

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY IN ARGENTINA: EFFECTS OF A NEWSPAPER-IN-SCHOOL PROGRAM

*Steven Chaffee, Roxana Morduchowicz and
Hernan Galperin*

ABSTRACT

Democracy and tolerance for alternative viewpoints are truisms in the United States, only marginally affected by educational curricula. But in new democracies such as Argentina, schools can play a major role in building such norms. This field experiment ($N=3,387$) examines the effects on political socialization of a program involving the use of local newspapers in 5th- and 6th-grade classrooms during Argentina's national election year of 1995. Participating teachers administered questionnaires to their students near the end of the school year (October), as did a control group of teachers in the same grades at the same schools who were not teaching with the newspaper. Effects of the newspaper intervention on students included higher news media use, discussion of politics with friends and family, interest in politics, expression of opinions, support for democracy, and tolerance for diversity. Socioeconomic status (SES) was a strong predictor of these measures, particularly of tolerance. The newspaper intervention interacted with SES, closing gaps between social strata in most indicators of political socialization.

The process of redemocratization in Latin America since the early 1980s has sparked considerable interest in ways to consolidate democratic institutions in the region. Particular attention is being paid to citizenship education, as scholars recognize that new institutional arrangements do not necessarily alter the political culture. A democratic system can coexist with a political tradition that harbors deep-rooted authoritarian elements (Diamond, 1993). Many of the 'new democracies' of Latin America govern peoples in whom there is no widespread norm of political tolerance or democratic participation.

The problem of building a broadly democratic citizenry is especially acute in countries where the transition to democracy has generated high expectations—especially for economic growth and redistribution—that many democratically elected governments are often unable to meet. Ordinary results in a context of

extraordinary demands generate popular feelings of inefficacy and distrust toward democratic institutions (Catterberg, 1991). Rosy predictions of the early 1980s that democratization of political institutions would automatically 'spill over' to the political culture were far too optimistic. Hence, in contrast to established democracies of North America and Western Europe, citizenship education is regarded as crucial for the consolidation of democratic regimes in Latin America.

The recent 'rebirth' of political socialization research has emerged mostly in Third World countries that are struggling to build legitimacy for their democratic institutions (Niemi and Hepburn, 1995). As Ichilov (1990) argues, basic concerns in new democracies differ markedly from those in more established regimes. While U.S. scholars focus on individual-level deficiencies such as political apathy, low rates of voting, political cynicism, and weak party affiliation, political education scholars in the Third World worry about the very existence of democratic institutions. Much effort is devoted to practical interventions to inculcate normative values and skills that are taken for granted where democratic institutions are considered less fragile.

This article describes results of one such intervention, an experimental curriculum throughout Argentina called 'Newspaper-in-School'. This program, started in 1986, aimed to strengthen democratic norms among primary and secondary school students by promoting classroom discussion of current public issues. Unlike most school interventions aimed at political socialization in the USA, results in Argentina have been very encouraging. Morduchowicz *et al.* (1994) found in a 1992 evaluation that the Newspaper-in-School program contributed to students' knowledge of public affairs and had some impact on their use of news media and interpersonal discussion of politics. In this article, we explore how use of the newspaper in the classroom during an election year can significantly promote democratic value orientations and skills among students.

Our second major concern is the social structure underlying these values. Social scientists have long noted the deeply conservative nativism and intolerance of lower socioeconomic (SES) classes (e.g. Bettelheim and Janowitz, 1950). We will give special attention to the impact of the newspaper intervention on pro-democratic norms among children in the lower SES strata, where we expect to find such values most lacking. School interventions, which generally reach children of all SES levels, tend to 'close gaps' by raising the attitudes and behaviors of the lower strata more than those of middle-class students (McDevitt *et al.*, 1996).

POLITICAL CULTURE IN ARGENTINA

In *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*, Diamond argues that 'political culture is better conceived not purely as the legacy of the communal

past but as a geological structure with sedimentary deposits from many historical ages and events' (1993, p. 428).¹ Argentina, one of the world's richer nations at the turn of the century, experienced from 1930 to 1983 a late and unbalanced industrialization process, under alternating populist governments, weak democracies, and oppressive military regimes. The result was a political culture of intolerance marked by a distrust of pluralism and of democratic debate as a legitimate means of conflict resolution.

Lechner (1992) says that pluralism's development in Latin America was retarded by a holistic conception of society and order, in which dissent and conflict were viewed as disintegrative and hence intolerable. As Lechner (1993) puts it, 'Latin American democracy has always been permeated by a distrust of plurality, seen as improper questioning of national unity'. In the same vein, Garretón (1994) argues that Latin American political culture is based on two key concepts: unity and subordination. Individual rights, community dialogue, and kindred pluralistic values have been relegated to secondary status.

Empirical work by Catterberg (1989, 1991) substantiates a picture of deep-rooted anti-democratic elements in the Argentinean political culture.² His findings also cast doubt on the socializing power of political democracy *per se*, at least in times of economic crisis. His 1984 survey (Catterberg, 1989) found that immediately after the country's transition to democracy 69 percent of Argentines interviewed disagreed with the statement, 'Democracy is dangerous because it can bring disorder and disorganization'. But by 1988 the number disagreeing had dropped to 52 percent (Catterberg, 1991). And while in the 1984 survey 81 percent disagreed that 'the majority has the right to eliminate the rights of the minority', only 50 percent similarly disagreed in 1988. Apparently, although the transition to democracy in 1983 brought an immediate expression of democratic norms among the population, the next few years of economic and political turmoil seriously undermined these initial gains. It is likely that these losses in the normative realm were most acute in the lower socioeconomic classes, where support for dissent and debate were never strong and where hardship cuts deepest in times of economic distress.

