

**VOTER TURNOUT IN SASKATCHEWAN:
HOW IMPORTANT ARE CIVIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION?**

**A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Political Studies
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon**

By Nicole Pogue

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**VOTER TURNOUT IN SASKATCHEWAN:
HOW IMPORTANT ARE CIVIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION?**

Voter participation among Saskatchewan's citizens has decreased in both federal and provincial elections, especially in the past decade or so, and especially among 18-24 year olds. Provincially, turnout has fallen almost 20 percentage points over a four-year period. Saskatchewan voter turnout in federal elections has fallen almost 15 percentage points in a similar time period. The purpose of this thesis is to uncover potential factors that might help to explain why turnout has decreased so markedly.

Though a number of factors exist to explain why fewer citizens are participating on election day, this thesis has worked to seek out the explanation in two forms. First, taking into account the civic literacy theory of Henry Milner, this thesis has examined Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school curricula in an effort to find changes in the way civics has been taught. Marked changes have

been found, and differences in the prescribed teaching of civics throughout the years point to the possibility that the way in which civics is taught to students may have an effect on whether they feel a duty or obligation to vote. Second, this thesis has, following the social capital theory of Robert Putnam, concluded through a brief survey of membership numbers in a small number of community and volunteer organizations as well as church attendance and volunteer levels that community involvement may also be a factor in deciding whether to vote.

This thesis has concluded that more, duty-oriented civic education is needed in Saskatchewan's junior and senior high schools in order to ensure that students leaving the education system feel an obligation to participate on election day and in the community more than they are presently.

**For Carol,
whose love of education and energy for life was so contagious.**

“Citizenship is not a spectator sport.”
-Robert D. Putnam

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Chapter One: Introduction

In Canada, voter participation levels in the selection of federal and provincial representatives have declined. Saskatchewan, like all other Canadian provinces, is not immune to this trend. Nor is this trend limited to Canada. Declining voter turnout is part of a larger international environment which includes a number of liberal democracies around the world including such places as New Zealand, Switzerland, the United States and Germany, who have also seen electoral participation rates decrease. Voter turnout in Saskatchewan's recent provincial elections have declined to lows of 65 per cent, while recent federal election turnout in Saskatchewan has reached lows of 62 per cent.¹ While it is evident that there are other factors that positively affect a person's decision to vote, such as income, age, level of education, social status, and social contacts²-which will be discussed to a greater extent in the chapters that follow-the aspect to be pursued in this thesis is civic education of young and future voters and membership in voluntary associations and participation in the community and what role these factors might play in a person's decision to vote.

The province of Saskatchewan has been chosen for study not only for reasons of geography and convenience, but also because its education system undoubtedly reflects the type of curricula that exists in other provinces across Canada. The study of education curricula has been chosen because the youth (18-24) are the group that has been found

¹ Province of Saskatchewan. Provincial Elections in Saskatchewan 1905-1986. Regina: Published by the Chief Electoral Office, Province of Saskatchewan, 1987., Elections Canada <<http://www.elections.ca>>. Elections Saskatchewan. Statement of Votes Twenty-Fourth Provincial General Election September 16, 1999. Regina: Published by the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan, 2000.

² Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone. Who Votes? New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 10.

least likely to participate in elections. In fact, only 25 per cent of Canada's 18 to 24 year old eligible electors voted in the 2000 federal election. By studying such things as education curricula and membership volunteer organizations and community participation, this thesis will examine if, and how, governments and organizations educate about, and encourage, electoral participation.

As a way of introducing this thesis, it is important to consider why one would take on this very subject to study. My interest in this subject stems from frustration with my own high school civic education—or lack of. When I began university and took my first political studies class, I realized how little I had been taught in high school about Canadian government and institutions. Later, as I became more active in political science and in politics, I realized that I was never encouraged to vote or to participate in any way in the political process. Throughout my 4 years as an undergraduate student as I came to enjoy more and more the subject of elections, electoral systems and reform, and voter participation, it seemed only natural to, with my own high school experience in mind, see if civic education might in fact be one of the factors that help to explain declining levels of voter turnout.

I decided to use Saskatchewan as my case study and began to look at provincial and federal voter participation in the provinces as well as instances and types of civic education prescribed in the provincial junior and senior high school curricula. Also, because I have always found Robert Putnam's social capital theory quite interesting, I decided to include a chapter on voter turnout and participation in community organizations-which I believe is also connected to civic education. This chapter was included as much for my own interest as for any other reason.

II. Objectives and Limitations

To examine the relationship between voter turnout and education, research will be conducted on the curricula of the Saskatchewan Department of Learning (formerly the Saskatchewan Department of Education) with respect to junior and senior high school students and the Offices of the Chief Electoral Officer of both Saskatchewan and Canada with respect to programs aimed at young voters. In the language of social science, we can infer that of the variables voter turnout is our dependent variable, or the variable that is reliant on changes in education curricula. The education curricula then is our independent variable, and may or may not affect voter turnout through its changes. The purpose of studying the policies and curricula of the Department of Learning and the federal and provincial elections offices will be to discover what attempts have been made to educate young and future voters about the importance of electoral participation.

This thesis will also examine membership levels of a number of community and volunteer organizations in Saskatchewan such as the Kinsmen Club, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and the YWCA as well as levels of church attendance and volunteerism in Canada. The purpose here is to understand the role that membership in these organizations and church attendance and volunteerism might have in educating about, and encouraging participation in, the electoral process. The study of public participation and Robert Putnam's theory of social capital is not meant to discount the theory that civic education affects voter turnout. Rather, this study provides an example of one of the many other factors that might affect voter turnout. As well, as will be discussed later, Putnam does make a point of arguing that further civic education may in fact result in greater civic participation. It will be important to consider that civic engagement and

social capital, which is a result of membership and participation in volunteer and community organizations, may be a good indicator of why voter turnout has declined in Saskatchewan and across the country.

This thesis will attempt to answer the following three questions; *Has the provincial department of education changed its approach to educating citizens? What contribution have provincial and federal orders of government made to educating citizens through their electoral offices?* and *Do community and volunteer organizations encourage voter turnout?* By answering these questions, the thesis will conclude with suggestions for encouraging higher electoral participation. It is hoped that it will make a contribution to the rapidly growing literature on public participation in Canadian and the relatively small literature regarding participation in provincial elections.

Though it is hoped that this thesis will make a contribution to the existing literature, there are a number of limitations to this study that must be considered. First, the very foundation of the research-that turnout has declined and that the decline presents a danger to democracy-may be only temporary. There is no way of knowing whether or not we will see further decline in voter turnout, or if the trend described in the thesis will eventually reverse. For now, and for the purpose of the research here, we have to consider the present turnout levels and the danger that they may pose to democracy.

Second, we can see in the thesis that there have been changes in the way the province has recommended that civic education be offered to students. From those findings, the conclusion has been made that the changes in civic education may be one of the factors that have contributed to the decline in voter turnout. The research here is limited as only the curricula that were produced by the provincial department of

education have been considered. As stated in the thesis, one of the limitations to this research is that there may be no way of knowing what teachers, especially those in the past, actually teach in their own classrooms and how they have interpreted the curricula provided.

Another limitation that should be addressed in the curricula research is that there may have been changes in society that may have been as or more responsible for declining voter turnout than the changes in high school curricula. Certainly factors mentioned in the thesis as well as societal changes like the movement toward a more individualistic, rights-based society may have contributed to changes in high school curriculum as well as in the attitudes of citizens toward things like duty or obligation in society.

Finally, even though I feel comfortable with the quality of the curricula research conducted, some might find a limitation in the fact that there were curricula missing for a number of years throughout the century. Though perhaps somewhat limiting, enough curricula were found to give an overall impression of the type of civic education offered and to present a synopsis of the changes that are evident throughout. Curricula were found for each of the decades examined in this work. Again, the curricula changes presented may not be able to account for declining voter turnout. The two may be totally unrelated, or a result of a societal change, like the rights-based, and individualistic attitude adopted mid-century.

Third, there are a number of limitations that can be found in the research related to Putnam's theory of social capital. While Putnam gives evidence significant enough to make his own arguments-that social capital affects voter turnout, the research presented

in chapter four of the thesis is not thorough enough to provide evidence that this trend is evident in Saskatchewan. If the membership, volunteer and church attendance numbers are a proper reflection of what is actually happening in society, then we could assume that what Putnam describes is in fact happening in Saskatchewan and that social capital is another factor that helps us to understand declining electoral participation. The problem with the research in this thesis is that only a three organizations were discussed and instances of volunteerism and church attendance are reported only for short time periods. This chapter was written for interest sake and would require much more time and research before any solid evidence could be reported.

III. Literature Review

After introducing the thesis topic, the organization of the thesis, the thesis question, and a review of the literature, the present chapter introduces the theories that will be used to explain the importance of education and membership in community organizations in a person's decision to vote.

This chapter includes a brief introduction to the theoretical work that will be used in the thesis. These include works by Henry Milner, Robert D. Putnam, and Seymour Martin Lipset. In *Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002), Henry Milner discusses such issues as civic engagement, social capital, political participation, political knowledge, and civic literacy. Milner defines civic literacy as “the knowledge and ability capacity of citizens to make sense of their political world.”³ Milner describes the relationship between civic literacy and political participation in a cyclical manner. He describes civic

³Henry Milner, *Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002), 1.

literacy as a means and an end; by promoting civic literacy, he argues, we will see greater political participation, which means that people will be trying to influence the way in which their interests are taken into account. This, argues Milner, can lead to more equitable socio-economic outcomes, which encourage people to keep well informed about government, or in other words encourages civic literacy.⁴ Milner's theory will be important in chapter three of this thesis, which will discuss the actions that Saskatchewan's Department of Learning has taken to educate students about government and political participation.

In his book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), Putnam discusses the decline of social capital- which he describes simply as "connections between individuals." He presents a study of "social capital" in America. In short, Putnam theorizes that a decline in social capital, which includes diminishing participation in community and volunteer organizations, public meetings, and church attendance, leads to a decline in public trust and cooperation, and therefore less public political participation.⁵ Putnam's theory will be important in chapter four of this thesis when membership levels in community and voluntary organizations will be discussed.

Finally, S. M. Lipset's *Agrarian Socialism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1968) will also be discussed in chapter four. Lipset's work is a widely acclaimed introduction to Saskatchewan politics and the type of people who have shaped the political landscape of Saskatchewan. Lipset discusses the rise of the Cooperative

⁴Ibid, 2.

⁵Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 15-26.

Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the political attitudes of the Saskatchewan people that welcomed the creation of this party in the 1930s. Lipset's work will be important throughout this thesis for the historical picture it paints of the background of Saskatchewan politics and Saskatchewan's people. Lipset also discusses such things as voting behaviour, membership in organizations, and how "the CCF has succeeded in involving more people in direct political activity than any other party in American or Canadian history"⁶ which will each have importance throughout the thesis. The theories of Putnam and Lipset will be used in chapter four to link the decline in volunteer association membership levels to a general lowering of interest in politics, and therefore a decline in voter turnout.

Together the themes presented by Milner, Putnam, and Lipset will help to position the information reported in the thesis. Milner's theory, which stresses the importance of civic knowledge and civic literacy, will prove helpful in chapter three. That chapter discusses Saskatchewan's education curricula and how civic education has changed throughout Saskatchewan's history. Putnam's social capital theory, which emphasises the effect of decreased participation in community and volunteer organizations, will be important in chapter four when membership levels in those types of organizations in Saskatchewan will be discussed. Lipset's work, which discusses important aspects of Saskatchewan politics, will be important throughout the thesis in gaining insight into the electoral participation of Saskatchewan citizens. It will also be discussed in chapter four with regard to community participation in Saskatchewan.

⁶Seymour Martin Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan. A Study in Political Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1950), 199.

Chapter Two

The second chapter reports voter turnout rates throughout the history of Saskatchewan's provincial elections as well as Saskatchewan's voter turnout in the country's federal elections. This chapter also discusses various social and economic factors that explain why people make the decision to vote, or not. Finally, this chapter examines why many academics see declining voter turnout as detrimental to democratic society.

Publications by *Elections Saskatchewan* give voter turnout rates for each of Saskatchewan's provincial general elections, excluding 1905 for which there is no information published. One problem with the data stems from the fact that between 1908 and 1948 publications from *Elections Saskatchewan* are incomplete, that is they fail to report voter turnout for a number of the provincial constituencies. Officials at *Elections Saskatchewan* have not been able to provide information for 1905, nor more complete voter turnout results for the provincial elections that took place between 1908 and 1948. Another problem with the data published by *Elections Saskatchewan* is that between 1921 and 1964 a number of constituencies in Saskatchewan elected multiple members to the Legislative Assembly. In some cases, voters were allowed to cast up to five votes each in their constituency. The data that have been published only report the number of eligible voters who cast votes, and not how many votes each voter actually cast. In order to ensure the validity of the data presented in the thesis, voter turnout in Saskatchewan reported prior to 1967 will be disregarded as there is no way of knowing just how accurate the reports might be.

Voter turnout will be reported for Saskatchewan's provincial elections between 1967 and 2003, and for federal elections from 1965 to 2004. The turnout data for both provincial and federal elections will be compared in an effort to show that voter turnout has decreased, and has in fact reached its lowest levels both provincially and federally since the mid-1960s.

Chapter two will include an examination of what academics describe as the factors that influence a person's decision to vote, or not. In their book, *Who Votes?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone list such demographic variables as level of education, age, marital status, occupation, and income to help to explain varying rates of turnout among definable social groups.⁷ These factors are seen as positively affecting a person's decision to vote. Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc examine the reasons that those surveyed have given for not voting in *Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-Voters* (Ottawa: Elections Canada, 2003). Pammett and LeDuc report a number of factors to explain not voting including: negative public attitudes, which include a lack of trust in government and politicians; feeling that participation is meaningless; lack of knowledge of election issues; apathy; and cynicism. They also report a high level of inaction among youth voters.⁸

In *Anatomy of a Liberal Victory: Making Sense of the Vote in the 2000 Canadian Election* (Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 2002), Andre Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau, and Neil Nevitte examine a number of factors including generation

⁷Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 102-3.

⁸Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc, *Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-Voters* (Ottawa: Elections Canada, 2003), 6.

cohort, education, income, and whether or not a person has immigrated to Canada within the past 10 years as factors that help to explain voter turnout.⁹ These factors will be important in setting the tone for the remainder of the thesis and providing insight into the importance of voter turnout.

The effect of low voter turnout will be discussed in relationship to the health of a democracy. In *The Disappearing American Voter* (Washington: The Brookings Institute, 1992), Ruy A. Teixeira warns of two reasons that low levels of electoral participation are unfavourable to democracy. First, he explains that the legitimacy of a government that is elected by a small percentage of the voting-age population is questionable.¹⁰ Second, Teixeira argues that governments may create policy or legislation aimed at those who are known to vote more often than others. Another reason that low voter turnout is of concern is that it may be an indicator of the health of the rest of the community. Putnam warns that low voter turnout is a result of a decline in participation in community and volunteer organizations and in connections between individuals.

Chapter Three

Chapter three studies Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school education curricula. A review of the curricula points out how civic education has been suggested to Saskatchewan's teachers and how they have been instructed, through the curricula, to teach students about civics. The study of the curricula shows a major shift away from active civic education in the 1970s, at which time educators were instructed to stop inculcating students with values like good citizenship. That lack of active encouragement

⁹Andre Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte, *Anatomy of a Liberal Victory: Making Sense of the Vote in the 2000 Canadian Election* (Peterborough, Broadview Press Ltd., 2002), 51.

¹⁰Ruy A. Teixeira, *The Disappearing American Voter* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1992), 101.

to take part in political activities, as chapter three discusses, has continued into the curricula of present. Also included in the third chapter will be details of what has been done, and what is currently being done, by Elections Saskatchewan and Elections Canada to encourage and educate voters, especially those who are voting for the first time.

The curricula discussed here, developed by Saskatchewan Learning and dated between 1907 and 1991 can be found in the Historic Textbook Collection located at the University of Saskatchewan Library's Education branch. Current education curricula can be found on the Saskatchewan Learning website. For the purpose of this thesis, civic-minded education, including such subjects as *history*, *social studies*, and *civics* being taught in junior and senior high school classes have been considered. The curricula provide the objectives of Saskatchewan Learning (or the Department of Education) in teaching young people the importance of being a good citizen and participating in elections. Those objectives and goals are clearly presented in each of the curriculum guides. As well, the curriculum guides also supply suggestions as to how teachers might fulfill the task of producing good citizens. The curricular information includes suggestions ranging from ensuring that students know the importance of being active in society to specifically asking teachers to talk to students about the important of elections and the responsibilities of the voter. The intention of this search is to find differences in the civic-minded education being presented to school children (or future voters) between 1907 and the present. This information will be of utmost importance in discovering, at different points in Saskatchewan's history, what education authorities considered essential to producing good citizens, or if good citizenship has in fact been of importance.

Also found in the Education branch of the University of Saskatchewan library are a number of the textbooks that have been prescribed by curricula throughout Saskatchewan's history. A number of these texts, including: R.S. Jenkins' *Canadian Civics: Saskatchewan Edition* (Toronto: Copp Clark Company, 1922), and Sir J.G. Bourinot's *How Canada Is Governed* (Toronto: Copp Clark Company, 1902), contain chapters detailing the rights, duties and obligations of good citizens, and provide extensive study of Canada's governments and institutions. Bourinot, for example, explains "however well devised a system of government may be, it is relatively worthless unless the men and women who compose the people of Canada are always fully alive to their duties and responsibilities."¹¹ Bourinot's work was prescribed widely in civics classes described in Saskatchewan's early education curricula. Also included in this list are textbooks such as J.O. Miller's *The Young Canadian Citizen: Studies in Ethics, Civics and Economics* (Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1920), C.R. McLeod's *Citizenship Training: A Handbook for Canadian Schools* (Toronto: Dent, 1944), and *Citizenship, Our Democracy* (Regina: King's Printer, 1940) produced by the Saskatchewan Department of Education. Comparing these prescribed textbooks of Saskatchewan's early education curricula with the textbooks being prescribed today will prove to be a valuable tool in researching what, if any, civics related curricula were being prescribed in the classrooms at various times throughout Saskatchewan's history, and how, if at all, these curricula have changed.

Henry Milner's theory of civic literacy will also be of importance here. As described earlier, Milner finds a connection between civic literacy, or a citizen's ability to make sense of his or her political surroundings, and political participation. Milner faults

¹¹Sir J.G. Bourinot, *How Canada is Governed: A Short Account of Its Executive, Legislative, Judicial and Municipal Institutions*, 5th Ed. (Toronto: The Copp Clark Company, Limited, 1902), 283.

increasing television consumption and declining newspaper readership for having a negative effect on civic literacy levels. He emphasises the role of knowledge in civic engagement and argues that “low levels of political knowledge correlate with low turnout.”¹² Milner’s theory of the relationship between civic literacy and electoral participation will prove to be important in setting the stage for the examination of education curricula that this third chapter will undertake.

