presented in column three. Column five presents the percentage of variance (PV) explained in the dependent variable based on the F-equivalents and degrees of freedom for each study. According to convention, PV estimates can be interpreted as: 1%=small effects, 10%=medium effects, and 25%=large effects. A PV of 1% can be interpreted as the treatment group mean being about two-tenths of a standard deviation greater than the mean for the control group. For a PV of 10%, the treatment group mean is about one-half of a standard deviation greater than the control group (Murphy and Myor 1998).

When effect sizes reported in Table 4 are converted to F-equivalents and then PV figures, the YUA also falls within the small to medium-sized effects range. For the COMP scale, PV=3% of variance explained, a small effect that is comparable to several of the other studies listed. When the sample is constrained to high-performing classrooms, the PV estimate climbs to 9% of variance in the COMP scale, a medium-sized effect. The YUA falls within the range of effects that have been demonstrated in prior research on other experientially-based civic education interventions.

Formative Modeling: Site Characteristics Associated with Greater Outcomes

If effects are present in the summative analysis of the YUA, the next step is to conduct formative analysis of how effects are achieved or how these effects are related to levels and types of implementation of the YUA model. In this section, data from the treatment group only are used to model relationships between outcomes and the following process variables:

(1) years of teacher experience with the YUA, (2) type of instructional process, and (3) the quality of student experience at the YUA convention. Outcome variables used in this section are the COMP variable used in the summative analysis and a measure of support for the YUA labeled Student Support.

The measurement of implementation of any educational program is extremely complex, combining the teachers' relative emphasis on treatment components, instructional process (pedagogy), and the particular needs and learning styles of students. In order to capture some of this complexity in a meaningful way, teachers were asked to provide the amount of time that they spent during the semester on each of several activities associated with implementation of the YUA. These self-reports were then subjected to exploratory factor analysis in order to understand patterns of implementation for the sample classrooms. From this factor analysis, structured by a varimax rotation, a two-factor solution explaining 77% of the variance was derived for the 19 treatment classrooms. Because these factors made conceptual sense, factor scores were retained and they were used as measures of two different implementation approaches: Class Discussion and Convention (CD&C) and Research, Reflection and Action (RR&A).

The Class Discussion and Convention (CD&C) and Research, Reflection, and Action (RR&A) factors appear to represent nearly parallel use of project components integrated into the classroom under different kinds of instructional processes.

Class Discussion and Convention (CD&C) is factor score derived from the following four items, coded by the amount of time spent on each during the treatment period:

“Amount of time spent building the in-class agenda.”

“Amount of time spent researching for the agenda by individual students”

“Amount of time spent on individual presentations of research, experience, or speeches prepared in relation to the YUA.”

“Amount of time spent in preparation for participation at the YUA convention.”

This factor represents classrooms where the YUA was primarily focused on student discussion and participation in the agenda day, rather than extension from the YUA into academic activities and integration with course content. It is also more oriented toward a pattern of individual preparation and large group interaction and presentation.

Research, Reflection, and Action (RR&A) is a factor score derived from the following four items, coded by the amount of time spent on each item during the treatment period:

“Amount of time spent on group presentations of research, experiences, or speeches in relation to the YUA.”

“Amount of time spent researching for the agenda in small groups.”

“Amount of time spent debriefing from the YUA convention.”

“Amount of time spent on agenda engagement activities following the convention.”

This factor represents a best practice approach to experiential learning: small group work that includes both research and presentation, reflection on experiences, and follow-up to course activity and content (Slavin 1995; Marzano 1998; Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde 1998). While the RR&A factor includes the same YUA project components it was implemented with a more student-centered instructional process.

HLM Analysis

A hierarchical linear model is estimated in order to obtain more accurate estimates of effects on variables measured at the classroom-level variables (teacher experience and instructional process) while utilizing the full student-level data set.

HLM is a regression-based analysis method designed to produce more accurate estimates of coefficients and their standard deviations in research linking individual- and group-level data. In education research, this is particularly important because nested data structures, i.e., students within classrooms, represent a problem for traditional OLS techniques. In this HLM analysis, two simultaneous regression equations are estimated at the student and classroom levels. The level-one equation is conceptually similar to a traditional OLS regression equation, with a dependent variable predicted by an intercept term and variables weighted by coefficients called Betas. In the level-two equation(s), the Beta coefficients (level-one intercept and slopes) become dependent variables and are predicted by classroom-level variables weighted by coefficients called Gammas.

In traditional OLS models, student level predictors are treated as having fixed-effects, i.e., they are assumed to have a constant variance across subjects. However, because individual subjects are often more alike within contextual groupings, rather than across all subjects, i.e., schools and classrooms, the assumption of constant variance is violated. Multi-level models allow these student-level variables to be treated as random variables, meaning that their relationship to the dependent variable will change depending on the sample of sites from which they are drawn. Treating the level-one predictor variables as random allows for the decomposition of variance components into within-group and across-group components for the covariance between a given level-one predictor and the dependent variable. The across-group variance is then available for explanation by level-two predictors.

