

**The effects of an on-site political education program
on the political knowledge and engagement
of young people**

Master thesis

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1. Introduction

Politically engaged and informed citizens are essential for a healthy democracy. Scholars agree that stable political institutions with checks and balances are not enough. A democracy requires citizens that have knowledge about politics and feel engaged in the process (Galston, 2001). Since Plato and Aristotle ‘good citizenship’ is a prominent topic of discussion in political theory. It is often argued that good citizens are made and not born (Spinoza [1670], 2000; Galston, 2001). Although it is clear that disagreement exists about what political education should aim at in detail, there seems to be a consensus that democracies require citizens that are engaged and have at least basic knowledge to make informed decisions about their own political life (Galston, 2001).

Most research on political education focuses on deliberate programs of education, instead of political education by life, culture and other agents. This focus on intentional political socialization of youth is often justified by evidence that individuals at a young age are most easy to influence and intentional socialization at a young age is most effective (Crittenden and Levine, 2015). Although in the fifties and early sixties most scholars thought that political education did not have the expected effects, more recent research suggests that intentional political socialization by education does have effects on the political knowledge and engagement of young people (Langton and Jennings, 1968; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Niemi and Junn, 1998; Galston, 2001; Milner, 2002).

Despite better education on average and more widespread education, young people in Western society, still have low levels of political knowledge and political engagement. Moreover, young people do not only have less knowledge compared to adults, they also have less knowledge compared to previous generations (Levine and Youniss, 2006: 3; Milner, 2008: 4). The danger is that youth with low levels of political knowledge and/or political interest are likely to become political dropouts. These young people will become so inattentive to politics

that they lack the minimal knowledge to make informed decisions about their political life and therefore will in the end not engage in society at all. This group of young political dropouts is growing (Milner, 2010: 24). Traditional and formal political education in classrooms seems insufficient to make a difference.

Therefore, given the importance of increasing the political knowledge and engagement of young people, there is a growing interest in alternative ways of getting young people in contact with politics. One alternative is *political education on-site*. This means that young people experience politics directly and learn about politics in authentic political places. In this research, it will be examined whether or not such a program could increase the political knowledge and engagement of young people. The research question that will be addressed in this thesis is as follows:

What are the effects of an on-site political education program on the political knowledge and political engagement of young people?

To answer the research question more than 600 young people in the Netherlands were asked about their political knowledge and engagement. With the experimental Solomon Four-group Research design, the effects of an on-site political education program on their knowledge and engagement were tested.

Until now, little attention has been paid in the literature to learning on-site and its effects. Most studies on political education focus on the more traditional and formal ways of education in classrooms. A few studies researched the effects of alternative ways of political education, but most studies have methodological problems. This study will try to contribute to this gap in the literature, by using the rigorous Solomon four-group research design. This design combats most of the internal and external validity problems apparent in lesser experimental designs. The societal relevance of this study lies in the usefulness of the outcomes of this study for policymakers and educators in this area. If the conclusion can be

made that on-site political education programs do have a positive effect on political knowledge and/or political engagement of young people, the opportunities for young people to engage in such a program could be expanded.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1 Political knowledge

Political knowledge is one of the most important components of democratic citizenship and for a well-functioning democracy (Milner, 2002). Political knowledge as defined by Delli Carpini and Keeter is ‘the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long-term memory’ (1996, 65). Political knowledge can be further differentiated in dimensions of the ‘political’: polity, politics and policy. Polity refers to the political system, including the institutions; politics refers to the processes of the political system, the events and actors; and policy refers to the political issues, programs and implementation (Von Prittwitz, 2007). Another distinction can be made between objective knowledge and subjective knowledge. Whereas objective knowledge refers to factual knowledge, subjective knowledge refers to the self-perception of one’s knowledge. Congruence between objective and subjective knowledge is not self-evident (Dekker, 2014). Someone may believe to have much knowledge about politics, but score low on actual political knowledge, and the other way around.

First of all, political knowledge is important for citizens to comprehend the political debate and to understand and realize their own interests as individuals and as members of a society. Second, political knowledge is important because it is a prerequisite for political engagement (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Dalton, 2000). It not only affects actual political behavior such as voting and political participation, but also the development and content of political beliefs, attitudes and opinions (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Popkin and Dimock, 1999; Andersen et al. 2001; Galston, 2001; Milner 2002).

Individual differences in political knowledge can be explained not only by motivation, ability and opportunity people have to learn about politics, but also by important background variables such as gender, age, education level and socio-economic status (Dekker and Nuus,

2007). Some studies suggest that boys do have more knowledge about politics than girls (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 2000). In general, younger people do have less knowledge than older people (Milner, 2005). The higher the education level, the more knowledge people have about politics. Finally the higher the socio-economic status of people, the more they know about politics (Galston, 2001; Delli Carpini, 2005).

2.2 Political engagement

Political engagement is often viewed as a multidimensional construct. Considering political engagement consists of different aspects, no single definition of political engagement is given in the literature (Cohen, et al., 2001). Some studies equate political engagement with political participation, others see political engagement as an explanation of political participation, but most studies view political engagement as a much broader concept, including not only the behavioral 'active' aspects of participation, but also psychological 'passive' aspects of involvement (Verba, Burns and Lehman Schlozman, 1997; Cohen, et al. 2001; Augemberg, 2008; Zani and Barrett, 2012; Fox and Korris, 2014). The active component refers to actual behavior such as voting, political participation, political discussion and the frequency of (traditional and alternative) media use. The passive component refers to psychological involvement in politics, such as political interest, political self-efficacy, political emotions and low levels of political cynicism (Verba, Burns and Lehman Schlozman, 1997; Galston, 2004; Augemberg, 2008; Fox and Korris, 2014). Whereas some studies view political self-efficacy, political emotions and the level of political cynicism as explanations of political engagement, other studies view them as important aspects of the psychological passive component of political engagement (Fox and Korris, 2014). In this study they will be viewed as components of political engagement.

Whereas individuals intention to vote only refers to the intention to a single act, intention to participate can refer to different ways of political participation, such as joining a demonstration, participating in a petition, attending a debate or following politicians on the internet. Other indicators of the active component of political engagement are discussing politics with friends and family and the frequency of political media use.

Political interest is an indicator of the passive psychological part of political engagement. Political interest is often defined as the ‘degree to which politics arouses a citizen’s curiosity’ or ‘the citizen’s attentiveness to politics’ (Deth, 2000). Political self-efficacy includes internal efficacy, beliefs about one’s own capacities to understand and participate in politics, and external efficacy, beliefs about the responsiveness of the government to the demands of the citizen (Niemi, et al, 1991). Political emotions are the emotions people have towards the political system, politicians or policies (Demertzis, 2014). This can include positive emotions such as joy, enthusiasm, or pride, but also negative emotions, such as anger, fear, shame or disappointment. Positive emotions are often an indication of high political engagement of citizens, whereas negative emotions can lead to the opposite. Negative political emotions are often related to political cynicism. This can be defined as a negative political attitude of an individual, based on the belief that the political actors, institutions and the political system are immoral and incompetent (Dekker and Schyns, 2006). High levels of political cynicism are expected to lower the incentive for people to learn about politics and become engaged. On the other hand, in some studies it is argued that both negative emotions about politics and political cynicism, can be an incentive for individuals to become more engaged, out of anger, or to change politics (Fu, et al., 2001). Nevertheless most scholars consider negative political emotions and political cynicism as detrimental for a healthy working democracy (Krouwel and Abts, 2005; Dekker, 2006).

Studies show that the behavioral and psychological components of political engagement are interrelated (Verba et al., 1995). Especially the psychological components have a positive effect on the behavioral components of political engagement and explain variances in the levels of political engagement of individuals. Furthermore, political knowledge does not only affect political engagement, political engagement also affects political knowledge. Increased political engagement has positive effects on the motivation and ability people have to learn about politics (Dekker and Nuus, 2007). Besides political knowledge, also motivation, ability and opportunity to become engaged are important explanations of individual differences in political engagement. Furthermore, as with political knowledge, important background factors such as gender, age, education level and socio-economic status affect the individual political engagement. Boys are often more engaged in politics than girls, political engagement generally increases with age, and the higher the education level or socio-economic status of the individual, the more engaged they are (Augemberg, 2008)

2.3 Political socialization

Besides ability and motivation, people need the opportunity to learn about politics and get engaged (Dekker and Nuus, 2007). Research on political socialization deals with the question: ‘when, how and as a result of what do individuals acquire what political knowledge, opinions, skills, attitudes, behavioral intentions and behavioral patterns’ (Dekker, 1991). A central issue when talking about political socialization is when individuals acquire the first and greatest amount of political knowledge and attitudes. Sears discusses three hypotheses explaining when people get socialized politically: the *life-long openness hypothesis*, the *life-cycle hypothesis* and the *impressionable years hypothesis* (Sears, 1983). The life-long openness hypothesis assumes that people are open to political socialization during their whole lives.

Age is in this model irrelevant for political socialization, since individuals can get political socialized at all ages. The life-cycle hypothesis suggests that individuals get socialized politically in certain stages of their lives. This model assumes that in different stages of your life individuals are more or less willing to adopt certain political attitudes. Furthermore the impressionable years hypothesis (in combination with the persistence viewpoint) proposes that political affections, cognitions and intentions develop during late adolescence and early adulthood and the susceptibility drops afterwards. Whereas dispositions are vulnerable when people are young, individuals are more resistant to change in later stages of their lives (Sears and Valentino, 1997). Most research finds evidence for the impressionable years hypothesis in combination with persistence in later stages (Sears, 1983; Miller and Sears, 1986; Krosnick and Alwin, 1989).

A distinction can be made between direct and indirect political socialization. Whereas direct political socialization involves the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, intentions, skills and opinions directly of political nature, indirect political socialization refers to the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, intentions, skills and opinions that are not political in nature, but tend to influence the political ones. It is possible that general attitudes at an older age are addressed as political and then become political attitudes (Dekker, 1991). One could think of a loving and caring attitude for nature and animals, which at a later age becomes more a political attitude when getting involved in political parties or action groups that address issues of climate change, damaged nature or the suffering of animals. One can moreover distinguish between intentional and not intentional political socialization.

Intentional political socialization happens when the socializing actor wants to influence the political knowledge and engagement of someone else. A clear example of intentional (direct) political socialization is political education, wherein for example a teacher wants to teach his students about political parties. Non-intentional political socialization on the other hand

happens when the actor not deliberately aims at influencing the persons political knowledge or engagement. An example of this could be overhearing parents talk about politics (Dekker, 1991).

2.4 Political socialization by education

Important agents in political socialization are family, education, church, media, peer groups, employment and political structures (Niemi and Sobieszek, 1977; Dekker, 1991). It is very difficult to make statements on which agent is the most influential actor in political socialization, not only because it is difficult to isolate socialization agents in a research design, but also because the amount of influence is difficult to measure. Still a lot of studies focus on the influence of different actors on the political socialization of individuals. In the fifties and sixties, research on political socialization suggested that family is the most important agency of political socialization. Political socialization in this primary group is often unintentional. More recent studies, however, emphasize the importance of education in shaping the political orientations of young people (Almond and Verba, 1963: 379; Jennings and Niemi, 1968; Torney-Purta, 2002).

Political and civic or citizenship education are often used interchangeably (Tse, 2004). Citizenship education however refers to a broader concept than political education, comprising both of political education and moral education. Whereas political education focuses on education related to political processes, citizenship education focuses also on education related to broader social processes. The focus in this thesis will be on political education: education aiming at political knowledge and political engagement.

Political education, however, is not uncontroversial (Tooley, 2000; Gilbert, 2006). From the 1950s until the 1970s not much attention was paid to political education, because it was assumed that intentional political socialization by state or schools did not have significant effects (Crittenden and Levine, 2015). Since some studies showed that educational practices

can influence young people, it is again subject of debate what the education of citizens about politics and civic life should consist of (Sherrod, Torney-Purta and Flanagan, 2010).

Questions are asked whether the state should have a role in political socialization through education at all, and if so, whether this education should be political, non political, patriotic or critical, focused on freedom or equality and encouraging participation or representation. One could argue that it is better to leave political socialization to other actors not related to the state, such as family, friends or church. Critics of a comprehensive educational approach in political life question the idea that the state has this much influence on what citizens think and do and call political education 'ideological manipulation or repression' (Tse, 2004). The danger is that the education will reflect the opinion of the people in power and reinforce their power, rather than reflecting different political possibilities (Wolin, 1989: 13) Moreover, disagreement exists on what the intended outcomes are of political education.

However, Galston argues that although disagreement exists on how political education should look like in detail, in most literature an emerging consensus comes into view on key features of political education in democratic states (2001). Education in general, and more specifically political education, contributes to the survival and stability of the state. Scholars agree that political education should give people at least a basic level of political knowledge to understand political debates. They do not have to be experts on political issues, but should have enough knowledge to understand what roles they can play in politics, they should feel encouraged and develop the skills to actually participate and engage in politics (Niemi and Junn, 1998; Galston, 2001; Milner, 2002). The danger of reinforcing existing power relations should be avoided by making political education neutral towards different conceptions of the good and more concrete of different party politics and policy (Popkin and Dimock, 1999). Political knowledge and engaging skills are not only important for the continuation of a democracy, but also for the flourishing of the welfare state (Milner, 2002). Given the fact that

not everyone will get politically socialized at home by parents, friends or for example the church, education at schools can give every citizen an equal starting point of basic knowledge and understanding of civic and political life (Crittenden and Levine, 2015).

