Political Knowledge and Participation in Teens During Low and High Political Interest Periods Surrounding the U.S. 2008 Presidential Election

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This paper examines how the three structural variables most closely associated with political socialization--family, school and child demographics--along with news media exposure, and cognitive attitudinal features of the youth 12-17 predict political knowledge and political participation during three time periods: six months before the 2008 Presidential election, the six weeks following the election, and six months after the election. As might be expected, self-reported political interest during these three time periods was highest right after the election, and lower before and six months after the election was over. This longitudinal panel study provides an excellent opportunity to examine factors that are known to affect political knowledge and participation under very different political involvement levels.

The opportunity to investigate these differences throughout the entirety of a Presidential campaign was offered by a large national three-panel study of youth 12-17 and their parents, a partnered study developed by researchers from five Universities[1] . Of course, given our study involved repeated measures administered to the same parents and children from May, 2008 to June 2009, with the inevitable dropout over time, we are faced with the usual challenges of longitudinal data,; but as we shall demonstrate, there was remarkable consistency in sample features over the three time periods.

The model of political socialization guiding this research posits a process that traverses from social structural variables through media exposure and cognitive/attitudinal variables to political knowledge and participation. This model is related to some recent others (e.g., Shah, et al, 2009; Hively & Eveland, 2009), but looks differently at cognitive/attitudinal variables and articulates differing types of political participation.

Political socialization is the process by which young citizens learn and develop responses to their polity: knowing about it, developing attitudes toward its various aspects, participating in its processes (like voting, attending rallies or community meetings, etc.). Clearly, political responses include a wide variety of indicators. The most typical are interest in politics, knowledge about politics, and participation through behaviors that have been classified as "political." But there are many other possible variables that are of clear significance to the political socialization process: amount of politically focused talk with others, classroom-based political curriculum, connecting online about politics through social media activities, community volunteering, and what has been called political consumerism (Vogel, 2004; Stolle & Houghe, 2004).

Parental Impact

Family communication, especially parental influence has long been considered an important factor in determining the political socialization of adolescents (Hyman, 1959; Greenstein, 1965; Easton & Dennis, 1969). Studies in political socialization of adolescence have conceptualized it as a top-down process in which children acquired political attitude, information and behavior from their parents through observation and modeling (Butler & Stokes, 1974; McDevitt, 2005) Parent's party affiliation has been a strong indicator of the children's partisanship , with adolescents more likely to follow the party affiliation of the parents (Desmond & Donohue, 1981; McDevitt, 2005).

Parental political activities were found to be a strong indicator of how involved in politics the children are (Desmond & Donohue, 1981). Also, parents with higher socioeconomic status were found to talk more to their children about politics, which led to the children to have more political knowledge than the low SES families (Kim & Kim, 2007; McDevitt & Chaffee, 2000; McLeod & Chaffee, 1973; Meirick & Wackman, 2004).

More recently, McIntosh, Hart and Youniss (2007) found that parent political knowledge and youth-parent political discussion were important predictors of youth political knowledge. That is, the knowledge of the parent was transmitted to the youth, and its effect was increased by the parent-child political discussion.

These findings lead us to expect that the more the parents know and the more they encourage youth to discuss politics, express their opinions and be politically involved, the more political knowledge and the higher the political participation the child will exhibit. . We summarize these expectations in two hypotheses:

H1: Parental political talk and participation will account for significant variance in youth political knowledge.

H2: Parental political talk and participation will account for significant variance in youth political participation.

Political Education at School

Schools can potentially provide social interaction that represents a level of political stimulation and communication that may not be available from parents at home (Kiousis & McDevitt, 2008). For low SES families, schools can help them surmount the problem of activating mass media messages in politics and mitigate social structural disparities outside of the classroom. School interventions, such as Kids Voting USA, encourage young future voters to be politically interested and knowledgeable, leading to a more motivated discussion in both school and in family (McDevitt, 2005; McDevitt and Chaffee, 2002). While family and home environment are perceived as the primary agents of political socialization, school has played an important part as a secondary agent, along with mass media exposure (Atkin, 1981). Thus:

H3: Experience with political curricula at schools will account for significant variance in youth political knowledge.