The actions Elections Canada and its provincial counterpart, Elections Saskatchewan, are taking to attract the youth to participate in elections is also presented in chapter three. Elections Canada’s website and numerous publications offer a plethora of information with regard to its attempts to attract youth to participate in elections. A multitude of programs and discussions have been undertaken in the name of attracting youth electoral participation. This information is not accessible on the Elections Saskatchewan website, nor has there been anything in the way of publications concerning youth voter turnout in Saskatchewan. For these reasons Elections Saskatchewan has been contacted to find out if there are programs or projects orchestrated or planned by Elections Saskatchewan to encourage youth electoral participation in the province. A conversation with Jan Baker, the Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan, has confirmed that Elections Saskatchewan does not offer any programs aimed at the youth, though the office would like to implement some in the near future.

Chapter Four

Chapter four surveys membership levels of selected community and volunteer organizations in Saskatchewan and throughout the country. Based on the arguments of

¹²Henry Milner, 6.

Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, and the historical picture of civic participation in Saskatchewan presented in Seymour Martin Lipset's *Agrarian Socialism*, the fourth chapter also discusses the role membership in community and volunteer organizations may have on a person's decision to participate in an election. Putnam's work provides an example of other factors that might influence voter participation, though it does not serve to contradict the idea that voter turnout might also be in some way affected by civic education. In fact, as will be discussed in chapter four, Putnam also presents that argument that greater civic education could mean higher levels of participation in the community.

The Kinsmen Club of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and the YWCA, have been contacted for information regarding change in their membership levels. Levels of church attendance have also been consulted. Curtis Kimpton, incoming National President of the Kinsmen Club of Canada, reports that membership in his organization has declined at alarming rates. In the past ten years, membership in the Kinsmen Club of Canada has fallen from 14,000 to 9,000.¹³ The decrease in memberships in the Kinsmen Club is an example of the kind of activity that will be reported in chapter four. Finally, this chapter also reflects on changes of volunteerism in Canada.

Considering declining membership levels in these organizations, the fourth chapter takes into account the work of Robert D. Putnam. Putnam argues that a decline in public participation can be traced back to a weakening of public trust which is a result of decreasing social capital. The decline in public trust is the result of diminishing

¹³Curtis Kimpton. "Thesis Information (Email)." (11 May 2004).

participation in community and volunteer organizations, public meetings, and church attendance. Putnam's work will be important in this thesis as a way to connect the declining membership, volunteer, and church attendance trend that is evident in chapter four to the decline in voter turnout in Saskatchewan. Putnam explains:

evidence confirms that community service programs really do strengthen the civic muscles of participants...well-designed service learning programs improve civic knowledge, enhance citizen efficacy, increase social responsibility¹⁴

Chapter four then turns to Lipset's work to compare the membership and participation in volunteer and community organizations which he describes as existing historically in Saskatchewan with the participation and membership that can be found today. Lipset explains that while many academics speak of the mass passivity of citizens in the United States and Canada, this was not the case in Saskatchewan. Lipset writes in 1950: "the most important single factor differentiating the Saskatchewan social scene from other regions is the high degree of individual participation in community organizations."¹⁵ If other organizations have seen a trend comparable to that described by Kimpton, Lipset's description of Saskatchewan social scene may no longer exist.

Considering the contributions made by Lipset and Putnam in combination with the results of contact with the community and volunteer organizations listed above as well as a description of church attendance and volunteerism, this chapter concludes with observations regarding the role that membership in organizations plays vis-à-vis public participation.

¹⁴Putnam, 405.

¹⁵Lipset, 244-5.

Chapter Five

The fifth chapter provides a conclusion to the thesis by bringing together the information discussed in the body of the thesis regarding Saskatchewan's education curricula, the efforts of Elections Saskatchewan and Elections Canada, and the role of membership in organizations on a person's decision to vote. The final chapter does not introduce any new literature, rather it re-examines what has already been introduced in order to answer the thesis questions put forth in the first chapter of the thesis.

IV. Theory and Definition of Terms

The assumption that will be used as the underlying theory of this thesis is that voting is a worthwhile activity that each citizen of a democracy has a duty or obligation to participate in. A simple explanation for this assumption can be found in the idea of self-interest, or in social choice theory. A classic question asks: "What if we held an election and no one came?" The answer is that one person, the only that decided to vote, is able to choose the government. In the interest of self, others would vote to ensure that the sole voter could not choose the government by himself or herself. A simple explanation then is that even if one does not believe that they have a duty or obligation to participate on election day, it is still in their own best interest to cast their ballot.

Before considering the research presented in the following chapters, it is important to define some of the terms that will be used throughout the thesis. The first, and perhaps most widely used, term is *voter turnout*. Used interchangeably with *electoral* or *voter participation*, voter turnout will refer to the number of eligible electors who have actually visited the polling station on election day with the intent of casting a ballot. Voter turnout is calculated by dividing the number of actual voters by the number

of eligible voters. Voter turnout in this case also includes those voters who have, purposefully or otherwise, spoiled their ballot.

The term *civics* is used throughout the thesis and especially in the third chapter where a survey of curricula is carried out. While civics can carry with it a number of interpretations, for the purpose of this thesis it will refer to a subject area that is being taught in the junior and senior high school courses. A number of criteria were used in deciding what actually qualified as a civics course. Those included such things as the mention of federal and provincial governmental institutions, public policy, the structure, function, or history of Canadian and provincial governments, political parties, the parliamentary system, democracy, the rights of a democratic citizen, how leaders are elected, how elections are carried out, and the duties and obligations of a citizen. The civics courses are placed in three categories; *duty*, *institutions*, and *culture*. Duty type of civics includes any mention of the duties and obligations of a democratic citizen including the duty to vote on election day or become involved in the community. Institution type of civics refers to lessons about the structure and function of government and politics. Culture type of civics includes instruction about the rights of an individual in democratic society, including what a citizen might expect from his or her government. These criteria were used to examine the Saskatchewan department of education *curricula*, or the lessons that were recommended by the provincial department throughout the 20th Century.

Chapter Two: Who Votes and How Does Turnout Affect the Health of Democracy?

Not unlike other provincial and federal elections in Canada, electoral participation in Saskatchewan's provincial general elections has decreased. Provincially, Saskatchewan has seen, among its highest, turnout at 83.9 per cent in the 1982 election, and at its lowest, turnout at 64.6 per cent in the 1995 election.¹⁶ Saskatchewan's voter turnout for federal elections, like its provincial elections, has also decreased in a similar time period. This chapter will examine levels of voter participation for each of Saskatchewan's provincial general elections after 1964, and Saskatchewan's electoral participation levels for each of the federal election beginning in 1965. In addition, the importance of voter turnout to the health of a country's democracy will be considered. Finally, the factors that help to explain varying rates of turnout among definable social groups will be discussed.

After 1991 voter turnout in Saskatchewan's provincial election turnout plummeted, falling almost 20 percentage points between 1991 and 1995 and increased only slightly in the 1999 and 2003 provincial elections. Federally, Saskatchewan's voter turnout also decreased during this time period. Voter turnout fell 9 percentage points between the 1988 and 1993 elections and another 10 percentage points between the 1993 and 2004 elections. Ruy Teixeira, Jerome Black, Arend Lijphart, and Robert Putnam are among the many authorities who explain why we should be concerned about declining voter participation. Their reasons include the questionable legitimacy of a government

¹⁶ Province of Saskatchewan. Provincial Elections in Saskatchewan 1905-1986. (Regina: Published by the Chief Electoral Office, Province of Saskatchewan, 1987) 141-148.

Province of Saskatchewan. Report of the Chief Electoral Officer Twenty-Third General Election June 21, 1995. (Regina: Published by the Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan, 1996), 6-12.

elected by a small percentage of the eligible voters, the possibility that a government may create policy or legislation that favours those who voted or tend to vote more often than others, and the likelihood that low voter turnout can also tell us about the health of the rest of the community. These will be discussed in this chapter.

Others, including Raymond Wolfinger, Steven Rosenstone, André Blais, Elizabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau, and Neil Nevitte, show that such factors as age, income, education, and occupation, help to explain which identifiable social groups are more likely to vote than others. Jon Pammett, and Lawrence LeDuc also present analysis that point to factors such as these in their indepth study of groups, mainly the youth, who tend not to vote.

Problems With Voter Turnout Data in Saskatchewan

Since its beginning as a province in 1905, Saskatchewan has conducted regular provincial general elections, its most recent being in November 2003. Publications by *Elections Saskatchewan* do not report any electoral participation information for the 1905 election.¹⁷ For this reason, the provincial general election of 1905 will not be considered in this chapter.

A second problem with the data stems from the fact that between 1908 and 1948 publications from *Elections Saskatchewan* were incomplete as they failed to report voter participation in a number of provincial constituencies. The election that witnessed the highest number of constituencies not accounted for was the election of 1917 in which 23 of the province's 59 constituencies did not report voter turnout. The election of 1934 saw

¹⁷ A phone inquiry to Elections Saskatchewan (16 February 2004) confirmed that there is little information in existence regarding the provincial election of 1905, and there is no information on voter turnout for that election.

the lowest number of constituencies not reporting voter turnout, only one of the 55 constituencies did not present the turnout information in that election.¹⁸ Officials at *Elections Saskatchewan* were unable to provide more complete information.¹⁹ A third, and overlapping problem, is that between 1921 and 1964 a number of provincial constituencies were multi-member. From 1921 to 1948 the constituencies of Moose Jaw City, Regina City, and Saskatoon City each elected two representatives. In the elections of 1952 and 1956 the number of representatives elected in Regina City rose to three while the constituencies of Moose Jaw City and Saskatoon City remained unchanged. In 1960 the constituencies of Regina City and Saskatoon City each added one member and sent four and three representatives to the legislature respectively. In 1964 while Moose Jaw City remained a two-member constituency, Regina City was split into Regina East and Regina West, each sending two members to the legislature, and Saskatoon City again gained a member, sending five representatives to the assembly. In the election of 1967, and in all Saskatchewan elections to follow, those three cities that had been multi-member constituencies became cities made up of multiple, single-member constituencies.²⁰

Taking these three problems with the turnout data into account and to keep from compromising the integrity of the data given in this thesis the information found for Saskatchewan's provincial election up to and including 1964 will be disregarded as there is no way of knowing just how accurate the information might be. Not all constituencies

¹⁸ Province of Saskatchewan. Provincial Elections in Saskatchewan 1905-1986. (Regina: Published by the Chief Electoral Office, Province of Saskatchewan, 1987), 21-79.

¹⁹ The February 16, 2004 phone call also revealed no more complete information available from Elections Saskatchewan.

²⁰ Province of Saskatchewan. Provincial Elections in Saskatchewan 1905-1986. (Regina: Published by the Chief Electoral Office, Province of Saskatchewan, 1987), 38-115.

have been reported for the elections between 1908 and 1948, nor do we know the actual number of ballots cast by each elector in the elections between 1921 and 1964. Though we can still calculate how many people actually visited the polling stations on election day and can therefore know what voter turnout was, we still do not know how many votes each elector cast. Therefore, in the interest of accurate reporting, none of the information for those elections can be used. Because the pre-1967 provincial election data are not being reported in this thesis, federal election turnout data for Saskatchewan cannot be used either if a proper comparison is to be carried out. For that reason, Saskatchewan's federal election data will be reported beginning in 1968.

Table 1: Voter Turnout In Saskatchewan Provincial Elections (1908-1964)

<u>Election Year</u>	<u>Voter Turnout (%)</u>	<u>Election Year</u>	<u>Voter Turnout (%)</u>
1908	71.6	1938	79.1
1912	59.2	1944	74.9
1917	69.9	1948	79.5
1921	66.2	1952	75.5
1925	63.2	1956	77.2
1929	76.7	1960	74.4
1934	81.7	1964	73.9

Table 2: Saskatchewan Voter Turnout In Federal Elections (1911-1965)

<u>Election Year</u>	<u>Voter Turnout (%)</u>	<u>Election Year</u>	<u>Voter Turnout (%)</u>
1911	63	1945	85
1917	70	1949	79
1921	67	1953	74
1925	57	1957	81
1926	70	1958	82
1930	81	1962	85
1935	77	1963	83
1940	77	1965	80

Source: Elections Saskatchewan, Elections Canada

Tables one and two show the turnout data reported by Elections Canada and Elections Saskatchewan. As explained, the Elections Saskatchewan pre-1967 data are

problematic. Therefore, for the purpose of consistency with federal data and reliability of data the pre-1967-68 information will not be used.

Voter Turnout In Saskatchewan (1967-2004)

As we see in the tables that follow, Saskatchewan's levels of voter turnout in provincial and federal elections have followed a somewhat similar pattern. In Saskatchewan, both provincially and federally, voter turnout remained higher during the elections of the late 1960s and 1970s as well both declined sharply in the mid-1990s. In Saskatchewan's provincial elections, voter turnout remained close to, or above, 80 per cent throughout the late 1960s, the 1970s and 1980s and the early 1990s. Between the provincial elections of 1991 and 1995 voter turnout fell from 83.2 per cent to 64.6 per cent, a decrease of 18.6 percentage points. Save for the elections of 1974 and 1980, which witnessed voter turnout of 72 and 71 per cent respectively, Saskatchewan's turnout levels in federal elections also remained close to or above 80 per cent throughout the late 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s. Speculating on a reason for the lower levels of voter turnout in 1974 and 1980, the argument might be made that voter exhaustion is partly to blame as each of these elections closely followed another federal election, one in 1972 and the other in 1979. Similar to its turnout provincially, Saskatchewan's voter turnout in the federal election of 1993 dropped to 69 per cent, down 9 percentage points from the election of 1988. Both provincially and federally, Saskatchewan's voter turnout remained low throughout the 1990s. Provincially, voter turnout in 1999 increased only slightly to 65.5 per cent, while federal voter turnout in Saskatchewan decreased even further to 65 per cent in 1997 and 62 per cent in the 2000 federal election. We do witness

a small increase in voter turnout in the 2003 provincial election, but then another rather large decrease in the 2004 federal election.

Table 3: Voter Turnout In Saskatchewan Provincial Elections

Election Year	Voter Turnout (%)	Election Year	Voter Turnout (%)
1967	78.1	1986	82.1
1971	83.2	1991	83.2
1975	80.3	1995	64.6
1978	79.4	1999	65.5
1982	83.9	2003	70.3

Source: Elections Saskatchewan.

Table 4: Saskatchewan Voter Turnout In Federal Elections

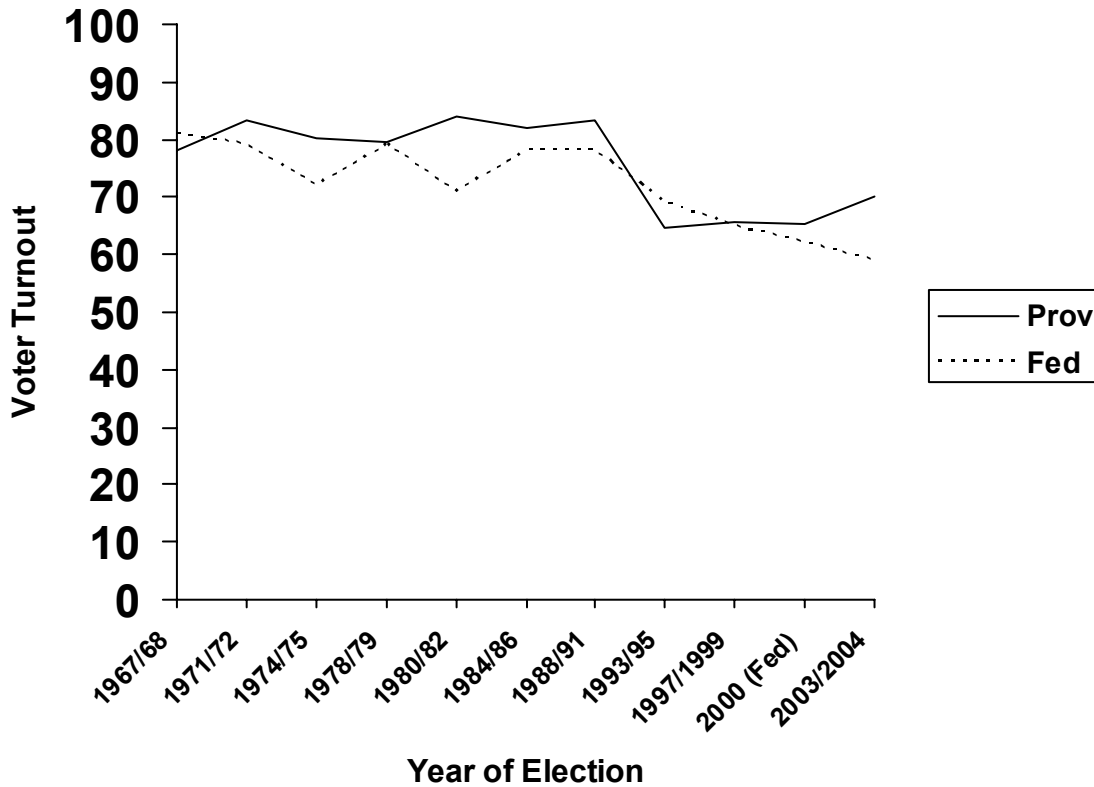
Election Year	Voter Turnout (%)	Election Year	Voter Turnout (%)
1968	81	1984	78
1972	79	1988	78
1974	72	1993	69
1979	79	1997	65
1980	71	2000	62
		2004	59*

*This preliminary report does not yet include those who registered on election day. This information was not yet available for the 2004 federal general election.

Source: Elections Canada

The graph that follows shows a comparison of Saskatchewan's voter turnout, both provincially and federally, between 1968 and 2004. The federal and provincial lines on the graph make apparent just how significant the decline in voter turnout over the past decade or so has been.

Table 5: Provincial and Federal Voter Turnout In Saskatchewan



As is evident in the tables and graph above, Saskatchewan has been witness to decreasing voter turnout in both its provincial and federal elections, especially in the past decade or so. It is important to focus on the steep decline in voter turnout that has taken place during and following the elections of 1993. Certainly there is no way of accurately predicting whether or not this pattern of low voter turnout will continue or even worsen, or whether voters will soon return to the polls in numbers like we witnessed prior to the 1990s. But with such a steep decline in voter participation over such a short period of time, and if this pattern does continue, one must wonder what effect this decline has on the health of democracy in Saskatchewan. As will be discussed further in this chapter,

voter turnout is important in considering the health of a democracy. Questions such as the legitimacy of a government that is elected by a small percentage of the eligible voters, the possibility of a government creating policy or legislation that caters to those who are more likely to vote, and what turnout tells us about the health of the rest of our community help to explain why we must pay close attention to voter participation levels in our provincial and general elections. Additionally, one must consider the factors that help to explain voter turnout rates among various defined social groups.

Should We Be Concerned About Low Voter Turnout?