Despite the increased attention to politics in the curriculum of schools, the observed levels of political knowledge and engagement are still low (Milner 2009; Torney-Purta et al., 2010; Hoskins et al., 2012). Although the curricular requirements, the preparation of teachers and textbooks all have been much improved over the last decade, formal education still seems to fail to increase the political knowledge and engagement of young people enough (Quigley, 1999; Niemi and Niemi, 2007; Milner, 2010). Formal political education at schools often constitutes learning about politics in classrooms with textbooks in a very passive way. Studies show that these forms of curricular education miss the link with reality, which makes it difficult for young people to incorporate the obtained knowledge in their daily lives. Young people perceive politics often as remote and complex and therefore too difficult to understand or to become engaged with (Godsay, et al., 2012). Some studies even show that education in the classroom could lead to a decrease in political knowledge and engagement (Niemi and Niemi, 2007). This suggests that formal education is insufficient in getting young people knowledgeable and engaged in politics.

2.5 Alternatives approaches: political education on-site

Given the importance of obtaining political knowledge and getting engaged in the political process, the demand for alternative ways of education grows. Several studies suggest alternative ways of getting young people more involved and to increase their knowledge about politics. These suggestions include not only alternatives within the classroom, but also outside the classroom. Activities inside the classroom for example include using political mass media in class, discussing real life events and current controversies or using simulations and mock

elections (Niemi and Junn, 1998; Milner, 2010; Deitz and Boeckelman, 2012). However studies show mixed results about the effectiveness of such activities. While some argue that these alternatives do increase the engagement and knowledge of the students, others remain skeptical and argue that those activities do not add much to the formal education in classrooms (Sherrod, Torney-Purta and Flanagan, 2010; Crittenden and Levine, 2015).

Other recommendations consist of learning and engaging outside the classroom. One of the best known examples of this is ‘service learning’. Classroom instructions are combined with community service activities. The idea is that students learn by experiencing other ways of life, working in a community and engaging in different social spheres, such as working in neighborhood or senior centers. When information in the classroom is combined with real life experiences in society, students are better able to connect theory and practice (Crittenden and Levine, 2015). Considerable evidence supports that students that learn how to participate in society are more likely to participate later in life (Youniss et al., 1997). However there are methodological issues with most of the studies. Few studies use pretests to determine the starting level of participation and few studies use actual control groups, which makes it difficult to determine what the effect of service learning actually exists of (Crittenden and Levine, 2015). A common criticism on service learning is the narrow focus on ‘service’ instead of action (Boyte and Kari, 1996). They argue that besides ‘serving’ students should also learn about voting, working, participating in organizations, protesting and deliberating (Boyte and Kari, 1996; Levinson, 2012).

Another promising alternative to formal political education in classrooms is *on-site political education*. This can be seen as a combination of *outside learning* and *experiential learning*. Outside learning is defined by Ofsted as ‘the use of places other than the classroom for teaching and learning’ (Ofsted, 2008). Experiential learning furthermore can be defined as ‘the direct encounter with phenomena being studied rather than merely thinking about the

encounter, or only consider the possibility of doing something about it' (Borzak, 1981).

Studies suggest that learning by experience may be the most effective way of increasing the political knowledge and engagement of young people (Damon, 2001: 144). Students do not only learn by experience by absorbing, doing and interacting in politics, but also by reflecting on those experiences (Dewey, 1933; Wertenbroch and Nabeth, 2000). A combination of both, experience and time for reflection, is therefore likely to increase the knowledge and engagement of young people most effectively.

Political on-site programs, taking place at actual political sites, for example in and around parliament, make it possible for young people to experience 'the political' directly. However, there are only a few examples of political on-site programs. In Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark, democracy workshops are offered by parliaments. The parliament of the United Kingdom offers a two-hour workshop during elections and voting in the parliament for secondary school students, and schools in the United Kingdom initiated projects for outdoor learning (Ofsted, 2008; Milner, 2010; Parliament.uk, 2015). Furthermore, some countries introduced the opportunity for young people to visit the parliament and meet representatives. *Close Up*, an organization in the United States, brings young people in contact with representatives of the parliament in Washington DC. In post-program surveys, the high school students indicated that the program is effective in helping them learn how to promote their political interests and understand the opinions of others (Close Up, 2014). Also in some countries, for example in the United States or Australia, parliaments offer internships for university students to conduct a research under the guidance of a member of parliament. Although one of the goals of such internships is 'understanding the structure and functioning of the parliament', the focus is mainly on developing research skills instead of experiencing politics (Parliament Western Australia, 2015).

Most programs for secondary school students for example in the United Kingdom, United States, Germany or Australia, often only involve a short one hour encounter with politics. The programs involve a guiding tour in the parliament focussing mostly on the institutional features of politics. Those programs do not consist of a total package of seeing parliament in action, meeting a member of parliament, experiencing politics by participating in democratic processes and evaluating and reflecting on those experiencing in workshops, games and simulations.

The effects of such workshops, guiding tours and programs have not yet been investigated thoroughly. One study by Ofsted suggests that outdoor activities lead to improvement in school achievements, motivation, personal development, and behavior (Ofsted, 2008). The study, however, is based on a small number of interviews, relying on the self-reports of the students knowledge, interest and motivations and about their experience with the activities.

Since 2011, there is also an organization in the Netherlands that offers an on-site political education program, which will be the subject of investigation in this study. Although not a lot of research is done on on-site political education programs, it is expected that such a program, due to its focus on directly experiencing politics, can have a positive effect on the political knowledge and engagement of young people. Therefore the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 1) Political on-site education programs have a positive effect on both the objective and subjective political knowledge of young people.

Hypothesis 2) Political on-site education programs have a positive effect on the political engagement of young people (including intention to vote, intention to participate, political interest, frequency of talking about politics, media-use, political self-efficacy and political positive emotions).

As mentioned earlier, since most scholars consider negative emotions and political cynicism as detrimental for a healthy democracy, negative political emotions and cynicism are seen as indicators of *less* political engagement. The program, therefore, strives to decrease those indicators.

Hypothesis 3) Political on-site education programs reduce negative political emotions and political cynicism of young people.

3. Methods

3.1 Case selection

In this research, the specific political on-site political education program that will be studied is a program of *ProDemos*, seated in The Hague in the Netherlands. *ProDemos* is an organization resulting from the merger of ‘the Institute for Political Participation (IPP)’ and the ‘Binnenhof Visitors’ Centre in the Hague’ in 2010. It provides a wide variety of activities such as tours, exhibitions, debates, courses and educational programs not only for students but also for tourists, members of political organizations and interested citizens. *ProDemos* works together with municipal, provincial and national authorities, courts and educational institutions. The central general goals of *ProDemos* are not only to increase knowledge about the values and foundations of the constitutional democracy, the operation of the institutions and politics and the constitutions, but also to promote effective political participation and political engagement (ProDemos, 2014).

ProDemos receives funding from the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, but also from third party funding for special projects (Ibid.). Although ProDemos is partly dependent on funding of the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, they strive to be as neutral and independent of specific political actors as possible to guarantee political neutral and objective educational information. *ProDemos* strives not to act as a spokesperson of the political majority or particular political movements (Ibid.). Both a supervisory board and a advisory board guarantee that ProDemos meets its objectives and satisfies the (educational) quality of the content. In 2015 a review committee investigated the way ProDemos fulfils its tasks and they suggested to broaden the positioning of ProDemos. This means that the funding will be based on a greater variety of political and constitutional actors. This would increase support for ProDemos, but also the independence regarding the different funders (ProDemos, 2015).

The one-day program 'Politics' of *ProDemos* in The Hague for high school students consists of a wide variety of activities, both inside the building of *ProDemos* and outside at the 'Binnenhof' (Inner Court), the 'Ridderzaal' (Hall of Knights) and the parliament. The activities inside the ProDemos building, which is seated across from the Binnenhof, take place in rooms made similar to actual Dutch political rooms such as the Trêveszaal, the Raadszaal, the Statenzaal, the Senate and the Second Chamber. In this way, the students have the feeling to actually be at those politically important places. Activities include simulations of elections or a debate in parliament, quizzes, interactive games, with room for discussion and reflection (ProDemos, 2014).

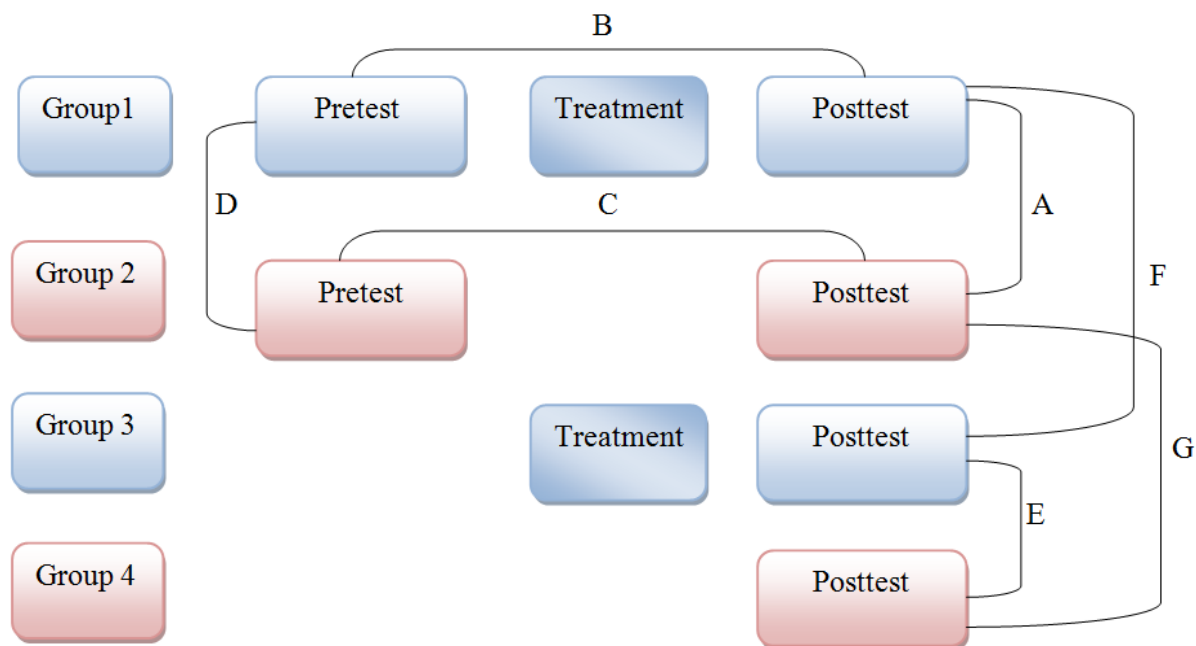
The other part of the program takes place outside the building, where politics is *actually* practiced. It includes watching the parliament in action in the Second Chamber, often a meeting with a member of the parliament and an instructive walking tour at the Binnenhof. In both parts of the day program, the students participate = and learn about politics by experiencing politics in authentic political scenes which makes the program a typical example of an on-site education program.

3.2 Research Design

To measure whether or not the on-site political education program has effects on the political knowledge and political engagement of secondary school students, a Solomon four-group research design will be applied (Solomon, 1949; Babbie, 2013). This experimental research design consists of four groups (see figure 1). The first group of participants is the pretest-posttest treatment group. This means that the students in this group get both questions before (pretest) and after (posttest) participating in the political on-site education program (treatment). The second group is the pretest-posttest control group, which means that the students in this group will also get both a pretest and a posttest, but will not get the treatment.

These first two groups compose the pretest- posttest control group design. Using a pretest- posttest treatment and a pretest- posttest control group, this design can control for external influences such as intensified media coverage of political issues in times of elections or other external events that may influence the outcome of the posttests (Campbell and Stanley, 1963: 24-25).

Figure 1. Solomon four-group research design



However this design cannot control for the interaction between the testing and the stimulus, such as priming or learning effects (Babbie and Benaquisto, 2002, 227). A priming effect has an indirect influence on the posttest outcomes. It is possible that because of the questions in the pretest, students become more aware of certain aspects of the program or respond differently to the program, and therefore answer questions in the posttest differently than they would have done when they did not have the pretest. The learning effect on the other hand is a direct effect. It is possible that the students learned certain things doing to the pretest, and answer therefore differently on the posttest compared to the students that did not have the pretest. Since the first two groups both received the pretest, it is not possible to determine whether or not the pretest has influenced the outcomes of the posttest. The Solomon four-group research design therefore adds two extra groups without a pretest. In this

way it is possible to control for the effects of the pretest. The third group is the experimental group and the fourth group the control group.

