

Socialization of lifestyle and conventional politics among early and late adolescents



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25 February 2014

Received in revised form 10 June 2015

Accepted 21 June 2015

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Political socialization

Adolescents

Civic engagement

Political consumerism

Communication mediation

ABSTRACT

This study uses national survey data from 1231 parent-children dyads to examine the socialization of political participation among adolescents (ages 12–17). In particular, we expand on existing models of political socialization to account for the incorporation of lifestyle practices into the political repertoires of today's youth. We found in comparison to future voting intention, which is rooted largely in background characteristics and the direct influence of socialization agents, political consumerism is fostered more indirectly through communication practices. Moreover, we found some meaningful age differences in the associations among key variables in the model. In particular, we observed a shift from a greater emphasis of socialization agents among younger adolescents to a greater emphasis of communication practices, particularly online communication, among older adolescents. We argue, for older adolescents especially, the controllability afforded by interactive digital media plays a critical role in the cultivation of political behaviors that address individual lifestyle concerns.

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Research on youth engagement over the last few decades reveals contention among scholars regarding the civic potential of young citizens. Indeed, scholarly work illustrating diminishing levels of newspaper readership, confidence in government institutions, and political participation has led to a widely publicized view of today's youth as apathetic and disengaged (Mindich, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Turow, 1997). These scholars argue that the younger generations, in particular, have largely withdrawn from public life (e.g., Putnam, 2000).

However, in response to such pessimistic and provocative claims, those subscribing to the engaged youth paradigm contend participation in public life has not declined so much as it has shifted to new realms (Bennett, 2008; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). They explain, as personal identity concerns replace a sense of duty to participate in conventional political activities (Bennett, 1998, 2008; Dalton, 2009), a new locus of citizenship has been found in "life-politics" (Scammell, 2000, p. 351, see also Giddens, 1991). For these scholars, the notion of youth as apathetic results from a narrow attention to dutiful, or conventional, forms of engagement (O'Toole, 2004; see also Bennett, 2008; Dalton, 2009).

New research questions emerging from this approach to youth engagement include how lifestyle politics are developed over the course of young people's lives and how its processes differ from those of conventional politics (e.g., Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2011). To address these questions, this study investigates how the socialization of one particular form of lifestyle politics, political consumerism, compares to the socialization of electoral participation. In particular, we use national survey data collected from parents and children in the United States to examine the roles of parents, school, peers, and communication practices in fostering political consumerism and future voting intention among adolescents.

Because adolescence is a period marked by significant change, both socially and cognitively, we also draw an important and relevant distinction between youth in the early stages of adolescence (12–14 year olds) and those in the later stages (15–17 year olds). We argue this distinction is particularly relevant for understanding the socialization of political consumerism and other forms of lifestyle politics that are rooted in personal identity concerns. Accordingly, we take this distinction into account in our examination of the associations among socialization agents, communication practices, and youth political participation.

Political consumerism as lifestyle politics

Political consumerism is the selection of products "based on political or ethical considerations, or both" (Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005,

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p. 246). This may take the form of boycotting (i.e., avoiding products or services) or “buycotting” (i.e., rewarding companies for engaging in responsible practices). For example, by refusing to wear clothing from companies that use sweatshop labor or using an eco-friendly reusable water bottle, young citizens can make a statement to themselves and others about their social and political values and help to bring about change regarding responsible corporate practices and sustainability. As these examples illustrate, political consumerism, as a form of lifestyle politics, provides a viable outlet for young citizens to address issues central to their identities and empowers them to act as “important agents of political change” through their everyday choices (Micheletti, 2010, p. 16). Bennett (2008) notes the sharp rise in political consumerism among 15–25 year olds reflects a larger trend toward an actualizing model of citizenship whereby youth find meaning in civic activities that center on their personal values.

Although some scholars express concern that participation in such individualized forms of politics has displaced participation in conventional forms of engagement (e.g., Putnam, 2000), others offer a more optimistic outlook. They contend participation in lifestyle politics, such as political consumerism, expands young citizens’ political repertoires (Bennett, 2008; Dalton, 2009) and provides them with opportunities to develop civic competencies in their everyday lives, such as expression of voice, cooperation, and collective action (Micheletti, 2010). Scholars have also shown that adult political consumers tend to endorse democratic ideals of public-spiritedness (Scammell, 2000) and solidarity (Dalton, 2009), have an awareness of and concern for issues of global importance (Micheletti, 2010), and are actually more likely than non-political consumers to engage in conventional political activities such as voting and working for a political party (Stolle, Micheletti, & Berlin, 2010). Accordingly, understanding how political consumerism is socialized among youth holds much value for scholars.

Political socialization

Agents

Across much of the political socialization literature, parents, school, and peers are regarded as important agents in shaping young citizens’ political identities. Research has shown that socialization begins early in the home. Parents help to shape political identity by “framing a view of the world and how one should relate to ‘others’ in that world” (Flanagan & Faison, 2001, p. 10), and they play an important role, along with siblings and extended family, “in igniting and passing on a spirit and praxis of participation” (Youniss et al., 2002, p. 130). Although this top-down view has been challenged by those advocating “trickle-up” socialization (Lee, Shah, & McLeod, 2013; McDevitt & Chaffee, 2000), parent role modeling and frequent political discussion in the home are consistently found to be important precursors to participation among 15–25 year olds in a host of political activities, both conventional and unconventional (Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003).¹

School also constitutes an important venue for political socialization. Although early approaches to civic education were textbook-bound and focused narrowly on the formal aspects of politics, recent approaches have incorporated more interactive, participatory learning (Campbell, 2008; Feldman, Pasek, Romer, & Jamieson, 2007; Hess, 2002; Torney-Purta, 2002). Empirical evidence from civic education programs such as Kids Voting USA (e.g., McDevitt & Kioussis, 2006, 2007) and Student Voices (e.g., Feldman et al., 2007) supports the educational benefits

of incorporating interactive components for students’ civic learning and future engagement (e.g., McDevitt & Kioussis, 2007). Bennett (2008) explains that such approaches to civic education are better able to appeal to the learning styles of today’s young citizens who seek opportunities to voice concern about issues central to their identities.