In Argentina, support for democracy as a political system seems to depend heavily on its perceived capacity to meet immediate individual economic demands (Catterberg, 1989). Democratic orientations are less widespread among those who bear the heaviest impact of recurrent economic crises. In a country characterized by dramatic polarization of wealth, social structure is a key factor in evaluating any field intervention aimed at citizenship education. If

¹ For further discussion on the concept of political culture, see Almond and Verba (1963), Linz (1988), Putnam (1993) and Weffort (1992).

² Catterberg compares Argentina with other Latin American and European countries; we focus only on the Argentinean case.

pro-democratic norms are strengthened in the upper SES sector and yet remain weak farther down the ladder, this widening gap could undermine support for the entire regime during times of trouble. Thus there is much more at stake in citizenship education in Argentina and similar new democracies than in countries where the main problem is to encourage young citizens to make full use of a political system that is itself not seriously in jeopardy.

THE NEWSPAPER-IN-SCHOOL PROGRAM

Argentina's political culture is reflected in many ways in its educational system. As Niemi and Hepburn (1995) point out, in new democracies, transmission of democratic values from one generation to the next cannot be assumed. Schools do not necessarily promote democratic orientations, nor provide students with the critical skills necessary to participate in the public sphere. This was undoubtedly the case when Argentina regained democracy in 1983. The Argentinean educational system bears the deep footprints of authoritarianism and anti-pluralism (Braslavsky *et al.*, 1989; Filmus, 1988). The educational project advanced by the last military regime (1976–1983) promoted a non-participatory, disciplinary, and authoritative pedagogical model designed to isolate students from political issues and critical perspectives. As Morduchowicz *et al.* (1994) argue, the transition to democracy in 1983 did not guarantee citizenship education in the classrooms: 'there was no tradition of political debate in the schools; the lingering memory of the military regime hardly encouraged open expressions of feelings and preferences' (p. 3).

In response to this situation, the Newspaper-in-School program was started in 1986. It was first established in Buenos Aires, with support from the National Association of Regional Daily Newspapers (ADIRA) and extended to the rest of the country a year later. The program, as its name implies, is centered on the use of the local newspaper in classes. Although it superficially resembles many newspaper-in-education programs in the USA, it is more akin to parallel efforts toward the establishment of democratic norms in other Latin American nations and less developed countries elsewhere (Ichilov, 1990; Fuenzalida, 1992). While most media education programs in Latin America attempt to 'inoculate' students against the media (Masterman, 1980), the ADIRA program is clearly pro-newspaper; nonetheless, its educational goals expressly include political socialization (Morduchowicz, 1995).

Teachers cooperating with the program receive training in regional workshops, and a national conference is held once a year.³ Regional newspapers provide

³ The second author is the national coordinator of teacher training programs for ADIRA, which sponsored data collection for the present study.

local schools with free copies once a week, and some papers also run a special weekly section featuring the program. The curriculum varies in practice; some teachers mainly use the newspaper for grammar exercises, but others connect it to social studies lessons including writing exercises, and discussion of current events and of the free press system (Chaffee *et al.*, 1997). The program is most pervasive in the 6th- and 7th-grades, when students are 11–13 years old. While some students at this age have limited understanding of public issues, there is a large drop-out rate after 7th-grade, so this is the age when universal political education is most feasible in Argentina. The present study focuses on 6th- and 7th-graders.

The program has met some resistance from teachers, for various reasons. First, many find it easier to talk about the past than the present. Second, compared to textbooks, newspapers deal with controversial issues that some teachers find difficult to handle in class. Third, teachers, who mostly lack college degrees, are rarely trained to promote and coordinate political debate in class. As a result, not all teachers have volunteered to join the program, and there is great diversity in the ways it is implemented. For the purposes of evaluation, this limited participation is fortunate, because it provides a ready-made 'control condition' within virtually every school where the newspaper program is being used.

The newspaper intervention in schools raises some unusual questions for political socialization scholars. Although early studies on political socialization (Almond and Verba, 1963; Easton and Dennis, 1969) found that the school plays an important role in shaping children's political orientations, scholars later argued that schools are only instrumental in developing support for the existing political system and a sense of national loyalty. Educational institutions fail to provide a critical understanding of democracy and its functioning (Sigel and Hoskin, 1981; Langton and Jennings, 1968; R. Merelman, 1971; Patrick, 1972). As McLeod *et al.* (1995, p. 4) put it in a recent U.S. study, 'the effects of school curricula appear to be a strong sense of loyalty to the nation, combined with a vague understanding of democracy and an idealized view of political authority'.

Chaffee *et al.* (1995) argue that the seemingly weak approach of schools to the socializing role stems from evaluations grounded on a 'transmission' model of political education. The recent 'rebirth' of political socialization studies (Niemi and Hepburn, 1995) stems to a considerable extent from questioning this literal, didactic instructional approach, reconceiving political education as a life-long process in which schools mainly provide students with critical tools that enable them to participate in the political sphere.⁴ This reconceptualization

⁴ For a critique of the transmission model of political socialization, see also Sigel (1995), Flanagan and Gally (1995), Conley and Osborne (1988), M. Merelman (1990) and Westholm, Lindquist and Niemi (1990).

offers a new view of presumed socializing agents. In recent studies, use of the media and discussion with parents are as likely to be considered indicators of political socialization as they are to be considered agents. In the present study, the school curriculum is the principal independent variable, although earlier field experiments on interventions of this type have shown only limited effects such as transmission of didactic knowledge (Williams, 1961; Litt, 1963; Elley, 1964).