By comparing the posttest of treatment group 1 with the posttest of control group 2 (comparison A) with an independent sample t-test, the effectiveness of the treatment can be determined. If the mean of posttest treatment group 1 significantly differs from the posttest of control group 2 in the expected direction, the treatment has an effect. With paired sample t-tests the pretests of treatment group 1 and control group 2 can be compared to the posttests of respectively treatment group 1 and control group 2 (comparisons B and C). In this way it can be determined whether the experimental group and the control group change over time. If the control group changes over time, some external factors have influenced the posttest results. An independent sample t-test of the pretests of treatment group 1 and control group 2 shows whether or not the randomization process was effective (comparison D). If the pretests do not differ significantly, the randomization process was successful. The comparison between the posttests of treatment group 3 and control group 4 with an independent sample t-test allows to determine whether or not the pretest had an effect on the posttest results (comparison E). If the differences in the comparisons E and A are different, then the pretest had some effect on the results. However, because the participants are not randomly assigned to the different groups, it is also still possible that the difference is due to a different starting position. By comparing posttest treatment group 1 and posttest treatment group 3 with an independent sample t-test, it can be determined if the pretest had an effect on the treatment (comparison F). Finally the comparison between posttest control group 2 and posttest control group 4 (comparison G) with an independent sample t-test shows whether or not the pretest itself had an effect on the actual results, independently of the treatment (LavanyaKumari, 2013).

3.3 Participants

The effects of political knowledge and political engagement are tested on students from secondary education. This study is particularly interested in the effects of the program on young people. By focusing on students from secondary education, the study can address whether or not the program has an effect on young people.

More specific, the study focuses on students from the 4th year of ‘senior general secondary education’ (known in Dutch as *havo*). This category of school levels is in between the category of ‘pre-vocational education’ (known in Dutch as *vmbo*), which consists of two levels of education, and the category of ‘pre-university education’ (known in Dutch as *vwo*). The students of ‘pre-vocational education’ and ‘pre-university education’ will be excluded from the study. Students of ‘senior general secondary education’ are an important group for *ProDemos*, since a third of the students that visit *ProDemos* are of that school level. All classes of senior general secondary education that attend the program of *ProDemos* are in their 4th year of the secondary education. Moreover, *ProDemos* already has done some research on the effects of their programs on students from pre-vocational education and pre-university education. In order to contribute to their knowledge about their programs, focusing on another group is more useful. All these students have civic and political courses in their curriculum (known in Dutch as *maatschappijleer*). It is interesting to examine whether or not *ProDemos* still contributes more to the knowledge and engagement of those students than the regular curriculum of schools already does.

3.4 Data collection, procedure and ethical concerns

The effects of the program are assessed using questionnaires measuring the political knowledge and engagement of the students (see appendix for the questionnaire). Teachers of classes of senior general secondary education that signed up for the program ‘Politics’ of *ProDemos* in March, April or May of 2015, were initially approached by email with the

question whether their classes want to participate in the study. Because the response was low after the first email, the teachers were approached a second time by email and eventually by telephone.

Due to time constraints it was necessary that the classes that formed the experimental group participated in the program in March or April of 2015. The control groups, on the other hand, are classes that participated in the program later that year in May. In this way, both the experimental group and the control group constitute of classes that intend to visit ProDemos, making the groups as similar as possible. This is necessary because it is possible that classes of schools that go to ProDemos are different kind of classes than classes of schools that do not go to ProDemos. One could imagine that schools that make time and money available to attend the program in the Hague consider political education more important than schools that do not visit The Hague. If the control groups would only consist of classes of schools that would not go to ProDemos at all, a danger of selection bias would occur.

As a consequence of selection by class, individual assignment to the different groups is not possible, because the participants visit ProDemos in classes. Therefore, total classes of the schools were assigned to the different groups. The assignment of the different classes to the different groups was based on the date the class visits ProDemos (the treatment), the schedule of the schools and the schedule of the researcher. The assignment was therefore not totally random. This makes the design a semi-experimental design.

The questionnaire started with a short introduction reminding the participants that they have to fill out the questionnaire on their own, without help of other participants or the teacher, that the information will be treated with confidentiality and to thank them in advance for participating in the study. This was also being explained orally to the participants before they started with the questionnaire. Then the questionnaire continues with ‘easy’ questions about demographics and end with the more difficult questions about knowledge, to not scare

the participants and avoid drop-outs. This probably increased the chance they complete the questionnaire.

The students of these classes filled out the questionnaire about their political knowledge and engagement once or twice depending on which test group they were assigned to. The pretest questionnaires of classes that visit ProDemos were completed before the start of the program at ProDemos and the posttest questionnaires were completed during regular school hours in a classroom. For all groups the setting of filling out the questionnaire was – as far as possible- the same. The participants received the instruction that they had to fill out the questionnaire in silence, as if they were making an exam, with an option to ask a question if something was not clear. Because it is necessary, due to the experimental design, to individually link the pretest and posttest questionnaires to compare the results, the students were told they had to fill in their names for methodological reasons. They were also told however that the results will not be traced back to them individually. On average the participants needed 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The time period between the pretest and posttest had an average of 9 days with a range of 6 to 14 days.

Of the 10 teachers that were approached to participate with their classes in the experiment, only 3 teachers did not want to participate due to busy schedules at school. The 7 teachers that agreed to participate with their classes in the experiment taught at 7 different schools across the country (*Het Schoter* from Haarlem, *Berlage Lyceum* and *Cartesius Lyceum* from Amsterdam, *De Nassau* from Breda, *De Goudse Waarden* from Gouda, *Christiaan Huygens College* from Eindhoven and *Udens College* from Uden). In total 24 classes participated in the study consisting of 643 students from senior general secondary education. The pretest-posttest treatment group consists of 159 participants, the pretest-posttest control group includes 104 participants, the posttest only treatment group includes 199 participants and the posttest only control group includes 179 participants. Female

participants were slightly overrepresented in this experiment (girls: 55% and boys: 45%). The age of the participants ranges from 15 to 17 years old, with an average of 16 years.

Guaranteeing complete anonymity in surveys is practically almost impossible. Especially in this research this is difficult, because the names of the students were needed to link the pretest and posttest. However, to make the questionnaires as confidential as possible, the names were removed after the data was entered and the different questionnaires were coded with numbers to make the connection between the pretest and posttest. This is explained to the students before filling in the questionnaire. The students were furthermore ensured that the researcher will not trace back the answer to the participants and that the data of individuals will not be shared with third persons, including the teacher. It is also explained to the students that if they have reasons not to participate in the experiment, they have the right to withdraw.

3.5 Measurement

The treatment, the independent variable in this study, is the participation of the students in the onsite political education program of ProDemos.

The effects of the program, the dependent variables of this study, are measured using questionnaires about the political knowledge and engagement of the students. Some measures are individual items, others are indexes or scales. The indexes of most variables are Likert-type scales, measuring the positive or negative response to a statement. The internal consistency of the scales will be tested with the Cronbach's alpha reliability test. If necessary it will be tested whether or not the measure is unidimensional, using an exploratory factor analysis.

Voting intention was measured by asking the students to indicate the probability that they would vote, if they had the right to vote. The values of the measure range from scores '0'

to '4', with a higher score indicating higher levels of intention to vote. The *frequency of talking about politics* is measured by asking the respondents how often they discuss politics with family, friends or classmates. The values of this measure also range from scores '0' to '4', with higher scores indicating a higher frequency of talking about politics. *Political interest* is measured by asking the students how much they are interested in politics. The values of this measure also range from '0' to '4', with higher scores indicating more political interest.

Objective political knowledge is measured asking the respondents eleven questions about their knowledge of polity and politics. Policy questions are not included, because this dimension of knowledge is not one of the knowledge goals of ProDemos. The questions are based on the specific knowledge goals of the program. Eight questions are closed ended multiple choice questions with four answer categories. In the appendix, the 'correct answers' are in italic font. Four questions are more difficult, using open ended questions. In the appendix, the 'correct answers' are written after the question. For the first eight questions the students receive one point for each correct answer, for the second four questions they receive two points for each correct answer. The scale includes questions about the tasks of the Second Chamber, the number of seats in parliament, the prime-minister, the Council of State, parliamentary democracy, the government and the legislature procedure. The eleven questions together form a scale with low internal consistency: pretest Cronbach's $\alpha = .595$ and posttest $\alpha = .593$. Deleting items of the scale did not help to increase the internal consistency. Furthermore the factor analysis did not reveal separate factors. It was decided to include the scale with all the eleven items. The scale ranges from '0' to '14', with higher scores indicating more knowledge.

To measure the *subjective political knowledge* of the respondents, they were asked how much knowledge they think they have about 'politics in the Netherlands', 'the Second

Chamber' and 'political parties in the Netherlands.' The three items form together a scale with values ranging from '0' to '12', with higher scores indicating higher levels of subjective knowledge. The alpha of the pretest and posttest is high, respectively $\alpha = .868$ and $\alpha = .840$. This indicates a high level of consistency of the scale.

The *intention to participate* is measured by asking the respondents if they would like to participate in the following six activities: join a demonstration, following politicians on the internet, hang political posters, participate in a petition, speak to a politician and/or attend a political debate. The six items together formed a scale ranging from '0' to '24' with an acceptable reliability of $\alpha = .729$ for the pretest and $\alpha = .748$ for the posttest.

The *political media use* of the respondents is measured by asking the respondents how many days a week they used the following media to follow politics: reading the newspaper, watching the news (e.g. NOS or RTL News), watching a political or news program on television (e.g. Nieuwsuur, Hart van Nederland or Jinek), using the internet (e.g. Twitter, or Facebook). The four items together formed a scale with moderate internal consistency, with $\alpha = .612$ for the pretest and $\alpha = .634$ for the posttest. The values of the measure range from '0' to '16'. The factor analysis showed that the items furthermore load all on the same factor, and therefore it was decided to form the scale.

To measure the *political self-efficacy* of the respondents, they were asked to what extent they agreed with two internal political self-efficacy items and two external political self-efficacy items: 1) Sometimes politics seems so complicated that I can't really understand what's going on, 2) I am well able to play an active role in Dutch politics, 3) I don't have any say about what the government does, 4) I don't think politicians care much what I think (based on items of Campbell et al, 1954; Niemi et al, 1991). First the negative worded items were reversed, so that a higher score indicates more political self-efficacy. Together the four items have a low internal consistency, namely pretest $\alpha = .473$ and posttest $\alpha = .495$. Using

the exploratory factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation, two factors can be extracted that correspond with the internal and external political self-efficacy. The correlation between the factors is significant but weak, $r = .173$. The two factors together explain 67,7% of all the variable variances. The correlations between the items in the two separate factors are significant but weak to moderate, pretest internal efficacy $r = .233$, posttest internal efficacy $r = .263$, pretest external efficacy $r = .325$ and posttest external efficacy $r = .402$. Both scales range from '0' to '8'.

Political emotions are tested by asking the respondents how often they felt a particular emotion towards politics: joy, enthusiasm, pride, hope, anger, fear, shame, disappointment (based on Demertzis, 2014). All the emotions together have an acceptable internal consistency, namely pretest $\alpha = .751$ and posttest $\alpha = .747$. It is possible individuals score both positive and negative emotions the same way because they either feel much about politics or do not care about politics. However, one could also expect that individuals give different answers to positive emotions compared to negative emotions.

Therefore also an exploratory factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation is conducted. With the factor analysis two factors were extracted, which were together capable of explaining 66.9% of all the variable variances. The positive emotions joy, enthusiasm, pride and hope loaded on the same factor, and the negative emotions anger, fear, shame and disappointment loaded on the same factors. The correlation between the factors is significant but weak, $r = .106$. Therefore it is decided to make separate scales for the positive and negative emotions. The internal consistency of the four items of positive emotions is good, namely pretest $\alpha = .851$ and posttest $\alpha = .846$ and the internal consistency of the four items of negative emotions is acceptable to good, namely pretest $\alpha = .776$ and posttest $\alpha = .813$. The scales were formed using the original variables. Furthermore both scales range from '0' to '16', with higher indicating, a higher frequency of emotions.

Political cynicism is measured by asking the respondents to what extent they agree with the following four political cynicism items: 1) Politicians are profiteers, 2) Politicians keep their promises, 3) Politicians get a kick out of power, 4) Politicians are capable of solving urgent issues in society (based on items of Dekker and Schyns, 2006; DPES, 2010). The positive worded items were reversed, so that a higher score indicates higher levels of political cynicism. The internal consistency of the scale is low to acceptable, with a pretest $\alpha = .598$ and posttest $\alpha = .692$. The values of the scale range from '0' to '16'.

Finally, questions are asked about the gender of the respondents, their age, school, class and political or civic courses.

4. Results

In this results section, the statistical results will be showed which will provide the basis for answering the question: ‘what are the effects of an on-site political education program on the political knowledge and political engagement of young people?’ The means of the different test groups will be compared in order to determine what for effect the program has on the political knowledge and engagement of the students.

4.1 Data analysis

To test whether the means of the different groups differ significantly, paired and independent sample t-tests were used. The effect of the independent variable (treatment or control group) on the independent variables will be determined using the measure of effect size: r . The rules of thumb are given by Cohen: lower than .1 = no effect, .1 to .3 = small effect, .3 to .5 medium effect and .5 and higher: strong effect. A small effect means that the effect is real, but only visible through careful study. A large effect is big enough to be visible (Cohen, 1988).