Lastly, peer groups play a critical role in political socialization, both formally and informally through participation in youth-led activist groups (Gordon & Taft, 2010), extracurricular activities, and interaction at school (Flanagan & Faison, 2001; Zukin et al., 2006). Regarding the latter, Lee et al. (2013) observe, “young people who interact with peers who value knowledge and discussion of public affairs content are likely to be encouraged to consume and reflect on news content” (p. 5). Such peer-to-peer socialization experiences provide youth with opportunities for developing important civic competencies and values such as self-determination, tolerance, and feelings of solidarity (Flanagan & Faison, 2001).

Communication practices

Although early models of political socialization implied a top-down process in which youth were construed as the passive recipients of information handed down directly from parents, teachers, etc., shifts in psychological and education theory have stressed the importance of considering youth as active agents in their own development (Haste, 2010; Lerner, 2004; Sherrod et al., 2010). Specifically, scholars have argued that youth actively create meaning and a sense of identity from their everyday experiences and interaction with socio-cultural contexts (Conover & Searing, 1994; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Metzger & Smetana, 2010). The trajectory of political development, therefore, is both socially constructed and communicatively mediated by youth as participants (Chung & Probert, 2011; Lerner, 2004). It is this sense that Youniss et al. (2002) limit the role of adults to contributing the raw material, explaining that “it is ultimately youth themselves who synthesize this material, individually and collaboratively, in ways that makes sense to them” (p. 133; see also Yates & Youniss, 1999). Communication scholars promote a similar view of youth as active agents who seek out and use information to interpret the world around them (Lee et al., 2013; McDevitt & Kioussis, 2006; McLeod, 2000; McLeod, Shah, Hess, & Lee, 2010). These scholars focus specifically on the role of such practices as political discussion, news consumption, and use of interactive digital media for political purposes in mediating the influence of socialization agents and facilitating pathways to participation.

In terms of the contributions of these communication practices to political socialization, interpersonal political discussion promotes the development of communication skills such as opinion expression and active listening (McLeod et al., 2010). It also contributes to the emergence of democratic norms that are crucial for engaging in public life (McDevitt & Kioussis, 2007). With regard to news consumption, the control that adolescents exert over their own media diet makes this agent of socialization very different from others (e.g., parents, school, peers), who may have a vested interest in passing on their beliefs and values (Arnett, 1995; Wrong, 1994). Indeed, Bennett, Freelon, and Wells (2010) note that today’s youth approach news media with a healthy skepticism and “sample their information more broadly as media genres blur and information channels proliferate” (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 399; see also Bennett, 2008). Lastly, use of interactive digital media contributes significantly to the development and maturation of political identity by empowering youth to be active agents in the creation and dissemination of information (Haste, 2010; McLeod et al., 2010). Text messaging, e-mail, and on-line video sharing, for example, enable public self-expression and information sharing, both of which are important civic learning opportunities (Bennett et al., 2010). They also provide youth with the means to voice concerns directly relevant to their lifestyles (Bennett, 2008), such as vegetarianism, green living, and socially-responsible consumption practices.

¹ It is important to note that in highlighting the importance of these socialization agents, we are not arguing that the process of political socialization is merely top-down or unidirectional. Rather, we view young children as active agents who are cognitively and emotionally maturing, and whose construction of meaning and identity is embedded within a socio-cultural network of influences that include these key socialization agents (Lerner, 2004; Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010).

Developmental differences

In exploring the political development of youth, we also recognize that adolescence is a period marked by significant change (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). As adolescents get older, they spend less time with their parents and more time with peers (Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996). Parents' control over their children's activities and friendships steadily decreases throughout the adolescent years, as does the degree to which adolescents confide in their parents (Keijsers, Frijns, Brnaje, & Meeus, 2009; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Although initially, many young adolescents transfer the emotional dependency they had previously on their parents onto their peers, by late adolescence, their susceptibility to peer influence declines and they become more autonomous (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986).

Adolescents also make ongoing advancements in terms of cognitive abilities such as problem solving, reasoning and information processing (Anderson, Anderson, & Garth, 2001; Luna, Garver, Urban, Lazar, & Sweeney, 2004). These social and cognitive changes, coupled with the physiological changes taking place (for a review, see Dorn & Biro, 2011), combine to create a time period filled with significant fluctuation (Arnett, 1999). Moreover, in addition to coping with these changes, adolescents also take on the important task of identity development. This occurs gradually such that adolescents' sense of identity strengthens and matures over time (Meeus, 2011; Waterman, 1999).

Many developmental scholars note that such dynamic changes during adolescence have important relevance to our understanding of young people's socialization into politics (Metzger & Smetana, 2010), as the development of citizenship practices and orientations is "integrally related to other aspects of human development" (Flanagan, 2003, p. 257; see also Wilkenfeld, Lauckhardt, & Torney-Purta, 2010). Metzger and Smetana (2010) focus on the development of social and cognitive reasoning, arguing this is crucial to adolescents' understanding of political issues and their decisions to join political parties, engage in protests, boycott, etc. These scholars observe that political reasoning generally begins during early adolescence, around age 10, and develops markedly as youth transition into late adolescence (Gallatin, 1980; Gallatin & Adelson, 1970). Adelson and O'Neil (1966), for example, found there is an ongoing development among youth in their political thoughts and understanding such that older adolescents have more contextualized and nuanced political understanding than their younger counterparts (see also Owen & Dennis, 1987). These findings square nicely with scholars' observations that there are politically significant transitions from early to late adolescence in terms of identity formation, cognitive development, parental and peer relationships, school environment, and communication practices (Flanagan, 2004; Jennings & Stoker, 2001; Ruck, Peterson-Badali, & Day, 2002; Smetana et al., 2006).