In early political socialization studies, the enduring influence of the limited-effects model of communication (Lazarsfeld *et al.*, 1965; Klapper, 1960) discouraged scholars from seriously taking mass media and other communication factors into account. Political scientists accepted the assertion that the media had only 'minimal consequences' on political attitudes and extended this premise uncritically to political socialization (e.g. Dawson and Prewitt, 1969). Empirical studies, however, asserted a socializing role for the media by demonstrating their importance in ushering teenagers into the world of politics (Chaffee *et al.*, 1970; Chaffee and Yang, 1990). Still, communication behaviors were generally interpreted as 'agents' that interacted with school and family factors in creating new citizens. Looking beyond the transmission model, researchers are now also considering communication variables such as TV news watching, newspaper reading, and political discussion within the family or in the schools as important outcomes of political education. Stimulation of communication habits is one important focus of evaluation, on the assumption that these behavioral skills can persist long after a student's knowledge of a particular school lesson has faded into obsolescence.

STUDY DESIGN AND CONTEXT

The present study was conducted in the fall of 1995, near the end of Argentina's school year. It involved 3,387 students and 130 teachers in 14 provinces across the country. The fact that implementation of the Newspaper-in-School program was voluntary for the teacher made possible a quasi-experimental design: each teacher participating in the program was asked to administer a questionnaire to his/her students and also to have it administered to another class in the same school and grade level that was *not* using the curriculum. This is similar to the design used by Morduchowicz *et al.* (1994) for their 1992 evaluation.

Fieldwork was conducted between October and November 1995, about five months after Argentina's general presidential elections, and many regional elections. This context maximized our opportunity to compare the Program and Control groups in terms of discussion and attention to media coverage of political issues and campaigns. Indicators of political socialization were developed in three areas where we hypothesized that the Newspaper-in-School program

might have some effects on communication behaviors, political cognitions, and political attitudes.⁵ Each of these had been affected in some manner according to the results of Morduchowicz *et al.* (1994).

Previous studies of the effects of school interventions with political implications (especially Chaffee *et al.*, 1995) have shown a strong stimulation of communication behaviors. From our questionnaire the following indices were constructed:

- (1) Mass media use, which includes questions about the frequency of newspaper reading and of attention to news on television.
- (2) Interpersonal discussion of political issues, divided into a general measure and separate indices for family and friends.

Political cognitions represent the area where strong effects of educational efforts in schools are usually found. Our measures included three indices that we expected the Newspaper-in-School program to stimulate:

- (3) Political knowledge, which consisted of the number of correct answers to four factual questions about current national and international political events.
- (4) Opinion-holding, an index constructed by summing the number of questions about political issues to which the student expressed an answer other than 'I don't know'.
- (5) Political interest, based on dispositional questions about willingness to vote and to take part in other political activities.

Finally, and perhaps most important in the context of Argentina's long-range need to establish broad support for a democratic regime, we evaluated normative attitudes involving support for democratic institutions and tolerance for societal diversity. These kinds of measures have rarely been found to be much affected by school interventions in the USA.

- (6) The Support for Democracy index includes items on support for democratic institutions and party pluralism.
- (7) The Tolerance index includes items on religious diversity, immigration, and freedom of expression.

The other measure of central interest in this study is socioeconomic status (SES), an index built from information about parental education and occupation, and family possessions. As in most Third World countries, there is a great deal of variance in SES within Argentina.

The Program group (students who participated in the program) proved to

⁵ For details on index construction, see the Appendix.

TABLE 1 Indices of political education (means), by experimental condition

<i>Index</i>	<i>Program</i> (<i>N</i> ≤ 1,626)	<i>Control</i> (<i>N</i> ≤ 1,761)	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Media use</i>			
Newspaper reading	2.07	1.90	+ .17***
TV news viewing	7.04	6.58	+ .46***
<i>Interpersonal discussion</i>			
General	1.53	1.44	+ .09**
With family	5.61	5.37	+ .24***
With friends	5.11	4.87	+ .24***
<i>Political cognitions</i>			
Political knowledge	2.31	2.26	+ .05
Opinion-holding	6.40	6.12	+ .28***
Political interest	1.92	1.83	+ .09**
<i>Political attitudes</i>			
Support for democracy	1.25	1.08	+ .17***
Tolerance index	3.21	3.00	+ .21**

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

be slightly below the Control group (students not involved in the program) on the family SES scale ($M_p = 8.9$, $M_c = 9.2$, $t = 1.38$, $p < .01$, $df = 3,365$). This difference would, if anything, tend to counteract positive overall effects of the classroom intervention; when we later tested for interactions between the intervention and SES, the latter variable was controlled statistically. There are, then, two main independent variables in this design: the field intervention of teaching with vs. without the newspaper, and the measure of SES. Because these two factors are essentially uncorrelated with one another, we interpret the study as a field experiment (more exactly, a quasi-experiment as per Cook and Campbell, 1979).

RESULTS

The overall effects of the teaching program are summarized in the form of group means in Table 1. There are significant differences for most measures, but not necessarily those we most expected. All five of the communication measures were significantly affected by the Newspaper-in-School intervention, including at-home behaviors such as watching television news and discussing politics with family. This effect is impressive both for its strength and consistency, and for the fact that it carried beyond the schoolroom into the students' daily

lives. One important effect of public affairs education seems to be to encourage more communication about politics, both with news media and interpersonally.

Some of our results for political cognitions were, on the other hand, disappointing. Almost all prior studies evaluating the impact of school programs on political socialization have shown an effect on knowledge of current events (e.g. Chaffee *et al.*, 1995; McLeod *et al.*, 1995; Morduchowicz *et al.*, 1994)—if little else in some cases. But we did not find a significant knowledge difference, despite our large sample size. Perhaps the four-item index was too weak. The related dependent measure of political interest, as measured by self-expressed willingness to become involved in political activities later in life, shows a minor effect that is significant due to the large sample.

On the other hand, we find a very sizable impact on the number of questions on which the students expressed opinions. This behavioral indicator involves more, of course, than cognitions. It is a mixture of cognition, affect, and communication, and probably indicates a global expansion of the student's range of interpersonal political contacts.