H4: Experience with political curricula at schools will account for significant variance in youth political participation.

News Media

Although mass media are an important source for knowledge of political issues (Delli Carpini, 2000; McLeod, Rush, & Friederich, 1968), the effect of media is diversified depending on the type of medium as well as the purpose of using the medium. For example, television use for entertainment has also been criticized as the cause of decreasing political engagement (Putnam, 1993, 2000). Television use for news, on the other hand, clearly shows a positive impact (Shah, McLeod & Lee, 2009). Newspaper use, although low among teenagers, still shows a positive impact on political knowledge and interest (e.g., Eveland, McLeod & Horowitz, 1998).

The Internet has emerged as an important additional medium for civic and political engagement (Pew Internet, 2006). Nie and Erbring (2000) showed that Internet use was negatively related to time spent with other media, family and friends, but other studies found that heavy Internet users were more likely to have social relationships than light users (Uslaner, 2004). Internet use has been shown to positively affect political p articipation (Gibson, Howard, & Ward, 2000; Hill & Hughes, 1998; Kraut, Kiesler, Boneva, Cummings, Helgeson, & Crawford, 2002). However it has also been shown to affect political engagement negatively or have no effect on it (Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Kraut et al., 2002). A likely explanation for this inconsistency is the operation of mediating variables like level of social capital, personal communication efficacy, and motivation to use the Internet (Kavanaugh & Patterson, 2001; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001). Entertainment internet use is not positively correlated with indicators of political engagement (Shah et al., 2001).

An important question is the extent to which youth use the Internet for political communication. According to Livingstone and his colleagues, adolescents had little interest in political participation on the Internet (Livingstone & Bober, 2004; Livingstone, Bober, & Helsper, 2004). On the other hand, Montgomery (2000) reported that adolescents used the Internet to express themselves in public forums. Compared to other ages, young people are actively participating in political activities on the Internet (Gibson, et al, 2002). Lin, Jung & Cheong (2005) showed that the level of Internet use of adolescents is positively related to their involvement in community service when they used the Internet for gaining information. In this vein, among the various usage patterns of the Internet and outcomes of media effects, this study focused on the effect of adolescent's Internet news use (i.e., information use) on two aspects of political engagement: political interest and political knowledge. Thus:

- H5: Television news use will be positively associated with political knowledge.
- H6: Television news use will be positively associated with political participation.
- H7: Newspaper exposure will be positively associated with political knowledge.

- H8: Newspaper exposure will be positively associated with political participation.
- H9: Internet news use will be positively associated with political knowledge.
- H10: Internet news use will be positively associated with political participation.
Cognitive/Attitudinal Variables

Civic mindedness is a concept most closely associated with Habermas' (2006) concept of the public sphere. Dahlberg (2001) posited that the concept involved six features, including two that were measured here. The first is a sense of autonomy from government and economic power. To measure this autonomy we included two items, "to be a good citizen you need to stand up for your values," and "people should speak up when they oppose our government's actions." The second is "respectful listening," which we operationalized with "I think it is important to hear others' ideas even if they are different from mine." To those items, however, we added a sense of civic responsibility: "I think it is important to get involved in improving my community," and "Those who are well off should help those who are less fortunate." Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins and Delli Carpini (2009) argue that civic mindedness is part of a constellation of attitudes strongly associated with both political knowledge and particpation. Thus:

H11: Those high in civic mindedness will have greater political knowledge.

H12: Those high in civic mindedness will show greater political participation.