We argue that when socialization is examined within the framework of these developmental trajectories, the processes that shape political development likely shift as young people construct a sense of identity. Accordingly, we draw a distinction between early (12–14 year olds) and late (15–17 year olds) adolescents (e.g., Inderbitzen-Nolan & Walters, 2000; Peter, Valkenburg, & Schouten, 2006; Valkenburg & Peter, 2008) to understand how youth political socialization may be influenced by changes that occur during adolescence. In making such a distinction, however, we note that the changes are inherently relational and dynamic (Cook, 1985; see also Berman, 1997). That is, adolescents go through such changes in their relationships to various contextual agents such as parents, school, peers, and media. We also acknowledge these are not hard age-bound stages, but nonetheless useful distinctions for observing differences in how youth interact with key socialization agents during adolescence. It is with these developmental trajectories in mind that we propose and test our theorized model of youth political participation.

Hypotheses and research questions

Theorized model of youth political participation

We propose a model of political participation (i.e., political consumerism and future voting intention) that includes socialization by parents, school, and peers directly as well as indirectly through communication practices (see Fig. 1). In addition to the anticipated direct path from parent role modeling of political participation to child participation (Andolina et al., 2003), we examine the direct and mediated paths from parent encouragement of political talk and news use, classroom deliberation, and peer norms to participation outcomes.

Regarding the associations between socialization agent variables and communication practices, we expect parent encouragement of political talk to be associated with face-to-face political talk, and parent encouragement of news use to be associated with a habit of consuming news. We also expect classroom deliberation and the presence of peer norms for being informed about news and current events to be more broadly associated with face-to-face political talk, news habit, and online political messaging. Finally, regarding the associations between communication practices and participation outcomes, we expect face-to-face political talk to be associated with news habit, as adolescents may turn to news media to glean information for use in future discussions (McDevitt & Kioussis, 2007), and for face-to-face political talk and news habit, in turn, to be associated with online political messaging. Lastly, as important mediators of prior agents (Lee et al., 2013), we expect all three communication practices to be associated with both political consumerism and future voting intention.

Comparing socialization of political consumerism and future voting intention

Within this overall model of youth political participation, we explore how the processes of lifestyle politics differ from those of conventional politics. In particular, we explore potential differences in the direct and indirect paths from socialization agent variables to political consumerism and future voting intention. First, we ask to what extent political consumerism, a form of lifestyle politics rooted in personal identity concerns, is facilitated through mediation by communication practices (face-to-face political talk, news habit, and online political messaging). Second, we ask to what extent future voting intention, a conventional political activity rooted in duty and obligation, is facilitated through the direct influence of socialization agents.

Differences between early and late adolescents

Moreover, we explore how developmental changes during adolescence shape the influence of the various socialization agents and communication practices involved in political socialization. Given the shifting nature of identity, cognitive ability, as well as familial, peer, and classroom environments, we expect that the core agents of socialization may work through communication practices to shape political participation in different ways across early and late adolescents. Accordingly, we develop and test a developmental hypothesis. In particular, we expect parents, school, and peers to play more forceful roles in early adolescence – when external agents of socialization occupy youth attention (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986) – and communication practices to play larger roles in late adolescence – when young people have developed the cognitive abilities to make revisions consistent with their developing identities (Luna et al., 2004; Metzger & Smetana, 2010).

Method

Data

To test the theorized model relating socialization agents, communication practices, and political participation (i.e., political consumerism

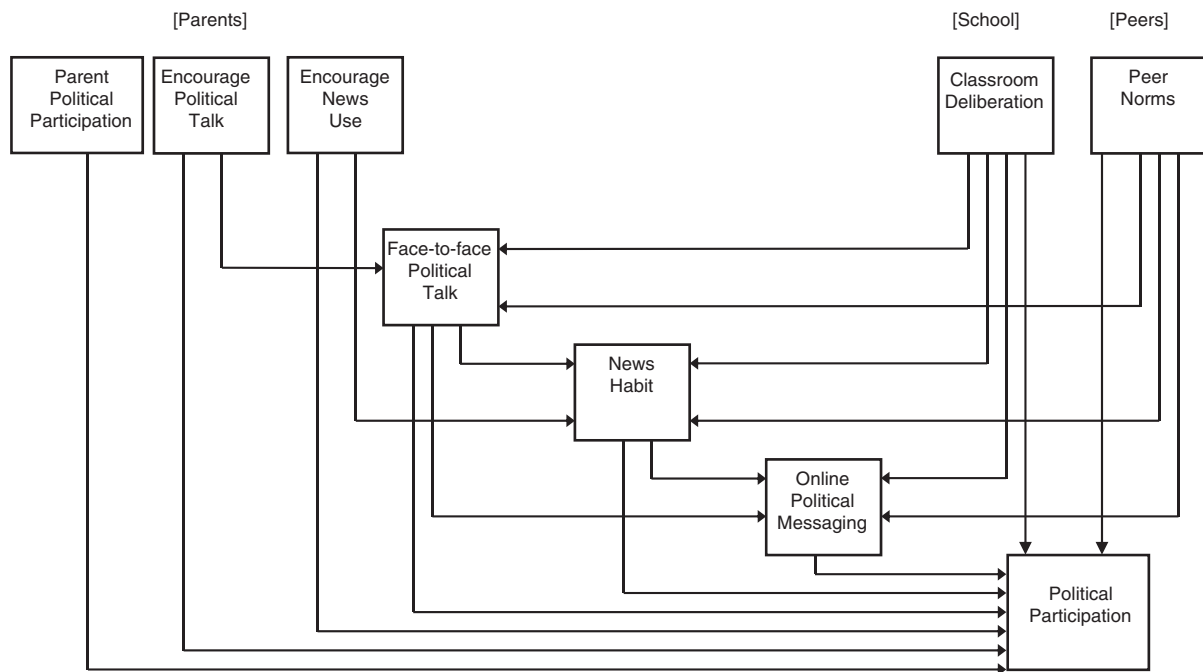


Fig. 1. Model relating socialization agents, communication practices, and political participation among adolescents.