Importantly, the normative attitudes of tolerance and support for democracy were both affected by the newspaper intervention. Students whose teachers used the newspaper expressed significantly greater tolerance for diversity, and stronger pro-democratic values. Given Argentina's developmental need for such norms in its general population, these findings merit closer examination. Table 2 shows the percentages in the two groups who expressed support for various normative themes. Effects of the program were not uniform throughout this list, but they were invariably in the direction of tolerance and support for democracy.

Normative attitudes are not built in a day, nor even in a year's worth of schooling. In the long run, they must become interwoven with the broad belief system of the common culture. But where such values are lacking, our results indicate that school is a venue where they can be inculcated. Apparently the teachers using the newspaper in their classrooms coupled it with a good deal of encouragement toward normative support for Argentina's still-fragile democracy and for tolerance for diversity. This probably stems from their preparation by the ADIRA staff. Detailed analyses show that increases in pro-democratic attitudes were particularly associated with classroom writing exercises and teaching about Argentina's free press system (Chaffee *et al.*, 1997).

While the findings regarding pro-democratic attitudes are encouraging, there is still a long way to go. The percentages in Table 2 supporting various normative statements are often in the 50-percent range, far below the numbers that might encourage us to imagine a broad cultural consensus. Anti-democratic sentiments remain in the Argentinean political culture. While Table 1 indicates some positive effects, Table 2 reminds us that there remains a lot of room for

TABLE 2 Tolerance and support for democracy items, by experimental condition

		Program (%) (N ≤ 1,626)	Control (%) (N ≤ 1,761)	Difference (%) ^a
<i>Tolerance</i>				
'Should illegal immigrants have a right to care in a public hospital?'	Yes	68.6	68.2	+0.4
	No	11.5	9.0	
	DK	19.9	22.8	
'People don't have the right to criticize the government'	Agree	28.2	27.3	
	Disagree	53.5	49.5	+4.0**
	DK	18.3	23.2	
'Should others who think differently from you be allowed to express themselves?'	Yes	72.6	66.0	+6.6***
	No	8.7	10.5	
	DK	18.7	23.5	
'Should other religions besides Roman Catholic be permitted?'	Yes	68.4	68.1	+0.3
	No	13.8	14.9	
	DK	17.8	17.0	
'Do you approve that newspapers criticize the government?'	Yes	68.6	64.6	+4.0*
	No	11.6	12.8	
	DK	19.8	22.6	
'Drug addicts should be re-educated'	Agree	79.3	75.5	+3.8*
	Other	20.7	24.5	
<i>Support for democracy</i>				
'Democracy is the best form of government for our country'	Agree	55.1	44.4	+10.7***
	Disagree	12.6	15.3	
	DK	32.0	40.3	
'Those for whom people vote should govern the country'	Agree	41.1	37.2	+3.9**
	Other	58.9	62.8	
'It would be best for the country if many political parties exist'	Agree	30.1	27.7	+2.4
	Other	69.9	72.3	

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

^a A positive (+) sign indicates a difference in the direction of increased tolerance or support for democracy, as indicated by the response category on the same line.

improvement. In the control group, for example, only 44 percent agreed that 'democracy is the best form of government', and the newspaper teaching program raised this figure only to 55 percent. Nearly one-third in each group did not feel that religions other than Roman Catholic should be permitted. In all, though, our results are very encouraging as an assessment of a program that typically involved no more than a few hours of class work per week.

Participation beyond voting (which is mandatory in Argentina) is an essential characteristic of a healthy democracy, and our results suggest an image of these students as adult citizens taking active roles in political affairs. Detailed analyses show that students in the program were more interested in political issues and more likely to take part in political events ($p < .01$) than those in the control group. This result is particularly important in that Latin American political regimes have strong tendencies to authoritarianism or to what O'Donnel (1994) has called 'delegative democracies'—a hybrid that falls somewhere between formal democracy and *de facto* dictatorship. These tendencies can be offset by active citizen involvement in the political sphere. We find it especially hopeful that some of the strongest effects of the program were to stimulate students to form personal opinions and to discuss political issues.

DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

In a seminal paper on rural development programs, Tichenor *et al.* (1970; see also Donohue *et al.*, 1975) advanced a model they called the 'knowledge gap'. A field intervention, they noted, might have significant positive effects on a total population *on average*, and yet these effects might be very different in higher and lower social strata. When a positive effect is limited to upper SES levels, this can be dysfunctional for the total system because the gap between the strata is widened. On the other hand, one might find stronger effects in the lower SES range, in which case the overall effect of the educational effort would be to bring the total population closer together. The 'gap' model directs attention to the distribution, or variance, in all public educational outcomes, beyond the summary mean or central tendency. In the present study, this approach calls attention to differential effects by SES for each of the criterion variables that were affected by the Newspaper-in-School program. Prior research suggests that special civic curricula have a greater impact on students from underprivileged family backgrounds (Jennings and Niemi, 1974). This can produce a 'gap-closing' process, as was found for example in a voting centered curriculum intervention in California schools (McDevitt *et al.*, 1996). When teachers make a special effort toward political socialization, low-SES students tend to catch up with those from more privileged families.