There are a variety of opinions among academics as to whether declining voter participation is unhealthy for a democracy. Some, like pollster Michael Adams, argue that low voter turnout does not point to problems with our democracy, rather that there is a “new consensus” in Canada and that elections “matter less because governments are doing less, because globalization places more policy issues beyond Ottawa’s control, and because citizens are more self-reliant and less willing to be lead by traditional figures of authority.”²¹ Others, including Jerome Black, Arend Lijphart, Ruy Teixeira, André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte argue the opposite, that low voter turnout does affect the health of Canada’s democracy. In *Anatomy of A Liberal Victory: Making Sense of the Vote in the 2000 Canadian Election* Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau and Nevitte argue that electoral participation’s “precipitous decline is serious cause for

²¹ Michael Adams, “The Revolt of the Voting Classes.”
<<http://erg.environics.net/news/default.asp?aID=424>> (Retrieved 30 November 2000).

concern.”²² While the authors give little explanation for making this statement, others have.

There are several reasons why declining voter participation should be of concern to Canadians. These include the argument that the legitimacy of any government elected by a small percentage of the eligible voters is questionable, the possibility that equality of influence may diminish for those social groups that tend to vote less often than others, and the claim that declining voter turnout may be one sign that Canadians are becoming less connected with community as a whole.

Two recent examples can be given of majority governments elected by a small percentage of eligible voters. In the 2000 federal general election, only 61.2 per cent of Canada’s eligible voters cast a vote. Of that 61.2 per cent, only 40.8 per cent, or 5,302,851 of more than 12 million voters, actually voted for the Liberal party, who went on to form government with a majority of the seats in the House of Commons. In the end, only 25 per cent of Canada’s eligible voters elected a majority Liberal government.²³ Similarly, in the Saskatchewan provincial election of 2003, the New Democratic Party (NDP) was elected with a slim majority after receiving 44.59 per cent of the popular vote. Considering that voter participation in the 2003 election was 70.3 per cent, only 31.3 per cent of eligible voters in Saskatchewan actually elected the majority NDP government.²⁴

One can question the legitimacy of a government that is elected by and therefore representative of such a small segment of the eligible voting population. How democratic is a province or country that allows such a small percentage of the voting-age population

²² André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte, Anatomy of a Liberal Victory: Making Sense of the Vote in the 2000 Canadian Election (Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 2002), 45.

²³ Elections Canada. <<http://www.elections.ca>> (Retrieved 10 October 2003).

²⁴ Elections Saskatchewan. <<http://www.elections.sk.ca>> (Retrieved 18 January 2004).

to elect a majority government therefore leaving a majority of eligible voters possibly feeling as if they are not being represented? As turnout decreases, the winning party loses its ability to claim that it has won the support of the public. Instead, as we see in the two cases above, a majority of those who voted (75 per cent in 2000 and 68.7 per cent in 2003) actually voted for parties other than the one that formed a majority government. Though this can also be seen as a problem with Canada's first-past-the-post electoral system, the problem with electing a government with such a small percentage of the vote can only be aggravated by declining voter participation if such a small percentage of the population can elect a government. In *The Disappearing American Voter*, Ruy A.

Teixeira warns:

As fewer and fewer citizens participate in elections, the extent to which government truly rests on the consent of the governed may be called into question. As a result elites may feel they do not have sufficient legitimacy among citizens to pursue desired policy objectives, and citizens may feel the government is not legitimate enough for them to support these elites and their policy objectives.²⁵

Another reason for concern about low voter turnout is the possibility that politicians may cater to certain social groups that tend to vote more than others, in an attempt to gain voters' support, when considering options for policies and legislation. A social group that tends to vote more than others may become the equivalent to a pressure or interest group if for no other reason than the tendency of its members to participate on election day. Policies might be crafted to satisfy those who political parties and government recognize as 'voters,' and may therefore not be representative of the whole. Teixeira explains,

²⁵ Ruy A. Teixeira, *The Disappearing American Voter* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1992), 101.

Low and declining voter turnout may contribute to the problem of an unrepresentative policy agenda...the policy decisions of the elites accurately reflect the immediate policy preferences of the population, but in the long run the policy agenda set by those elites only poorly represents certain segments of the population.²⁶

Academics like Jerome Black and Arend Lijphart warn that this pattern is unhealthy for democracy as it means that political parties and government tend to ignore the concerns of those who need their attention most. Black argues that while people who are socially and economically better off tend to vote more often, “the less well off are the ones who most need to vote.”²⁷ He adds, “unevenness in electoral participation usually translates into distortions in representation and governmental response...an important consequence of nonparticipation is the neglect of major interests.”²⁸

Arend Lijphart agrees that low voter turnout could result in policy and legislation aimed at those social groups who tend to vote. According to Lijphart, “unequal turnout...is systematically biased against less well-to-do citizens. Unequal turnout spells unequal political influence.”²⁹ Like Black, he warns of a class bias and explains that politicians and officials are under no obligation to give much attention to classes and groups of citizens who do not vote. Lijphart argues, “who votes, and who doesn’t, has important consequences for who gets elected and for the content of public policy.”³⁰

A third reason that low voter turnout might be a concern for a democracy is what it tells us about the state of our communities. As will be further explored in Chapter Four, voter turnout can be considered a symptom of growing apathy not only toward

²⁶ Ibid, 102.

²⁷ Jerome Black, “Voter Participation in Canada: Is Canadian Democracy in Crisis?” *Centre for Research and Information on Canada* (Montreal, 2001), 29.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Arend Lijphart, “Unequal Participation: Democracy’s Unresolved Dilemma,” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 91, No. 1 (March, 1997), 1.

³⁰ Ibid, 4.

politics and government, but also toward participation in the community. In *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert D. Putnam explains that social capital refers to connections among individuals. He says that as those connections become fewer, which he blames on decreasing participation in community and volunteer organizations, public meetings, and diminishing church attendance, there is a decline in public trust and cooperation. What results, he argues, is a decline in political participation and voter turnout.³¹ According to this argument voter turnout is an indication of the health of our community, and low levels of participation in an election are a sign that the rest of our community may also be suffering.

Who Votes?

Because Canada and other democratic countries have witnessed decline in voter turnout in the past decade, there is a wide body of literature that outlines the factors that explain which social groups tend to vote more than others. Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone, as well as Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau, and Nevitte list these factors that help to explain who does and does not vote. Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc, along with officials at *Elections Canada*, discuss which groups, mainly youth, tend not to vote.

In *Who Votes?* Wolfinger and Rosenstone examine a number of factors and discuss how they can be used to understand which social groups are more likely than others to participate in elections. They explain that such factors as “education, occupation, income, age, and marital status are commonly thought to be related to the

³¹ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 15-26.

likelihood of voting.”³² They also explain that these factors are often interrelated. For example, someone with a higher level of education likely has a better job and therefore earns more money than someone with a lower level of education. Wolfinger and Rosenstone also point out that a higher level of education “creates greater ability to learn about politics without anxiety and to master the bureaucratic aspects of registering and voting.”³³ They add that people with higher income “have a bigger “stake in the system” and thus are more highly motivated both to make the appropriate choice on election day and to support the political system by participating in it.”³⁴

According to Wolfinger and Rosenstone, the tendency to vote also increases with age and among married people. The inclination to vote increases with age, they argue, until maturity turns into old age at which time turnout declines, often for health-related reasons. They say that age corresponds with other factors that explain turnout. For example, a married, middle aged person, with an average to above average income, is more likely to vote than an unmarried person of the same age with a lower income. In the case of marital status, they explain, “people with very little autonomous political motivation are most likely to respond to political stimuli from those with whom they have continuing relationships. The encouragement of a wife or husband might be the push necessary to get both partners to the polls.”³⁵ If we consider the increasing levels of divorce in Canada and around the world, the fact that fewer and fewer people are staying married may be one factor that accounts for lower voter participation. Perhaps the most important observation offered by Wolfinger and Rosenstone is that no factor can

³² Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 10.

³³ *Ibid*, 14.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 22.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 45.

determine, on its own, the probability of a member of a social group to vote or not. Rather, a number of factors combined give the most accurate reading of an individual's tendency to participate in an election.

In *Anatomy of A Liberal Victory: Making Sense of the Vote in the 2000 Canadian Election*, Blais *et al* also discuss factors that help to identify social groups that have a higher tendency than others to vote. While they list factors similar to those discussed by Wolfinger and Rosenstone, including age, income, education, and occupation, the authors pay much attention to who does not vote, including the group they refer to as “post-generation X.” Non-voting among post-generation X, or those born after 1970, “increased by 14 points between 1993 and 2000.”³⁶ The authors explain that while voter participation within this age group may increase as its members move from their twenties into their thirties, “they are less interested in electoral politics than their elders, they pay less attention, and they are less well-informed.”³⁷

Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc describe the factors that explain which social groups are less likely to vote, and the reasons given for their lack of electoral participation in *Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-Voters*. Like Blais *et al*, Pammett and LeDuc find that the largest group of non-voters exists in the youth, those in the 18 to 24-age category. In the 2000 federal election only 25 per cent of 18-24 year olds voted.³⁸ Pammett and LeDuc report, “voter

³⁶ André Blais, *et al*, 46.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 60-61.

³⁸ Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc, *Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-Voters* (Ottawa: Elections Canada, 2003), 20.

participation declines steadily as one moves from the oldest to the youngest age cohorts.”³⁹

Along with the lower of voter participation rates of 18 to 24 year olds, Pammett and LeDuc describe the reasons given by non-voters to explain why they have failed to vote. Those include such things as negative public attitudes toward politicians and political institutions, the perceived meaninglessness of electoral participation, and public apathy.⁴⁰

In the survey, Pammett and LeDuc asked, “What do you think should be done to get young people to be more interested in politics?” Twenty-three per cent of respondents under the age of 25 and 23.7 per cent of respondents 25 years old and older responded that “more education in the schools” is needed.⁴¹ Also in this survey, the authors asked people to choose from *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree* regarding the statement: “Schools should do more to educate children in the benefits of voting and political participation.”⁴² Of those surveyed, 44 per cent picked *strongly agree* while 39 per cent chose *agree* in response to the statement. Pammett and LeDuc argue that, “increased attention to civics education in the schools, particularly as it pertains to social and political participation, will convey a positive message about the benefits of interacting with others in the fulfillment of civic duties.”⁴³

According to Pammett and LeDuc, Canada’s youngest eligible voters are, in large numbers, avoiding the polls on election day. This trend is of great concern. In their study of non-voters, Pammett and LeDuc have found that negative attitudes toward

³⁹ Ibid, 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 6.

⁴¹ Ibid, 52.

⁴² Ibid, 53.

⁴³ Ibid, 73.

government and politicians, administrative problems, public apathy, and perceived meaninglessness of electoral participation play a substantial role in individuals' explanations of why they do not vote. What they have also found is that a majority of those surveyed agreed that schools should educate more about the benefits of voting and political participation.

Conclusion

Canada is witnessing a trend in its federal elections in which voter turnout is declining, and is especially low among the youth. Saskatchewan is not immune to this trend. Especially worrisome is the rate at which turnout has fallen, as we see between 1991 and 1995 in Saskatchewan's provincial elections, and the similar decrease following the 1988 federal election. The federal elections witnessed a drop of 16 percentage points over twelve years (1988-2000) as compared to a drop of 18.6 percentage points in Saskatchewan over only four years.⁴⁴

As has been argued by Jerome Black, Arend Lijphart, Ruy Teixeira, André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte, voter turnout is important in measuring the health of a democracy. These authors give three reasons including: the legitimacy of a government elected by a small percentage of the population, the possibility of policy or legislation that is directed toward those that tend to vote more often than others, and the belief that the declining level of voter turnout says something about the community as a whole, and might constitute a threat to democracy. The argument that a decline in voter turnout is unhealthy for a democratic country justifies the study that follows.

⁴⁴Elections Canada. <<http://www.elections.ca>> (Retrieved 18 March 2004).

Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau and Nevitte, along with Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc have provided factors that help to identify those social groups who have a tendency to vote, or to not vote, in elections. The authors agree that socio-economic factors such as education, income, age, occupation, and marital status are indicators of an individual's propensity to vote. They also identify the youth as a group that has a tendency to avoid the polls for reasons ranging from lack of interest in politics to lack of faith in politicians.

Another possible factor behind decreasing voter turnout in Saskatchewan might be its growing young Aboriginal population. Aboriginal peoples constitute the highest birthrate in Saskatchewan. We also know that Aboriginal people tend to participate less in elections than do non-Aboriginals.⁴⁵ Therefore, a possible (and very speculative) factor in explaining declining turnout in Saskatchewan would be to consider that because Aboriginal people tend to vote less, and there are so many young Aboriginal people, that their population might be affecting voter turnout rates.

Finally, Pammett and LeDuc describe how a majority of those people surveyed are of the opinion that schools must do more to educate students about politics as a way to ensure more participation among young people on election day. Pammett and LeDuc also argue that further civic education in schools would increase students' awareness of the importance of cooperation and interaction in the realization of civic duty. Keeping this advice in mind, the following chapter will discuss civic-minded education in Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school curricula and how it has changed over the years.

⁴⁵ Jean-Pierre Kingsley, "Introduction" Electoral Insight Volume 5, Number 3 (Ottawa: November 2003), 1.

Chapter Three: Educating Voters

Because democracy depends on the participation of citizens in order to function, decreases in voter participation, which are apparent in Saskatchewan and across the country, must be taken seriously. Factors that influence voter participation, as well as possible solutions that may help increase civic interest, are important if we are to be successful in encouraging increased electoral participation in the province and in the country. This chapter will reiterate the findings of Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc regarding the need for further civic education in the classroom. In addition, the work of Henry Milner will be discussed to emphasize the importance of civic literacy in ensuring greater citizen participation.

Keeping those arguments in mind, a survey of Saskatchewan's junior (grades 7 and 8) and senior (grades 9 through 12) high school curricula will be shown and changes or themes in the curricula will be brought to the surface in an attempt to find out if civic education could be a factor in electoral participation, especially among the youth. The survey will include an examination of Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school history, civics, and social studies curricula in an attempt to find out how the curricula have recommended that civics be taught and if those recommendations have changed throughout the century. By studying the curricula and how they have changed over time, recommendations can be made regarding what might be done by Saskatchewan Learning and in the classroom to help encourage a greater number of young people to participate in elections.

Finally, a brief review of the programs created and sponsored by Elections Canada and targeted at the country's youth will introduce what is being done outside the classroom to

encourage further electoral participation. A review of Elections Saskatchewan's mandate and future direction will also introduce that organization's role in attracting youth to the polls.

Is Civic Education Important?

One suggestion for increasing electoral participation, especially among the youth, has been to increase education in schools about the importance of voting and electoral participation. In their post-election survey, Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc find that a majority of those surveyed agree. Another academic, Henry Milner, proposes that the decline of civic literacy is to blame for decreased voter participation. Those proposals will be discussed here.

In Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-Voters Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc describe the factors that explain which social groups are less likely to vote, and the reasons given for their lack of participation. Like Blais *et al*, Pammett and LeDuc find that the largest group of non-voters exists in the youth, those in the 18 to 24 age category. In the 2000 federal election only 25 per cent of 18-24 year olds voted.⁴⁶ Pammett and LeDuc report, "voter participation declines steadily as one moves from the oldest to the youngest age cohorts."⁴⁷

One of the survey questions presented by Pammett and LeDuc asked, "What do you think should be done to get young people to be more interested in politics?" Twenty-three per cent of respondents under the age of 25 and 23.7 per cent of respondents 25 years old and older responded that "more education in the schools" is needed.⁴⁸ Also in this survey, the authors asked people to choose from *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree* regarding the

⁴⁶ Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc, *Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-Voters* (Ottawa: Elections Canada, 2003), 20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 52.

statement: “Schools should do more to educate children in the benefits of voting and political participation.”⁴⁹ Of those surveyed, 44 per cent picked *strongly agree* while 39 per cent chose *agree* in response to the statement. Pammett and LeDuc argue that, “increased attention to civics education in the schools, particularly as it pertains to social and political participation, will convey a positive message about the benefits of interacting with others in the fulfillment of civic duties.”⁵⁰

In *Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002), Henry Milner discusses such issues as civic engagement, social capital, political participation, political knowledge, and civic literacy. Milner defines civic literacy as “the knowledge and ability capacity of citizens to make sense of their political world.”⁵¹ He adds that a society’s level of civic literacy “reflects the proportion of adults possessing the knowledge required for effective political choice.”⁵² Milner describes the relationship between civic literacy and political participation in a cyclical manner. He describes civic literacy as a means and an end; by promoting civic literacy, he argues, we will see greater political participation, which means that people will be trying to influence the way in which their interests are taken into account. This, argues Milner, can lead to more equitable socio-economic outcomes, which encourage people to keep well informed about government. In other words it encourages civic literacy.⁵³

Milner reports a strong correlation between television dependency and newspaper readership, and voter turnout in his findings. He has found that as people grow more dependent

⁴⁹ Ibid, 53.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 73.

⁵¹ Henry Milner, *Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002), 1.

⁵² Ibid, 6.

⁵³ Ibid, 2.

on television, they tend to read fewer newspapers. This, he argues, means lower levels of civic literacy in society, which in turn means decreased electoral participation. In Canada, he says, it is “dramatically clear that we are lagging behind many comparable countries.”⁵⁴ He explains that increased television viewing tends to replace newspaper reading and “thereby reduces the quantity and quality of relevant knowledge that helps determine whether the citizen decides to vote or otherwise participate politically.”⁵⁵ In this sense Milner disagrees with Robert Putnam’s theory that increased television viewing erodes social capital because individuals are becoming less involved in the community. Rather, Milner argues, it is not that increased television viewing and decreased newspaper consumption erodes social capital but that it hampers the development of civic literacy.

Milner suggests ways to increase the level of civic literacy in Canada including: education, media use and political institutions. This chapter will consider what Milner recommends regarding education as an instrument to increase the level of civic literacy. Milner suggests that the best course of action “would be to aim civics courses at 16 to 18 year-olds still in school.”⁵⁶ He also argues the importance of fostering habits of general literacy in school to ensure a literate population that will hopefully continue what he refers to as “habits of literacy” which include reading newspapers and books, using libraries and maps, and writing letters after the conclusion of their formal education.⁵⁷

Keeping in mind the findings of Pammett and LeDuc, that a majority of those surveyed believe that further civic education in schools would aid in increasing voter turnout among the youth, and of Milner who places great importance in the relationship between civic literacy and

⁵⁴ Henry Milner, “Civic Literacy in Comparative Context,” *Policy Matters* Vol 2, No 2 (July 2001), 20.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 21.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 22.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 22.

voter turnout, what follows is a survey of Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school civic education curricula. The curricula will be examined for changes that might be seen as contributing to decreased interest in electoral participation.

Saskatchewan Education Curricula

Because junior and senior high school students are among the students closest to reaching the age of majority, it is important to discover what their instructors are expected to teach them about Canadian government and politics and about the responsibilities of being a Canadian citizen. This section will survey Saskatchewan's junior (grades 7 and 8) and senior high school (grades 9 to 12) curricula in an attempt to find out what was and is being taught, and to discover any changes in the prescribed programs over the period of 1907 to 1999. As an aid to the survey of curricula, a number of textbooks used by Saskatchewan educators will be reviewed briefly to identify how civic education was introduced or supplemented through the use of such materials. For organizational purposes, curricula will be described by decade, beginning in 1907 through to Saskatchewan's most recent curriculum introduced in 1999. The curricula that are being examined fall under three headings: civics, history, and social studies. The category under which civic education falls will be listed for each decade. Also, as defined in chapter one, the civics curricula in this chapter are placed under one of three headings; duty, institutions, and culture. Institution type civics is present in each of the curricula examined though, as explained in appendix two, the civics lessons change from duty type to culture type in the early 1970s.