and future voting intention) among early and late adolescents, we use data from Wave 1 of the Future Voters Study, a national survey of parents and children conducted in the United States by Synovate in the spring of 2008. Data were collected by means of a stratified quota sampling technique. First, large subsets of people are contacted via mail and asked whether they are willing to participate in periodic surveys for small incentives. Then, a sample is drawn from those who agree to participate, reflecting the population within each of the nine Census divisions in terms of the following properties: household size and income, population density of city of residence, and age of respondent. Lastly, this sample is adjusted to compensate for expected differences in response rates within a range of subcategories including race, gender, and marital status.

Using this stratified sampling technique, a total of 4000 surveys were mailed to households with children 12–17 years old. The survey was divided into three sections: Section 1 asked about the parent's and child's background; Section 2 asked about the child's attitudes and behaviors; and Section 3 asked about the parent's attitudes and behaviors. One parent per selected household was asked to complete Section 1 of the survey and then pass the survey to the child who had most recently celebrated a birthday and was between 12–17 years of age. Once the child answered the survey questions in Section 2, it was returned to the parent to complete and mail back. Parents and children were asked to complete their sections independently, and to provide additional privacy, the parent sections were included on the cover sheet and back page of the survey, whereas the child section was included in a separate interior portion.

Of the 4000 surveys mailed out, 1325 responses were received, which represents a response rate of 33.1% (for additional methodological details, see Shah, McLeod, & Lee, 2009). Due to incomplete responses and inconsistent information, a small number of these responses were omitted, resulting in a sample of 1,291. Additionally, for the analyses that compare models across age groups, we had to omit responses for 60 participants who did not report their age, resulting in a sample of 1231.

Among child participants, 50.5% were male, 80.9% were white, and the mean age was 14.67 years. Among parent participants, 83.5% were mothers (or stepmothers) and had a median household income of \$50,000–\$59,999.

Age groups

In order to compare the associations among socialization agents, communication practices, and political participation over the course of adolescence, participants were divided into early adolescents (12–14 years of age, $n = 614$) and late adolescents (15–17 years of age, $n = 617$).

Political participation

Political consumerism

Political consumerism was measured on an 8-point scale (1 = not at all, 8 = very frequently) by two items asking participants how often they engaged in the following activities during the past six months: “Boycotted products or companies that offend my values” and “Bought products from companies because they align with my values” ($r = .65$). This measure was then recoded into a dichotomous measure of political consumerism (0 = did not engage in political consumerism, 1 = engaged in political consumerism). Within the past 6 months, 28.4% of early adolescents and 31.4% of late adolescents reported engaging in political consumerism.

Future voting intention

Future voting intention was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) using an item asking participants to rate their agreement with the following statement: “Once I am 18, I expect I will vote regularly” ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.12$).

Socialization agents and communication practices

Parents

Parent socialization was captured by three measures: parent role modeling, parent encouragement of political talk, and parent encouragement of news use. Parent political consumerism was measured on an 8-point scale (1 = not at all, 8 = very frequently) by two items asking parents how often they engaged in the following activities during the past six months: “Boycotted products or companies that offend my values” and “Bought products from companies because they align with my values” (parents of early adolescents: $M = 2.88$, $SD = 2.23$,

$r = .69$; parents of late adolescents: $M = 3.10$, $SD = 2.44$, $r = .76$). Parent voting was measured by an item that asked whether they voted in their state's recent primary/caucus (58% indicated that they voted).

Parent encouragement was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) by two items asking parents to rate their agreement with the following statements: "I often encourage my child to talk about politics" (early adolescents: $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.13$; late adolescents: $M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.16$) and "I often encourage my child to follow the news" (early adolescents: $M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.05$; late adolescents: $M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.06$).

School

School socialization was captured by child participation in classroom deliberation. This was measured on an 8-point scale (1 = not at all, 8 = very frequently) by five items asking participants how often they engaged in the following activities in school during the past six months: "Followed the news as part of a class assignment," "Learned about how government works in class," "Discussed/debated political or social issues in class," "Participated in political role playing in class (mock trials, elections)," and "Encouraged to make up your own mind about issues in class" (early adolescents: $M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.81$, $\alpha = .86$; late adolescents: $M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.95$, $\alpha = .87$).

Peers

Lastly, peer socialization was captured by the presence of peer norms for being informed about news and current events. This was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) by an item asking participants to rate their agreement with the following statement: "Among my friends, it's important to know what's going on in the world" (early adolescents: $M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.05$; late adolescents: $M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.05$).

Communication practices

Communication practices included face-to-face political talk, news habit, and online political messaging. Face-to-face political talk was measured on an 8-point scale (1 = not at all, 8 = very frequently) by asking participants how frequently they talk about news and current events with family members, friends, and adults outside their family during the past 6 months (early adolescents: $M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.88$, $\alpha = .85$; late adolescents: $M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.89$, $\alpha = .88$).