In this HLM analysis, the goal was to understand how civic development for the average student is impacted by teacher experience with the YUA and characteristics of implementation, while controlling for student-level measures. In the HLM analyses, each level-one predictor was centered on its mean (X minus classroom mean X) so that the intercept term (BO) was interpretable in the macro-level equation. The level-one intercept becomes the dependent variable in the across-school equation, and is interpreted (after centering the level-one variables) as predicting civic development for the average student, rather than a zero-value baseline used to interpret the intercept-term in OLS models. Because the intercept term is the product of the level-one equation, it represents variance in the dependent measure after student-level characteristics have been controlled.

There are two preliminary steps in the HLM analysis. First, an unconditional model (i.e., a model that has no predictor or control variables) is fitted to examine the variances of the dependent variables, partitioned into within- and across-classroom components. The unconditional model is a univariate ANOVA with random effects using the classroom means. The results from this analysis are then used to calculate an intraclass correlation coefficient that describes the amount of variance in the dependent variable that is available for explanation by the classroom-level predictors.

Table 6 provides the variance components, HLM-estimated reliability coefficients, and the intraclass correlation coefficient. For the COMP model, 18% of the student outcome variance is available to be explained by classroom-level predictors. For the Student Support model, 26% of the variance is available. This suggests that substantial variance occurred across classrooms.

The second preliminary step is to test for the homogeneity of variance across classroom units of the level-one predictors. HLM estimates assume homogeneity, and the

program provides a Chi-square test that the level-one residual variances across the level-two units are significantly different from each other. The null hypothesis of no differences in variance across classrooms was retained for both the COMP and Student Support models.

HLM Results

The classroom-level variables were significant predictors of student civic development, even while controlling for student characteristics related to the dependent variable. In the COMP model, Teacher Experience and the RR&A factor score were significant at the $p < .10$ level. In the Student Support model, both variables were highly significant. Although the CD&C factor was non-significant in both models, the sign remained negative, reinforcing interpretation of the RR&A variable as a positive contributor to civic development effects.

The proportion of variance explained by the classroom level equations was 34% in the COMP model and 75% in the Student Support model. However, these percentages represented the explained variance in the dependent variable that was available for explanation by the level-two equations. The interclass correlation coefficient describes the proportion of total Y variance that was available for the explanation at the classroom level. By multiplying these figures, the proportion of total variance in Y that was explained by the classroom-level equations was obtained. For the COMP model ($.75 \times .18 = .14$) classroom variables explained 14% of the total Y variance. For the Student Support model ($.80 \times .26 = .21$) classroom-level variables explained 21% of the total Y variance.

It appears that having an experienced teacher with prior training on the YUA made an important contribution to YUA effects. Further, this data also suggests that emphasis on small group work and reflection/follow-up was associated with greater YUA effects. Indeed, an emphasis upon individual activity and large-group discussion was negatively associated with

YUA outcomes across the models, although the HLM estimates do not achieve statistical significance.

Characteristics of High Performing Classrooms

So far, the analyses presented suggest that the civic development of student participants in the YUA is related to attendance at the convention, instructional process in the classroom, and the presence of a teacher with prior YUA experience and training. This analysis suggests, and really defines, that the four high performing classrooms that were identified in the summative analysis will demonstrate higher scores on each of these important implementation variables. When mean scores on the RR&A and Teacher Experience variables for the four high performing classrooms were compared to mean scores for the remaining classrooms, differences were highly statistically significant ($F=98.896$, $p=.000$ and $F=291.315$, $p=.000$ respectively) in favor of the identified high-performing classrooms.

In 13 of the 19 treatment classrooms, outside observers collected data on the Taxonomy of Affective Behavior (TAB; Kaplan 1986). The TAB is an observational tool designed to provide a picture of the communicative environment and level of affective engagement in a learning context across the 26 items in six categories listed in Table 8. TAB data provides a more fine-grained view of the instructional process and the characteristics of group discussion in classrooms that scored higher on the RR&A factor and had more experienced teachers. Significant correlation coefficients (Pearson- r) between TAB item-scores and the RR&A and Teacher Experience variables are presented in Table 8. Although the sample size was small and the number of significant correlations few, these findings point out the attributes of an effective civic instructional process, and in this instance, specifically identify the attributes of an effective teacher as discussion facilitator. The TAB data was

collected during sessions where the class-group was asked to reduce their multi-item class agenda to a three-point convention agenda. Because the YUA project is centered upon student communication, these talk-related characteristics of the YUA experience are of great interest.