Persuasion efficacy

Starting with the two-step flow paradigm (Katz & Lazarfeld, 1955) and developed extensively in consumer research has been the concept of personal persuasion of others (e.g., Childers, 1986; Gatignon & Robertson, 1985). Often persuasion was operationalized by asking people about others who would influence them to purchase brands. But an interesting alternative to this measure is asking people themselves whether they influence others. The extent to which they report they do, we labeled persuasion efficacy. We posit that those high in persuasion efficacy would be more likely to want to engage in politics in general, certainly to talk to others about politics, but perhaps also to participate at more extensive levels of political participation like putting signs in their yards or wearing a button, as well as to engage in consumer politics like boycotting or boycotting products. Hence:

H13:   Those high in persuasion efficacy will have greater political knowledge.

H14: Those high in persuasion efficacy will show greater political participation.

QUESTION: How do we get those high on persuasion efficacy to use those skills for political purposes?

Elaboration

The ability to think deeply about politics begins in adolescence (Eveland, 2001; 2004) as young people start to mentally process the abstract ideas and concepts which serve as the bases for politics. Eveland & Dunwoody (2001) define cognitive elaboration as connecting separate pieces of information, whether it is from memory or material being processed, into a larger whole that provides a framework for understanding. Elaboration in terms of media use then occurs when information from media in this case is collected by the individual and compared with prior knowledge, allowing the individual to construct new frameworks for understanding the world. Elaboration thus is positively associated with knowledge.

Different media play different roles in elaboration. With the Web, it appears that the benefits that come with rich interconnected information resources benefit frequent users' ability to elaborate on what they are consuming, whereas with less-frequent users the wealth of information might serve to confuse users and thus hinder elaboration

(DENSMORE COMMENT: OPPORTUNITY: Figure out tools which convert the confusion of the web into a rich, interconnected information resource which fosters elaboration rather than blocking or frustrating it.

(Eveland, Marton & Seo, 2004). Newspapers have been found to be strongly associated with elaboration, and how the media are used also matters, as use for information and surveillance is positively associated with elaboration compared to use for entertainment (Eveland, 2001; Beaudoin & Thorson, 2004).

Studies in elaboration and political news seem to support the importance of elaboration on verbalizing political opinions. First, the more people elaborated, the more knowledgeable they were about politics. Positive relationships between the level of news elaboration and political knowledge have been found frequently (Cappella, Price, & Nir, 2002; Eveland, Cortese, Park, & Dunwoody, 2004; Eveland & Dunwoody, 2002). Hively and Eveland (2009) found a strong relationship between discussion elaboration and structured knowledge. When people elaborated on the news, their knowledge was more likely to be connected with what they already knew. Similarly, even after controlling for motivation to future discussion, elaboration was found to be a strong predictor of political knowledge (Eveland , 2004).

Given these findings, we predict:

H15: Greater elaboration will increase knowledge.

H16: Greater elaboration will be associated with higher political participation.

Response Variables

Political Knowledge

Political knowledge is usually measured in terms of the number of factual questions people can answer about candidates and issues in an election. Because we were looking at three distinct time points, the knowledge questions were different at each

time, designed to determine how well the youth had managed to pick up salient information circulating at that time about the Presidential election.

Political Talk

Political talk is an important aspect of deliberative democracy (Habermas, 2006) By political conversation, all kinds of political talk, discussion or argument should be included as long as they are voluntarily carried out by citizens. We think these types of political conversation happen before adolescents decide to take action on political activities and that it is important that adolescents learn to talk about politics to others. Thus, we hypothesized that adolescent political news use would show similar influence in initiating political talks to those they may not be familiar with.

Traditional Political Participation

Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978) defined political participation as the "legal activities by citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take." Usually these measures include such activities as voting, campaign contributions, and participating in a political protest.

Charity Activity

Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins and Delli Carpini (2009) suggest that hands-on participating with others toward the public good is closely related to more specific political participation. Even though what we will call charity activity is usually outside campaigns and political officials, it can have important impacts on political issues like public safely, education, and community development. McKinney, Kaid and Bystrom (2005) argued indeed that the driving force of democracy can be found in individual citizens' many acts of joining, volunteering, serving, attending, meeting, participating, giving and perhaps most importantly, cooperating with others (p. 6). For them, the simple act of voting is not the core value or practice fueling democracy. Instead, these actions of volunteerism are where the civic dialogues take place. Unlike traditional political campaign participation, volunteer activities involve the attention to the community, and its needs. Thus, we argue that charity is also an important aspect of political socialization.