A number of issues complicate the survey of education curricula. Because of the age of the materials consulted, not all curricula and textbooks are accessible (some simply could not be found) for each grade throughout every decade. However, enough curricula and supplemental reading material exist to present an assessment of the type of

civic education that has been prescribed for each of the junior and senior high school levels in each decade and to infer trends that are present throughout. Appendix one (page 106) provides a comprehensive list of the curricula that has been found and used in reporting this information. Another problem is that while the same curricula are prescribed for every classroom in the province, there is no way of knowing how individual educators have interpreted and taught the material outlined according to the province's recommendations. Also, because there currently exists no standardized testing in Saskatchewan,⁵⁸ and as a result there exists no mechanism for testing whether or not there is overarching uniformity in the way educators interpret the curricula, it is difficult to examine how the recommendations are delivered in each classroom. Because it is impossible to know how educators have interpreted the curricula in their own classrooms, and no testing mechanism currently exists to ensure that curricula is being followed in a uniform fashion, this survey must assume that each educator has followed closely the recommendations made in the curricula in their own lessons. A final problem is that there is no way of knowing how much of the curricula actually reached junior and senior high school-aged students especially in the early post-First World War years. Many students did not finish or even attend junior and senior high school; therefore there is no way of knowing for sure whether or not those young people were introduced to civic education. For the purpose of this work, it will have to be assumed that the prescribed curricula did reach a majority of young people in Saskatchewan.

⁵⁸ According to officials at Saskatchewan Learning, there has been standardized testing in the social studies courses only for Grade 12 students, and only in the case of non-accredited teachers. This practice of standardized testing was eliminated in August of 2002 and therefore no standardized testing currently exists in the province (05 May 2004).

The 1900s

As described above, because of the age of the materials available for research, some information is simply not available. Curricula available for the 1900s in Saskatchewan are limited to what was being prescribed for grades 10 through 12. The curricula that exist provide a sample of what was being taught under the heading of *History* in Saskatchewan's senior high schools. In the 1900s, history curricula for grades 10 and 12 approved a program that was strong in British and Canadian history and constitutional matters. A duty type program was present in the grade 11 history syllabus, which suggested as part of the course "the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizens."⁵⁹ Under that description lessons were to be given on such topics as: the duties and responsibilities of a citizen, the fact that a well-devised system of government is relatively worthless unless the people of Canada are willing to participate in the community, and the importance of men voting during elections and supporting their representatives following an election.⁶⁰

Also important to note about the early history curricula are their strong emphasis on educating students about the structure and function of the provincial and Dominion governments. Much attention was paid to the responsibilities of MLAs and MPs as well as to the political and policy processes. Importance was placed on knowing what the government was responsible for and how its actions affected daily life.⁶¹

Two texts, including J.G. Bourinot's *How Canada is Governed: A Short Account of Its Executive, Legislative, Judicial, and Municipal Institutions* and R.S. Jenkins' *Canadian Civics: Saskatchewan Edition* were prescribed from the 1900s to the end of the 1920s. Bourinot's text

⁵⁹ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Course of Study for the Junior, Middle and Senior Forms of High Schools and Collegiate Institutes (Regina: Department of Education, 1907), 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 5.

⁶¹ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Course of Study for the Junior, Middle and Senior Forms of High Schools and Collegiate Institutes (Regina: Department of Education, 1909), 4.

was recommended for use at the senior high school level beginning in 1907 through to 1925. The text included chapters on Canada's institutions and governing structures and concluded with a chapter entitled "The Duties and Responsibilities of Canadian Citizens." In that chapter Bourinot described the importance of participation in the community in these terms: "if the people of Canada are indifferent to the character and ability of men to whom, from time to time, they entrust the administration of public affairs...they must sooner or later themselves reap the results of their neglect."⁶² Bourinot's work was supportive of the type of civic education that was recommended by the Department of Education at the time. Similarly, the text by Jenkins, which was recommended for use in the junior high school courses between 1909 and 1929, also endorsed the type of civic education prescribed by the province. In his text, Jenkins, like Bourinot, included a chapter entitled "Duties of the Citizen" in which he argued "constitutions are not worth the paper they are printed on...if citizens do not take an interest in the affairs of the state." He added "your duty as a citizen is to put your knowledge of the nation and its government to practical use by taking an active part in politics."⁶³ These two texts were recommended throughout the 1900s, 1910s and 1920s to assist educators in the development of good citizens.

It is safe to describe the early 1900s as a time in which civic education with its emphasis on different levels of government, the functions of representatives, and the importance of citizen participation in elections, as an important part of the high school history curricula. During this time, those students reaching the age of majority (21) who had completed their secondary schooling had been taught about the importance of voting. Although through the early years

⁶²Sir J.G. Bourinot, How Canada is Governed: A Short Account of Its Executive, Legislative, Judicial and Municipal Institutions, 5th Ed. (Toronto: The Copp Clark Company, Limited, 1902), 284.

⁶³R.S Jenkins, Canadian Civics: Saskatchewan Edition, (Toronto: Copp Clark Company, 1922), 166-7.

only males were able to vote, the females (who had been taught the same material) could put their education to use by encouraging their husbands and male relatives to exercise their franchise.

The 1910s

The senior high school curricula of the 1910s are similar to that of the 1900s in that they provide for a historically driven course in grades 10 and 12 and a duty type course for grade 11. Grade 11 pupils in the 1910s, not unlike those in the 1900s were to be reminded of their responsibilities as a citizen including participation in the community, voting in elections, and supporting elected representatives. One difference worth noting though is that the 1912-13 grade 10 history syllabus did mention that students should be taught the “duties of citizenship” as well as British and Canadian history.⁶⁴ In addition, the grade 10 curriculum of 1918 placed great emphasis on municipal, provincial, and federal politics and government, including how those governments were organized, their functions, powers, and rules of procedure. Also important to note is that the curricula replaced history with “civics” for the grade 10 program, leaving grades 11 and 12 with the title of “history.” In 1918, the grade 10 civics course took on the responsibilities for encouraging citizen participation that were previously held by the grade 11 history syllabus in the 1900s through to 1918. Finally, in 1918 “current events” were added to the senior high school curriculum for each of the grades.⁶⁵

Strong duty oriented instruction was also found in the junior high school curricula of the same decade. The history syllabi for both grades 7 and 8 prescribed, “talks on civics and

⁶⁴ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Course of Study for the High Schools and Collegiate Institutes (Regina: Department of Education, 1912-13), 1.

⁶⁵ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Regulations and Courses of Study for High Schools and Collegiate Institutes (Regina: Department of Education, 1918), 13-14.

government.”⁶⁶ In the introduction to the grades 7 and 8 history courses, educators were instructed that pupils “should be encouraged to take an active interest in the life of the community in which they live; to understand their duties as members of society.”⁶⁷ The students were also to be taught the importance of the idea of government in the home, the community, the school and in the state.⁶⁸ Like the senior high school curriculum of 1918, grades 7 and 8 history was changed to “civics” and more emphasis on municipal, provincial, and federal governments, their structure and function, as well as their effects on society was evident.⁶⁹ Educators were also instructed in 1918 to ensure that each student “understand what the community has a right to expect from him and how he can best fulfill his obligations to the community.”⁷⁰

Like the curricula of the 1900s, the courses prescribed by the province for teachers in the 1910s demanded a level of duty-minded education that ensured students were aware of their responsibilities as citizens, including the duty to vote on election day, upon the completion of their formal education. In both the junior and senior high school curricula there was a change in 1918 that prescribed even stronger civic education, which promoted instruction about the three orders of government as well as the responsibilities of the citizen. Also important to take into consideration about the 1910s is that in 1918 women were awarded the right to vote in federal elections, though many of the provinces, including Saskatchewan, had granted them the provincial franchise in the previous year. The junior and high school curricula do not discuss this important event, though educators may have included discussions about it in their own interpretations of the curricula.

⁶⁶ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Course of Study for the Public Schools of Saskatchewan (Regina: Department of Education, 1913), 29-32.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Course of Study for the Public Schools (Regina: Department of Education, 1918), 31-32.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 7.

The 1920s

Much like the courses of 1918, the senior high school curricula of the 1920s stipulated that students be taught about the municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government as well as their functions, structure, and powers. The curricula also continued to promote duty oriented civic education in the form of educating students about their responsibilities as citizens including their participating both in their community and in elections. One change worth mentioning is that in 1920 and throughout the decade, the grade 9 course, in which the strongest civic-minded information was found, was called “history and civics,” while the grades 10, 11 and 12 courses were referred to as “history”. Their content was of a much more historical view than the grade 9 course.⁷¹ For the most part, the senior high school curricula of the 1920s were much the same as that prescribed by the Saskatchewan government throughout the 1910s.

The junior high school curricula of the 1920s, much like its senior high school counterpart, were quite similar to that of the 1910s. The grades 7 and 8 courses continued to be referred to as “civics” classes and emphasis was still placed on the function and structure of the three levels of government, and how those governments affect Canadian citizens. Also similar was the prominence of the responsibilities of citizens. The 1923 curriculum, for example, required that students be taught about “elections-the object of; how often to be held in Canada, and in Saskatchewan. Responsibilities of voters. [sic]”⁷²

Again, like the two decades that have been discussed to this point, the curricula of the 1920s presented strong duty type instruction to educators in Saskatchewan’s junior and senior high schools. As well as ensuring that students were aware of how the three levels of

⁷¹ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Regulations and Courses of Study for High Schools and Collegiate Institutes (Regina: Department of Education, 1920), 14-15.

⁷² Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Programme of Study for Public Schools (Regina: Department of Education, 1923), 26.

government operate, and their importance, educators were also responsible for making sure that students understood their responsibilities as citizens, including the duty to take part in elections.

The 1930s

The senior high school curricula of the 1930s remained, for the most part, unchanged from the 1920s. While the 1930s curricula did rename grades 9 through 12 “history,” the content of the course syllabi remained much like that of the preceding decade. The 1930s courses also encouraged educators to discuss “current events” in the classroom to inform students about the community. Educators were encouraged to spend 15 minutes, twice a week, in each of the grades, discussing current events of local, national, and international interest with the use of newspapers and periodicals.⁷³

Strong duty type changes are apparent in the junior high school curricula of the 1930s. Interestingly, the curricula of the 1930s referred to the grade 7 and 8 courses as “Citizenship and Character Education.” Topics that were to be discussed in these classes included: what makes a good citizen; respect for those in positions of authority; recognition of the function of public officials; obtaining authentic knowledge about elected representatives; and supporting those who are elected.⁷⁴ Also included in the 1930s junior high school curricula was a section specifically about elections. This section asked educators to ensure that students knew the methods of voting, who is allowed to vote, and the voter’s responsibilities including: “to register, to take a true interest in public affairs, and to be well informed on all matters on which one has the right to vote.”⁷⁵ The curricula also suggested that students be taught that voting is a civic trust and that they be informed about sectional and selfish interests versus community welfare and the

⁷³ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Regulations and Courses of Study for Secondary Schools (Regina: Department of Education, 1930), 19.

⁷⁴ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Public School Curriculum Grades 1-8 (Regina: Department of Education, 1931), 89.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 103.

common good. As well the students were to be taught that bribery or abuse of the franchise are “a disgrace and an insult.”⁷⁶

In addition to the strong duty type lessons that were suggested for the grade 7 and 8 classrooms, the curricula also recommended that schools set up a “School Civic League.” The League would direct projects and extracurricular activities and would be comprised of officers including a president, vice president, a secretary and a treasurer. The curricula suggested that elections be held by ballot and in accordance with municipal election procedures.⁷⁷

Throughout the late 1920s and the 1930s, James McCaig’s *Studies In Citizenship* was recommended as the text for the junior high school Citizenship and Character Education courses. In his text, McCaig warned that there is “often a danger in society from people insisting upon their rights and forgetting their duties.”⁷⁸ Like the curricula it supported, McCaig’s text described the importance of citizen participation as well as the rights of citizens. He listed “The Duty of Voting” as one of the duties of the citizen. Under that heading, McCaig argues:

it is our duty to take part in elections, so that, as far as we are concerned, the best men or women, and only the best men or women, in the community shall be elected to represent us...we say that we have the right to vote; then, let us exercise that right...we are responsible for the kind of government we have.⁷⁹

McCaig’s text was supportive of the type of civic education prescribed by the Department of Education in its attempt to convince students of the importance of electoral participation.

Again, like the decades that precede it, the senior high school curricula of the 1930s continued to suggest civic education as part of its history courses, though little change in the

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 106-7.

⁷⁸ James McCaig, *Studies In Citizenship*, (Toronto: The Educational Book Co., Limited, 1928), 282.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 290-1.

courses took place. On the other hand, the junior high school curricula became even more duty oriented than it had been in preceding decades. The junior high curricula of the 1930s recommended further education about elections and the duty to vote and suggested that students take part in school government as a way to promote further civic education outside the classroom.

The 1940s

The 1940s witnessed a thematic change to the junior and senior high school curricula. During this decade, the subject known as “Social Studies” was formally introduced and used in Saskatchewan’s schools. This new course was adopted in grades 1 through 8 in 1941, and grades 9 through 12 in 1946. The social studies were described as “a collective designation for curricular material of history, civics, politics, geography, and economics”⁸⁰ The Department of Education explained that:

The depression years brought home to educators, in Canada as elsewhere, the actualities of social change. They...reached the conclusion that, if democracy was to live, the schools would have to help in rescuing the adolescent population from the whirlpool of social and political insecurity.⁸¹

The department also emphasized that they were moving away from the “Whiggish tendencies” of British historians because British history “left much unsaid about the social and economic life of the common people.”⁸²

The education policy of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), first elected in Saskatchewan in 1944, called for the changes that took place in the 1940s curricula. In his book *Agrarian Socialism* Seymour Martin Lipset describes how the CCF wanted to move away

⁸⁰ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Programme of Studies for the High School (Regina: Department of Education, 1946), 60.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, 61.

from what it saw as the teaching of “capitalist social and economic values” and the glorification of war, toward curricula that recommended the teaching of principles of cooperation.⁸³ The curricula of the 1940s were reflective of the CCF party platform, which read:

The CCF proposes to revise the school curriculum so that the material of school studies may prepare students adequately for intelligent participation in the life of their community and not, as now, inadequately for a University to which the majority will never go.⁸⁴

This new social studies curriculum, prescribed under the CCF government, would focus more on the common people than what the party considered as capitalist instruction of the past.

The social studies courses continued to provide students with civic education in addition to history, politics, and other social sciences. The new curriculum recommended that educators teach students about the importance of democracy in comparison with other forms of governance, as well as in the context of the will of the majority and the rights of the minority. Educators were also asked to ensure “alertness to civic and social responsibilities and willingness to respond with appropriate action” in the students, in addition to a sense of the rights and responsibilities of citizens.⁸⁵ Like the School Civic League of the 1930s, the 1940s curricula also suggested that students take part in students’ unions or debating societies organized on the model of the provincial or federal government. Elections, constitutions, and procedures were also suggested as “practical training in civics.”⁸⁶

In the 1940s, the curricula for grades 9, 11 and 12 had strong duty oriented components, while the grade 10 syllabus paid more attention to history and geography. The grades 9 and 11 curricula recommend teaching about democracy, how it functions, the rights and responsibilities

⁸³ S.M. Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 167.

⁸⁴ Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, *Provincial Platform*, (Regina: 1944).

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 63-64.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 65.

of citizens in a democracy, and democracy in comparison with other forms of government.⁸⁷

The grade 12 curriculum proposed teaching about the meaning of Canadian citizenship, the duties and privileges of Canadian citizens, political organization, the parliamentary system, and political parties.⁸⁸ In fact, it is in the 1940s when we witness the first instances of recommending that students learn about their rights and privileges of citizenship in democracy as well as their duties and obligations.

The junior high school social studies curricula proved to remain duty oriented in the grade 7 and 8 courses. Again, the curricula recommended that students be taught about the responsibilities of a Canadian citizen. As well, students were to be informed of the importance of democracy and “why democracy is best.” In grade 7, students were to be made aware of the organization of the provincial and federal governments and the services that they provide. The grade 8 syllabus suggested that responsible government be discussed and that students learn the meaning of universal suffrage, and how men and women won the right to vote. The curriculum also recommended that “a good discussion might centre around the topic: It is every citizen’s *duty* to vote in federal, provincial, and municipal elections.”⁸⁹ Additionally, the School Civic League was again suggested as a way of “developing wholesome attitudes towards their duties as citizens in a democratic state.”⁹⁰

Two textbooks including *Citizenship: Our Democracy* published by the Department of Education, and George Brown’s *Canadian Democracy in Action* were recommended throughout the 1940s and early in the 1950s. The text created by the Department of Education, which was

⁸⁷ Ibid, 74.

⁸⁸ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Programme of Studies for the High School (Regina: Department of Education, 1948), 33.

⁸⁹ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Elementary School Curriculum (Regina: Department of Education, 1941 (reprinted in 1947)), 204.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 206.

suggested for use in the junior high school courses, included such lessons as the structure and function of different levels of government, and provincial and Canadian flags as well as a section on the importance of participation. Under the heading “The Duties of the Citizen,” the text suggests that educators “explain the relation of “rights” and “duties,” indicating that your right is a duty,” and stressed that one of those duties to be taught was “voting at elections.”⁹¹ Brown’s text, which was recommended for the senior high school courses, includes information about the functions of levels of government and democracy as well as instruction regarding “The Freedom and Responsibility of Choice.” Under that heading, Brown argues, “with freedom of choice goes responsibility. The most serious danger to democracy is the ignorant, ill-informed, and indifferent voter. Apathy in a democracy is like dry rot. If it goes far, it threatens the whole structure.”⁹² These two texts, used throughout the 1940s and in the early 1950s support the type of civic education that was recommended by the Department of Education in the junior and senior high school social studies courses.

Despite the change that took place in the curricula of the 1940s, the recommendations of the Department of Education proved to remain as slanted toward duty type civics as in previous decades. The junior and senior high school curricula continued to prescribe to educators the importance of democratic government and the responsibilities of Canadian citizens. In addition, the curricula, like that of the 1930s, continued to recommend a School Civic League or some other society in which students could learn in a practical way about the organization and function of government as well as learning about the importance of voting and election procedures.

⁹¹Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Citizenship: Our Democracy, (Regina: Department of Education, 1940), 42.

⁹²George W. Brown, Canadian Democracy in Action, (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1946), 43-4.