In YUA classrooms that scored higher on the RR&A factor, teachers were more likely: (1) to be aware of the feelings of their students; (2) to inquire into how their students felt about an event or subject; and (3), to defend the rights of students to possess the values that they do. Further, they were more likely to engage their students in higher order thinking operations such as (4) identifying the characteristics of values or value systems, and (5) the comparison or weighing of alternative values. In these classrooms, students were more likely to be engaged with each other, to encourage expression, and to make judgments about the issues they were discussing. Student discussion in RR&A classrooms was characterized by higher order operations as alternatives were weighed, relationships described, and values were located within larger value systems. Importantly, students in more RR&A classrooms were also more likely to be willing and able to revise judgments when evidence was offered.

YUA Convention: Cross-Metro Contact and Civic Dispositions

The YUA model involves both the in-class components of the course and participation in the YUA convention that occurs outside the classroom. The YUA convention is a focal point for the in-class activity and provides key civic experiences such as large-group decision-making and purposive interactions with students from very different backgrounds. Across each of the regression models, the PT variable demonstrated a weaker or an inverse relationship with civic dispositions when compared to the FT dummy. Of special interest are the coefficients on the PT variables for Social Tolerance and Communicative Efficacy because tolerance of others and confidence in group discussion and decision-making environments were directly related to the civic experiences that participation in the YUA

convention provided. For both of these variables, the PT coefficient was negative, statistically significant, and carried standardized Beta-coefficients that were larger than Betas on the FT variables in these models. It appears that within the context of the overall YUA project, the convention served as an important source of key civic experiences that support the positive development of civic values in students.

Sixty percent of the intervention sample (217 students) participated in the YUA convention and were surveyed concerning the quality of their experiences during the half-day activity. This survey data made it possible to assess the relationship between student experience on the convention day and change in civic development. The quality of participant experience was measured on a scale of items regarding the student's perception of an environment that was diverse, tolerant, inclusive, and authentic.

For the 217 YUA convention participants, models were constructed to regress student-level variables on the COMP and Student Support variables. In each model, student and family level controls (and the pretest for the COMP variable) were used to explain as much variance in the dependent variable as possible, and then the Convention Experience variable was entered as the final block. In both cases, the quality of the YUA convention experience was related to positive change in the student outcome, suggesting again that the YUA convention made a contribution to program effects.

For the COMP model (n=163), total variance explained in the dependent variable was 32% and the increment of this variance added by the YUA Convention Experience variable was 2% (p=.061, F=3.567). The coefficient on the YUA Convention Experience variable in this model was nearly statistically significant (p=.061) and the beta was nearly one-third the size of the coefficient on the pre-test variable. For the Student Support model (n=189), total variance explained in the dependent variable was 14% and the increment of this variance

added by the YUA Convention Experience variable was 2% ($p=.044$, $F=4.118$). The coefficient on the Student Support variable in this model was statistically significant ($p=.044$).

This effect of the YUA convention can be interpreted in at least two ways because the YUA convention represents a fairly unique experience for students on two dimensions. First, it is a large group decision-making environment that is new to most secondary-aged students in southeastern Michigan (Smith 2000a). Second, it represents a highly diverse environment, bringing together students from very different schools, and therefore social and ethnic backgrounds, to discuss issues that are of importance to themselves and their communities. Which of these elements are most important for students in the YUA process? While it is not possible to tease out this kind of evidence from the models presented, the students' own ratings of the various elements of the YUA convention experience provides a possible answer. As in prior research on the YUA convention (Smith 2000a), the small group caucuses – where students are mixed across schools and asked to build a consensus agenda - were rated much more highly than either the overall convention process or the final voting plenary. In the study group, students rated the opportunity to meet and talk about substantive issues with students from different schools (73.2% giving a grade of A or B) as more important than the other components of the YUA convention, including the final voting plenary where students are exposed to a large-group decision-making process on the party convention model (54.5% giving a grade of A or B). These student ratings suggest that the diversity of the YUA environment is more important to student support and enthusiasm than the parliamentary experience. In either case, these results demonstrate that the diversity of participants and their level of interaction in a safe communicative environment is an important element of the YUA.

Conclusions

This evaluation suggests that the YUA produces positive change in civic dispositions of student participants. Effects in the summative analysis were small to moderate compared to other experiential civic education treatments and by social science convention. Higher performing classrooms yielded higher effects although still in the moderate range.

In the formative analysis, positive change in civic dispositions, as well as student support for this method of civic instruction, were related to teacher experience in use of the YUA model and an instructional process that includes best-practice elements such as small group work, community engagement with the learning process, and intentional follow-up and reflection on the learning task. In higher performing classrooms teachers acted as facilitators and removed their own judgments from the discussion process. Students were engaged in discussion, defended the rights of others to hold different opinions, and acted to synthesize concepts and ideas. In both the summative and formative analyses, the cross-metropolitan agenda convention was an important predictor of positive change in student dispositions. In the summative analysis convention attendance was critical to the attainment of positive effects, while those who participated in only the in-class portion seemed to experience negative effects (although non-significant). In the formative models, the quality of experience at the convention (diversity, authenticity, tolerance, inclusion) was related to both change in student civic dispositions as well as student support for the project.

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