Political Consumerism

Stolle, Hooghe, and Michelettie (2005) defined consumer politics as the selection of products "based on political or ethical considerations, or both" (Micheletti, Follesdal, & Stolle, 2003). Consumer politics are part of a broader activity that Bennett (1998) "lifestyle" politics, in which people participate in more informal groups that share similar interests. Zukin et al (2009) found that more Americans were involved in some kind of consumer activism than in any other political activity except voter registration and voting (p. 77).

Method

Survey data were collected from a three-wave panel of parents and youth (aged

12-17 at first test) in 2008 and 2009. The first wave was gathered between May 20 and June 25, 2008 by Synovate, a commercial survey research firm, using a four-page mailed questionnaire. The second wave was gathered from these same respondents between November 5 and December 10, 2008 (immediately after the Presidential election) again using a four-page mailed questionnaire. The third wave data were collected May-June, 2009, six months after the Presidential election.   Synovate employs a stratified quota sampling technique to recruit respondents. Initially, the survey firm acquires contact information for millions of Americans from commercial list brokers, who gather identifying information from drivers' license bureaus, telephone directories, and other centralized sources. Large subsets of these people are contacted via mail and asked to indicate whether they are willing to participate in periodic surveys. Small incentives are offered, such as pre-paid phone cards, for participation.   Further details of the sample features can be found in Shah, McLeod, & Lee, 2009.

Of the 4,000 wave 1 mail surveys distributed, 1,325 responses were received, which represents a response rate of 33.1% against the mailout. A small number of these responses were omitted due to incomplete or inconsistent information, resulting in a slightly smaller final sample. As a result, 1,255 questionnaires were mailed out for the second wave on November 4, 2008. Of the recontact surveys distributed, 738 were returned, for a panel retention rate of 55.7%. The third panel of the study that was fielded in May and June 2009, six months after Obama's election. Of the recontact surveys distributed, 305 were returned, for a panel retention rate of 41%. Variables examined in this study were identical in all three waves, except for changes in the political knowledge question.

Political interest ("I am interested in politics.") varied significantly from wave 1 (mean = 2.59, SD= 1.15) to wave 2 (mean = 3.0, SD = 1.11) to wave 3 (mean = 2.64, SD =1.14; F( ) = xxx, p < .01

Predictor variables

Political conversation with family was a combination of both parents' and children's response on how often they "talked about news or current events with family members" (See Table 1). Political curricula at schools index was created from five items: "Followed the news as part of class assignment," "Learned about how government works in class," "Discussed/debated political issues in class," "Participated in political role playing in class (mock trials, elections)," and "Encouraged to make up your own mind in class." Parents' political participation index was a 5-item index of the activities: "Contributed money for a charitable cause," "Wrote a letter or an email to a news organization," "Did volunteer work," "Worked on a community project," and "Contributed money to a political campaign."

Adolescents were asked about the number of days in a typical week they watched or read TV news, newspaper, and online news. *Television news* was a composite 3-item index of responses to viewing local television news, network television news, and morning television news programs (e.g. The Today Show, Good Morning America, or The Early News). *Print News* was a composite 2-item index of responses to reading a

print copy of a local newspaper and the school's student newspaper. Finally, *Online News* was a 3-item composite index of reading/viewing national newspaper websites, local newspaper websites, and TV news websites.

For our cognitive/attitudinal variables, the following were indexes comprised of statement measured on 5-point Likert scales (1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree). *Civic Mindedness* was created with 3 items: "I think it is important to get involved improving my community," "I think it is important to hear others' ideas even if they are different from mine," and "People should speak up when they oppose government's actions." *Persuasion efficacy* was a two-item index: "I am influential among my friends," and "My friends often seek my opinion about politics." *Elaboration* was computed with two items: "I try to connect what I see in the media to what I already know," and "I often recall what I encounter in the media later on and think about it" (See Table 1 for reliabilities and correlation).

