

# Policy in action: Applying adolescent research to defend when the voting age should be

## INTRO

- The aim of the current study was to assess student’s perspectives on the inclusion of a paper in an adolescent development class devoted to using adolescent and developmental research to argue when the voting age should be.
- It was guide by the theory of constructivism, which posits learning occurs through integrating prior knowledge with new information, assimilating and accommodating this into new knowledge (Jones & Brader-Areje, 2002)
- Prior research suggests students appreciate seeing how research can influence public policy (Heise, 1992)

## METHOD

- In Fall 2020, students in an undergraduate adolescent class completed a paper where they had to use at least three arguments to defend what they think the voting age should be based only on developmental research/content
- An anonymous survey was sent during the Fall 2020 semester to students in an undergraduate adolescent development course.
- It sought their perceived learning of the content via the paper.

Students perceive to have a better understanding of adolescent development and how research can inform policy by writing a paper arguing what the voting age should be based only on developmental research



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Table 1. Demographics (n= 59)

	M or %
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	96.6
Male	3.4
<b>Age</b>	21.3
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
White	61.0
Latino/a	28.8
Other	10.2
<b>Class</b>	
Freshmen	1.7
Sophomore	0.0
Junior	50.9
Senior	47.5

Table 2. Student perspectives (n= 59)

	% Agree
This paper helped me think more about how adolescent developmental research applies to policies and programs?	86.2
This paper helped me deepen my learning of adolescent development content	75.9
This paper made me critically think about adolescent development	82.76
I think this paper will help me in the future thinking about the appropriateness of policies based on age	61.0

## RECOMMENDATIONS & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Family Science faculty should consider having students reflect on how research can be applied to policies and programs