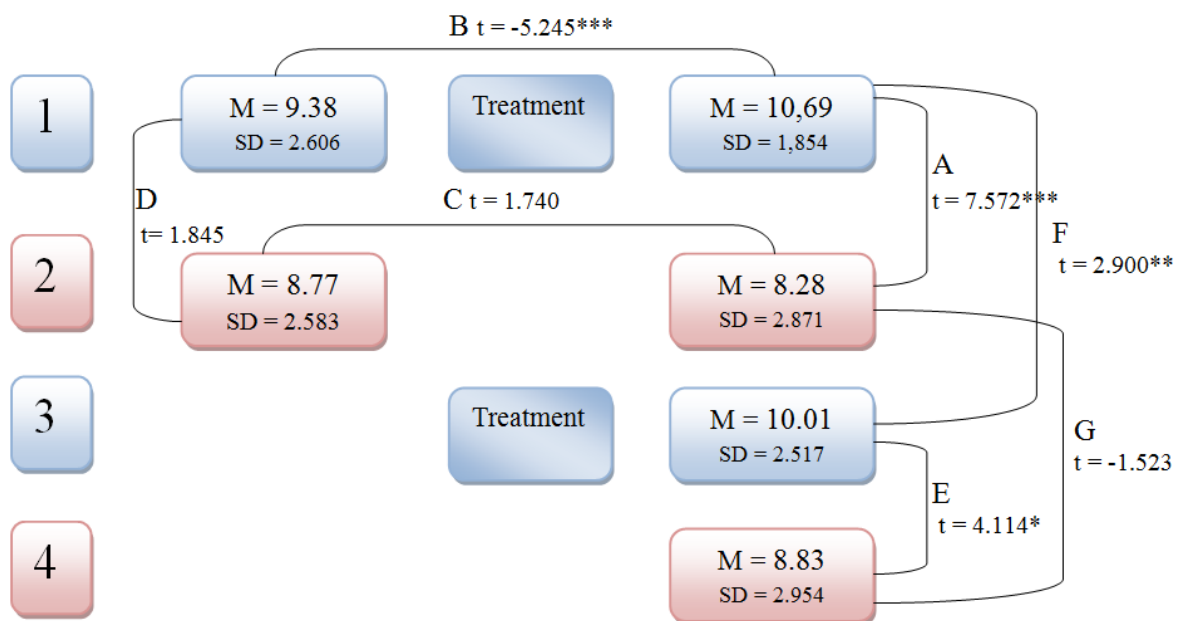
To determine the effects and control for the covariates gender and age, a MANCOVA (Multivariate Analysis of Covariance) test will be used. The MANCOVA test can be seen as an extension of the ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) which can include multiple dependent variables. The MANCOVA can detect whether groups differ over several variables, whereas ANOVA can only detect if groups differ on a single variable (Field, 2009: 586). Using a simple contrast the differences between the experimental groups and the control groups can be detected. To examine the effect size of the covariates the measure partial eta squared (η^2_p) will be used. Cohen’s rules of thumb indicate that .01 = small effect, .06 = medium effect and .14 = large effect (Cohen, 1988).

4.2 The effectiveness of the program on knowledge and engagement

First the effect of the program on political objective and subjective knowledge will be presented. Second the effects on the positive indicators of political engagement and lastly the effects on the negative indicators of political engagement. The randomization process was furthermore successful in all cases, since the pretests of treatment group 1 and control group 2 did not differ significantly (comparison D).

There seems to be a significant effect of the program on the political objective knowledge of the participants (see figure 2). On average, the participants that participated in the on-site education program did have more political objective knowledge ($M = 10.69$, $SD = 1.854$) compared to those that did not participated in the program ($M = 8.28$, $SD = 2.871$). This means that the participants answered 76% of the questions correctly after participating in the program, whereas participants that did not participated in the program only answered 59% of the questions correctly. The difference is significant ($t = 7.572$, $p < .001$) and the effect size is quite large ($r = .51$) (comparison A).

Figure 2. Political objective knowledge (0-14)



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

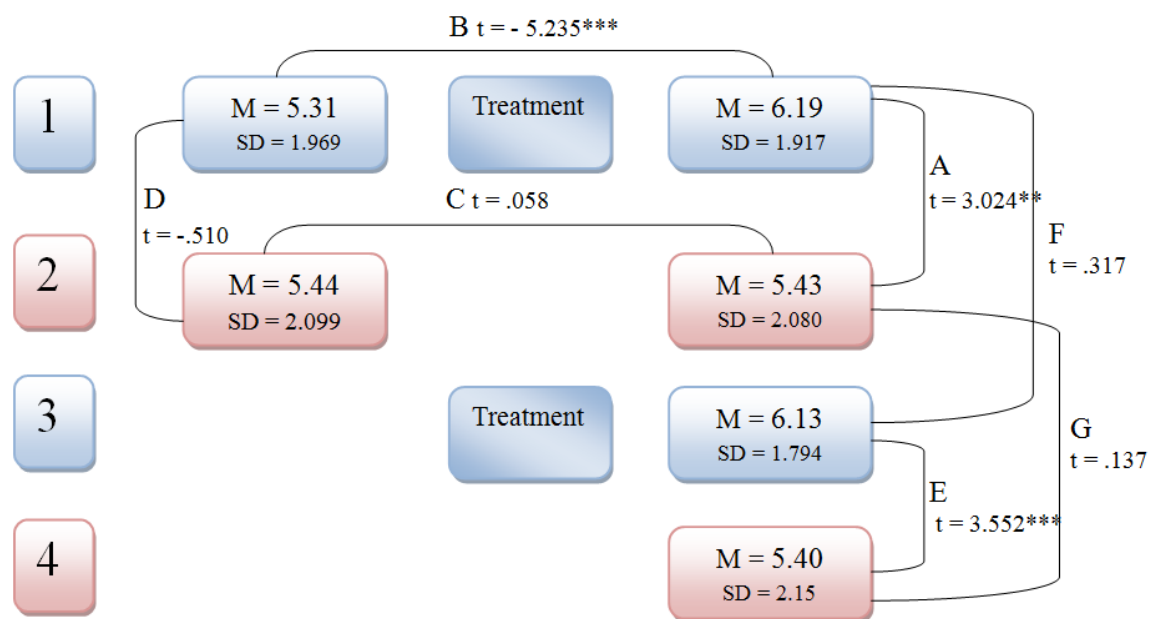
Comparison B shows that there is an increase of the political objective knowledge in the treatment group in the pretest ($M = 9.38$, $SD = 2.606$) compared to the posttest ($M = 10.69$, $SD = 1.854$) which is significant ($t = -5.245$, $p < .001$). Although there seems to be a decrease of political knowledge in the control group from pretest ($M = 8.77$, $SE = 2.583$) to posttest ($M = 8.28$, $SD = 2.871$), the difference is not significant (comparison C). There seems to be a difference in the starting positions of the first two groups: pretest group 1 ($M = 9.39$, $SD = 2.606$) and pretest group 2 ($M = 8.77$, $SD = 2.583$). The difference is not significant, which would lead to the careful conclusion that the randomization process was successful (comparison D). Whereas the pretests of treatment group 1 and control group 2 were not significantly different, there is a difference between the posttests of treatment group 1 and control group 2 which indicates that the treatment had an effect on the political objective knowledge of the participants. The comparisons between the posttest of group 3 and 4 (comparison E) is significant, though smaller than the difference in comparison A ($t = 4.114$, $p < .001$), which would indicate that the pretest may have had some effect. The posttest of group 1 and 3 (comparison F) shows that the pretest did have some effect on the treatment, since they differ significantly ($t = 2.900$, $p < .01$). The posttests of group 2 and 4 (comparison G) furthermore show that the pretest did not influence the actual outcomes directly.

The program also seems to have a positive effect on the political subjective knowledge of the participants (see figure 3). The participants in the treatment group showed more political subjective knowledge ($M = 6.19$, $SD = 1.917$) compared to the participants in the control group ($M = 5.43$, $SD = 2.080$). Although the difference is significant ($t = 3.024$, $p < .01$), the effect size is quite small ($r = .18$) (comparison A). This means that whereas on average the participants in the control group indicate that they know ‘little’ about politics, the participants in the treatment group indicate that they know ‘some’ about politics.

Comparisons B and C show that there is a significant increase of subjective knowledge of the

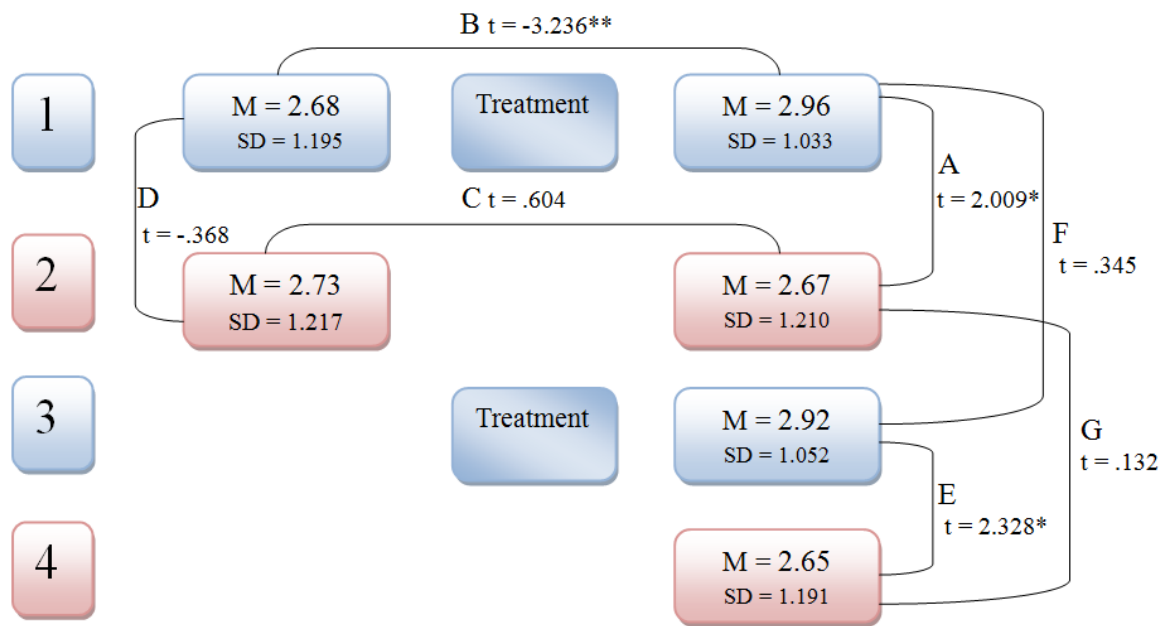
pretest to the posttest in the treatment group, from pretest group 1 (M = 5.31, SD = 1.969) to posttest group 1 (M = 6.19, SD = 1.917), which is significant: ($t = -5.235$, $p < .001$), and no significant increase in the control group: pretest group 2 (M = 5.44, SD = 2.099) and posttest group 2 (M = 5.43, SD = 2.080). This suggests that no external factors influenced the increase in subjective knowledge. Furthermore comparison E shows that the difference between the posttest of the experimental group 3 (M = 6.13, SD = 1.794) and the posttest of the control group 4 (M = 5.40, SD = 2.15) is significant ($t = 3.552$, $p < .001$). The fact that the differences in both comparison A and comparison E are significant indicates that the pretest did not have an effect. This can be confirmed by the fact that the differences in comparisons F and G are also not significant, which shows that the pretest did neither influence the treatment nor directly the outcomes.

Figure 3. Subjective knowledge (0-12)



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

Figure 4. Intention to vote (0-4)



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

The program also seems to have a significant effect on the intention to vote of the participants (see figure 4). On average, the participants that participated the on-site education program did have more intention to vote ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.033$) compared to those that did not participated in the program ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.210$). The difference was significant, but the effect size is small ($t = 2.009$, $p < .05$, $r = .14$) (comparison A). On average the participants in the control group lean more to ‘maybe go voting’, whereas the participants in the treatment group lean more to ‘probably go voting’. The intention to vote increased significantly in the treatment group (comparison B) and not significantly in the control group (comparison C), which indicates that the increase is due to the program. Comparisons E, F and G show that the pretest did not influence the treatment or the outcomes.