[Insert Table 1 here]

Criterion Variables

Political participation

Principal factors extraction with varimax rotation was performed on 14 items measuring various political activities across three waves. Adolescents were asked the frequency of activity in the last three months on 8-point response scales (1=Not at all, 8=Very Frequently). The first factor was named *Classic Political Participation* (Variance explained Wave 1=.26, Wave 2=.28, Wave 3=.33). Items loaded on this factor were "Wrote a letter or email to a news organization," "Worked for a political party of candidate," "Displayed a political campaign button, sticker or sign," "Participated in a political protest activity," "Contributed money to a political campaign," and "Attended a political meeting, rally or a speech." (See Table 1 for reliabilities and descriptive statistics.)

The second factor was *Political Talk* (Variance explained Wave 1=.17, Wave 2=.18, Wave3=.19). The items loaded on this factor were "Talked about news and current events with friends," "Talked about news and current events with adults outside your family," and "Talked about news and current events with people who disagree with you."

A third factor was *Charity Activities* (Variance explained Wave 1=.16, Wave 2=.16, Wave3=.16). Items loaded were "Did volunteer work," "Worked on a community project," and "Raised money for charitable cause."

The fourth factor was *Political Consumerism* and the items loaded were "Boycotted products or companies that offend my values," and "Bought products from companies because they align with my values" (Variance explained Wave 1=.12, Wave 2=.12, Wave3=.13).

General political knowledge

We asked general political knowledge questions, such as information on the presidential candidate for the second wave, or identifying which party controls the congress in all three waves. Wave 1 had 8 questions, Wave 2 had 3 and Wave 3 had 6 questions in total. Although the questions were slightly different in wording across different waves, they were all asking about political candidates, presidents, political parties. The correct and incorrect answers were then added to create a political knowledge scale (Wave 1 M=4.11 SD=1.99; Wave 2 M=.98 SD=1.01; Wave 3 M=3.43 SD=1.82).

RESULTS

The three wave panel data we used for analysis had the same issue with every panel study: participants dropping out of the panels. To deal with the problem before we compared our hierarchical regression models across three different times, we calculated the frequency of several demographic variables and examined whether there were any stark differences in the sample characteristics (See Table 2). All the demographic variables we used, parents' gender, parents' political affiliation, parents' education level, the type of school the child attends and the child's gender and political affiliation, were found to be remarkably similar across all three waves, providing us the justification to claim that whatever differences we find in different waves was not likely a result of differences in the sample characteristics.

The next step was to test the influence of structural variables and cognitive variables on different types of political participation and political knowledge. We set up hierarchical regression models for each wave predicting different types of political participation and political knowledge with demographics at the first level[1], political conversation with family members, school education, and parents' political participation at the second level, the media use variables at the third level (structural variables), and civic mindedness, persuasion efficacy, and elaboration at the last level (cognitive/attitudinal variables). Total $R2$ for all different models across three different waves ranged from .17 to .62, suggesting a large variance explained by our model (See Tables 3, 4, 5).

For wave 1, we simply entered the blocks of variables described above.   But for waves 2 and 3, we entered as a control the value of that variable in the previous wave. For example, in the equation for campaign participation, we controlled youth campaign participation from wave 1. Thus for waves 2 and 3 we are examining the change in the dependent variables from the prior wave.

The first hypothesis predicted the influence of political talk with family and parents' political participation on political knowledge. Across all three waves political conversation with family members significantly and positively influenced political knowledge. However, parents' political participation activities did not influence the youth political knowledge (See Tables 3, 4, 5).