News habit was measured by 21 items asking participants how many days each week they consume the following types of news: morning news, national nightly news, local news about your viewing area, news magazine shows, CNN cable news programs, Fox cable news programs, a print copy of a national newspaper, national newspaper websites, a print copy of a local newspaper, local newspaper websites, your school's student newspaper, news magazines – print or online, online-only news magazines, conservative political blogs, liberal political blogs, TV news websites, political candidates' websites, conservative talk radio, news programming on NPR, news reports on music radio, and Christian television and radio programs. Responses were recoded so that consuming a particular type of news at least one day each week was coded as 1, and not watching was coded as 0. An index was created by summing across the recoded items so that higher scores represented having a more varied news diet (early adolescents: $M = 4.77$, $SD = 3.92$, $KR-20 = .84$, late adolescents: $M = 5.10$, $SD = 3.72$, $KR-20 = .80$). This measure of news habit was based on Massanari and Howard's (2011) call for measures of "omnivorous" news habits instead of separate measures of news consumption by medium or source.

Online political messaging was measured on an 8-point scale (1 = not at all, 8 = very frequently) by four items asking participants how often they engaged in the following activities during the past six months: "Exchanged political emails with friends and family," "Forwarded the link to a political video or news article," "Received a link to a political video or news article," and "Sent or received a text

message about politics" (early adolescents: $M = 1.35$, $SD = 0.97$, $\alpha = .88$; late adolescents: $M = 1.43$, $SD = 1.05$, $\alpha = .87$).

Control variables

Demographic control variables included gender and race of child, as well as parents' household income and level of education. Parents' level of education was measured by a combined index of mother's/stepmother's and father's/stepfather's level of education, with educational attainment categories recoded to reflect the number of years of education ($M = 13.77$, $SD = 2.00$). These variables are included as controls as the characteristics an individual is born with (e.g., gender, minority status, parents' education) are among the important contributors to citizen engagement (Zukin et al., 2006; see also Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). Among teens in particular, being female and growing up in a family with a higher household income emerge as positive predictors of political participation (Zukin et al., 2006). Also, in the specific context of political consumerism, those with greater wealth can be expected to have greater opportunity to express their political concerns through consumption-related activities (Friedland, Rojas, & Bode, 2012).

Results

Path analysis using weighted least squares with adjusted means and variances (WLSMV) was conducted using Mplus to examine the theorized associations among socialization agents, communication practices, and political participation among adolescents, as depicted in Fig. 1. In an effort to examine to what extent the processes of lifestyle politics (political consumerism) differ from those of conventional politics (future voting intention), particular attention was paid to comparing the contributions of socialization agents – both directly as well as indirectly through communication practices – to these distinct forms of political participation. Additionally, multiple group path analysis was conducted to further examine how these processes differ across younger and older adolescents. Across both models, all paths control for gender and race of child, as well as parents' household income and level of education. Table 1 reports the correlations between all variables in the model.

Political participation in the overall sample

Results indicate the model relating socialization agents and communication practices to political consumerism and future voting in the overall sample fits the data well ($CFI = 0.98$, $RMSEA = 0.05$).

The results of the direct paths are shown in Table 2. These results reveal some similarities, but also many key differences in the direct contributions of socialization agents to political consumerism and future voting intention. Before discussing these differences, it is important to also note differences that emerged in the contributions of the demographic control variables to each of these participation outcomes. Whereas none of the control variables was significantly associated with political consumerism, being male, white, and having parents with a high income and level of education were all significantly associated with future voting. Regarding the paths from socialization agent variables, whereas only parent role modeling (parent political consumerism) and classroom deliberation were significantly associated with political consumerism, parent role modeling (parent voting), parent encouragement of political talk, classroom deliberation, and peer norms for being informed all were significantly associated with future voting. However, parent encouragement of news use was not associated with either participation outcome.

The results of the indirect paths, shown in Table 3, also reveal some key differences in the mediation of political consumerism and future voting intention by communication practices. Parent encouragement of political talk, classroom deliberation, and peer norms all had significant indirect associations with political consumerism through all three

Table 1
Correlations among modeled variables.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
1. Male														
2. White	0.00													
3. HH income	−0.01	0.15*												
4. Parent education	−0.02	0.03	0.45*											
5. Parent political consumerism	−0.00	−0.03	0.10*	0.13*										
6. Parent voting	−0.02	−0.08*	0.17*	0.16*	0.14*									
7. Parent political talk encouragement	−0.00	−0.02	0.15*	0.21*	0.29*	0.15*								
8. Parent news use encouragement	−0.01	−0.02	0.11*	0.14*	0.20*	0.08*	0.63*							
9. Classroom deliberation	−0.07*	−0.04	0.09*	0.12*	0.23*	0.12*	0.28*	0.26*						
10. Peer norms	−0.03	−0.12*	−0.08*	−0.03	0.08*	0.07*	0.17*	0.22*	0.25*					
11. Face-to-face political talk	−0.06*	−0.04	0.07*	0.11*	0.19*	0.09*	0.34*	0.31*	0.50*	0.34*				
12. News habit	−0.02	−0.07*	−0.02	0.04	0.18*	0.07*	0.18*	0.17*	0.34*	0.22*	0.38*			
13. Online political messaging	−0.01	−0.11*	0.00	0.04	0.22*	0.08*	0.16*	0.11*	0.28*	0.14*	0.31*	0.44*		
14. Political consumerism	−0.06*	−0.09*	0.04	0.07*	0.39*	0.09*	0.17*	0.12*	0.26*	0.13*	0.25*	0.30*	0.34*	
15. Future voting	−0.01	−0.03	0.17*	0.18*	0.13*	0.30*	0.30*	0.23*	0.27*	0.27*	0.26*	0.15*	0.08*	0.07*

* $p < .05$.

communication practices, either singularly and/or in conjunction with one another. Only the paths from parent encouragement of political talk to political consumerism through face-to-face political talk and from peer norms to political consumerism through online political messaging were not significant. Conversely, these three socialization agent variables also had significant indirect associations with future voting intention, but only through face-to-face political talk. However, parent encouragement of news use was not indirectly associated with either participation outcome. Moreover, it should be noted that among the communication practices, online political messaging had the strongest association with political consumerism, followed by news habit, and then face-to-face political talk. Conversely, face-to-face political talk had the strongest association with future voting, whereas neither news habit nor online political messaging was even associated with this outcome.