Although we know that gaps can either close or widen in a field intervention,

TABLE 3 Correlation of socioeconomic status with indices of political socialization, by experimental condition

<i>Index</i>	<i>Program</i> (N ≤ 1,626)	<i>Control</i> (N ≤ 1,761)	<i>Difference^a</i>
<i>Media use</i>			
Newspaper reading	.00	.00	n.s.
TV news viewing	.05*	.04	n.s.
<i>Interpersonal discussion</i>			
General	.04	.12***	**
With family	.07**	.14***	*
With friends	.04	.10***	*
<i>Political cognitions</i>			
Political knowledge	.09***	.13***	n.s.
Opinion holding	.09***	.15***	*
Political interest	.07**	.08***	n.s.
<i>Political attitudes</i>			
Support for democracy	.08***	.15***	*
Tolerance index	.15***	.21***	*

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

^a All significant differences shown are in the direction of closing gaps between socioeconomic status levels. Difference between correlations was tested by subtraction of variance (R-squared) estimates.

the factors that determine which are not well established (Viswanath and Finnegan, 1995); differing theories lead to opposing predictions (Ettema and Kline, 1977). The gap-widening prediction presumes that interventions activate latent predispositions, exaggerating differences that stem from social structural factors. In this view, children from poor families come to school with structural deficits—weak verbal and attentional skills, for example—that predict that they will fall farther behind their high-SES peers when everyone is offered an intensive educational experience. The gap-narrowing prediction, on the contrary, assumes that all students can learn and that a special intervention can stimulate novel interests regardless of social background. This view stresses that *differences* between children from diverse backgrounds do not represent persistent *deficits* (Ettema and Kline, 1977). In the same vein, Chaffee *et al.* (1995) concluded that their gap-narrowing evidence supported a characterization of the educational program's impact as 'stimulation', rather than 'activation', of students' political behaviors.

Testing the 'gap' model takes the form of an interaction between SES and the experimental program. Tables 3 and 4 present the results of two slightly

TABLE 4 Indices of political education, by experimental condition and socioeconomic status

Index	Low-SES			High-SES			Net Dif ^a
	Program N ≤ 786	Control N ≤ 780	Difference	Program N ≤ 813	Control N ≤ 940	Difference	
<i>Media use</i>							
Newspaper reading	2.07 (.87)	1.88 (.87)	+ .19***	2.07 (.84)	1.94 (.84)	+ .13***	+ .06
TV news viewing	6.85 (2.68)	6.44 (2.61)	+ .41***	7.20 (2.72)	6.74 (2.66)	+ .45***	-.04
<i>Interpersonal discussion</i>							
General	1.49 (.76)	1.36 (.81)	+ .13***	1.58 (.70)	1.51 (.76)	+ .06	+ .07
With family	5.48 (2.12)	5.06 (2.20)	+ .42***	5.78 (2.08)	5.66 (2.16)	+ .12	+ .30*
With friends	5.05 (1.88)	4.69 (1.79)	+ .35***	5.18 (1.86)	5.05 (1.88)	+ .12	+ .23
<i>Political cognitions</i>							
Political knowledge	2.24 (1.17)	2.11 (1.19)	+ .13*	2.39 (1.24)	2.40 (1.17)	-.01	+ .14
Opinion holding	6.26 (1.79)	5.85 (1.99)	+ .41***	6.56 (1.60)	6.36 (1.76)	+ .20*	+ .21
Political interest	1.85 (.94)	1.75 (.92)	+ .09*	2.00 (.93)	1.91 (.90)	+ .08	+ .01
<i>Political attitudes</i>							
Support for democracy	1.18 (.98)	0.92 (.90)	+ .25***	1.34 (.99)	1.22 (1.02)	+ .11*	+ .14*
Tolerance index	2.93 (2.14)	2.49 (2.24)	+ .43***	3.49 (2.13)	3.43 (2.15)	+ .06	+ .37**

Cell entries are means. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

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

^aSignificance of net difference was tested by analysis of variance. A positive sign (+) indicates experimental effect was to close the socioeconomic status gap. Differences are subject to rounding error.

different statistical tests of this interaction. Table 3 compares the Program and Control groups in terms of the correlation between SES, as a graded variable across its entire range, with each dependent variable. The right-hand column, which tests the difference between the two correlations, indicates the gap effect. In Table 4, SES has been dichotomized at the median, to show the group means on each dependent variable at two contrasting levels of SES. The interaction is again tested in the right-hand-column, which compares the Program–Control difference in low SES to that in high SES.

As is evident from both Tables 3 and 4, the school program produced consistent gap-closing patterns, across all the political socialization indicators except television news viewing. While not all differences are statistically significant, the others all point in the direction of closing the SES gap, by both our tests. This is indicated by positive directional signs in the right-hand column of Table 4. This pattern, similar to that reported for U.S. political socialization intervention by Chaffee *et al.* (1995), proceeds from the fact that these criteria of political socialization tend generally to be lacking in lower SES strata—as indicated by their positive correlations with SES in the control group (Table 3). This control-group correlation is equivalent to a survey in an unperturbed population; similarly, in adult surveys SES tends to be a positive predictor of all sorts of political cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors. Catterberg's findings (1989, 1991) about major differences of political culture between socioeconomic strata in Argentina—stemming from different political experiences and opportunities—are clearly replicated here. The one area where we did not find the expected correlation is mass media use, an anomalous finding we cannot readily explain with the data at hand. Ordinarily, surveys of children as well as adults show a positive relationship between family SES and consumption of news via media.

A notable finding in Table 3 is that tolerance is a strong positive correlate of SES. This coincides with much other research on social stratification and political culture. It is vividly shown in Table 4, where the mean difference on our tolerance index between SES levels is approximately one full scale position in the Control group; in the Program group, this dysfunctional gap has been reduced by about one-half. Although this encouraging result shows that norms of tolerance can be built through educational programs, the very size of the tolerance gap between SES strata reminds us how far a developing country like Argentina has yet to go in building a social infrastructure where democracy could be considered a stable norm. Many scholars dealing with the problem of regime consolidation in new democracies (Catterberg, 1991; Alvaro-Moisés, 1994; Linz, 1988), both in Latin America and Europe, note that the lower classes tend to be hesitant in their adherence to democratic principles. This is understandable in light of the dramatic polarity of wealth that has remained

after political institutions have shifted to democratic formalities. Unease with democracy among those who are most affected by recurrent economic crises should come as no surprise. Indeed, we would consider the political socialization of lower SES students to be faulty to some degree if they were to embrace democracy uncritically as the ideal form of governance in the face of their own disadvantaged socioeconomic position. More than schooling is needed to sell democracy to the very poor in Latin America.