H2 predicted that political conversation with family and parents' political participation will increase youth political participation. The second (or third) block in the hierarchical regression model all showed a significant increase in R^2 across three waves. For campaign engagement, family political talk did not predict classic campaign engagement across all three waves. However, parental political participation significantly influenced youth classic campaign engagement. Political talk was significantly predicted by family political conversation in all three waves, but parents' political participation did not predict the political conversation outside of family. Parents political participation significantly predicted Charity Activity in all waves, but political conversation with family did not. Political Consumerism was only predicted by political talk and parental political participation in Wave 1, but not on the other waves.   Thus H2 was partially supported (See Tables 3, 4, 5).

Our next set of hypotheses concerned the influence of political education at school on political participation and knowledge. H3 predicted that political knowledge would be significantly predicted by political education at school. This was partially supported. For Wave 1 and Wave 2, political education at school significantly and positively influenced youth general political knowledge, but did not reach significance at Wave 3. School political education also significantly predicted all four of the participation indices, supporting H4 of our study.

We next examined the influence of news media on political knowledge and participation. The R^2 change for news media block in the hierarchical model was significant for classic campaign engagement and political talk for Wave 1, all political participation variables in Wave 2, and campaign engagement and political talk in Wave 3. None of the news media variables predicted political knowledge except newspaper use negatively predicted the general political knowledge on Wave 3, thus failing to support H5, H7, and H9. Television news use positively influenced the classic campaign engagement, political talk, and charity activity in Wave 1, but only the classic campaign engagement and political in Wave 3. Thus, H6 was partially supported.

Newspaper use predicted campaign engagement, political talk and charity activity in Wave 1, only community engagement in Wave 2, and failed to predict any political participation indices for Wave 3, thus partially supporting H8. Finally, for the media block, online news use significantly predicted the campaign engagement, political talk, and political consumerism in Waves 1 and 2, but only predicted the political talk for Wave 3, partially supporting H10.

Our final set of hypotheses dealt with the cognitive/attitudinal variables: civic mindedness, persuasion efficacy, and news elaboration. The final block of the hierarchical regression model had significant R2 change for all dependent variables on Wave 1, only classic campaign engagement and political talk in Wave 2, and political talk and charity activities in Wave 3.

Inconsistent with H11, civic mindedness failed to predict political knowledge in any of the three waves. Civic mindedness negatively predicted classic campaign activities and positively predicted charity activity in Wave 1 and Wave 3, providing some support for H12.   (Densmore comment: THIS IS DISCOURAGING!

Persuasion efficacy positively predicted political knowledge in Wave 1, but did not have any influence in the other two waves., thus providing only small support for H13. It positively influenced different types of political participation indices: campaign participation, political talk, and charity activity in Wave 1, campaign participation and political talk in Wave 2, and was negatively related to charity activity in Wave 3, providing mixed support for H14.

Finally, elaboration only predicted political knowledge in Wave 1. It did not positively predict any political participation variable except political consumerism in Wave 1, and political talk in Wave 3. Elaboration was negatively related to charity activity in Wave 3.   Thus there was little support for H15 and H16.

DISCUSSION

There are three highly significant findings in the study. First, in spite of participant loss over the year-long time period examined, the variables examined here were quite stable, even though political interest immediately after the 2008 Presidential election was significantly higher than six months prior or after.   Second, although there were some variations in the exact pattern of predictions of political knowledge and participation, the family, school, media and three cognitive/attitudinal variables predicted these outcomes well. And third, the criterion variables are predicted by quite different combinations of the structural and process variables. "Political engagement" is clearly not a monolith, but a cluster of knowledge and behaviors.

In wave 1 family political talk, school political education, persuasion efficacy and elaboration accounted for 11% of the variation in political knowledge. In wave 2 where we were predicting change in political knowledge from prior time periods, the structural variables family political talk, school political education, and parent political participation were the significant predictors. In wave 3 , only the political talk variable remained significant. This is likely because the effects of the knowledge levels at the prior time periods had captured most of the effects of the other variables. This demonstrates the great important of political family talk, regardless of where the current political process is.