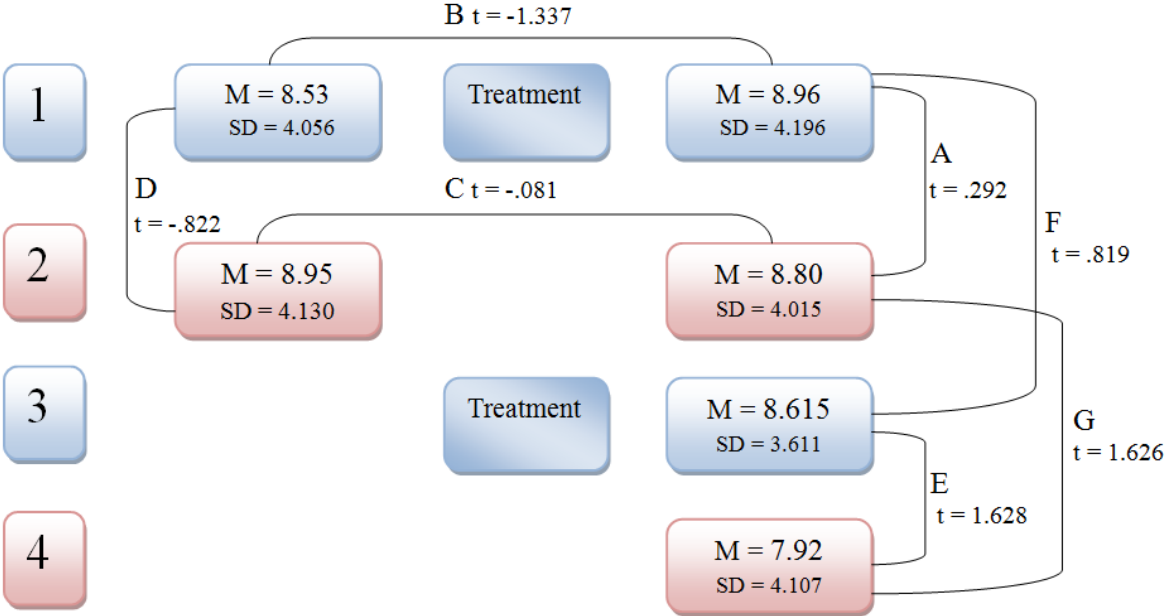
The program did not have a significant effect on the intention to participate of the participants of the program (see figure 5). The intention to participate did not differ significantly between the posttest of group 1 ($M = 8.96$, $SD = 4.196$) and the posttest of group 2 ($M = 8.80$, $SD = 4,015$), ($t = .292$, $p > 0.05$, $r = .02$) (comparison A). In both control and

treatment group average intention to participate is low ('probably not' to 'maybe').

Comparisons B and C show that both in the treatment group and in the control group no significant increase of intention to participate occurred. Comparisons E, F and G show no pretest effect.

The program did however have a significant effect on the individual item 'intention to debate' within the participation scale (see figure 6). The participants in the treatment group scored higher at the intention to attend a political debate (M = 1.77, SD = 1.179) compared to the participants in the control group (M = 1.40, SD = 1.114). The difference is significant, but the effect size is small (t = 2.516, p < .05, r = .15). There seems to be a difference in the posttest of group 1 (M = 1.77, SD = 1.179) and the posttest of group 3 (M = 1.53, SD = 1.141), which would indicate that the pretest had a positive effect on the treatment, and therefore the outcomes. However this difference is not significant (t = 1.883, p > .05).

Figure 5. Intention to participate (0-24)



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

Figure 6. Intention to attend a political debate (0-4)

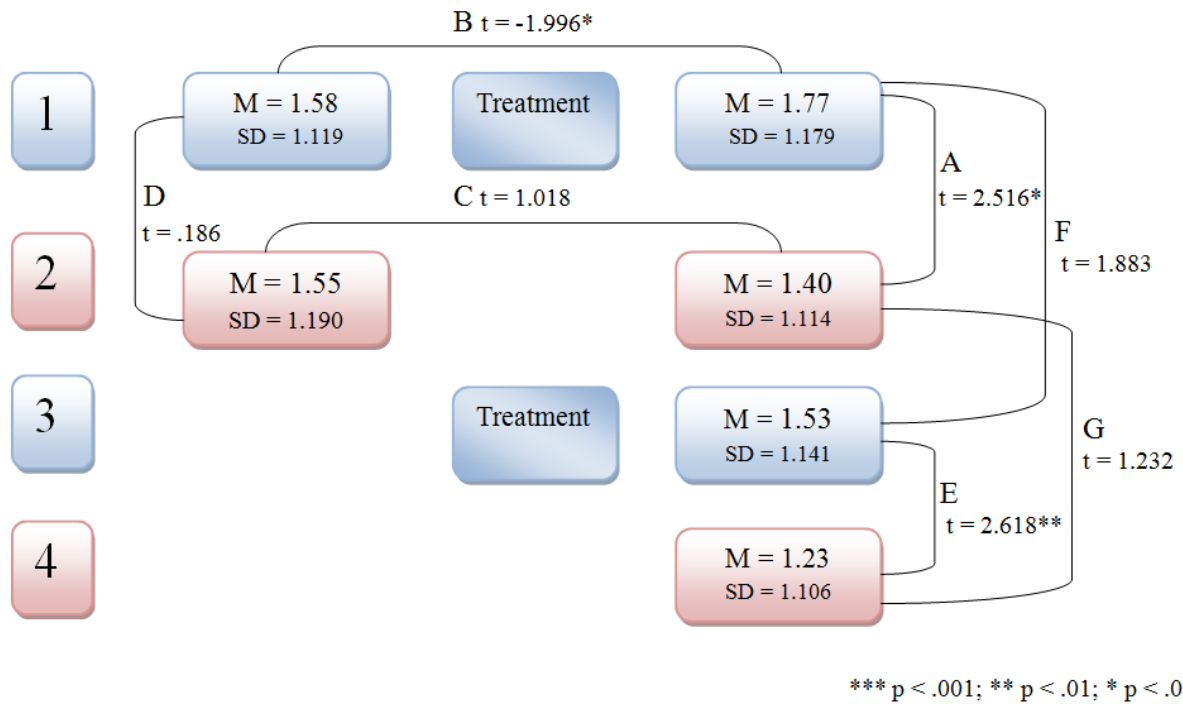
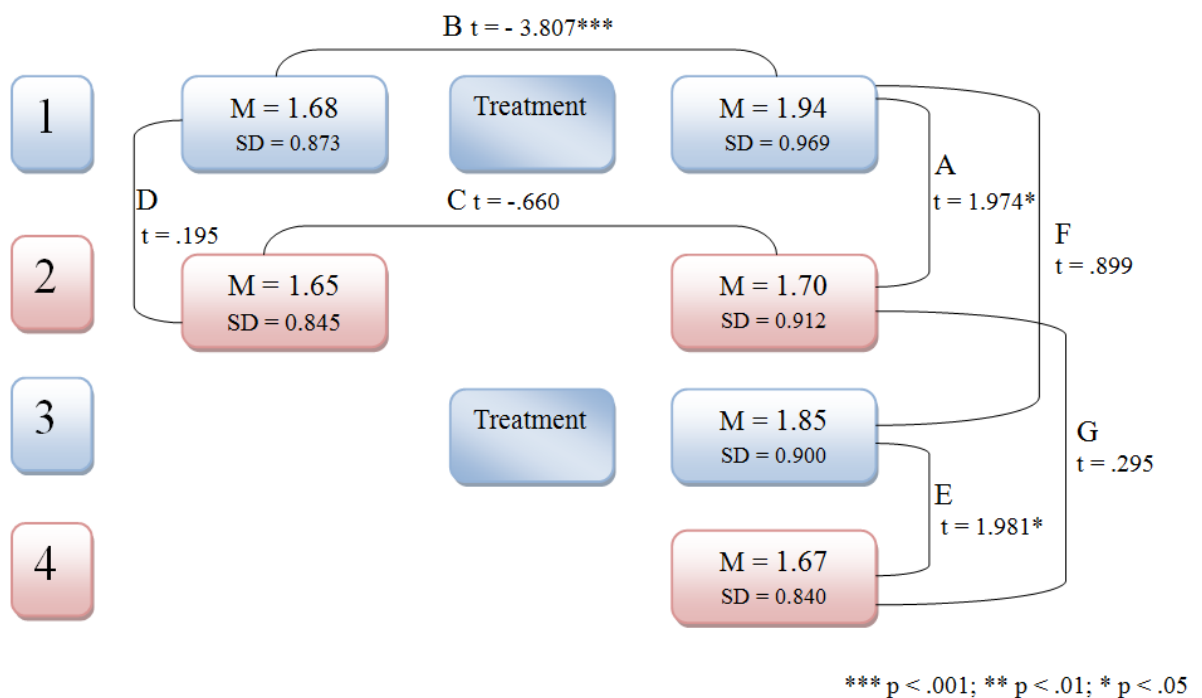


Figure 7. Political interest (0-4)



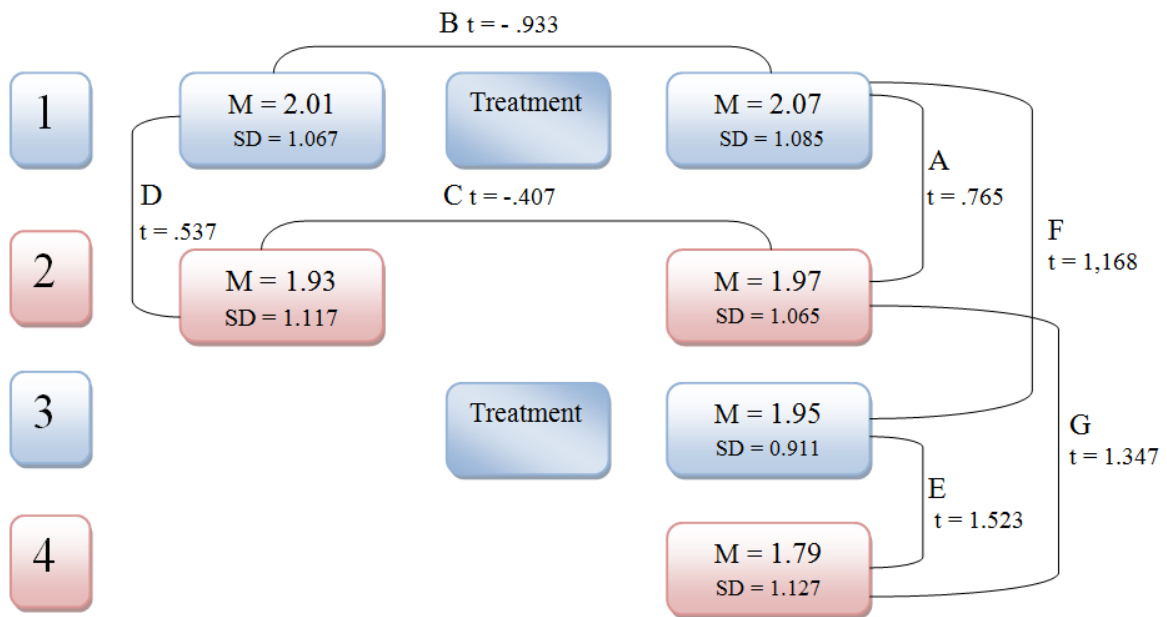
The program also seems to have a positive effect on the political interest of the participants (see figure 7). The comparison A shows that the participants in the group that participated in the program scored higher at political interest ($M = 1.94$, $SD = 0.969$) than the participants

that did not participated in the program ($M = 1.70$, $SD = 0.912$). The difference is significant, but the effect size is small ($t = 1.974$, $p < .05$, $r = .12$). On average, the interest in politics of the participants is low. The participants in the control group lean more to ‘little interest’, whereas the participants in the treatment group lean more to ‘some interest’. There is a significant increase in the first treatment group and no significant increase in the control group, which means that the increase is only due to the program (comparisons B and C). There seems to be no pretest effect (comparisons D, E, F and G).

The program did not have an effect on the frequency the participants talk about politics (see figure 8). There is no significant difference between the participants in the treatment group ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 1.085$) and the participants in the control group ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 1.065$), ($t = .765$, $p > .05$, $r = .05$) (Comparison A). In both the treatment and the control groups the participants indicate that they talk ‘sometimes, once a month’ with family, friends or classmates about politics. Neither in the treatment group nor in the control group the frequency of talking about politics increased significantly (comparisons B and C). Although the posttest outcomes of group 3 and 4 are slightly lower than the posttest outcomes of group 1 and 2, the difference is not significant, so no pretest effect can be found (comparisons E, F and G).

The program also did not have an effect on the frequency the participants used several news media for politics (see figure 9). The frequency to use media for politics did not differ significantly between the posttest of the treatment group ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 3.558$) compared to the posttest of the control group ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 3.559$), ($t = .967$, $p > .05$) (comparison A). In both the treatment group and the control group the participants indicate that on average they approximately use 2 days a week different media for politics.