It is important to note that our study would not support the belief—particularly popular among populist/conservative commentators—that the lower classes are inherently incapable of comprehending, and living under, principles of tolerance in a democratic society. Such students in fact gained more than did their middle- and upper-class peers. But underprivileged families continue, to some extent, to reside in a political culture of their own. What is encouraging here is that some of the anti-democratic features of that separate culture are being eroded by the Newspaper-in-School program. The more privileged students did not remain unmoved by the Newspaper-in-School experience, of course. Table 4 shows significant gains in the high-SES group on both measures of media use, and also statistically significant increases in expression of opinions (although not in interpersonal discussion) and in our index of pro-democratic norms.

Some of our gap-closing results could be due to a ‘ceiling effect’ among students from high-SES families (Ettema and Kline, 1977). In other words, it is possible that these students come to school with such high initial levels of political socialization at home that the intervention adds little for them; students from low-SES backgrounds have much more room for improvement. Describing their situation in a slightly different way, students whose families are already likely to subscribe to a newspaper probably do not find the newspaper at school an especially novel or stimulating experience. For whatever reasons, however, we have found in our gap analyses a general social leveling effect that could represent a small but important step in the building of an inclusive and democratic political sphere in Argentine society.

EDUCATION *FOR* DEMOCRACY, DEMOCRACY *THROUGH* EDUCATION

The Newspaper-in-School program is not only an innovative and effective educational experiment, its success as documented here invites rethinking of other assumptions about political socialization. Few interventions have conceived of the schoolroom as a training ground for future democratic participation via extracurricular skills of citizenship; most school programs promote democracy *within* the school, by such devices as holding class elections. The research

literature has discouraged educators from attempting to build *through* the school young people who are prepared to take their place as citizens in the active political context of the larger democratic society. The intervention analyzed here is a successful effort in the latter direction and is particularly important in Argentina where students begin dropping out of school to assume adult roles soon after the grade levels studied here.

Our results discredit some common notions about political education and political culture. It appears that curriculum interventions can be instrumental in enhancing political literacy among pre-teens, despite prior research that did not detect such effects. Teaching with the newspaper helped students to develop political communication skills and stimulated the voicing of personal opinions. It also built an interest in political participation, fostered pluralistic orientations, and enhanced support for democracy. Our results also contradict the pessimistic view embodied in most academic renderings of the 'knowledge gap' hypothesis. Gap-closing is, in principle, just as likely as gap-widening as an outcome of a field intervention. Moreover, political socialization involves a good deal more than mere transmission of information. Although we found no significant effect on political knowledge *per se*, the gap model led us to uncover a general leveling effect in the narrowing of numerous 'gaps' in other important political behaviors. While SES was found to be, as expected, highly correlated with most measures of political socialization, the intervention reduced that correlation, helping students from low-SES families approach the level of their high-SES peers.

These results lead us to reject a third notion that is popular among political elites: that the political culture of the lower classes, historically identified with populist governments in Latin America, is inherently antithetical to democratic principles. Our analysis shows quite the contrary: that students from low-SES families were *more* receptive to the program and benefited the most in terms of preparation for citizenship. The lower classes are clearly not anti-democratic *per se*.

Consolidation of democracy in Argentina will require more than changes in the political culture. As many scholars (e.g. Weffort, 1992) point out, the lower classes will not embrace in the long run a political system that proves ineffective in reducing the society's dramatic polarization of wealth. To paraphrase our own study, one cannot expect to permanently reduce attitudinal gaps when huge gaps in actual well-being remain. Participatory democracy involves citizens who are permanently engaged in political dialogue. This presupposes not just political literacy on the part of individuals and formal democratic procedures, but a political culture that encourages the expression of opinions and a system that is responsive to the full range of societal groups. Macroscopic conditions that would involve lower strata in national development processes continue to be lacking to a large extent in Argentina, as in many new democracies. Our

purpose here has been a narrow one: to evaluate a school program based on a single educational strategy—use of the newspaper in class. Typically this involved no more than a few hours of class work per week; it produced changes in individuals that, although necessary to a stable democracy, are not in themselves sufficient. Our findings encourage a very hopeful view of this educational tool, but it is only one small step toward the kinds of changes that are needed in the political world of Argentine citizens, young and old.

APPENDIX

Listed below are item wording and coding for the indices used in this paper.

MEDIA USE

Newspaper reading

'Do you read the first page of the newspaper?' Yes = 1; No = 0; DK = 0.

'Do you read the inside pages of the newspaper?' Yes = 1; No = 0; DK = 0.

'Do you read the editorials or opinion articles?' Yes = 1; No = 0; DK = 0.

TV news viewing

'How many days a week do you watch news?' 0 = 1; 1 = 2; 2 = 3; 3 = 4; 4 = 5; 5 = 6; 6 = 7; 7 = 8.

'When was the last time you watched TV news?' Yesterday = 3; The past week = 2; More than 2 weeks ago = 1; Otherwise = 0.

INTERPERSONAL DISCUSSION

General

'Do you talk with anyone about what is going on in the country and the world?' Yes = 1; No = 0; DK = 0.

'When you see or read news about what is going on in the country and the world, do you share it with other people?' Yes = 1; No = 0; DK = 0.

With family

'When you watch TV news, do you call your parents' attention to something?' Yes, very often = 2; Yes, at times = 1; No = 0.

'Do you recommend that your parents read interesting news?' Yes = 1; No = 0.

'How much do you talk with your parents about what is going on in the country and the world?' Almost every day = 3; Once/twice a week = 2; Almost never = 1; Otherwise = 0.

'With whom do you share news about what is going on in the country and the world?' Father = 1; Mother = 1; Siblings = 1; Teacher = 0; Friends = 0.

'Who brings up, in general, discussion in your home about what is going on in the country and the world?' I do = 1; My parents = 0; My siblings = 0; DK = 0.