SO THE CHALLENGE IS HOW TO CREATE FAMILY POLITICAL TALK

This contrasts with the pattern for traditional campaign participation. The structural variables school political education and parent participation are consistent predictors of the youth's participation in all three waves. In wave 1, television, print, and online news have strong positive impact on participation, although print effects disappear in waves 2 and 3 and the effect of the other two media are weaker. Civic mindedness has a negative effect on political participation, supporting the notion of Zukin et al (2009)

that charity activity and political participation are alternative approaches. As we would expect, then, civic mindedness generally has a highly positive effect on Charity Activity. It is interesting that so many of the variables combine to affect political participation, regardless of wave. It appears to require multiple impacts to raise political participation levels.

THIS IS THE CRITICAL FINDING – NEED MULTIPLE IMPACTS.

Family political talk and school political education consistently predict youth political talk. Like political participation, in wave 1 exposure to the mass media is important, but their effects are diminished in waves 2 and 3, again probably because their effects are captured with the prior-time-period controls. Persuasion efficacy and elaboration have very large effects on political talk in wave 1, although their effect is diminished in waves 2 and 3.

School, parent participation, television and newspaper, civic mindedness and elaboration are important predictors of Charity Activity in wave 1. The school and parent participation effects remain strong in waves 2 and 3, but the effects of the other variables are lessened and somewhat inconsistent. Again, it appears that the structural variables remain strong influences even on changes in charity behavior.

Political consumerism in wave 1 is significantly affected by all three structural variables, family talk, school, and parental participation, and also strongly by online news use. School and online news remain significant at wave 2, but at wave 3 online news effect disappears. The fact that online news is so important for political consumerism is consistent with the idea that these behaviors are more individualist and may occur earlier for youth who spend time online.

The next step should be more detailed analysis of the interactive relationships among the structural and process variables. Multicollinearity among those variables is clearly a problem and will need to be sorted out in a way beyond the scope of the present study.   But it does appear that across a year's ups and downs in political interest, youth knowledge and participation and its antecedents remain fairly stable and consistently interrelated.

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Table 1. Sample demographics of Wave 1, Wave 2, Wave 3

Variable	Categories		Wave 1 N (Valid %)	Wave 2 N (Valid %)	Wave 3 N (Valid %)
Gender	Parent	Male	212 (16.5)	115 (16.3)	69 (18.4)
		Female	1075 (83.5)	592 (83.7)	307 (81.6)
	Child	Male	629 (50.5)	343 (49.2)	181(49.1)
		Female	617 (49.5)	354 (50.8)	188(50.9)
Race	Parent	White	1059 (85)	580 (84.8)	307(85.3)
		Black	106 (8.5)	59 (8.6)	29(8.1)
		Native American	10 (.8)	8 (1.2)	2 (.6)
		Asian	17 (1.4)	10 (1.5)	10 (2.6)
		Pacific Islander	3 (.3)	2 (.3)	2(.6)
		Multi-Racial	50 (4.0)	25 (3.7)	10(2.8)
	Child	White	988 (80.9)	552 (81.2)	291(81.1)
		Black	103 (8.4)	63 (9.3)	31(8.6)
		Native American	10 (.8)	8 (1.2)	2(.6)
		Asian	17 (1.4)	10 (1.5)	10(2.8)
		Pacific Islander	7 (.6)	2 (.3)	2(.6)
		Multi-Racial	96 (7.9)	45 (6.6)	23(6.4)
Political Affiliation	Parent	Strong Democrat	76 (8.0)	43 (6.4)	19(5.3)
		Democrat	373 (32.1)	202 (30.1)	106(29.4)
		Independent	302 (29.0)	173 (25.7)	100(27.8)
		Republican	383 (25.4)	205 (30.5)	108(30.0)
		Strong Republican	97 (5.5)	49 (7.3)	27(7.5)
	Child	Strong Democrat	43 (3.9)	54 (8)	18(5)
		Democrat	339 (30.7)	217 (32.1)	88(24.5)
		Independent	401 (36.3)	196 (29.0)	149(41.5)
		Republican	274 (24.8)	172 (25.4)	88(24.5)
		Strong Republican	48 (4.3)	37 (5.5)	16(4.5)
Type of school	Public School		1081 (86.0)	602 (86.9)	314(85.6)