The 1950s

The social studies curricula of the 1950s were not much different from that of the preceding decade. As in the 1940s senior high school curricula, the grade 10 syllabus concentrated on geography and history, while the grade 9, 11 and 12 courses paid more attention to duty type learning. Again, the grade 9 curriculum recommended that educators explain the privileges and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship to students including: “what makes a Canadian citizen; what privileges can we expect as a citizen; responsibilities expected of us: knowledge of main issues and political parties and their platforms, obligation to vote, obligation to pay our share for the good of all.”⁹³ Also similar to the 1940s, the grade 11 curricula of the 1950s asked teachers to spend time discussing democracy and discussing how “government by consent is possible only when the people understand that to which they give their consent. Education is, therefore, the life-blood of democracy.”⁹⁴ The grade 12 curricula, much like that of the 1940s, prescribed such subjects as political organization, the parliamentary system, political parties, and the duties and privileges of Canadian citizenship.⁹⁵

The junior high school curricula found in the 1950s were similar to that of the 1940s. In the 1950s, educators were asked not to teach citizenship as a subject, but to ensure that students adopted it as “an attitude or spirit to be developed.”⁹⁶ The curricula also described how the social studies should help students understand and improve the democratic way of life. Both grade 7 and grade 8 offered units called “Developing Responsible Citizenship in Canada” in which one of the aims described was to have the student “be in a position to appreciate his

⁹³ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Programme of Studies for the High School (Regina: Department of Education, 1950), 100.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 111.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 120.

⁹⁶ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Elementary Curriculum Guide 1 for Languages, Social Studies, Music, Art (Regina, Department of Education, 1953), 56.

privileges, to understand that the freedoms he enjoys are only possible because of centuries of struggle, and that he has a heavy responsibility in maintaining and striving to improve his lot as a citizen.”⁹⁷ Those units also asked educators to ensure that students knew that they would “all soon have to help steer the ship.”⁹⁸ Among other things, including learning about the function and structure of provincial and federal governments, one of the suggested activities in the 1950s curricula was to conduct a study of the number of people in the community who vote at municipal, provincial and federal elections and suggest reasons “why it is desirable to have a large majority of citizens casting a vote. List ways in which all eligible voters might be encouraged to vote.”⁹⁹

C.R. MacLeod’s *Citizenship Training: A Handbook for Canadian Schools* was recommended as a textbook for junior high school social studies courses throughout the 1950s. In the text, MacLeod emphasised the importance of the school in the development of good citizens: “the school as a duly organized institution of society must accept its responsibility for citizenship training.”¹⁰⁰ He added that schools should teach students about civic duty and loyalty to democratic ideals while encouraging “participation in community affairs and the exercise of the franchise.”¹⁰¹ MacLeod’s text, like the curricula of the same time period, stresses the importance of civic and electoral participation in the high school social studies courses.

In the junior and senior high school curricula of the 1950s, there was evidence of the continuity of duty-minded courses in the social studies syllabi. Like the curricula of the decades that came before, the content of the 1950s curricula continued to place great emphasis on the

⁹⁷ Ibid, 111.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ C.R. MacLeod, *Citizenship Training: A Handbook for Canadian Schools*, (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1949), 19.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 80.

importance of citizen participation in the community and in elections. Both at the junior and senior high school levels, students were encouraged to be good citizens and were to be educated about the three levels of government in Canada.

The 1960s

Throughout the 1960s, much like the 1950s, the senior high school curricula recommended such things as ensuring students knew of the rights and responsibilities of a citizen as well as the functions and virtues of a democratic system of governance. Like the 1940s and previous decades, the senior high school curricula of the 1960s also suggested that students be encouraged to form councils or societies that followed parliamentary procedures in order for the students to receive “training in civics” before they left the education system.¹⁰²

However, there was one change in the 1960s senior high school curricula that is worth noting. According to the 1963 curriculum, Canadian History had previously only been taught at the grade 9 level because “many students discontinued school before receiving grades XI and XII and it was considered necessary that every student should have the opportunity to study the history of Canada before the end of his formal education.”¹⁰³ According to the curriculum, the Canadian History course was moved to the grade 12 level “to offer a more mature course than had been previously possible, and to prepare students more adequately for the responsibilities of citizenship.”¹⁰⁴ The new grade 12 course also focused on Canadian problems including: the constitution, dominion, provincial and local jurisdictions, Dominion-Provincial relations,

¹⁰² Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Program of Studies for the High School Social Studies (Regina: Department of Education, 1962), 7.

¹⁰³ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Program of Studies for the High School: Social Studies (Regina: Department of Education, 1963), 3.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Canadian citizenship, and foreign policy. The purpose of studying Canadian problems was to provide students with the tools necessary to study and find possible solutions for them.¹⁰⁵

The junior high school curricula of the 1960s were similar to the junior high school curricula of the previous decade. Again, the curricula of the 1960s recommended that educators in grades 7 and 8 teach students about the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizens, and about the democratic system of governance. Also similar to the decades that preceded it, students in the 1960s were to be encouraged to form societies or clubs, like the School Civic League, in order to learn proper procedure and the importance of participation in the community and in elections.¹⁰⁶

L.D. Baker and J.M. Brown's *Civics and Citizenship: A Sourcebook for Schools*, which was recommended for the junior high school social studies classes in the 1960s, was supportive of the civic education that was prescribed by the Department of Education at the time. In the text, Baker and Brown described "obligations in the community" as one of the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. Under that heading the authors explain:

The good citizen is interested in government at all levels. The good citizen assists in seeking out good candidates for public office and in promoting the fullest and fairest possible discussion of public issues and problems. The good citizen exercises his franchise. He does so intelligently-not on the basis of whim or prejudice. Before he votes, he gives careful thought and study to the issues involved and to the ability and integrity of the candidates for office. At the poll he marks his ballot as a well-informed citizen.¹⁰⁷

The text by Baker and Brown was indicative of the level of civic education that was being prescribed by the province in the 1950s.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 15.

¹⁰⁶ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Elementary School Curriculum Guide for Division III (Regina: Department of Education, 1965), 179.

¹⁰⁷ L.D. Baker and J.M. Brown, Civics and Citizenship: A Sourcebook for Schools, (Regina : School Aids and Text Book Pub. Co., 1960), 100-1.

Other than moving the Canadian History course from the grade 9 level to a more mature grade 12 level course, the junior and high school curricula of the 1960s remained largely unchanged from what it had been in the 1950s. Strong civic-minded syllabi remained in place during the 1960s as it did in the decades that came before them and educators were again encouraged to remind students of their duties as Canadian citizens as well as informing them of the function and importance of Canada's democratic system of governance.

The 1970s

In the 1970s, wholesale change was adopted for the junior and senior high school curricula. The Department of Education analyzed past curricula and decided that there needed to be a change in the teaching of values and attitudes. The analysis described how teachers in the past had used two different approaches in the treatment of values and attitudes. The first was a neutral approach in which schools attempted to avoid indoctrination. The second was "value inculcation where schools attempted to indoctrinate or inculcate students with the 'right' values such as 'good citizenship.'"¹⁰⁸ The department reported that evidence indicated that neither of the two approaches had reached their desired ends. Rather, the department suggested, a different method of dealing with values had emerged: "teachers have left it up to students to identify and clarify their own values. To load an issue with only one set of sources is to inculcate not educate. Given all points of view the student is left to make the decision himself as to what is 'right' or 'wrong'."¹⁰⁹ The new social studies program encouraged the questioning of

¹⁰⁸ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Tentative Outline for Piloting of the New Social Studies Program (Regina: Department of Education, 1972), 55.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

‘conventional truths’, searching for evidence, keeping informed of current problems, and taking informed action about the problems.¹¹⁰

Consequently, the curricula that followed the social studies reform of the early 1970s was now oriented toward a more culture type civics lesson than it had been in previous decades. While the curricula still recommended that students learn about political structures and types of government, new items including culture, decision-making, leadership, and individuals and their relationships with society appeared in the curricula. The levels and functions of government, democracy, and political parties were to be taught to students, but the recommendations of the curricula were of a structural fashion and there was no mention of civics, citizenship, or the responsibilities of a Canadian citizen.¹¹¹ Rather, the new social studies program moved away from the promotion of duty and obligation, and encouraged different civic virtues such as thinking for oneself and questioning convention. As well, the grade 12 social studies program, “Canadian Studies,” discussed a wide variety of organizational and functional aspects of the Canadian government including such things as the role of the government and the civil service, the political spectrum and political parties, pressure groups and public opinion, and the role of the media. Again, the Canadian Studies syllabus made absolutely no mention of citizenship or the duties of a citizen in a democratic society.¹¹²

The textbooks of the 1970s followed the change made to the curricula in the 1970s. Allan S. Evans and Lawrence A. Diachun’s *Canada: Towards Tomorrow*, which was recommended for the senior high school social studies courses, provides a descriptive account of

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Social Studies 10, Man: A Study of the Individual (Regina: Department of Education, 1973), 15. Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Social Studies 20: Cross-Cultural Comparison (Regina: Department of Education, 1976), 15-16.

¹¹² Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, A Curriculum Guide for Division IV. Social Studies 30: Canadian Studies (Regina: Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, 1978), 24-25.

the levels of government and their functions. The text also taught *about* elections, but did not stress the importance of participation: “the right to vote is one of the basic privileges of citizenship. Citizens can also voice their opinions about making laws and how public funds should be spent.”¹¹³ This text was supportive of the type of change, one that shifted away from instilling students with values, that was suggested by the province in the 1970s.

Following the suggestion that educators no longer inculcate students with ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ values, and that they give students the tools to discover their values on their own, there was a shift away from duty type civic education in the junior and senior high school social studies curricula. Like in the senior high school curricula, the junior high school curricula concentrated not on civic education or citizen responsibilities but on history and geography, any mention of Canadian government or politics was strictly descriptive.¹¹⁴ This is the first time in the history of the province that we witnessed an unambiguous shift, one that was carried out and explained by the Department of Education, away from duty oriented civic education in the junior and senior high schools.

The 1980s

Following the changes to the social studies curricula that took place in the 1970s, the 1980s proved for the most part to be a continuation of a less duty oriented focus in Saskatchewan’s junior and senior high schools. A more subtle change than that of the 1970s was present in the curricula of the 1980s. In addition to a shift away from duty type civic education, the curricula of the 1980s moved toward a more international or global focus. The curricula of

¹¹³ Allan S. Evans and Lawrence A. Diachun, Canada: Towards Tomorrow, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1976), 282.

¹¹⁴ Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, Elementary School Curriculum Guide for the Social Studies (Regina: Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, 1979), 18-26.

the 1980s suggested that educators teach students about different cultures, the interdependence of nations, and Canada's political and geographical position in the world.¹¹⁵

Like the senior high school curricula of the 1970s, the senior high school curricula of the 1980s recommended instruction on political structures, types of governance, culture, decision-making, leadership, and the relationships among individuals. Again, the curricula treated the subjects of government, democracy, or the political process in a functional and structural manner and there was no mention of civics, citizenship, or the responsibilities of a citizen.¹¹⁶

The junior high school curricula of the 1980s were also similar to that of the 1970s. But unlike the 1970s, there was subtle mention of citizenship. In the 1980s, the grade 8 curricula recommended units that taught students about culture, the environment, position or status in society, national identity, and the interrelationship of individuals, groups and nations. Also in the grade 8 syllabus it was suggested that "students develop an awareness of what citizenship means," though there was no mention of the duties or responsibilities of citizenship or the importance of elections in democratic society.¹¹⁷ Like the grade 8 curriculum, mention or instruction about civics or the responsibilities of the citizen in the grade 7 syllabus was of a passive nature. Rather, the grade 7 course suggested discussion about Canada's place in the international community, natural resources, power and authority, world governance, technical and social change, interaction and interdependence of individuals, groups, and nations, and

¹¹⁵ Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, Social Studies: A Curriculum Guide for Grade 8: The Individual in Society (Regina: Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, 1987), 8-30.

¹¹⁶ Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, Social Studies: A Curriculum Guide for the High Schools (Regina: Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, 1986), 6-24.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

suggested that students be taught to “value the democratic process and appreciate and understand the political advantages of living in Canada.”¹¹⁸

Angus Scully’s *Canada Today* was the textbook recommended for the junior high school courses of the 1980s. Like the curricula at the time, Scully’s text focused on the structure and function of government and Canadian institutions. The text also included a section on elections, which treated the subject in a mechanical manner. The section on elections described that elections are a way of influencing the government and even touched on the fact that some Canadians do not vote. The text did not describe this as a problem. Rather, it simply explained why some people chose not to vote and did not suggest that those people should exercise their franchise. Scully explained: “Of course, in our democracy citizens are free to vote or not to vote. Some citizens protest against the government by refusing to vote. Others think their vote would not make a difference even if they did vote.”¹¹⁹ The changes emphasised in the curricula of the 1970s were evident in the texts recommended by the province in their teaching of issues like elections, which offered a descriptive and non-valued focus on the subject.

Though subtle change took place in the 1980s toward a more international or global focus, the curricula changed little from that of the 1970s, which had turned away from instilling values like that of good citizenship and toward giving students the tools to discover their own values. The 1980s curricula also suggested globally focused subjects like culture, power, technological change, and international governance rather than the lessons in the duties and responsibilities of a citizen that were recommended prior to the 1970s. While there were some recommendations about the benefits of living in a democratic nation and developing awareness

¹¹⁸ Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, Social Studies: A Curriculum Guide for Grade 7: Canada and the World Community (Regina: Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, 1988), 45.

¹¹⁹ Angus L. Scully, Canada Today 2nd Ed., (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1988), 32.

about citizenship, the 1980s curricula was of a much less active civic-minded nature than that of earlier curricula.

The 1990s

The curricula of the 1990s is the most recent to be prescribed by the Government of Saskatchewan for the province's junior and senior high schools. Like the 1980s, the curricula of the 1990s are focused on subjects of international or global importance. Saskatchewan Learning describes the aim of the kindergarten to grade 12 social studies education as:

...a study of people and their relationships with their social and physical environments...social studies in the school setting has a unique responsibility for providing students with the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills, and values to function effectively within their local and national society which is enmeshed in an interdependent world.¹²⁰

Like the curricula of the two decades that preceded it, the 1990s curricula also lack any spirited focus on civics or the responsibilities of citizenship.

The 1990s social studies curricula for the senior high school include subjects such as history, cultural change, education about First Nations peoples, international political and economic organizations, decision making, human rights, population, and the environment. The curricula for grades 9, 10 and 11 make no mention of citizenship and little mention of Canadian government and politics. The grade 12 social studies syllabus, "Canadian Studies," does suggest, "students need to think about what it means to be a citizen in a democratic society and also what it means when citizenship is conferred upon an immigrant by a democratic society."¹²¹

The grade 12 course also recommends teaching about the structure and function of Canadian

¹²⁰ Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, Social Studies: A Curriculum Guide for Grade 9: The Roots of Society (Regina: Saskatchewan Education, Learning and Employment, 1991), 3.

¹²¹ Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Learning, Social Studies Curriculum for Division IV <<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/midlsoc/gr7/intro4.html>> (Retrieved 15 April 2004).

government, but does not discuss the duties of citizenship or the importance of elections in democratic society.

Like the junior high school curricula of the 1980s, the recommendations of the 1990s are largely focused on international and global matters but do suggest some instruction on citizenship. The grade 7 course calls for education about Canada's position in the world, natural resources, power and change. At the same time, educators are instructed that students should "learn to be effective citizens, locally and globally, when they see themselves as active participants in an interdependent world."¹²² Some mention of citizenship is also present in the grade 8 course outline. While the course focuses on culture, identity and interdependence, the syllabus also suggests that students "know the nature of citizenship in democratic societies, especially Canada, the process by which people become Canadian citizens, and the role citizens serve in Canadian democracy."¹²³

The texts recommended for the junior high school social studies courses of the 1990s are reflective of the post-1970 move away from teaching right and wrong values to students. Like Scully's text used in the 1980s, the texts used in the 1990s give instruction *about* elections as well as other Canadian institutions and issues, rather than any encouragement to participate in elections. The 1990s curricula recommend *Canadian Citizenship in Action* by Derald Fretts *et al* and *You and Your World* by Margaret Leier for the junior high school courses. These texts offer students descriptive lessons about the structure and function of government and of Canadian elections, but like the texts of the 1970s and 1980s, offer no encouragement to take part in those elections. Fretts *et al* discuss why some people do not vote, but do not explain the significance

¹²² Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Learning, [Social Studies Curriculum for Division III](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/midsoc/gr7/intro1.html#P71_949) <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/midsoc/gr7/intro1.html#P71_949> (Retrieved 14 April 2004).

¹²³ Ibid.

of low turnout: “Voters have to make more of an effort to become informed about local issues and candidates, and those who don’t make the effort often don’t vote. Some people find it hard to vote. Some people do not bother to vote because they feel their vote will not count much in the overall picture.”¹²⁴ Leier’s text also describes how elections take place and explains such issues as representative democracy, universal suffrage, secret ballots, and political parties, but like the Fretts text, does not encourage students to participate as wholeheartedly as the texts that were present earlier in the century.¹²⁵

The junior and senior high school curricula of the 1990s are reflective of the move away from the indoctrination of values that was proposed and adopted in the 1970s, though there also seems to be a shift back to making students aware of Canadian citizenship, if not at all levels, at least at the junior high school level. The senior high level on the other hand seems to remain far removed from the civic-minded education of decades past.

Themes In The Curricula (1907-1999)

The marked decrease in voter turnout between Saskatchewan’s 1991 and 1995 provincial elections and Saskatchewan’s participation levels in the 1993, 1997 and 2000 federal elections warrant an investigation into what factors might be responsible for contributing to such a large percentage of the eligible voting population staying away from the polls. This survey of Saskatchewan’s junior and senior high school curricula has outlined changes in the course outlines that might help to explain the recent decline, especially among the youth, in voting in Saskatchewan.

¹²⁴ Derald Fretts, Pamela S. Perry-Globa, Martin Spiegelman, and Reginald C. Stuart, Canadian Citizenship in Action, (Regina: Weigl Educational Publishers Limited, 1992), 76.

¹²⁵ Margaret Leier, You and Your World, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, Inc., 1987), 310-12.

A number of patterns, or themes, in the junior and senior high school curricula are evident. Two of those themes are apparent in a glance at the curricula. First, there is a definite trend in the decades up to the 1970s that placed great importance on civics, citizenship, and the duty or obligation of each citizen to vote. The second theme is that after the 1970s until the present students continued to be taught about Canadian government and the political process, but any duty oriented lessons or education about citizenship became much more passive than the civics lessons prior to the 1970s. Other themes are more subtle, but are interesting to note. One of those is a change that is most apparent in the 1940s and 1950s, or post-Second World War, in which the curricula changes from stressing the importance of British history and promotion of the good of the community. The curricula offered prior to the 1940s placed emphasis on the importance of building democratic values in the country, and on the duties of the Canadian citizen. The curricula of the 1940s and 1950s, and the curricula that followed, placed more importance on government by consent, why democracy is the best form of governance, and the rights and privileges of Canadian citizens. This change is reflective of society's attitudes at the time. Saskatchewan had passed its own Bill of Rights in 1947, and the Diefenbaker government would formalize a federal Bill of Rights in 1960, both of which would be reinforced by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. Citizens were being made more aware of their rights, freedoms and privileges and perhaps less so of their responsibilities and duties. Certainly the shift away from inculcating students with right or wrong values and toward allowing them to decide their values on their own may have been a reaction to this changed mindset of Saskatchewan and Canadian citizens.