With friends

'With whom do you share news about what is going on in the country and the world?' Father = 0; Mother = 0; Siblings = 0; Teacher = 0; Friends = 1.

'Do you talk with friends about what is going on in the country and the world?' Yes, a lot = 2; Very little = 1; No = 0; DK = 0.

'How much do you talk with your friends about what is going on in the country and the world?' Almost every day = 3; Once/twice a week = 2; Almost never = 1; Otherwise = 0.

'How much do you talk with your friends about the elections?' A lot = 3; A little = 2; Almost none = 1; Otherwise = 0.

POLITICAL COGNITIONS

Political knowledge

'Which of these names is Minister of Foreign Affairs?' Correct = 1; Incorrect = 0.

'The privatization of which of these 3 services is currently being discussed?' Correct = 1; Incorrect = 0.

'In which country is there a terrible civil war?' Correct = 1; Incorrect = 0.

'Which of these presidents governs a country of the Mercosur?' Correct = 1; Incorrect = 0.

Political interest

'When a project is proposed by the government, do you ask yourself what your opinion is?' Yes = 1; No = 0; DK = 0.

'If the government proposed a project you considered bad for the country, would you do something to show your opposition?' Yes = 1; No = 0; DK = 0.

'Would you like to be able to vote?' Yes = 1; No = 0; DK = 0.

Opinion holding

'Democracy is the best form of government for our country and the world' DK = 0; Otherwise = 1.

'In elections it is the same if either party wins, because they are all the same' DK = 0; Otherwise = 1.

'In a democracy every citizen should participate' DK = 0; Otherwise = 1.

'Do you approve of the optional military service?' DK = 0; Otherwise = 1.

'Should illegal immigrants have a right to care in a public hospital?' DK = 0; Otherwise = 1.

'Should others who think differently from you be allowed to express themselves?' DK = 0; Otherwise = 1.

'Should other religions besides Roman Catholic be permitted?' DK = 0; Otherwise = 1.

'Do you approve that newspapers criticize the government?' DK = 0; Otherwise = 1.

POLITICAL ATTITUDES

Tolerance

'People don't have the right to criticize the government'. Agree = -1; Disagree = 1; DK = 0.

'Should illegal immigrants have a right to care in a public hospital?' Yes = 1; No = -1; DK = 0.

'What should be done with drug-addicts?' Re-education = 1; Put them in jail = -1; DK = 0.

'Should other religions besides Roman Catholic be permitted?' Yes = 1; No = -1; DK = 0.

'Should others who think differently from you be allowed to express themselves?' Yes = 1; No = -1; DK = 0.

'Do you approve that newspapers criticize the government?' Yes = 1; No = -1; DK = 0.

Support for democracy

'Democracy is the best form of government for our country and the world'. Agree = 1; Disagree = 0; DK = 0.

'Who should govern the country?' Those for whom people vote = 1; Those who know the most = 0; The military = 0; DK = 0.

'What would be best for the country?' If many parties exist = 1; If no political parties exist = 0; If only one political party exists = 0; DK = 0.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (SES)

Father's education: Completed primary school = 1; Completed secondary school = 3; Completed university = 5.

Mother's education: Completed primary school = 1; Completed secondary school = 2; Completed university = 3.

Father's occupation: Unemployed = 0; Employed, General = 3; Employed, Professional/manager/supervisor = 6.

Mother's occupation: Unemployed = 1; Employed, General = 2; Employed, Professional/manager/supervisor = 4.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was supported in part by small grants to the first author from the Center for Latin American Studies, and the Institute for International Studies,

of Stanford University; and from the Spencer Foundation. Some of the findings reported herein were presented to the 1997 convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

REFERENCES

- Almond, G. and Verba, S. (1963): *The Civic Culture*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Alvaro-Moisés, J. (1994): 'A escolha democrática em perspectiva comparada'. *Lua Nova*, 33, 17-38.
- Bettelheim, B. and Janowitz, M. (1950): *Dynamics Of Prejudice: A Psychological and Sociological Study of Veterans*, New York, Harper & Row.
- Braslavsky, C., Cunha, L. A., Filgueira, C. and Lemez, R. (1989): *Educación en la transición a la democracia*, Santiago de Chile, UNESCO/OREALC.
- Catterberg, E. (1989): *Argentina Confronts Politics*, Boulder, CO, L. Rienner Publishers.
- Catterberg, E. (1991): 'El balance de la transición : Percepciones de eficacia gubernamental en el Cono Sur', Paper presented to the XV Political Science World Congress, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- Chaffee, S. H., Moon, Y. and McDevitt, M. (1995): 'Stimulation of communication: Reconceptualizing the study of political socialization', Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC.
- Chaffee, S., Morduchowicz, R. and Galperin, H. (1997): 'The newspaper as an agent of political socialization in schools: Effects of "El Diario en la Escuela" in Argentina'. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Chicago, IL.
- Chaffee, S. H., Ward, S. and Tipton, L. (1970): 'Mass communication and political socialization', *Journalism Quarterly*, 47, 647-59.
- Chaffee, S. H. and Yang, S. M. (1990): 'Communication and political socialization'. In O. Ichilov (ed.) *Political Socialization, Citizenship, and Democracy*, New York, Teachers College Press.
- Conley, M. W. and Osborne, K. (1988): 'Civics, citizenship, state power and political education: The Canadian experience'. In B. Claussen and S. Kili (eds.) *Changing Structures of Political Power, Socialization and Political Education*, New York, Peter Lang.
- Cook, T. D. and Campbell, D. T. (1979): *Quasi-Experimentation: Design and Analysis Issues for Field Settings*, Chicago, Rand-McNally.
- Dawson, R. and Prewitt, K. (1969): *Political Socialization*, Boston, MA, Little & Brown.
- Diamond, L. (1993): *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*, Boulder, CO, L. Rienner Publishers.
- Donohue, G. A., Tichenor, P. J. and Olien, C. N. (1975): 'Mass media and the knowledge gap: A hypothesis reconsidered', *Communication Research*, 2, 3-23.
- Easton, D. and Dennis, J. (1969): *Children in the Political System*, New York, McGraw-Hill.