Taken together, the results of the direct and indirect paths reveal quite different processes underlying political consumerism and future voting intention among adolescents. They show that political consumerism is fostered directly by parent role modeling and classroom deliberation, but is largely fostered indirectly through communication practices. Conversely, they show that future voting is largely fostered directly by socialization agents, but also indirectly through face-to-face political talk. It should also be mentioned that these two participation outcomes were uncorrelated.

Age group differences

Before examining how the paths in the model differed across younger and older adolescents, we first examined whether there were any mean differences in the modeled variables. Among the socialization agent, communication, and political participation variables, independent sample *t*-tests revealed only three small but significant mean differences. Specifically, parent encouragement of news use ($t(1227) = -2.82, p < .05$), classroom deliberation ($t(1224) = -3.16, p < .05$), and face-to-face political discussion ($t(1224) = -3.13, p < .05$) were greater among older adolescents than younger adolescents.

Regarding the comparison of the paths across age groups, whereas assessment of the theorized model in the overall sample focused on the differences in the direct and indirect paths from socialization agent variables to the participation outcomes, assessment of the multi-group model paid closer attention to each of the individual paths emerging from socialization agent variables and communication practices to examine to what extent these paths differed according to stage of development – early (12–14 year olds) versus late adolescence (15–17 year olds). All paths were free to vary across age groups, and Wald tests were conducted to test whether constraining the paths to be equal would degrade model fit. A significant χ^2 would mean that

the constraint does not hold and that the path coefficients are significantly different across age groups, and thus should be free to vary.

Results indicate the multi-group model relating socialization agent variables and communication practices to political consumerism and future voting intention also fits the data well ($CFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.04$). Moreover, a chi-square difference test showed this model provided a better fit to the data ($\chi^2(24) = 53.14$) than the more parsimonious model in which paths were constrained to be equal across groups ($\chi^2(72) = 120.68, \Delta\chi^2(48) = 67.54, p < .05$).

Results of the direct paths are shown in Table 4. These results reveal many similarities, but also some key differences across age groups in the associations among socialization agent variables, communication practices, and political participation. Regarding the paths from socialization agent variables, parent role modeling and encouragement of political talk had similar associations with the other variables in the model across age groups; however, differences did emerge in some of the paths from classroom deliberation and peer norms. Although the paths from classroom deliberation to political consumerism and future voting were not significantly different across age groups, it is important to note these paths remained significant only among younger adolescents. The path from classroom deliberation to news habit, however, was significantly different across age groups such that it was stronger among younger adolescents.

Also, although the path from peer norms to news habit was not significantly different across age groups, it remained significant only among the younger adolescents. Interestingly, the path from peer norms to political consumerism was significantly different across age groups such that it was negative among younger adolescents; however, as this path was nonsignificant across both age groups, not much can be made of this difference. Lastly, the path from peer norms to online political messaging was significantly different across age groups such that it was negative among older adolescents, and in this case it also emerged as significant among this age group.

Regarding the paths from communication practices, news habit had similar associations with the other variables in the model across age groups; however, differences did emerge in some of the paths from online political messaging and face-to-face political talk. The path from online political messaging to political consumerism was significantly different across age groups such that it was stronger among older adolescents. Interestingly, although the path from online political messaging to future voting was not significantly different across age groups, it emerged as significant and negative among younger adolescents. Lastly, although the paths from face-to-face political talk to political consumerism and future voting were not significantly different across age groups, the path to political consumerism remained significant only among younger adolescents, whereas the path to future voting intention remained significant only among older adolescents.

Table 2
Estimates of direct paths in the political participation model.

Direct Path	Est.	SE	Est./SE
<i>Political consumerism on:</i>			
Male	−0.12	0.08	−1.51
White	−0.09	0.09	−1.00
HH income	0.00	0.01	0.10
Parent education	0.01	0.02	0.65
Parent political consumerism	0.18	0.02	10.61*
Parent political talk encouragement	0.01	0.04	0.21
Parent news use encouragement	−0.01	0.05	−0.23
Classroom deliberation	0.06	0.02	2.33*
Peer norms	0.02	0.03	0.67
Face-to-face political talk	0.05	0.03	2.05*
News habit	0.05	0.01	4.05*
Online political messaging	0.25	0.04	7.26*
<i>Future voting on:</i>			
Male	0.13	0.06	2.06*
White	0.24	0.07	3.39*
HH income	0.01	0.01	2.12*
Parent education	0.07	0.01	4.80*
Parent voting	0.48	0.06	7.77*
Parent political talk encouragement	0.12	0.03	3.86*
Parent news use encouragement	0.01	0.03	0.35
Classroom deliberation	0.08	0.02	4.54*
Peer norms	0.34	0.02	14.61*
Face-to-face political talk	0.05	0.02	2.66*
News habit	0.01	0.01	0.60
Online political messaging	−0.03	0.03	−1.12
<i>Online political messaging on:</i>			
Male	0.04	0.05	0.70
White	−0.10	0.06	−1.18
HH income	−0.00	0.00	−0.55
Parent education	0.01	0.01	0.44
Classroom deliberation	0.06	0.02	3.74*
Peer norms	−0.01	0.02	−0.39
Face-to-face political talk	0.08	0.02	5.31*
News habit	0.09	0.01	20.17*
<i>News habit on:</i>			
Male	0.16	0.20	0.83
White	−0.24	0.22	−1.07
HH income	−0.04	0.02	−2.46*
Parent education	0.04	0.05	0.86
Parent news use encouragement	0.18	0.14	1.30
Classroom deliberation	0.38	0.06	6.37*
Peer norms	0.23	0.08	2.78*
Face-to-face political talk	0.52	0.06	9.12*
<i>Face-to-face political talk on:</i>			
Male	−0.06	0.09	−0.66
White	0.00	0.10	0.04
HH income	0.01	0.01	1.34
Parent education	0.00	0.02	0.07
Parent political talk encouragement	0.18	0.05	3.79*
Classroom deliberation	0.41	0.02	17.37*
Peer norms	0.35	0.04	9.31*
<i>Political consumerism with:</i>			
Future voting	−0.07	0.04	−1.81

Note. Estimates for variables predicting political consumerism are probit regression coefficients; all other estimates are linear regression coefficients.