Appendix two *Types and Instances of Civic Education Mentioned in Junior and Senior High School Curricula (1907-1999)*(page 107-108) provides a comprehensive list of the

curricula and the occurrences and types of civic education mentioned in each of the curriculum used in this thesis. In addition to the description of Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school given above, the chart provides a breakdown of the number of times each type of civic education is mentioned in each of the curricula in the hopes of finding a pattern in which the curricula have changed throughout history. The chart provided lists three types of civic education that can be found in the curricula; *duty*, *institutions*, and *culture*. Instances of "duty" include any mention of teaching students about the duty or obligation of a citizen, telling students that they should vote or participate in elections, encouraging students to get involved in the community or in school government, instructing students about how to run public meetings or organizations, and encouraging students and educators to discuss current events.

"Institutions" include instruction about Canadian government and politics, the structure and function of Canadian governmental or political institutions, and the mechanics of elections. Finally, "culture" includes placing importance on democracy versus other types of government, and on the rights and privileges of citizenship. If we are to draw any connection between the type of civic education being taught and voter turnout, then there must be a clear pattern, or change in the pattern, of what is being prescribed to educators.

The patterns found in the chart are, of course, similar to those found in the description of themes in the curricula discussed above. The numbers in the chart show that there has been a shift in the type of civic education that has been prescribed in the province's junior and senior high school curricula. Mention of "duty" in the curricula were somewhat steady until 1972 when it decreased sharply. After 1972 there are isolated instances of encouraging students to take part in elections, though a majority of the curricula prescribe the discussion of current events as their only mention of "duty." With regard to "institutions" the data show that recommendations of

this type of civic education have remained particularly steady throughout Saskatchewan's history. Under the heading of "culture" the data show a pattern that could be said to mirror the pattern found under the "duty" heading. As the duty-type of civic education decreased (in the mid-1970s), the culture-type of civic education increased. This means that while the Department of Education was still recommending that students learn *about* Canadian government and politics ("institutions"), there was a change in the importance that was being placed on living as a democratic citizen. Prior to the mid-1970s, as mentioned above, the duties and obligations of democratic society played a greater role in the way the civics program was recommended. Post-1972, culture, or the rights and privileges one could expect from a democratic society, became more widely recommended in the curricula than duty. Another important aspect of the chart that should be mentioned is that increase in the number of pages of each curriculum. The sizes of the curricula increased steadily throughout Saskatchewan's history, though they provide no more mention of civics than do the earlier curricula. As the number of pages increased, so did the description of what was expected of educators, though the content of the larger curricula were not significantly different from the smaller.

There are a number of factors that might explain why voter turnout has declined in Saskatchewan and throughout the country, and civic education in the junior and senior high schools may be partly to blame. If we consider that the indoctrination of such values as good citizenship was discouraged in the 1970s (a pattern that remains evident in the current curriculum) we can infer that the lack of duty oriented civic education over the past 30 years in Saskatchewan could be considered one of the factors contributing to declining voter participation. Those who attended junior and senior high school in the 1970s were not taught about the duty to vote in elections. What is not found in this study is an immediate effect of the

change in education curricula. Decreasing voter participation may be partly blamed on the social studies curricula that have taken a passive approach to educating about citizenship in Canada for the past three decades, though a more immediate effect in the pattern of voter turnout may provide more solid evidence of this.

Elections Machinery in Saskatchewan and Canada

A study of the way in which Canada's young and future voters are being educated is not complete without a brief survey of the programs that Elections Canada has aimed at youth in an attempt to increase their electoral participation. The programs created by Elections Canada will be reviewed in order to find out the type of civic education that Canada's youth might find outside of the classroom. A brief introduction to Elections Saskatchewan is also important to discover how that organization operates within the province and what its plans are for targeting young voters.

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (Elections Canada) is a body, independent from partisan influence, established by Parliament in 1920 to conduct federal elections in Canada. Its responsibilities include such things as enforcing electoral legislation, registering political parties, monitoring election spending by candidates, political parties and third parties, ensuring all electors have access to the electoral system, informing citizens about the electoral system, and reporting to Parliament on the administration of elections and referendums.¹²⁶ The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), who is appointed by a resolution of the House of Commons, reports directly to Parliament and is completely independent from the government of the day and all political parties.

¹²⁶ Elections Canada, <<http://www.elections.ca>> (Retrieved 20 February 2004).

Canada's current CEO, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, was appointed in 1990. Kingsley has taken on the task of encouraging Canada's youth to participate in elections through various programs created and sponsored by Elections Canada. Prior to Kingsley's appointment as CEO, Elections Canada paid little attention to encouraging the young to vote. A simple explanation for this can be seen in the timeframe of the decrease in electoral turnout in Canada's federal and provincial elections. As was described in chapter two, turnout decreased between 1991 and 1995 in Saskatchewan, and between 1988 and 2000 in federal elections, both time frames that coincide closely with Kingsley's appointment (though Kingsley is in no way to blame for the decline in turnout.) At the National Forum on Youth Voting held in Calgary in October 2003, Kingsley expressed his concern about the lack of youth interest in elections:

We must be clear about one thing: turnout is declining in Canada not because experienced voters are dropping out of the system, but because potential new voters are not opting into the system. Indeed...the recent decline in voter turnout, if left unaddressed, will likely continue.¹²⁷

Under Kingsley's reign as Chief Electoral Officer, Elections Canada has created and sponsored a plethora of programs aimed at convincing Canada's youth of the importance of participating in elections. Those programs range from educational packages that are offered free of charge from Elections Canada to educators across the country to be used in the classroom to programs aimed at developing youth involvement outside the classroom. Elections Canada has also formed partnerships with organizations to further encourage youth electoral participation.

A large amount of civic education material is available to educators across the country. That material includes games and activities for children in kindergarten to grade four which allow students to pick, or vote for, mascots, and more advanced resources for grades 5 to 12 that

¹²⁷ Elections Canada, "National Forum on Youth Voting, Calgary – October 30–31, 2003, Chief Electoral Officer's Speaking Notes," <<http://www.election.ca>> (Retrieved 28 April 2004).

allow students to simulate elections in the classroom, hold elections for student councils, and use election materials like ballots. Elections Canada also offers information to educators about the history of elections in Canada.¹²⁸

Elections Canada has developed a number of programs that are implemented outside of the classroom and in the media in an effort to convince youth of the importance of electoral participation. These efforts include congratulatory greetings that are being sent out, by Kingsley, to those turning 18 to remind them that voting is a fundamental right. The greeting also provides an opportunity for the recipient to register to vote. Another effort is an advertising campaign that will convey the message that “citizens who stand back from the electoral process miss an important opportunity to have their say.”¹²⁹ This internet and media based program will be implemented prior to and during the federal election campaign of 2004. Elections Canada also includes a section on its website that provides information about voting as a right, the importance of helping to choose a representative, and how youth can become involved with political parties and even become candidates themselves.

Aside from classroom and educational materials, Elections Canada also attempts to reach out to youth through the use of games and pop culture. On its website, Elections Canada includes a *Games Corner* in which youth can test their knowledge through trivia and word puzzles that also serve to educate about elections and the importance of voter participation. The site also provides links to programs such as *Rush the Vote*, an organization that seeks to increase young voter turnout and political awareness through music and education, and *Student Vote*

¹²⁸ Elections Canada, “Young Voters: Learning Resources,” <http://www.elections.ca/content_youth.asp?section=yth&dir=res&document=index&lang=e&textonly=false> (Retrieved 28 April 2004).

¹²⁹ Elections Canada, “National Forum on Youth Voting, Calgary – October 30–31, 2003, Chief Electoral Officer’s Speaking Notes,” <<http://www.election.ca>> (Retrieved 28 April 2004).

2004, which is a non-profit educational initiative working to inspire the habit of electoral and community participation among students across Canada.

Elections Canada has also formed partnerships with organizations such as the *Dominion Institute*, *Cable in the Classroom*, and the *Historica Foundation* in their effort to encourage further youth electoral participation. Elections Canada and Cable in the Classroom have collaborated to challenge “young people to create 30-second public service announcements (PSAs) to tell their peers about the importance of voting and the democratic process. A contest is taking place in each province and territory, and the winning PSAs will be broadcast by the more than 30 participating cable stations over a period of one year.”¹³⁰ Together with the *Historica Foundation*, Elections Canada has created *YouthLinks*, which is an education module about citizenship and voting. *YouthLinks* is an online program available to high school students all across the country.¹³¹ A series of town hall discussions were planned by Elections Canada, the *Dominion Institute*, and a number of other sponsors including media organizations for the 2004 federal election. The *Youth Vote 2004 Town Halls* were held in high schools throughout the country and were aimed at new and future voters. The town halls provided students with the opportunity to quiz local candidates, journalists and policy experts and to express their own interests about the issues facing Canadians.¹³²

Elections Canada, and Chief Electoral Officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley have proved to be quite pro-active not only in fulfilling the mandate of Elections Canada, but also in attempting to mobilize the youth vote in Canada. Great efforts have also been made in conjunction with organizations like the *Historica Foundation*, *Cable in the Classroom* and the *Dominion Institute*

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² The *Dominion Institute*, <<http://www.dominion.ca/English/educational.html>> (Retrieved 29 April 2004).

to ensure that youth are reached with the help of games, events and popular culture. It is of utmost importance that the youth in Canada become interested in the political process. Time will tell if the efforts of Elections Canada are fruitful.

Like Elections Canada, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan (Elections Saskatchewan) is independent from the province's Legislative Assembly. The mandate of Elections Saskatchewan is to ensure election readiness in the province. When asked about Elections Saskatchewan programs targeted at young voters in the province, Chief Electoral Officer Jan Baker explained that while youth programs are important and will be looked at in the near future by her office, there are many more pressing concerns that Elections Saskatchewan must address first.

Baker, who was appointed to her position in 1998, replied that because her office has had to oversee two provincial general elections and thirteen by-elections since her appointment, Elections Saskatchewan has not yet had the time to implement youth programs, though she agrees that those programs are important. She explained that the mandate of Elections Saskatchewan is election readiness and other programs have to follow that. She described how Elections Saskatchewan is not yet electronic (their website was only recently developed in time for the November 2003 provincial election) and must become so before it can be expected to reach out to youth. Baker pointed out that youth programs will be looked at by Elections Saskatchewan in the near future and mentioned the importance of supplying teaching aids to educators in Saskatchewan's schools. When asked about notifying new voters or those who are about to turn 18, Baker replied that it is difficult to compare Elections Saskatchewan with the practice of sending out congratulatory greetings by Elections Canada because Saskatchewan still uses door-to-door enumeration while Elections Canada uses the National Register of Electors to

keep track of voters. While her office has not yet implemented any programs aimed at young voters in Saskatchewan, Baker did agree that youth programs are important and assured that her office would be studying youth programs in the near future.¹³³

Conclusion

In Saskatchewan, like in the rest of the country, electoral participation has decreased dramatically. Among non-voters, the youth have been the least likely to vote. Whatever the reason for the youths' absence from the polls, whether it is apathy or cynicism, it is of utmost importance that we find a way to attract them to the polls. The reasons we must encourage the youth to vote lies in the evidence presented in chapter two, namely out of fear that one (or all) of three things might happen, or are happening. Those three include the argument that the legitimacy of any government elected by a small percentage of the eligible voters is questionable, the possibility that equality of influence may diminish for those social groups that tend to vote less often than others, and the claim that declining voter turnout may be one sign that Canadians are becoming less connected with community as a whole.

Pammett and LeDuc, in their survey of non-voters in the 2000 federal election found that a majority of those questioned believed that there should be greater education in the schools about the importance of voting and community involvement. Henry Milner argues that declining rates of newspaper readership and an increase in television consumption have contributed to a population with lower levels of civic literacy, or the ability to make sense of their political world. He suggests further civic education of students between the ages of 16 and 18 as one of the ways of encouraging higher voter turnout.

¹³³ Nicole Pogue, Personal conversation with Jan Baker, Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan, May 12, 2004.

With these findings and suggestions in mind, this chapter has presented a survey of junior and senior high school education curricula, beginning with examples from 1907 and ending with Saskatchewan's most recent curricula, dated 1999. A number of interesting observations were made of the education curricula, including how the curricula created by the Saskatchewan Department often reflected the mood of society in a similar time frame. Worth noting once again is the major curriculum change that took place in the 1970s. It suggested to educators that they stop inculcating students with values such as 'good citizenship' and give them the tools necessary to decide those values for themselves. That suggestion continues to be evident in the most current curricula prescribed by Saskatchewan Learning.

A brief survey of the programs created and sponsored by Elections Canada and the lack of youth outreach by Elections Saskatchewan were also needed as a way of reviewing how youth are being reached outside the classroom. These programs are an important tool for reaching young people in an attempt to peak their interest in the political process, but they certainly cannot and do not replace the impact that could be made in the classroom. Arguably, unless educators introduce Elections Canada materials and programs in the classroom, there is no all-encompassing way to reach Canada's youth. Elections Canada has put forth great effort to reach young voters, especially with the use of the internet, but it is difficult for that information to reach all young people. In fact, young people have to visit the Elections Canada website themselves to receive a majority of the information targeted at them, and as we know, most young people simply are not interested in that type of activity. The materials and programs created by Elections Canada provide an excellent supplement but cannot replace civic education in our schools.

There are many factors that have been used to explain why voter participation, especially among the youth, has decreased. The data collected through a survey of Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school curricula point to the fact that the civic education that was being offered in classrooms prior to the 1970s recommended that students be taught that voting and participation are among the duties and responsibilities of the Canadian citizen. The recommendations made in the 1970s and the decades following have turned away from suggestions of that kind. Rather, today's youth have not been introduced to the importance of voting and political participation in the classroom.

If the conclusions reached through the survey of the curricula before us are representative of the changes in the province's education of junior and senior high school students, then it is quite plausible to conclude that a contribution to the drop in voter turnout over the past decade or so may have been the change in the education curricula, though a more immediate effect might make this line of reasoning more decisive. Though there are many factors that might contribute to decreasing voter turnout, and no way of proving that a single one, including civic education, is more important than the others, it is safe to assume, after surveying Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school curricula, that the pattern of change in what is being prescribed vis-à-vis civic education and that the way civics are taught, may make a difference in the way students view their role as democratic citizens, and therefore how they feel about voting in provincial and federal elections.

A re-examination of Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school curricula is required and a return to the duty oriented civic education of the pre-1970 era is what is needed to ensure that our youngest voters take more of an interest in the municipal,

provincial, and federal governments that touch every part of their lives. Saskatchewan Learning should be responsible not only for making sure that every student knows about their right to vote and to participate in the political process, it should also guarantee that every student knows the importance of voting and the need to vote in order to make the democratic process function as well as possible. A population well versed in the structure and function of all orders of government as well as the importance of electoral participation is dependent on young people that are taught those very things.

Chapter Four: Social Capital and Voter Participation

Following an introduction to the civic education content of Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school curricula, it is worth reviewing the levels of community participation in the province and across the country in order to judge further how willing citizens are to take part. This chapter will introduce and discuss the social capital theory introduced by Robert D. Putnam and the community and political participation study of Saskatchewan of S.M. Lipset. The chapter will also provide a brief observation of selected community and volunteer organizations in Saskatchewan and throughout the country in an attempt to find out if Putnam's theory might help to explain declining voter participation levels.

Putnam's theory regarding the effect of community participation on voter turnout will be discussed and specific Saskatchewan and Canadian examples will be given in order to discover if his conclusions can be supported that participation in the community may in fact be one of the factors explaining low voter turnout. This chapter will also observe membership in organizations such as the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the YWCA, and the Kinsmen Club of Canada, as well as levels of regular attendance at church and degrees of volunteerism in Canada. The conclusions reached will provide further evidence that potential voters are not receiving enough civic education in the school system and in their own communities.

Understanding Social Capital

In his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* Putnam defines social capital as "connections among individuals - social networks and

the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.”¹³⁴ Putnam explains that social capital has an individual as well as a collective aspect. In other words, according to Putnam, individuals who are trusted and connected in the community are generally happier, healthier and are offered more opportunity than those who are less well connected or trusted. Under what he refers to as the collective aspect of social capital, Putnam writes that social capital contributes to easier communication and cooperation within society.¹³⁵ He argues that

social capital allows citizens to resolve collective problems more easily. People who have active and trusting connections to others...develop or maintain character traits that are good for the rest of society. Joiners become more tolerant, less cynical, and more empathetic to the misfortunes of others.¹³⁶

How then does social capital translate into voter participation? Putnam explains that the health of democracy “requires citizens to perform our *public* duties...and the health of our *public* institutions depends, at least in part, on widespread participation in *private* voluntary groups-those networks of civic engagement that embody social capital.”¹³⁷ The idea that a healthy and effective government depends on discussion and debate among citizens is at the core of Putnam’s argument. He explains that in these *private* voluntary groups individuals learn to and are able to discuss concerns and desires about government and debate public issues. Through this process, citizens are forced to examine their own thoughts and concerns and are then able to share and debate their ideas with others. The next step then is participation in institutions like debates, elections, and public life. Putnam also points out that further civic education may result

¹³⁴ Robert D. Putnam, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 19.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 287-8.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 288.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 336.

in stronger social capital. He argues that when service programs are included in the education curriculum, the civic ‘muscles’ of citizens are strengthened.

Increased social capital also creates an opportunity for better public policy. Richer social capital means that citizens are more willing (and perhaps more able) to insist on action from some order of government. Greater citizen participation and cooperation leads to a government that is more accurately able to gauge societal concerns and better equipped to rectify problems. If government is able to understand exactly what it is that the citizenry desires, which is the result of a more active citizenry, then that government has enhanced understanding with which to produce better policy.¹³⁸ Putnam argues that citizen engagement is key to having a healthy democracy, which includes representatives responsive to the desires of the citizens. Citizenship, he urges, “is not a spectator sport.”¹³⁹

The pages that follow will discuss specific examples of community and volunteer organizations in Saskatchewan and across Canada, church attendance, and volunteerism in Canada in an effort to show evidence that Putnam’s theory could be used to help explain decreasing voter turnout. Membership levels in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the YWCA, and the Kinsmen Club of Canada will be observed as part of this study. As well, church attendance levels and instances of volunteerism in Canada will be presented as part of the study of social capital.