- Elley, W. (1964): 'Attitude change and education for international understanding', *Sociology of Education*, 37, 325.
- Ettema, J. S. and Kline, F. G. (1977): 'Deficits, differences, and ceilings: Contingent conditions for understanding the knowledge gap', *Communication Research*, 4, 179-202.
- Filmus, D. (1988): *Respuestas a la crisis educativa*. Buenos Aires: Cántaro.
- Flanagan, C. and Gally, L. (1995): 'Reframing the meaning of "political" in research with adolescents', *Perspectives on Political Science*, 24, 34-42.
- Fuenzalida, V. (1992): 'Media education in Latin America: developments 1970-1990'. In C. Bazalgette, E. Bevort, and J. Savino (eds.) *New Directions: Media Education Worldwide*, London, BFI.
- Garretón, M. A. (1994): *La faz sumergida del iceberg: Estudios sobre la transformación cultural*, Santiago de Chile, CESOC-LOM.
- Ichilov, O. (1990): 'Dimensions and role patterns of citizenship in democracy'. In O. Ichilov (ed.) *Political Socialization, Citizenship, and Democracy*, New York, Teachers College Press.
- Jennings, M. K. and Niemi, R. G. (1974): 'Social studies teachers and their pupils'. In M. K. Jennings, and R. G. Niemi (eds.) *The Political Character of Adolescence: The Influence of Families and Schools*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
- Klapper, J. T. (1960): *The Effects of Mass Communication*, Glencoe, IL, Free Press.
- Langton, K. P. and Jennings, M. K. (1968): 'Political socialization and the high school civics curriculum in the United States', *American Political Science Review*, 62, 862-7.
- Lazarsfeld, P., Berelson, B. and Gaudet, H. (1965): *The People's Choice*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lechner, N. (1992): 'Some people die of fear: Fear as a political problem'. In J. Corradi, P. Weiss-Fagen, and M. A. Garretón (eds.) *Fear at the Edge*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press.
- Lechner, N. (1993): 'A disenchantment called post-modernism', *Boundary 2*, 20, 122-39.
- Linz, J. J. (1988): *Democracy in Developing Countries*, Boulder, CO, L. Rienner Publishers.
- Litt, E. (1963): 'Civic education norms and political indoctrination', *American Sociological Review*, 28, 69-75.
- Masterman, L. (1980): *Teaching About Television*. London: Macmillan.
- McDevitt, M., Chaffee, S. H. and Moon, Y. (1996): 'Closing gaps between rich and poor: Effects of an experimental curriculum on political socialization'. Paper presented to International Communication Association, Chicago, IL.
- McLeod, J., Eveland, W. P. and Horowitz, E. M. (1995): 'Learning to live in democracy: The interdependence of family, schools and media'. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC.
- Merelman, R. (1990): 'The role of conflict in children's political learning'. In O. Ichilov (ed.) *Political Socialization, Citizenship, and Democracy*, New York, Teachers College Press.
- Merelman, R. (1971): *Political Socialization and Educational Climates*, New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Morduchowicz, R. (1995): *De la actualidad a la escuela: La formación social y democrática*, Buenos Aires, Aique.

- Morduchowicz, R., Catterberg, E., Niemi, R. G. and Bell, F. (1994): 'Teaching political information and democratic values in a new democracy: An Argentine experiment'. Paper presented to International Political Science Association, Berlin, Germany.
- Niemi, R. and Hepburn, M. A. (1995): 'The rebirth of political socialization', *Perspectives on Political Science*, 24, 7-16.
- O'Donnell, G. (1994): 'Delegative democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, 5, 55-69.
- Patrick, J. (1972): 'The impact of an experimental course, "American Political Behavior", on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of secondary school students', *Social Education*, 36, 168-79.
- Putnam, R. D. (1993): *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
- Sigel, R. (1995): 'New directions for political socialization', *Perspectives on Political Science*, 24, 17-22.
- Sigel, R. S. and Hoskin, M. (1981): *The Political Involvement of Adolescents*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press.
- Tichenor, P. J., Donohue, G. A. and Olien, C. N. (1970): 'Mass media and differential growth in knowledge', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 34, 158-70.
- Viswanath, K. and Finnegan, J. R. (1995): 'The knowledge gap hypothesis: Twenty five years later'. In B. Burleson (ed.) *Communication Yearbook 19*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.
- Weffort, F. (1992): *New Democracies, Which Democracies?*, Washington, DC, Latin American Program, Woodrow Wilson Center.
- Westholm, A., Lindquist, A. and Niemi, R. (1990): 'Education and the making of the informed citizen: Political literacy and the outside world'. In O. Ichilov (ed.) *Political Socialization, Citizenship, and Democracy*, New York, Teachers College Press.
- Williams, H. M. (1961): 'Changes in pupils' attitudes toward West African Negroes following the use of two different teaching methods', *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 31, 292-6.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Steven Chaffee is Janet M. Peck Professor of International Communication, and chair of the Department of Communication, at Stanford University. His research interests include political communication, family communication processes, and mass media effects. He is a former editor of the journal *Communication Research*, and a past president of the International Communication Association.

Roxana Morduchowicz is Professor of Communication at the University of Buenos Aires. She is general director of the Newspaper-in-School program for the Association of Dailies of the Interior of the Republic of Argentina (ADIRA).

Hernan Galperin is a Ph.D. student in Communication at Stanford University.

His research interests include political communication and international media policy.

Correspondence should be addressed to Steven Chaffee, Department of Communication, Building 120, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-2050; e-mail chaffee@leland.stanford.edu.