	Private School	67 (5.3)	32 (4.6)	18(4.9)
	Religious School	43 (4.3)	32 (4.6)	19(5.2)
	Home School	55 (4.4)	27 (3.9)	16(4.4)
Mother Education	Some High School	55 (4.3)	26 (3.7)	16(4.3)
	Graduated High School	562 (44.3)	305 (43.6)	153(41.1)
	Graduated Trade School	138 (10.9)	85 (12.2)	43(11.6)
	Graduated College	410 (32.3)	223 (31.9)	120(32.3)
	MA, MS, JD, Ph.D., MD	103 (8.1)	60 (8.6)	40(10.8)
Father's Education	Some High School	127 (10.5)	69(10.4)	33(9.5)
	Graduated High School	515 (42.4)	276(41.6)	137(39.5)
	Graduated Trade School	148 (12.2)	85(12.8)	41(11.8)
	Graduated College	297 (24.5)	169(25.5)	100(28.8)
	MA, MS, JD, PH.D, MD	127 (10.5)	65(9.8)	36(9.5)
Total		1291	711	376
Missing		77 (6%)	47 (6.6%)	19(5%)

Table 2. Reliabilities estimates and descriptive statistics for composite indexes

Composite Variables	No. of items in index	Cronbach's alpha	Mean (SD)
Parent Civic Participation (scale: 1-8)	5	.73 (W1)	3.06(1.23)
		.72 (W2)	2.57(1.46)
		.77 (W3)	2.75(1.97)
School Political Education (scale: 1-8)	5	.86 (W1)	3.51(1.89)
		.90 (W2)	3.55(2.01)
		.92 (W3)	3.46 (1.97)
Classic Liberalism (scale: 1-5)	3	.65(W1)	3.97 (0.64)
		.66(W2)	3.86(7.49)
		.61(W3)	3.91(.71)
TV News (scale: 0-7)	3	.78 (W1)	1.53 (1.84)
		.77(W2)	1.77(1.80)
		.82(W3)	1.85(1.85)
Print (scale: 0-7)	3	.66(W1)	1.11 (1.20)
		.72(W2)	1.27(1.46)
		.65(W3)	1.13(1.21)
Online News Sites (scale: 0-7)	3	.66(W1)	0.51 (1.00)
		.72(W2)	.57(1.05)
		.65(W3)	.52(1.00)
Classic Political Campaign Participation (scale: 1-8)	6	.85(W1)	1.32 (1.05)
		.87(W2)	1.41(.98)
		.90(W3)	1.40(1.04)
Political Talk outside of Family (scale:	4	.87(W1)	3.26 (1.82)

1-8)		.88(W2)	3.70(1.94)
		.89(W3)	3.24(1.83)
Charitable Volunteering (scale: 1-8)	3	.85(W1)	3.14 (2.05)
		.85(W2)	2.83(1.93)
		.86(W3)	3.03(2.05)
Boycotting Activities (Scale 1-8)	2	.78(W1)	1.76(1.55)
		.84(W2)	1.72(1.53)
		.86(W3)	1.88(1.63)

2-item Variables	Pearson's r	p-value	Mean (SD)
Family Political Talk (scale: 1-8)	.41(W1)	<.001	5.09(2.10)
	.37(W2)		5.27(1.90)
	.45(W3)		4.74 (1.86)
News Elaboration (scale: 1-5)	.63(W1)	<.001	4.00(.94)
	.65(W2)		3.34(.92)
	.66(W3)		3.27 (0.82)
Child Opinion Leadership (scale: 1-5)	.38(W1)	<.001	2.73(.94)
	.47(W2)		2.79(.97)
	.48(W3)		2.68 (.99)