* $p < .05$.

Taken together, the results of the multi-group model reveal some differences that are in line with our developmental hypothesis, but also some differences that were unexpected or contrary to expectations. Overall, they show that the paths that were stronger among younger adolescents, or else reduced to nonsignificance or negative among older adolescents, tended to emerge from socialization agent variables, in particular classroom deliberation or peer norms. Conversely, the paths that were stronger among older adolescents, or else negative among younger adolescents, tended to emerge from communication practices, in particular online political messaging.

Table 3
Estimates of indirect paths to political consumerism and future voting.

Indirect Path	Political Consumerism			Future Voting		
	Est.	SE	Est./SE	Est.	SE	Est./SE
<i>Parent political talk encouragement ind:</i>						
Face-to-face political talk	0.01	0.01	1.81	0.01	0.00	2.18*
Face-to-face political talk, news habit	0.00	0.00	2.66*	0.00	0.00	0.58
Face-to-face political talk, online political messaging	0.00	0.00	2.78*	0.00	0.00	−1.08
Face-to-face political talk, news habit, online political messaging	0.01	0.00	3.15*	0.00	0.00	−1.09
<i>Parent news use encouragement ind:</i>						
News habit	0.01	0.01	1.25	0.00	0.00	0.54
News habit, online political messaging	0.00	0.00	1.28	−0.00	0.00	−0.87
<i>Classroom deliberation ind:</i>						
Face-to-face political talk	0.02	0.10	2.03*	0.02	0.01	2.63*
News habit	0.02	0.01	3.43*	0.00	0.00	0.59
Face-to-face political talk, news habit	0.01	0.00	3.68*	0.00	0.00	0.59
Online political messaging	0.02	0.00	3.41*	−0.00	0.00	−1.10
Face-to-face political talk, online political messaging	0.01	0.00	3.93*	−0.00	0.00	−1.14
News habit, online political messaging	0.01	0.00	4.59*	−0.00	0.00	−1.14
Face-to-face political talk, news habit, online political messaging	0.01	0.00	5.43*	−0.00	0.00	−1.15
<i>Peer norms ind:</i>						
Face-to-face political talk	0.02	0.01	2.00*	0.02	0.01	2.57*
News habit	0.10	0.00	2.27*	0.00	0.00	0.58
Face-to-face political talk, news habit	0.01	0.00	3.47*	0.00	0.00	0.59
Online political messaging	−0.00	0.01	−0.39	0.00	0.00	0.37
Face-to-face political talk, online political messaging	0.01	0.00	3.68*	−0.00	0.00	−1.14
News habit, online political messaging	0.01	0.00	2.64*	−0.00	0.00	−1.07
Face-to-face political talk, news habit, online political messaging	0.00	0.00	4.88*	−0.00	0.00	−1.15

Note. Estimates for variables predicting political consumerism are probit regression coefficients; all other estimates are linear regression coefficients.

* $p < .05$.

Discussion

This research aimed to expand the study of political socialization to account for the wider array of civic practices in which today's youth are engaged (Bennett, 2008; Dalton, 2009). We argue as lifestyle politics become a more integral part of citizens' political repertoires, it becomes important to examine how they are acquired over the course of young people's lives. Moreover, because adolescence is such a critical period during which youth undergo significant social and cognitive changes (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995; Smetana et al., 2006), as well as take on the important task of identity development (Meeus, 2011; Waterman, 1999), we argue it is also important to consider how socialization processes interact with adolescents' developmental trajectories. We believe this is particularly relevant for examining the socialization of lifestyle politics, which are rooted in personal identity concerns.

Accordingly, we developed and tested a model of political participation that allowed us to compare the relative contributions of socialization agents and communication practices to political consumerism (lifestyle politics) and future voting intention (conventional politics). In doing so, we also drew an important distinction between youth in the early stages of adolescence (12–14 year olds) and those in the

Table 4
Estimates of direct paths in the political participation model across age groups.