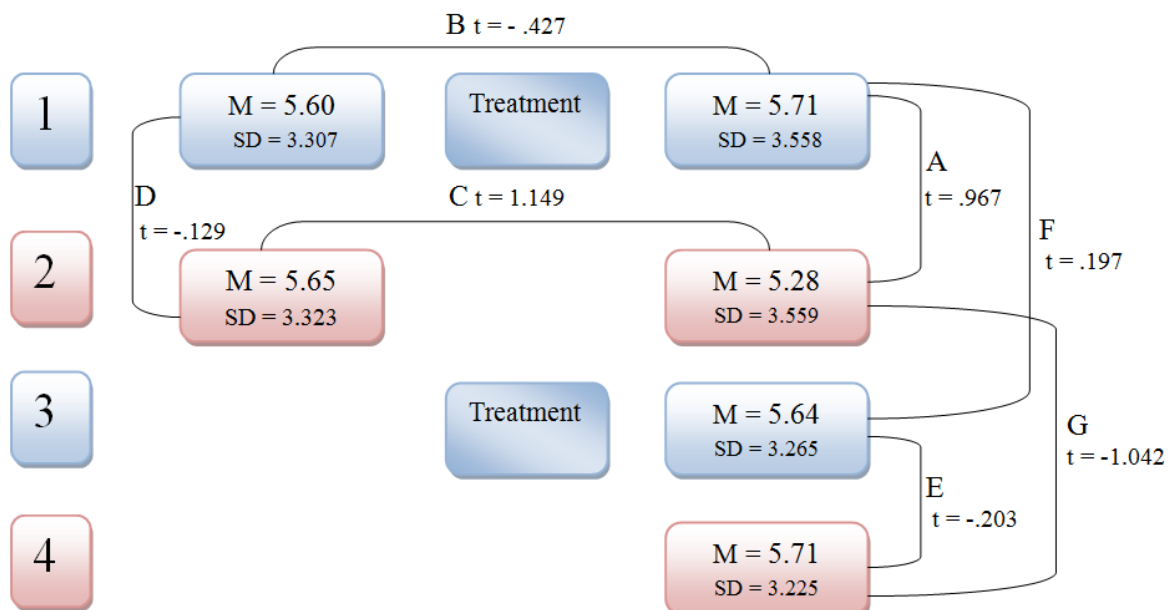
Figure 8. Talking about politics (0-4)



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

There seems to be a little increase in the media use in the treatment group, and a decrease in the control group. However both changes are not significant (comparisons B and C). The comparisons E, F and G do not show significant pretest effects. Although the posttest scores of control group 4 are higher, than the posttest scores of control group 2, what suggests a pretest effect on the actual outcomes, the difference is not significant (comparison G).

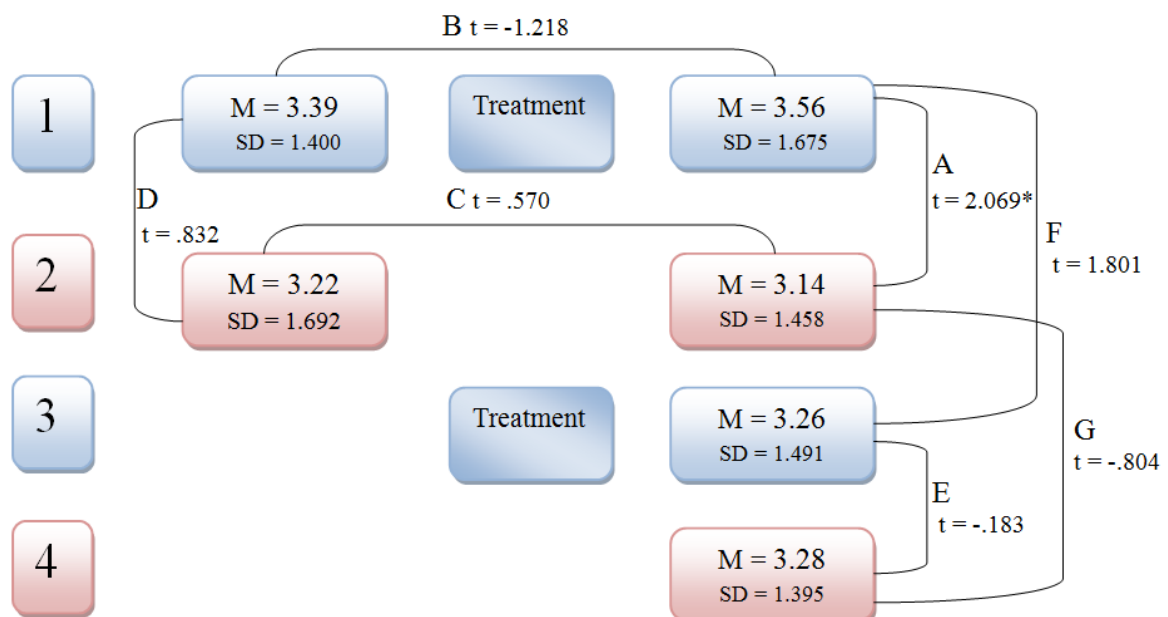
Figure 9. Media use (0-16)



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

Initially, there seems to be an effect of the program on the internal political self-efficacy of the participants (see figure 10). The participants in the treatment group ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.675$) score significantly higher at internal political self-efficacy than the participants in the control group ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.458$) and the effect size is small ($t = 2.069$, $p < .05$, $r = .13$) (comparison A). However comparisons B and C show that the differences between the pretests and posttests in both the treatment group and the control group over time are not significant, which would indicate that the program does not increase the political self-efficacy of the participants. Although there is a light increase of political self-efficacy in the treatment group and a light decrease in the control group, those differences are not significant. This could be explained by the differences in the pretests of the groups. Although the difference between the pretests is not significant, the first group already starts somewhat higher compared to the second (comparison D). That the program does not have an effect on the internal political self-efficacy of the participants seems to be confirmed looking at comparison E. In the post-test only groups the differences between the treatment group and control group are also not significant ($t = -.183$, $p > 0.05$). Both comparisons F and G show no pretest effect.

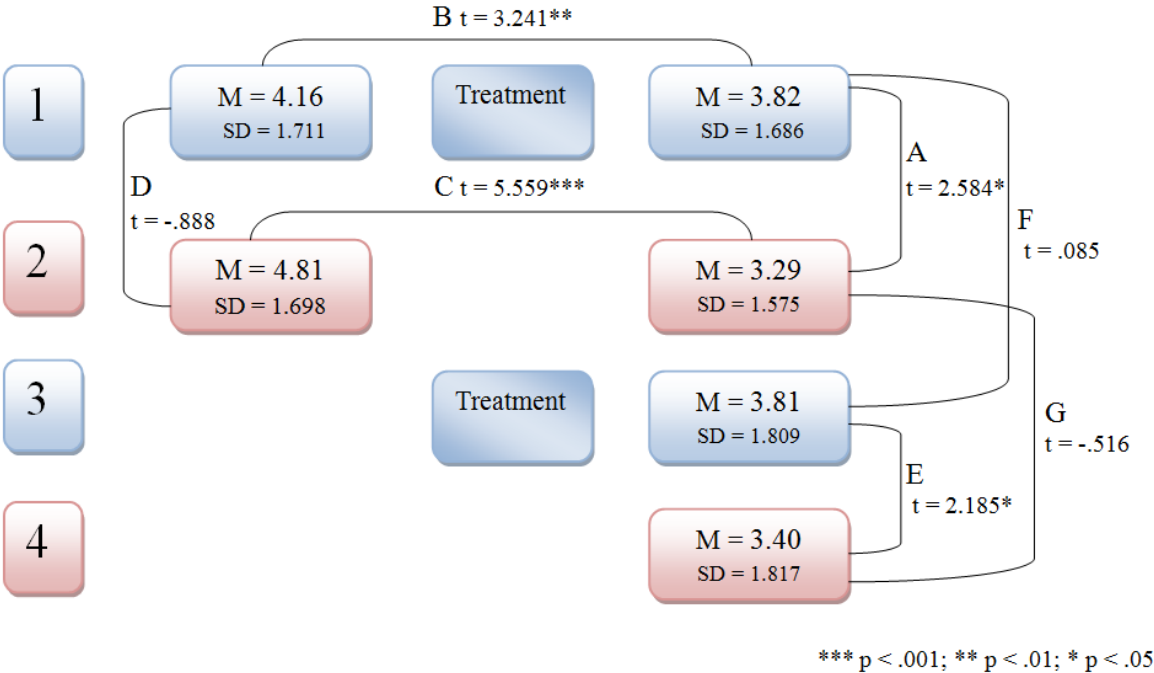
Figure 10. Internal political self-efficacy (0-8)



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

With the external political self-efficacy of the students something remarkable happens (see figure 11). In both treatment group 1 and control group 2 the external political self-efficacy decreases significantly ($t = 3.241, p < .01$, and $t = 5.559, p < .001$) (comparisons B and C). The decrease is smaller in treatment group 1 compared to control group 2, which indicates that the program has a moderate effect on the decrease. Therefore a significant difference can be seen between the posttest of treatment group 1 ($M = 3.82, SD = 1.686$) and the posttest of control group 2 ($M = 3.29, SD = 1.575$), ($t = 2.584, p < .05$). The difference between the treatment and control groups without the pretests is also significant, which indicates no effect of the pretest (comparisons E, F and G).

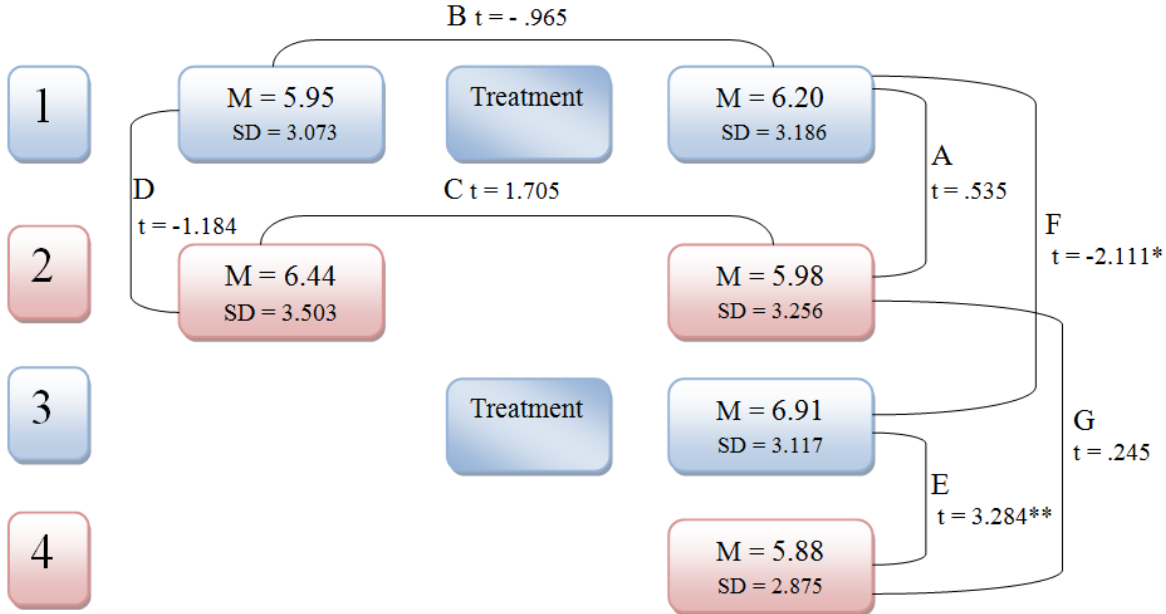
Figure 11. External political self-efficacy (0-8)



Initially it seems that the program did not have a positive effect on the positive emotions participants have about politics (see figure 12). The frequency of positive emotions did not differ significantly after the program between the participants in the treatment group ($M = 6.20, SD = 3.186$) and the participants in the control group ($M = 5.98, SD = 3.256$) ($t = .535, p > .05, r = .03$) (comparison A). In both the treatment group and the control group the

participants indicate that they have ‘almost never’ to ‘sometimes’ positive emotions about politics. Comparison B shows no significant increase of positive emotions and although there seems to be a decrease in positive emotions over time in the control group, this difference is not significant (comparison C). However, the difference between posttest group 3 (M = 6.91, SD = 3.117) and posttest group 4 (M = 5.88, SD = 2.875) is significant (t = 3.284, p < .01) (comparison E). The participants that participated in the program indicated to have more positive emotions about politics than the participants that did not participated in the program. This could indicate a pretest effect, or – because the students were not randomly assigned to the difference groups, an ineffective randomization in those groups. If there is indeed a pretest effect, comparisons F and G show that the pretest did have an influence on the treatment and therefore on the outcomes, and not directly on the outcomes.