Community and Volunteer Organizations and Social Capital

Putnam’s social capital theory argues that declining membership and participation in community and volunteer organizations mean looser webs of trust and cooperation in

¹³⁸ Ibid, 348-9.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 341.

the community and therefore decreased political participation. Membership levels in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the YWCA, and the Kinsmen Club of Canada will be discussed here in an attempt to discover whether or not Putnam's theory can help to explain declining voter participation in Saskatchewan and across the country.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was created in 1924 when farmers who were frustrated in their attempts to receive a fair price for wheat began to look to various marketing systems. In 1923, Alexander James McPhail of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association (SGGA) encouraged the organization to endorse the creation of a wheat pool. That year the SGGA met with the United Farmers of Alberta and the United Farmers of Manitoba and agreed to set up provincial pools with a common central agency that would handle sales. The Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers Ltd., now known as the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, began operation in 1924 and remains a pillar of Saskatchewan's rural livelihood. In its first year of operation the Wheat Pool attracted 51,507 members and membership grew rapidly following that. Between 1924 and the mid-1970s membership in the Wheat Pool more than doubled, meaning a stronger voice for Saskatchewan's farmers on the national and international stage. Growth in memberships was so strong, in fact, that the 1949 Annual Report reported that "it might be of interest to delegates to note that the total number of applications received in the past ten years is greater than the total number of contracts signed at the time the Pool commenced operations in 1924."¹⁴⁰ As seen in the table that follows, membership numbers began to decline in the mid-1970s and have continued to do so. Decreased

¹⁴⁰ Saskatchewan Cooperative Producers Limited, "Annual Report 1949," (Regina: Saskatchewan Cooperative Producers Limited, 1949), 43.

membership in the Wheat Pool means that farmers may no longer be allotted as strong a voice in Ottawa and throughout the world as they once were.

Table 6: Membership in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Members</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Members</u>
1925	51,507	1965	141,227*
1930	82,893	1970	100,921
1935	104,942	1975	100,322
1940	110,715	1980	90,125
1945	129,412	1985	89,449
1950	138,167	1990	88,362
1955	141,227*	1995	81,153
1960	141,227*	2000	71,300

Source: 1925-1954: Saskatchewan Cooperative Producers Ltd. Annual Reports, 1955-2000: Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Annual Reports.

*Between 1955 and 1965, when membership rates reached 141,227, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Annual Reports explained that at that time the organization was not accepting any new membership applications.

One must consider why membership in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has declined at such a marked rate, in fact, not since the 1930s has membership been as low as it is presently. We must take into account the fact that Saskatchewan's farm population has decreased rapidly and continuously since the creation of the Wheat Pool in the 1920s. The first census taken after the creation of the Wheat Pool, in 1931, shows that 564,012 or 61 per cent of Saskatchewan's 921,785 residents were known as farm population. The percentage of the population who were known as farm population remained at or above half of the province's population until the census of 1961, which reported the beginnings of rapid decline in farm population in Saskatchewan. In that 1961 census 305,740 or 33 per cent of Saskatchewan's 925,181 residents were listed as farm population. That trend continued in the 1971 census, which showed Saskatchewan's farm population as 233,792 or 25 per cent of its 926,240 residents. In

the 1981 census, Saskatchewan's farm population represented 187,163 or 19 per cent of its 968,313 citizens. The 1991 census reported that 159,725 or 16 per cent of Saskatchewan's 988,928 residents were farm population. The 2001 census continued to show a decline in farm population as 145,560 or 15 per cent of Saskatchewan residents were placed in that category.¹⁴¹ Because the Wheat Pool acts as a lobby group to sway government to their favour regarding agricultural policy, its strength is obviously in its numbers. Certainly we must consider that membership has declined because the number of farmers in the province has declined. But, we must also consider what per cent of the provincial population are and have been members of the Wheat Pool. In its first year, the Wheat Pool's membership included 9 per cent of the provincial population. That figure rose to a high of 17 per cent of the population in the 1950s and has declined since then to a low of 7 per cent at present. Declining membership in the Wheat Pool means not only a weaker lobby voice in Ottawa, but also fewer Saskatchewanians meeting to discuss and debate agricultural and other ideas. Therefore social capital is not being "built" to the same extent now as it was 50 years ago. This decline is also important to mention because of what S.M. Lipset writes about the participation levels of Saskatchewan's population, especially the rural, prior to and during the introduction of the CCF in the province. As Lipset makes clear in the following section, rural Saskatchewanians were once greatly involved in their communities, which in turn reinforced democratic values.

Early Participation in Saskatchewan

In his *Agrarian Socialism*, S.M. Lipset discusses community and political participation in Saskatchewan at the time of the creation of the CCF. At the time his

¹⁴¹ Government of Saskatchewan, "Agricultural Statistics 2002," (Regina: Department of Agriculture, 2002), 1.

book was written, Lipset claims that while much of North America was experiencing widespread public and political apathy, this was not the case in Saskatchewan. As mentioned earlier, Lipset maintains that the CCF was successful in involving more people in direct political activity than any other American or Canadian political party. He points out that in 1945, the CCF had a “dues-paying membership of 31,858, or approximately 4 per cent of the total population and 8 per cent of the 1944 electorate.”¹⁴² The most important factor that explains such high rates of electoral participation, argues Lipset, is the high degree of individual participation in community organizations in rural districts. In those areas, he says, there were enough elected positions that one position was available to every two or three farmers.¹⁴³ Lipset describes Saskatchewan’s first three decades as being witness to “the creation of a powerful, organized, class-conscious agrarian movement.”¹⁴⁴

The CCF was able to take advantage of the level of community involvement in Saskatchewan in order to build and successfully sustain itself. According to one party informant “we are building socialism through the Wheat Pool, through our co-op store, through our U.F.C. local, as well as through the CCF. They are all part of one movement, the ‘people’s movement.’”¹⁴⁵ With the help of Lipset’s work, it is obvious that the levels of community participation evident in the early membership numbers of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool were not subject only to that organization, but were widespread in Saskatchewan, especially its rural areas, which as described above, were

¹⁴² Seymour Martin Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan. A Study in Political Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1968), 244.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 245.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 93.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 253.

more heavily populated than the urban areas at the time. As is apparent in this chapter, the political and community participation described by Lipset exists no longer in Saskatchewan.

The YWCA

The YWCA is an international organization that works with women and their families in the community to ensure empowerment and equality. The organization, started by Adelaide Hoodless in 1893, is the oldest and largest women's service organization in Canada. There are currently 38 member organizations across Canada. The YWCA has and continues to strengthen and encourage women to take part in the community, discuss and debate issues, and to assume leadership roles. According to Darlene Pontikes, National President of the YWCA, it is difficult to define *membership* in the YWCA because people use the organization for a variety of reasons. Some use the exercise facilities while others seek shelter with the organization. Actual membership, she argues, is philosophical, meaning that membership in the YWCA is equivalent to support of the organization from the community and results in various degrees of participation in the organization itself. Some become members simply as a fundraising activity for the organization, yet others take an active role.

Pontikes says that the number of members and of associations across the country and around the world has decreased. She points out that nationally, while it is difficult to examine actual membership levels, there has been a reduction in the number of associations. Also, she explains that internationally YWCAs are declining in size, especially in developed countries like Canada, the United States and Australia. She explains that she believes this decrease in size is to blame on urbanization as the YWCAs

of the past were smaller community based organizations.¹⁴⁶ Not unlike the consequences of declining membership in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, decreased membership in the YWCA means that fewer women are taking the opportunity to build leadership skills and to learn about issues, how to debate them and how to influence government based on those issues and debates. Certainly one can see that declining membership in the YWCA means that fewer women are being afforded the opportunity to build stronger networks of social trust and communication.

The Kinsmen Club of Canada

The Kinsmen Club is a Canadian service organization made up of community volunteers. Harold Rogers, a young man who had recently returned from the First World War and was interested in meeting with men his own age, founded the organization in 1920. Since 1920 the Kinsmen Club has promoted service, fellowship, positive values and national pride. Their far-reaching work includes fundraising activities for medical research, including cystic fibrosis, and for local projects across the country. The Kinsmen also work to promote active community involvement. For its members, the Kinsmen club is an opportunity to make and maintain the community ties and networks of trust, which are important to Putnam's theory. Those who are involved in Kinsmen, according to Putnam's theory of social capital, would then be more likely to participate in other community activities like voting in elections or running for office.

As with membership in the Wheat Pool and the YWCA, that of the Kinsmen Club of Canada has declined at a marked rate. According to the April 2004 statistics provided by the Kinsmen Club, membership has fallen from 14,500 members nation-wide in the

¹⁴⁶ Nicole Pogue, Personal conversation with Darlene Pontikes, National President of the YWCA, 17 May 2004.

1993-94 year to just over 8,000 members in the 2003-04 year.¹⁴⁷ According to Curtis Kimpton, incoming President of the Kinsmen Club of Canada, that decline may be blamed on a change in the workplace. Kimpton explains that when many men used to work in factories they were able to talk to co-workers during the day and encourage them to join organizations like the Kinsmen. Now that more and more people work in secluded offices, out of their vehicle, or from home there is less of that type of workplace interaction.¹⁴⁸ Certainly the idea that there exists a challenge to convincing people to join community organizations like the Kinsmen is a part of what Putnam is trying to describe with his social capital theory. What declining membership in the Kinsmen Club means is that fewer men are taking the opportunity to be active in the community and to serve others. Also missing is their ability to meet and discuss and debate issues and encourage others to become involved in the community.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the YWCA, and the Kinsmen Club of Canada are examples of the type of community and volunteer organizations that are described by Putnam as places in which networks of trust and social capital can be built in the community. Because membership in and support for all three of the organizations are declining, it is safe to point out that Putnam is correct, that social capital is a factor that can be used to explain, at least partly, why voter turnout is declining. To reiterate Putnam's theory, declining membership in these types of organizations means that fewer of these networks of trust and less social capital is being built as a result. This decrease in social capital means that individuals are finding less opportunity to discuss and debate

¹⁴⁷ Kinsmen Club of Canada, "April 2004 Stats with Chart," (received from Curtis Kimpton, Incoming National President of the Kinsmen Club of Canada).

¹⁴⁸ Nicole Pogue, Personal conversation with Curtis Kimpton, incoming National President of the Kinsmen Club of Canada, 14 January 2004.

important issues and be involved in their community and the political process. Aside from community and volunteer organizations, Putnam also discusses church attendance and volunteerism and their relationship with social capital. Those factors will be discussed here.

Church Attendance and Social Capital

According to Putnam, “churches provide an important incubator for civic skills, civic norms, community interests, and civic recruitment. Religiously active men and women learn to give speeches, run meetings, manage disagreements, and bear administrative responsibility.”¹⁴⁹ He also explains that church provides a place for people to meet others who might be likely to recruit them to other forms of community involvement. In fact, Putnam points out, “religiously involved people seem simply to know more people.”¹⁵⁰ Putnam argues that for these reasons churchgoers are more likely to vote and participate politically, and more likely to belong to community groups and societies.

Taking Putnam’s findings into account, it is important to observe religious activity in Canada to see if church attendance could be a factor in declining turnout in Saskatchewan and across the country. According to Statistics Canada’s *Canadian Social Trends*, attendance at religious services at least once per month (which includes weekly attendees) has decreased across the country. The Statistics Canada data show that Saskatchewan’s church attendance has declined from 43 per cent of the population, aged

¹⁴⁹ Putnam, 66.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 67.

15 and over, attending church at least once per month in the 1989-1993 time period to 39 per cent in the 1999-2001 period.¹⁵¹

Like the decrease in membership in community and volunteer organizations, the decline in church attendance and the effects of that decline on social and trust networks may also be partly to blame for Saskatchewan's low voter turnout. According to Putnam's theory, the community networks lost by failing to regularly attend church services could certainly affect churchgoers' ability to recruit others to community and political activities and could therefore be a contributor to Saskatchewan's voter turnout levels.

Now that we have witnessed the decline in membership in community and volunteer organizations like the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the YWCA, and the Kinsmen Club of Canada as well as the decline in regular church attendance in Saskatchewan and have pointed out how those declining figures relate to Putnam's social capital theory and to voter participation, it is important to consider one additional factor. The following will briefly examine levels of volunteerism in Canada and how they relate to voter and political participation.

Volunteerism and Social Capital

Putnam explains that altruism, volunteering, and philanthropy themselves are not part of social capital. Social capital, he argues, refers to a network of social connection- or doing things *with* others, not *for* them. He concedes though that it is through social networks that we are able to recruit individuals to volunteer and to help others.¹⁵² Rather

¹⁵¹ Warren Clark, "Pockets of Belief: Religious Attendance Patterns in Canada," Canadian Social Trends 68 (Spring 2003), 3.

¹⁵² Putnam, 116-7.

than being a factor in determining the health of our social capital, like membership in community organizations or church attendance, levels of volunteerism are predicted by civic engagement. In essence, if civic engagement and social capital are at healthy levels then recruitment for voluntary activities should be easier. On the other hand, if those networks are not healthy then we might have difficulty in convincing people to volunteer because we simply do not have the social networks to do so.

Taking Putnam's explanation into account it is important to observe Canada's volunteer activity in an effort to further gauge the health of its social capital and trust networks. According to the *Canada Volunteerism Initiative (CVI)*, a group that attempts to encourage Canadians to volunteer with, support, and participate in community organization, volunteer resources are eroding. In its *Report of the National Volunteerism Initiative Joint Table*, the CVI says that one million fewer Canadians volunteered in 2000 than in 1997. The group also reports that only "7 per cent of Canadians contributed 73 per cent of Canada's volunteer effort in 2000," a number the group says may be unsustainable.¹⁵³ In Putnam's terms, these numbers mean that Canada's social networks are not in top form. The fact that so few people are volunteering means that others are having trouble, or simply do not have the connections needed to recruit people to volunteer their time.

Conclusion

Measuring the strength of social capital in Saskatchewan and across the country is important if we are to consider its strength a factor in determining why voter turnout is in decline. According to Robert Putnam, social capital, the connections that exist between

¹⁵³ Canada Volunteerism Initiative, "Report of the National Volunteerism Initiative Joint Table," (December 2001), 2-3.

citizens, and networks of trust are key if we are to have a healthy and highly participatory democracy. What this chapter has shown is that Saskatchewan's and Canada's social capital may not be as strong as it once was and may be held as a contributor to the lack of political and electoral participation found in the province and across the country.

Memberships and interest in volunteer and community organizations like the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the YWCA, and the Kinsmen Club of Canada have declined. With the decline in community participation, we see that the active Saskatchewan population of the past, which is described by Lipset in his study of the immensely popular and well-organized CCF, may no longer exist. As well, fewer people in the province and across the country are regularly attending church services than even a decade ago, nor are they volunteering at the rate they once were.

Along with these membership and attendance levels comes a decline in social capital and the building of networks of trust among members of the community. This, according to Putnam, translates into the decline in voter participation that we are witnessing in Saskatchewan and across the country. The addition of volunteerism figures supports the notion that social capital throughout the province and country is not at its best levels. The fact that so few are volunteering is further proof that social networks are lacking. These conclusions mean that Putnam's theory of social capital in combination with examples of community organizations, church attendance, and volunteerism are verification that social capital might in fact play an important role in electoral turnout and participation in Saskatchewan and across the country. It also seems rather safe to call for greater civic education within and outside the school system, which might in turn translate into greater community participation and higher voter turnout.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

As we have seen, voter turnout has declined sharply in the past decade or so in Saskatchewan. This decline is not unique to Saskatchewan; indeed the entire country has seen a similar decrease in political participation. Low turnout such as this is a concern for the health of democracy. This thesis has, in response, provided a study of voter participation levels in Saskatchewan for both provincial and federal elections between 1967 and 2000. It has listed reasons for which we should be alarmed with decreasing levels of electoral participation as well as factors that help to explain which identifiable social groups tend to vote more often than others. In addition, the thesis has, taking its lead from Henry Milner's theory of civic literacy, provided a survey of Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school curricula to determine how civic education has changed over the past century in an attempt to show how civic education, or lack thereof, might affect voter participation, especially among the youth. Finally, the thesis has used Robert Putnam's social capital theory to explain the relationship between voter turnout and declining levels of membership in community organizations, volunteer activity, and church attendance in Saskatchewan and across the country. This final chapter will provide a short summary of the four preceding chapters and will suggest possible solutions to the problem of low voter turnout.

Chapter one provided three questions to be considered in this thesis. Those were; *Has the provincial department of education changed its approach to educating citizens? What contribution have provincial and federal orders of government made to educating citizens through their electoral offices?* and *Do community and volunteer organizations*

encourage voter turnout? In response to those three questions, a number of overarching conclusions can be drawn from the work. First, there has been a change in the nature of the civic education that has been offered to junior and senior high school students in Saskatchewan since 1907. As appendix two on pages 107 and 108 shows, there has been a definite change-beginning in the early 1970s-in the type of civic education proposed by the provincial department of education. While civic education in itself continues to be prescribed, the recommendations that once asked educators to emphasize the duties and obligations of a democratic citizen, now asks teachers to educate about the rights and benefits that can be expected as a democratic citizen. To answer the first question proposed; yes, the department of education has changed its approach to educating citizens.

Second, we find in chapter three that the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada vary greatly in their response to declining voter turnout. Federally, Elections Canada has and continues to make an effort to encourage higher levels of participation, especially among the youth. Elections Saskatchewan, on the other hand, has done nothing to encourage greater participation in elections. So, to answer the second of the questions proposed; there is a marked difference in the what the two orders of government are doing, through their electoral offices, to encourage greater participation.

Finally, the research conducted regarding a small number of community and volunteer organizations vis-à-vis Putnam's social capital theory concludes that if the membership numbers shown in the thesis are representative of a larger body of organizations then Putnam's theory certainly could be another of the factors that help to explain declining voter participation.

Following a brief introductory chapter which outlined the objectives of and questions to be answered by the thesis and presented the literature to be used throughout, chapter two offered a synopsis of Saskatchewan's electoral turnout in addition to warnings about the effect of low turnout on democracy and factors to help explain who is or is not likely to vote on election day. Evident in the second chapter were three problems with the data presented by Elections Saskatchewan that had to be addressed before the research could proceed. Those included a lack of turnout information for the 1905 provincial election, information not available for a number of constituencies between 1908 and 1948, and a number of multi-member ridings between 1921 and 1964. For the purpose of this study, the 1905-1964 provincial election information was disregarded as there was no way of reporting the information without possibly compromising the validity of the thesis. This meant that federal information prior to 1967 also had to be ignored as no valid comparison could be made. The information from Saskatchewan's 2003 provincial election could not be used either as the 2004 federal voter turnout information is not yet available and no proper comparison was possible.

A review of Saskatchewan's voter participation in both provincial and federal elections shows significant declines following the 1991 provincial and 1988 federal elections that continued in following elections. Chapter two presented a number of reasons that low voter turnout might be considered dangerous to the health of a democracy as well as a number of factors that help to explain which identifiable social groups are more likely to participate in elections than others. Arguments presented by academics including Jerome Black, Arend Lijphart, Ruy Teixeira, André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil,

Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte discuss possible problems including the questionable legitimacy of a government elected by a small percentage of eligible voters, the possibility that equality of influence may diminish for members of those social groups that tend to vote less often than others, and the likelihood that declining vote turnout may be one sign that Canadians are becoming, or already are, less connected with the community as a whole. Keeping these concerns in mind, the second chapter also offered a number of factors that help to explain who is more likely to vote than others. Research presented by academics including Raymond Wolfinger, Steven Rosenstone, Jon Pammett, and Lawrence LeDuc as well as Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau, and Nevitte explained which identifiable social groups are more likely to vote than others. These academics gave such factors as education, occupation, income, age, and marital status as commonly related to the likelihood of voting. As well, Pammett and LeDuc presented the results of a survey conducted following the 2000 Canadian federal election. In that survey, Pammett and LeDuc found that the largest group of non-voters exists in the youth, those between the age of 18 and 24. In fact, only 25 per cent of that age group voted in the 2000 federal election. The reasons that were given by non-voters to explain their lack of electoral participation included such things as negative public attitudes toward politicians and political institutions, the perceived meaninglessness of participation, and public apathy. The study also found that a majority of those surveyed agreed that schools should do more to educate students about the importance of electoral participation. These reported results laid the foundation for the study of Saskatchewan's junior and senior high school curricula that followed in chapter three.