Figure 12. Positive emotions (0-16)

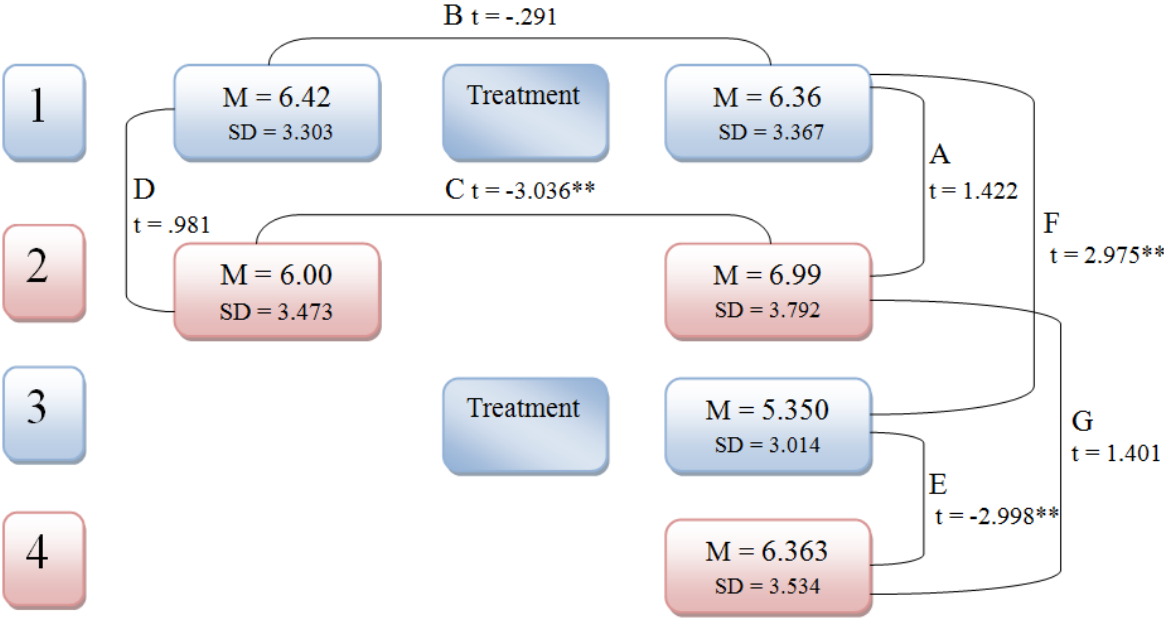


*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05

On average the level of negative emotions about politics of the participants is somewhat higher than the level of positive emotions about politics (see figure 13). Almost the same seems to happen with the influence of the program on the negative emotions of the

participants. Looking at comparison A, one would conclude that the treatment has no effect on the negative emotions of the participants, since there is no significant difference between the posttest of group 1 (M = 6.36, SD = 3.367) and the posttest of group 2 (M = 6.99, SD = 3.792) ($t = 1.422, p > .05$). In the treatment group there is no significant decrease of negative emotions. In the control group on the other hand, the negative emotions about politics do increase significantly between the pretest and the posttest ($t = -3.036, p < .001$). This would indicate that although the program did not decrease the level of negative emotions, it did stop an increase of negative emotions over time.

Figure 13. Negative emotions (0-16)



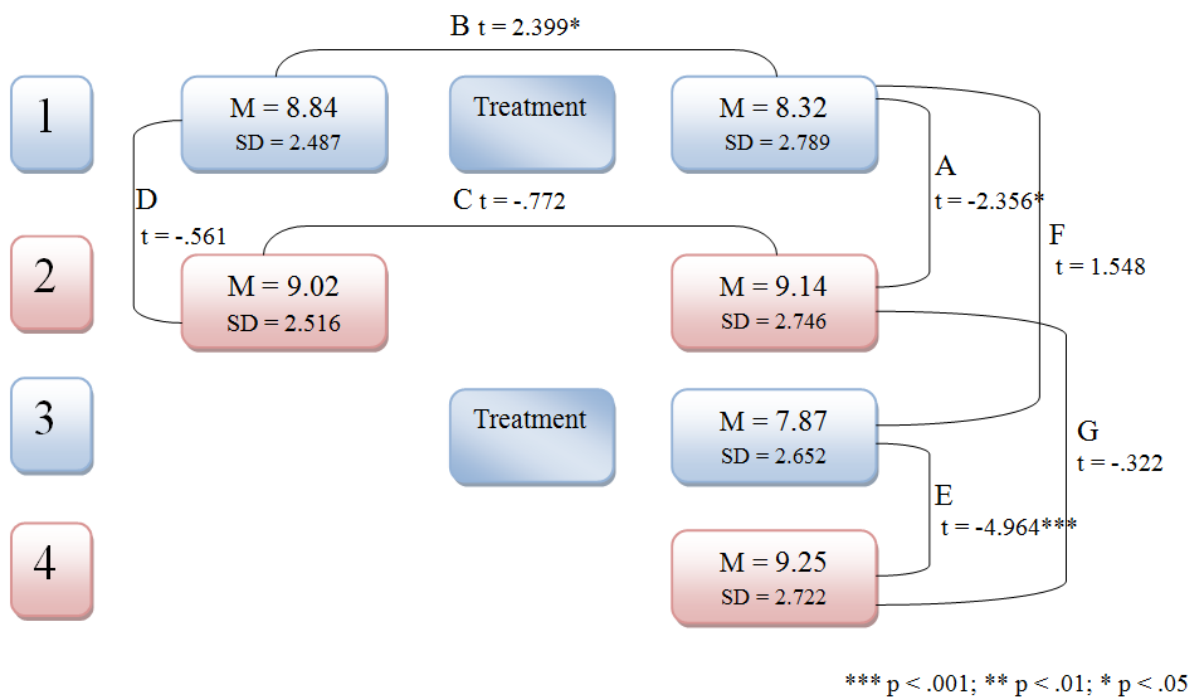
*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05

As with the positive emotions, there seems to be a pretest effect (or ineffective randomization), when looking at group 3 and 4. The level of negative emotions is significantly lower in the treatment group compared to the control group ($t = -2.998, p < .001$) (comparison E). If this difference is indeed due to a pretest effect, comparisons F and G show again that the pretest

did have an influence on the treatment and therefore on the outcomes, and not directly on the outcomes.

Finally the program has a decreasing effect on the political cynicism of the participants (see figure 14). The participants in the treatment group score significantly lower on political cynicism ($M = 8.32$, $SD = 2.789$) compared to the participants in the control group ($M = 9.14$, $SD = 2.746$), ($t = -2.356$, $p < .05$) (comparison A). There is a significant increase in the first treatment group and no significant increase in the first control group, which means that the increase is only due to the program (comparisons B and C). The comparisons E, F and G show that the pretest did not have an effect on the treatment or the outcomes directly.

Figure 14. Political cynicism (0-16)



4.3 *The influence of gender and age*

As mentioned, background variables as gender, age, education level and socio-economic status, can have an influence on the political knowledge and engagement of individuals. In this study the education level is the same for all respondents, namely senior general secondary education. Furthermore testing for socio-economic status is not useful yet because the respondents are still very young. Therefore, a MANCOVA test is conducted to determine whether or not the treatment group and control group differ significantly on the different dependent variables, controlled for gender and age. The independent variable 'group' is for those purposes recoded into '1' = posttest treatment groups' and '2' = posttest control groups' to make use of the standard simple contrast, with the control group as reference category (Field, 2009: 371). Moreover there should be a theoretical basis for putting dependent variables in the same test (Ibid., 587). Therefore it is decided that the different dependent variables are grouped using the theoretical division already made in the hypotheses: 'knowledge', 'positive indicators of political engagement' and 'negative indicators of political engagement'.

The covariate, age, is significantly related to the subjective knowledge of the participant ($F(1,623) = 12.334, p < .001$) (see table 1). This means that the higher the age of the participant, the higher the subjective knowledge. This effect is small ($\eta^2 p = .019$). Also the covariate, gender is significantly related to the subjective knowledge of the participants, ($F(1,623) = 5.257, p < .05$). In this case it means that boys score higher at political subjective knowledge compared to girls. The effect is however also small ($\eta^2 p = .008$). The covariates age and gender did not have a significant effect on the political objective knowledge of the participants. After controlling for the effect of age and gender, the different groups (treatment or control) still had a significant effect on both political objective and political subjective knowledge, which corresponds with the effects already determined by the t-tests. The effects

of the groups on those variables are respectively ($\eta^2p = .097$), which indicates a medium to large effect, and ($\eta^2p = .039$) which indicates a small to medium effect.

Table 1. Influence of age and gender on knowledge

Covariates and independent variable	Dependent variables	F (df)	(sig)	η^2p
Age	Objective knowledge	1.612 (1,623)	.205	.003
	Subjective knowledge	12.334 (1,623)	.000***	.019
Gender	Objective knowledge	.393 (1,623)	.531	.001
	Subjective knowledge	5.257 (1,623)	.022*	.008
Treatment group controlled for age and gender	Objective knowledge	66.687 (1,623)	.000***	.097
	Subjective knowledge	25.005 (1,623)	.000***	.039

Age has a significant effect on the frequency of talking about politics of the participants ($F(1,625) = 4.853, p < .05$) and on the media use of the participants, ($F(1,625) = 5.878, p < .05$) (see table 2). In both cases the effect is small, respectively ($\eta^2p = .008$) and ($\eta^2p = .009$). For both the frequency of talking about politics and the media use of the participants this means that the higher the age of the participant, the more they talk about politics and the more they use the media for politics. Age also seems to have some effect on the intention to vote of the students, though not significant and with a very small effect ($F(1,625) = 3.119, p = .078, \eta^2p = .005$). Age does not affect the other dependent variables.

Gender significantly predicts the intention to participate ($F(1,625) = 5.374, p < .05$). This means that boys do have more intention to participate than girls. The effect however is small, ($\eta^2p = .009$). Gender also significantly affects the level of media use of the participants ($F(1,625) = 11.643, p < .01$) and the internal political self-efficacy of the participants ($F(1,625) = 20.412, p < .001$). Whereas the effect on media use is small ($\eta^2p = .018$), the effect on the internal political self-efficacy is small to middle ($\eta^2p = .032$). For both variables this means that boys score higher than girls. Gender does not significantly affect the other variables.

Table 2. Influence of age and gender on positive indicators of engagement

Covariates and independent variable	Dependent variables	F (df)	(sig)	η^2p
Age	Intention to vote	3.119 (1,625)	.078	.005
	Intention to participate	.676 (1,625)	.411	.001
	Political interest	1.019 (1, 625)	.313	.002
	Talking about politics	4.853 (1, 625)	.028*	.008
	Media use	5.878 (1, 625)	.016*	.009
	Internal political self-efficacy	.050 (1, 625)	.823	.000
	External political self-efficacy	.257 (1, 625)	.613	.000
	Positive emotions	.879 (1, 625)	.349	.001
Gender	Intention to vote	.011 (1,625)	.915	.000
	Intention to participate	5.374 (1,625)	.021*	.009
	Political interest	.332 (1,625)	.564	.001
	Talking about politics	2.307 (1,625)	.129	.004
	Media use	11.643 (1,625)	.001**	.018
	Internal political self-efficacy	20.412 (1,625)	.000***	.032
	External political self-efficacy	2.423 (1,625)	.120	.004
	Positive emotions	.112 (1,625)	.738	.000
Treatment group controlled for age and gender	Intention to vote	10.482 (1,625)	.001**	.016
	Intention to participate	2.764 (1,625)	.097	.004
	Political interest	8.523 (1,625)	.004**	.013
	Talking about politics	3.591 (1,625)	.059	.006
	Media use	.086 (1,625)	.770	.000
	Internal political self-efficacy	1.835 (1,625)	.176	.003
	External political self-efficacy	12.766 (1,625)	.000***	.020
	Positive emotions	6.872 (1,625)	.009**	.011

After partialling out the effect of age and gender, it becomes clear that the different groups (treatment or control) still significantly affect intention to vote, political interest, external political self-efficacy and positive emotions. Also this corresponds with the already determined effect of the treatment on the different variables by the t-tests. The effect of the group on the different variables is small, respectively ($\eta^2p = .016$, $\eta^2p = .013$, $\eta^2p = .020$, $\eta^2p = .011$). It seems furthermore that the group also has some effect on the intention to participate and the frequency of talking about politics, but that effect is not significant, respectively ($F(1,625) = 2.764$, $p = .097$) and ($F(1,625)$, $p = .059$).

At last, age did not have a direct effect on the negative indicators of engagement: negative emotions and political cynicism (see table 3). Gender, on the other hand, did have a

significant but small effect on both, respectively ($F(1,632) = 7.423, p < .01, \eta^2p = .012$) and ($F(1,632) = 5.046, p < .05, \eta^2p = .008$). Boys score higher on both negative emotions and political cynicism, compared to girls. When controlled for age and gender, the group still has significant influence on both negative emotions and political cynicism, which corresponds with the already determined results by the t-tests. The effect of the group on negative emotions is small ($\eta^2p = .014$) and the effect of the group on political cynicism is medium ($\eta^2p = .057$).

Table 3. Influence of age and gender on negative indicators of engagement

Covariates and independent variable	Dependent variables	F (df)	(sig)	η^2p
Age	Negative emotions	.944 (1,632)	.332	.001
	Political cynicism	.364 (1,632)	.547	.001
Gender	Negative emotions	7.423 (1,632)	.007**	.012
	Political cynicism	5.046 (1,632)	.025*	.008
Treatment group controlled for age and gender	Negative emotions	8.920 (1,632)	.003**	.014
	Political cynicism	38.048 (1,632)	.000***	.057

5. Discussion

What are the effects of an on-site political education program on the political knowledge and political engagement of young people?

It can be concluded that the program did have a positive effect on both the objective and subjective political knowledge of the participants, which means that the first hypothesis is supported (see table 4). This means that after participating in the program not only the knowledge of the participants about Dutch politics was increased, they also had the feeling to know more about politics.

The program has furthermore a mixed effect on the positive indicators of political engagement of the participants. Whereas the program did not have an effect on the intention to participate (in total), talking about politics, media use and internal political self-efficacy, the program did have a positive effect on the intention to vote, intention to debate and political interest of the participants. That the intention to debate increased, whereas the program did not have an effect on all the other individual items of political participation, could possibly be explained by the fact that ‘the debate’ is a significant part of the ‘politics’ program of ProDemos. The participants not only watch a debate in the parliament, but also simulate a Second Chamber debate at ProDemos with their classmates and teachers. However, the effect of the program on the positive emotions of the participants is unclear. In the groups with pretest the program did not influence the positive emotions, whereas in the groups without the pretest the treatment group scored significantly higher at positive emotions than the control group. Although this could indicate that the pretest did influence how the participants experienced the treatment and that the participants therefore scored lower at the posttest, it could just as well mean that the randomization in the third and fourth group was not effective. With external political efficacy also something particular happens. The program does not increase the external political efficacy of the participants, but does limit the decrease

of external political efficacy. This could be interpreted as a positive effect of the program. All in all, the second hypothesis is partially supported.

Table 4. Summarized results of the t-tests

	<i>Treatment effect</i>	<i>(Unclear) treatment effect</i>	<i>No treatment effect</i>
<i>Hypothesis 1</i>	Objective knowledge Subjective knowledge		
<i>Hypothesis 2</i>	Intention to vote (Intention to debate) Political interest	Positive emotions External political efficacy	Intention to participate Talking about politics Media use Internal political efficacy
<i>Hypothesis 3</i>	Political cynicism	Negative emotions	

Finally the program has also a mixed effect on the indicators of *less* political engagement. Whereas the program is effective in reducing the political cynicism of the participants, the effect on the negative emotions of the participants is more unclear. The program does not decrease the negative emotions about politics of the participants, but is effective in stopping an increase of negative emotions, which is visible in the control group. This could be interpreted as a positive effect of the program on the negative emotions. Given the fact that the program is effective in reducing the political cynicism of the participants, and stopping the increase of negative emotions of the participants, it should be concluded that the third hypothesis is partially supported. The program did furthermore not have any negative effects on the political knowledge or engagement of the participants. Lastly, age and gender did have significant effects on some dependent variables, but after controlling for those covariates, the influence of the program remained significant.

Recommendations however should be made carefully, because this study also has its limits. One of the biggest limits of studies in this field, this study included, is that nothing can be said about the long-term effects of the education programs. It is worth investigating what, if any, the long-term effects of such a program are. However one should be skeptical about long-term effects, because it is doubtful that just a one-day program could actually contribute

to political knowledge and most of all engagement on the long run. On the other hand, learning by actual experiences could maybe trigger interest in politics and leave a lasting memory. Furthermore the study is only done with students from senior general secondary education. The effects might be different on students from other types of secondary education. Therefore generalizations should be made with caution. It cannot be said with certainty that the program has the same effects on all young people. Another limitations is the low internal consistency of some scales, especially the political objective knowledge scale and the political self-efficacy scales. This could have lead to lower validity of the measures. One explanation for the low internal consistency of the political objective knowledge scale is that some students guessed the answers randomly, because they did not know the answers and the answer category 'don't know' was not included in the questionnaire.

The aim of this research, to increase our knowledge about the effects of this new alternative of political education: on-site political education, is both relevant scientifically and socially. This study adds to the literature on political education in two ways. First, not a lot of research on this specific alternative of education is done. This study adds to the study of political socialization, by giving an insight in what way an alternative way of political education contributes to political knowledge and engagement of young people. Moreover, although some studies are conducted on these alternative ways of politically educating people, the research methods vary in quality. As for example Billig puts it 'research in the field of service-learning has not caught up with the passion educators feel for it' (2000). Only few studies use control groups, they lack a pretest-posttest design and many rely on self-reports. In this study the effects of such an alternative educational program are investigated in one of the most rigorous experimental designs in quantitative studies: the Solomon Four Group Research design. With the design it was possible to control not only for external influences, using treatment and control groups, but also for the presence of pretest sensitization. In this way it

was possible to actually tell what the effect of the program was on the different dependent variables.

Furthermore this study could have social implications. Lack of political knowledge and political engagement are seen as pressing problems in Western democratic societies (Milner, 2010; Fox and Korris, 2014). The fact that turnout among young people is low, and even decreasing, is worrying. Because this study shows that an on-site political education program actually contributes to the political knowledge of students, and important aspects of political engagement such as the intention to vote and political interest, it should be considered to increase the opportunities for students to participate in such an on-site political education program.

For further research it would be interesting to investigate the long term effects of such programs on political knowledge and engagement. In the end, long term effects are the goals of intentional political socialization through education. Additionally, further research should check whether or not the same results will be found with students from other types of secondary education.

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7. Appendix

8.1 Questionnaire

Introductory text of questionnaire:

Beste leerling,

Voordat je begint, is het belangrijk dat je het volgende leest.

Het gaat ons om jouw eigen mening.

Lees elke vraag goed door voordat je de vraag beantwoordt.

Beantwoord alle vragen zelf.

Ga niet overleggen met je buurman of buurvrouw.

Je antwoorden op de vragen zijn vertrouwelijk.

We vragen je je naam in te vullen om de vragenlijsten aan elkaar te kunnen koppelen, maar in de analyse worden de antwoorden niet terug gekoppeld naar jou persoonlijk.

Voel je vrij om alles op te schrijven wat jij denkt of vindt.

Als je de vragenlijst af hebt, kijk dan of je niet per ongelijk een vraag bent vergeten. Het zijn in totaal 29 vragen.

Alvast bedankt voor je medewerking!

Questions in the questionnaire of both the pretest and posttest groups:

Vraag 1 Wat is je naam?

Antwoord:

Vraag 2 Ben je een jongen of een meisje? Zet een kruisje door het rondje voor het juiste antwoord.

Antwoord: Jongen
 Meisje

Vraag 3 Wat is je leeftijd?

Antwoord: 13 jaar of jonger
 14 jaar
 15 jaar
 16 jaar
 17 jaar of ouder

Vraag 4 Op welke school zit je?

Antwoord: Naam school:.....

Vraag 5 In welke klas zit je?

- Antwoord: 2e klas
 3e klas
 4e klas
 5^e klas

Vraag 6 Heb je maatschappijleer of heb je het gehad in vorige jaren?

- Antwoord: Ja
 Nee

Vraag 7 Stel dat er nu verkiezingen zouden zijn, en je zou mogen stemmen. Zou je dan gaan stemmen?

- Antwoord: Zeker wel
 Waarschijnlijk wel
 Misschien
 Waarschijnlijk niet
 Zeker niet

Vraag 8 Zou je in de toekomst mee willen doen aan een van de volgende activiteiten? Omcirkel het cijfer behorende bij het goede antwoord.

Antwoord: Zeker niet Waarschijnlijk niet Misschien Waarschijnlijk wel Zeker wel

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Meedoen aan een demonstratie	1	2	3	4	5
Politici volgen op internet	1	2	3	4	5
Politiek posters ophangen	1	2	3	4	5
Meedoen aan een handtekeningenactie	1	2	3	4	5
Met een politicus spreken	1	2	3	4	5
Naar een debat over een politiek onderwerp gaan	1	2	3	4	5

Vraag 9 Hoeveel vind je dat je weet van de volgende zaken?

Antwoord:	Heel weinig	Weinig	Wel wat	Veel	Heel veel
	-----	-----	-----	-----	
Politiek in Nederland	1	2	3	4	5
Politieke partijen in Nederland	1	2	3	4	5
De Tweede Kamer	1	2	3	4	5

Vraag 10 Hoeveel interesse heb jij in de politiek in Nederland?

- Antwoord:
- Zeer veel interesse
 - Veel interesse
 - Een beetje interesse
 - Weinig interesse
 - Geen interesse

Vraag 11 Praat jij wel eens met je familie, vrienden of klasgenoten over politiek?

- Antwoord:
- Vaak (meerder keren per week)
 - Regelmatig (1 keer per week)
 - Soms (1 keer per maand)
 - Bijna nooit (1 keer per jaar)
 - Nooit

Vraag 12 Hoe veel dagen per week gebruik jij een van de volgende media voor politiek?

Antwoord:	Nooit	1 tot 2	3 tot 4	5 tot 6	Elke dag
	-----	-----	-----	-----	
Lezen van de krant	1	2	3	4	5
Kijken van het nieuws (zoals NOS of RTL Nieuws)	1	2	3	4	5
Kijken van politieke of actualiteitenprogramma's (zoals Nieuwsuur, Hart van Nederland of Jinek)	1	2	3	4	5
Internet (zoals twitter of facebook)	1	2	3	4	5

Vraag 13 Welk gevoel heb jij over de politiek in Nederland?

Antwoord:	Nooit	Bijna nooit	Soms	Regelmatig	Vaak
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Blij	1	2	3	4	5
Boos	1	2	3	4	5
Enthousiast	1	2	3	4	5
Angstig	1	2	3	4	5
Trots	1	2	3	4	5
Schaamte	1	2	3	4	5
Hoopvol	1	2	3	4	5
Teleurstelling	1	2	3	4	5

Vraag 14 Wat vind je van de volgende stellingen?

Antwoord:	Helemaal niet mee eens	Niet mee eens	Tussenin	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Soms lijkt de Nederlandse politiek zo ingewikkeld dat ik niet begrijp wat er speelt	1	2	3	4	5
Ik kan goed een actieve rol spelen in de Nederlandse politiek	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb geen invloed op wat de regering doet	1	2	3	4	5
Ik denk dat politici niet geven om wat ik vind	1	2	3	4	5

Vraag 15 Wat vind je van de volgende stellingen?

Antwoord:	Helemaal niet mee eens	Niet mee eens	Tussenin	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Politici zijn zakkenvullers	1	2	3	4	5
Politici komen hun beloftes na	1	2	3	4	5
Politici kicken op macht	1	2	3	4	5
Politici kunnen dringende problemen op lossen in de samenleving	1	2	3	4	5

Nu volgen wat vragen over wat je weet van de Nederlandse politiek.

Het is geen proefwerk: je krijgt geen cijfer.

Vraag 16 Wat zijn de belangrijkste twee taken van de Tweede Kamer?

Antwoord: ...*wetten maken*..... en.....*regering controleren*.....

Vraag 17 Hoeveel zetels hebben de Eerste en Tweede Kamer?

Antwoord: De eerste Kamer heeft ...*75*... zetels en de Tweede Kamer heeft ...*150*... zetels.

Vraag 18 Hoe heet de minister-president van Nederland?

Antwoord: (*Mark Rutte*).....

Vraag 19 Wat is een oppositiepartij?

- Antwoord:
- Een partij in de Tweede Kamer die de regering niet steunt
 - Een partij in de Tweede Kamer die de regering wel steunt
 - Een partij in de Tweede Kamer die niet samenwerkt met andere partijen
 - Een partij in de Tweede Kamer die in de regering zit

Vraag 20 Wat is de taak van de Raad van State?

- Antwoord:
- De Raad van State keurt nieuwe wetten goed of af
 - De Raad van State maakt wetsvoorstellen
 - De Raad van State adviseert de regering en het parlement over nieuwe wetten*
 - De Raad van State voert de wetsvoorstellen uit

Vraag 21 Wat is een kenmerk van een parlementaire democratie?

- Antwoord:
- Het volk bepaalt wie de macht mag uitoefenen. Ze kiezen daarvoor vertegenwoordigers*
 - Het volk besluit zelf over nieuwe wetten en regels voor het land

- Het volk besluit welke partijen in de regering mogen
- Het volk bepaalt wie de minister-president wordt

Vraag 22 De koning zit in de regering. Wie zitten er nog meer in de regering?

- Antwoord:
- Staatssecretarissen
 - Ministers*
 - Ministers en staatssecretarissen
 - Ministers en de Eerste Kamer

Vraag 23 Welke partijen zitten er in de regering op dit moment?

- Antwoord:
- VVD, PVV en PvdA
 - VVD en PvdA*
 - D66, PVV en VVD
 - VVD en PVV

Vraag 24 Wie bepaalt of een wetsvoorstel wordt aangenomen?

- Antwoord:
- De regering
 - De Raad van State
 - De Koning
 - Het parlement*

Vraag 25 Wanneer is een wet goedgekeurd door de Tweede Kamer?

- Antwoord:
- Als de grootste partij voor het wetsvoorstel stemt
 - Als de helft van de Kamerleden voor het wetsvoorstel stemt
 - Als meer dan de helft van de Kamerleden voor het wetsvoorstel stemt*
 - Als zowel de coalitie als oppositie voor het wetsvoorstel stemt

Vraag 26 Wat gebeurt er als de Tweede Kamer een wetsvoorstel heeft goedgekeurd, maar de Eerste Kamer tegen stemt?

- Antwoord:
- Dan komt de nieuwe wet er niet*
 - Dan komt de nieuwe wet er toch, want de Tweede Kamer is belangrijker dan de Eerste Kamer
 - Dan mag de Koning bepalen of de wet er wel of niet komt
 - Dan bepaalt de Raad van State of de wet er wel of niet komt

Questions in the questionnaires of the posttest treatment group:

Nu volgen nog wat vragen over de dag in Den Haag:

Vraag 27 Ben je een bekende politicus tegengekomen in Den Haag?

- Antwoord:
- Ja
 - Nee

Vraag 28 Heb je een gesprek gehad met iemand uit het parlement?

Antwoord: Ja
 Nee

Vraag 29 Wat is je het meest bijgebleven van je dag in Den Haag?

Antwoord:
.....
.....
.....

Dit is het einde van de vragenlijst. Bedankt voor de medewerking!