The third chapter discussed Henry Milner's theory of civic literacy, offered a comprehensive review of Saskatchewan's education curricula, and gave a brief description of the programs being presented by Elections Saskatchewan and Elections Canada that are aimed at youth voters. Milner describes civic literacy as the ability of individuals to make sense of their political world, and argues, in short, that as television consumption increases and newspaper readership decreases voter turnout is negatively affected because the ability of individuals to make sense of their political world suffers as they are less connected with the education sources required to make those types of distinctions.

Milner's theory sets the stage for the study of Saskatchewan's education curricula that was presented in chapter three. The study of curricula presented a review of junior and senior high school curricula for each decade beginning in 1907 and ending in 1999 with Saskatchewan Learning's most recent curriculum. While each of the decades witnessed differences in the curricula, a number of trends can be found throughout the century. The two most obvious themes in the curricula can be found prior to and following the 1970s. Prior to the 1970s, the education curricula in Saskatchewan placed great importance and emphasis on civics, citizenship, and the duty or obligation of each citizen to vote. The 1972 curriculum saw the Department of Education asking educators not to inculcate students with values like good citizenship, rather to give them the tools necessary to decide good values on their own. This recommendation meant that the post-1972 curricula continued to teach *about* Canadian government and the political process, yet offered lessons in civics and citizenship that were much more passive and less influential than those prior to 1972. Other themes are more subtle, but interesting to note

nonetheless. One of those is the change that took place following the 1940s and 1950s. Prior to the change, history and civics classes placed great emphasis on British history, the importance of building democratic values in the country, and the duties of the Canadian citizen. The change that took place introduced the *social studies* program and shifted emphasis to the importance of government by consent, why democracy is the best form of government, and the rights and privileges of Canadian citizens. This change was reflective of the attitude of society. Saskatchewan passed its Bill of Rights in 1947, the Diefenbaker government formalized a federal Bill of Rights in 1960, both of which were reinforced in 1982 by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Certainly the shift away from inculcating students with values like good citizenship may have been a reaction to the attitudinal changes in society at the time.

The review of curricula proved that while there are a number of factors that might be blamed for declining voter turnout, we cannot discount the effect civic education may have on a person's ability to make sense of their political world or desire to participate on election day. What the study of Saskatchewan's curricula showed is that the lack of civic education in the past 30 years in Saskatchewan could quite possibly be considered one of the factors contributing to the decline in voter turnout in the province. Those who attended junior and senior high school in the 1970s were not taught, according to the curricula, about the duty or obligation to participate in elections. Declining voter participation may therefore be partly to blame on the Saskatchewan education system which has taken a culture type approach to civic education for the past three decades, though a more immediate effect vis-à-vis decreasing voter turnout levels would have solidified this argument.

A study of how youth are being educated about government and politics is not complete without a brief review of the ways in which organizations are attempting to reach Canada's youngest voters outside of the classroom. Following a study of Saskatchewan's education curricula, chapter three presented a short synopsis of the programs initiated by Elections Canada that target youth voters as well as an explanation given by Elections Saskatchewan for its lack of any youth-based programs. A number of youth-targeted educational tools and games can be found on the Elections Canada website. As well, Elections Canada has initiated, or partnered with other organizations, to introduce a number of programs including *Rush the Vote*, *YouthLinks* and *Student Vote 2004* in an attempt to encourage electoral participation amongst the youth. Elections Saskatchewan, on the other hand, has not introduced any programs targeted at influencing youth participation in elections. While Jan Baker, Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan, agrees that youth education programs are of great importance, she explains that her office has simply been too busy with two general elections and thirteen by-elections in Saskatchewan since her appointment in 1988. She also explained that her office has not yet become electronic (the website was only recently developed for the November 2003 provincial election) which is a requirement before it is able to reach out to young voters. The information provided in chapter three regarding civic literacy, Saskatchewan's education curricula, and the attempts by Elections Canada to interest young voters in the political process opened the door for a final chapter that looked at public participation in the community and how voter turnout is affected.

Chapter four discussed Robert Putnam's theory of social capital in which he argues that declining participation in community organizations may be one of the factors

contributing to declining levels of voter turnout. The chapter looked at a number of community organization across Saskatchewan and Canada and instances of volunteerism and church attendance in the country to see if Putnam's theory could help to explain the decline in voter participation in this province. The chapter also briefly discussed S. M. Lipset's description of Saskatchewan's participatory culture of the past.

Putnam describes social capital as connections among individuals, or networks of social trust that are created when people are members of community and volunteer organizations. At the core of Putnam's theory is the argument that the health of democracy depends on debate and discussion among individuals. It is within these community and voluntary organizations that people learn and are able to discuss and debate important issues, not only because skills are learned but also because many of these organizations provide the desirable arena. Richer social capital, argues Putnam, means better public policy as the citizens are more involved in the process. Low voter turnout, according to Putnam, is a measure of the health of the community. As fewer and fewer individuals are participating in the community they in turn participate less frequently in elections and public policy.

The fourth chapter undertook a brief review of membership in three organizations in Saskatchewan and across the country. Those three included the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the YWCA, and the Kinsmen Club of Canada. What the research found was that each of these organizations has seen a decline in their membership. Though a decline in Wheat Pool membership can also be blamed on demographics, as there are fewer farmers in Saskatchewan than there once was, chapter four showed that while this certainly is the case the Wheat Pool's strength is in its numbers as it tries to act as a lobby group for

farmers. Wheat Pool members once accounted for 17 per cent of Saskatchewan's population. That number is now less than 7 per cent. Declining membership in the Wheat Pool means a weaker lobby voice in Ottawa as well as fewer opportunities for debate and discussion of agricultural and other policies in the community. Like the Wheat Pool, the YWCA has also seen a decline in participation in its organization. While it is difficult to measure actual membership in the YWCA, it was found that the YWCA has had to decrease the number of associations it holds around the world, especially in developing countries. Darlene Pontikes, National President of the YWCA, blames these decreases on urbanization. Much like the Wheat Pool, the YWCA has lost members thanks to a change in demographics and is less able to provide a place, physically or metaphorically, for women to debate and discuss issues and in turn become more involved in electoral politics and public policy. The Kinsmen Club of Canada is another example of an organization, once abundant with members, that has seen a dramatic decline in membership. The Kinsmen Club has witnessed membership levels fall from 14,500 members nation-wide in 1993-94 to just over 8,000 members in 2003-04. Curtis Kimpton, incoming President of the Kinsmen Club, blames that decline on a change in working conditions. Kimpton argues that when men used to work in factories they were better able to encourage co-workers and friends to join organizations like the Kinsmen than they are now in the age of working out of offices, the home, or sometimes the car. Like the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and the YWCA, declining membership in the Kinsmen Club means that fewer individuals are taking the opportunity to be active in the community and to discuss and debate the issues that are important to them. This,

according to Putnam's theory, means that those people are also less likely to participate on election day.

Like membership in community organizations, Putnam argues that church provides a place to grow civic skills, learn about community interests and recruit people for political and other community activities. Putnam points out that religiously involved people seem to know more people and are therefore better able to make connections in the community than someone who is not involved in the church. Taking this into account, it is important then to note that church attendance in Canada, like community organization involvement generally, has declined. Information from Statistics Canada showed that church attendance has gone from 43 per cent of the population of Canada aged 15 and over attending church at least once a month in the 1989-1993 time period to 39 per cent in the 1999-2001 period. Volunteerism, explains Putnam, is not part of social capital. He argues that social capital means doing things *with* others, not *for* them. Volunteerism instead is predicted by civic engagement, meaning that if social capital is at a healthy level, then it should be easier to recruit people for volunteer activities. Considering that the findings in chapter four point to declining civic engagement, it should not be surprising that the Canada Volunteerism Initiative reported that only 7 per cent of Canadians contributed 73 per cent of Canada's volunteer effort in 2000, or that 1 million fewer Canadians volunteered in 2000 than in 1997. The fact that volunteerism has reached such lows in Canada is an indication of the failing health of social capital.

Finally, the fourth chapter discussed the work of S. M. Lipset which describes the participatory nature of Saskatchewan's population in the 1930s and earlier and how the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was able to build upon that attitude to

contribute to its success and longevity as a political party. Lipset argues that while much of North American was experiencing widespread apathy, this was not the case in Saskatchewan. He describes the CCF as being able to involve more people than any other political party in Canada or the United States. He credits this success to a high degree of individual participation in community organizations, especially in rural districts. As we have seen with the example of membership in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the rural population in Saskatchewan has shrunk dramatically and the community involvement that once existed in this province seems to have decreased along with it.

Something must be done. The rate at which voter turnout has decreased in Saskatchewan and across the country is alarming at best. Especially problematic is the rate at which Saskatchewan's and Canada's youth are deciding not to participate. In a recent issue of the *Globe and Mail*, Elisabeth Gidengil, Neil Nevitte, André Blais, Patrick Fournier and Joanna Everitt discuss the findings of a survey that was carried out during the 2004 federal election. When asked about the duty to vote, 75 per cent of respondents in the survey strongly agreed that "it is every citizen's duty to vote in federal elections," and 32 per cent said that they would feel guilty if they did not vote in a federal election. Meanwhile, when asked the same questions, only 55 per cent of young people agreed that every citizen has the duty to vote, while only 18 per cent said they would feel guilty for not voting.¹⁵⁴ There is obviously a marked difference in the attitudes of young and old in this country regarding the duty of the Canadian citizen.

This thesis has argued reasons for which we must be concerned about the health of our democracy when faced with a voting-age population as apathetic as ours. The

¹⁵⁴ Elisabeth Gidengil, Neil Nevitte, André Blais, Patrick Fournier and Joanna Everitt, "Why Johnny Won't Vote," *Globe and Mail*, <<http://www.globeandmail.com>>. (Retrieved 04 August 2004).

non-voters are only partly at fault for their lack of interest in public policy or in the future of the country. As this thesis has shown, there are a number of factors that help to explain why some people chose not to vote. This thesis has provided a case study of one of those possible factors, civic education, but cannot conclude that this single factor might explain in whole the declining voter participation levels in Saskatchewan and throughout the country. We live in a less group-oriented, more individual rights driven society than that of the past, we have also seen huge changes to the traditional family; divorce rates are increasing and fewer people are marrying, especially at young ages. Our population is changing. As mentioned, we have a rapidly growing Aboriginal population in Saskatchewan and we know that Aboriginal people are less likely to vote than non-Aboriginals. We can also infer that perceived closeness in an electoral race, or the intensity of the issues might drive more voters to the polls during particular elections as opposed to other less close and less intense races. Finally, globalization is playing an increased role in daily life. Technology has made it easier for citizens to consider what is happening all around the world and is therefore making government at the local level seem less relevant to some.

This thesis has been a case study of one province. Though we have seen a change in the type of civic education that has been offered by the province of Saskatchewan throughout the 20th Century, one cannot infer that civic education, or lack of, is solely responsible for changes in voter turnout levels. Rather all that can be argued is that decreasing voter participation levels may be partly to blame on a lack of duty oriented civic education. We must also consider the differences in the factors listed above within the very aggregate that is being surveyed here. While the thesis considers Saskatchewan

voter turnout and education curricula, the factors listed above, as well as other possibly unknown factors, may also be at play within the Saskatchewan aggregate.

Further research may be done in this area to test whether or not civic education does play a role in voter turnout. Two approaches might be considered in the attempt to find out if civic education does in fact affect voter turnout. One is to further study changes in society to see how they have affected education curricula and to see if a decline in voter turnout exists. If those two factors are present, then further study might determine whether or not changes in the curricula have created a decline in turnout, or if the decline is simply coincidental and an effect of the larger societal shift.

Another approach to a more in-depth study of the relationship between civic education and voter turnout would be to conduct a large-scale survey of what is recommended by the provincial department of education and how educators actually interpret and present those recommendations to their students. Because this thesis has been limited to a study of the curricula only, we do not know for sure if the type of civic education recommended is actually being taught. A more time-consuming study might include interviews and visits to educators to find out what they are teaching their students about voting. Part of this approach might also consider varying areas of the province to look for differences in the teaching of civic education and levels of voter turnout.

This work has considered whether or not government and politics has been presented to our citizens in an important and meaningful way. As the work in this thesis has shown, our education system has failed, and continues to fail, our youngest voters. For the past thirty years, Saskatchewan's Department of Education (or Saskatchewan Learning) has asked educators not to inculcate in students values like good citizenship

but to let them decide those values on their own. High school teachers are asked to teach about government and elections. No longer are they encouraged to impress upon their students the obligations and duties of the citizens, which include being involved in the community and at the very least, taking the time to vote on election day. Programs presented by Elections Canada, and in the planning stages by Elections Saskatchewan, are helpful and are a good start when it comes to reaching youth voters. Programs such as these cannot and should not be discounted, but they are not enough to sufficiently reach all of our future and young voters. It is true that Elections Canada has made a good effort at attempting to reach as many young Canadians as possible. As the voter turnout figures for the 2004 federal election are made available, it will be interesting to see whether or not their efforts have paid off. Elections Saskatchewan needs to concentrate its efforts on promoting youth programs comparable to those offered by its federal counterpart, and to attracting Saskatchewan residents to the polls.

These programs do not have the same ability to reach every young person on a daily basis, as would programs offered in a classroom setting. By offering duty-focused civic material at the junior and senior high school levels (and earlier if possible), educators have the opportunity to instill in young, future voters the importance of being involved in the community and in choosing the government that will affect their daily lives. Saskatchewan's education system has a responsibility to all citizens of Saskatchewan and Canada to produce citizens that are involved in, and understand the importance of the political process in order that our democracy may be one that works as well as it has the potential to. Students who leave the education system with a feeling of responsibility to the province and to the country might have the potential to become more

involved in the community and in the democratic process. This thesis calls on the Government of Saskatchewan to assume an innovative role and to reconsider its policy that instructed educators to stop inculcating students with values such as good citizenship. This province should take the lead and reintroduce the importance of political participation into the classroom so that it may reach as many young and future voters as possible and ensure that those young people might save our democracy from the threat of widespread voter apathy.

**Appendix One:
Saskatchewan Junior and Senior High School Curricula**

Year	Curriculum Located (Grades)
1907	10-12
1909	10-12
1912	10-12
1913	7 & 8, 10-12
1914	7 & 8, 10-12
1915	7 & 8, 10-12
1916	7 & 8
1918	7 & 8, 10-12
1919	7 & 8
1920	7 & 8, 10-12
1921	7 & 8
1922	10-12
1923	7 & 8
1924	7 & 8, 9-12
1926	7 & 8, 9-12
1929	7 & 8, 9-12
1930	9-12
1931	7 & 8, 9-12
1932	9-12
1935	9-12
1936	9-12
1941	7 & 8, 9-12
1946	9-12
1948	7 & 8, 9-12
1950	9-12
1953	7 & 8
1957	7 & 8, 9-12
1960	9-12
1963	9-12
1965	7 & 8, 9-12
1972	7 & 8, 9-12
1973	9-12
1976	7 & 8, 9-12
1978	9-12
1982	7 & 8, 9-12
1987	7 & 8, 9-12
1988	7 & 8
1991	7 & 8, 9-12
1999	7 & 8, 9-12

Appendix 2: Types and Instances of Civic Education Mentioned In Junior and Senior High School Curricula (1907-1999)

Curriculum Year and Grade(s)	"Duty"	"Institutions"	"Culture"	Total Civic	Number of Pages
1907 (10-12)	3	3	0	6	13
1909 (10-12)	3	3	0	6	10
1912 (10-12)	3	2	0	5	12
1913 (7&8)	4	4	0	8	17
1913 (10-12)	3	2	0	5	12
1914 (7&8)	4	4	0	8	18
1914 (10-12)	3	2	0	5	15
1915 (7&8)	4	4	0	8	18
1915 (10-12)	3	2	0	5	15
1916 (7&8)	3	4	0	7	12
1918 (7&8)	3	3	0	6	12
1918 (10-12)	4	3	0	7	16
1919 (7&8)	3	4	0	7	14
1920 (7&8)	4	3	0	7	14
1920 (10-12)	4	3	0	7	18
1921 (7&8)	3	2	0	5	16
1922 (10-12)	3	2	0	5	18
1923 (7&8)	4	2	0	6	18
1924 (7&8)	4	3	0	7	22
1924 (9-12)	3	3	0	6	25
1926 (7&8)	4	2	0	6	20
1926 (9-12)	4	4	0	8	24
1929 (7&8)	4	2	0	6	20
1929 (9-12)	3	3	0	6	29
1930 (9-12)	3	4	0	7	29
1931 (7&8)	5	2	0	7	24
1931 (9-12)	3	4	0	7	28
1932 (9-12)	4	4	0	8	28
1935 (9-12)	4	3	0	7	60

Curriculum Year and Grade(s)	"Duty"	"Institutions"	"Culture"	Total Civic	Number of Pages
1936 (9-12)	4	3	0	7	62
1941 (7&8)	5	2	1	8	60
1941 (9-12)	4	3	1	8	90
1946 (9-12)	4	3	1	8	90
1948 (7&8)	5	2	1	8	86
1948 (9-12)	4	3	1	8	90
1950 (9-12)	4	3	1	8	98
1953 (7&8)	4	2	2	8	90
1957 (7&8)	4	2	2	8	86
1957 (9-12)	4	3	2	9	98
1960 (9-12)	4	2	1	7	72
1963 (9-12)	4	3	2	9	78
1965 (7&8)	4	2	1	7	90
1965 (9-12)	4	3	2	9	80
1972 (7&8)	1	2	2	5	96
1972 (9-12)	1	3	3	7	120
1973 (9-12)	1	3	3	7	120
1976 (7&8)	1	2	3	6	102
1976 (9-12)	1	3	3	7	118
1978 (9-12)	1	3	2	6	120
1982 (7&8)	1	2	2	5	98
1982 (9-12)	1	4	2	7	120
1987 (7&8)	1	2	2	5	102
1987 (9-12)	1	4	3	8	118
1988 (7&8)	1	3	2	6	108
1991 (7&8)	1	3	2	6	112
1991 (9-12)	1	4	4	9	118
1999 (7&8)	1	3	3	7	112
1999 (9-12)	1	4	4	9	120
Total	175	167	58	400	3431

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