Direct Path	Early Adolescents			Late Adolescents			Wald χ^2
	Est.	SE	Est./SE	Est.	SE	Est./SE	
<i>Political consumerism on:</i>							
Male	−0.16	0.12	−1.35	−0.14	0.11	−1.23	---
White	−0.12	0.13	−0.91	−0.11	0.15	−0.71	---
HH income	0.01	0.01	0.39	0.00	0.01	0.21	---
Parent education	0.02	0.04	0.46	−0.02	0.03	−0.55	---
Parent political consumerism	0.20	0.03	7.11*	0.19	0.02	7.87*	0.05
Parent political talk encouragement	−0.01	0.06	−0.11	0.01	0.07	0.13	0.03
Parent news use encouragement	−0.07	0.07	−0.98	0.05	0.07	0.60	1.25
Classroom deliberation	0.09	0.04	2.31*	0.04	0.03	1.10	0.93
Peer norms	−0.09	0.06	−1.57	0.09	0.05	1.91	5.90*
Face-to-face political talk	0.08	0.04	2.17*	0.03	0.04	0.94	0.84
News habit	0.05	0.02	3.43*	0.04	0.02	2.22*	0.43
Online political messaging	0.16	0.05	2.95*	0.33	0.05	6.47*	5.63*
<i>Future voting on:</i>							
Male	0.18	0.08	2.09*	−0.09	0.09	−0.98	---
White	−0.08	0.11	−0.68	0.05	0.12	0.39	---
HH income	0.01	0.01	0.82	0.02	0.01	2.91*	---
Parent education	0.06	0.02	2.49*	0.03	0.02	1.29	---
Parent primary voting	0.47	0.08	5.39*	0.46	0.09	5.26*	0.01
Parent political talk encouragement	0.16	0.05	3.61*	0.15	0.04	3.56*	0.07
Parent news use encouragement	−0.00	0.05	−0.08	−0.04	0.05	−0.82	0.28
Classroom deliberation	0.11	0.03	3.62*	0.04	0.03	1.76	2.65
Peer norms	0.27	0.04	7.33*	0.20	0.03	5.79*	2.03
Face-to-face political talk	0.02	0.02	0.73	0.06	0.03	2.55*	1.79
News habit	−0.00	0.01	−0.34	0.01	0.01	0.85	0.78
Online political messaging	−0.12	0.04	−2.90*	−0.01	0.04	−0.24	3.25
<i>Online political messaging on:</i>							
Male	0.05	0.08	0.65	−0.01	0.08	−0.09	---
White	−0.01	0.08	−0.08	−0.26	0.09	−2.79*	---
HH income	0.01	0.01	0.90	−0.01	0.01	−1.41	---
Parent education	−0.01	0.02	−0.42	−0.02	0.02	−0.94	---
Classroom deliberation	0.05	0.02	2.24*	0.05	0.02	2.12*	0.00
Peer norms	0.06	0.04	1.34	−0.13	0.03	−4.85*	14.33*
Face-to-face political talk	0.06	0.02	2.55*	0.09	0.02	4.46*	1.51
News habit	0.09	0.01	16.70*	0.09	0.01	11.78*	0.09
<i>News habit on:</i>							
Male	0.02	0.29	0.05	−0.04	0.30	−0.13	---
White	−0.37	0.32	−1.17	−0.15	0.36	−0.42	---
HH income	−0.07	0.02	−2.95*	−0.02	0.03	−0.60	---
Parent education	0.04	0.08	0.44	0.07	0.08	0.83	---
Parent news use encouragement	0.19	0.21	0.92	0.10	0.19	0.50	0.12
Classroom deliberation	0.52	0.09	5.78*	0.22	0.09	2.59*	5.68*
Peer norms	0.27	0.14	2.02*	0.10	0.11	0.92	0.96
Face-to-face political talk	0.39	0.08	4.91*	0.59	0.08	7.12*	2.99
<i>Face-to-face political talk on:</i>							
Male	−0.04	0.13	−0.31	−0.14	0.13	−1.13	---
White	−0.11	0.14	−0.78	0.09	0.17	0.57	---
HH income	0.01	0.01	0.45	0.01	0.01	0.50	---
Parent education	−0.02	0.03	−0.64	0.03	0.03	0.72	---
Parent political talk encouragement	0.24	0.07	3.67*	0.20	0.07	2.86*	0.20
Classroom deliberation	0.39	0.04	10.35*	0.39	0.03	12.16*	0.01
Peer norms	0.40	0.06	6.50*	0.24	0.06	4.27*	3.77
<i>Political consumerism with:</i>							
Future voting	−0.09	0.05	−1.71	−0.08	0.05	−1.52	---

Note. Estimates for variables predicting political consumerism are probit regression coefficients; all other estimates are linear regression coefficients.

* $p < .05$.

later stages (15–17 year olds). Although we acknowledge adolescence is not marked by hard age-bound stages, drawing this distinction allowed us to observe differences in the contributions of socialization agents and communication practices.

Overall, we observed some important differences in the direct and indirect associations between socialization agent variables and our two participation outcomes. We found that socialization of political consumerism – a lifestyle political activity rooted in personal identity concerns – happens largely as indirect through communication practices, especially online communication. However, it is important also to note that parent role modeling of this behavior did emerge as a major contributing factor (Andolina et al., 2003). School also played a direct role, which we attribute to the nature of this variable as capturing a mix of both traditional approaches to civic education as well as more interactive opportunities that appeal to the learning styles of today's youth, who seek opportunities for self-expression (Bennett, 2008).

Conversely, we found that socialization of future voting intention – a conventional political activity rooted in duty and obligation – happens largely as direct from socialization agents. However, the influence of parents, school, and peers also occurred indirectly through political discussion. This is consistent with previous research showing political discussion as an additional pathway for the influence of socialization agents on democratic outcomes (McLeod et al., 2010). Moreover, above and beyond the influence socialization agents, we also observed an important direct contribution of background characteristics (i.e., gender and race of child, parents' household income and education) to future voting intention, which was lacking entirely for political consumerism.

Beneath this pattern of findings we also observed some meaningful age group differences. Although our results did not provide support for our developmental hypothesis across the board, the differences that did emerge generally suggest a greater and more positive contribution of socialization agents among younger adolescents and a greater and more positive contribution of communication practices among older adolescents. To reiterate, the path from face-to-face political talk to future voting intention remained significant only among older adolescents, and the path from online political messaging to political consumerism was significantly stronger among older adolescents. In both cases, these findings demonstrate the most important communication pathway to each outcome – face-to-face political talk for future voting intention and online political messaging for political consumerism – was more pronounced among older adolescents. However, contrary to our developmental hypothesis, the path from face-to-face political talk to political consumerism remained significant only among younger adolescents. We attribute this unexpected finding to the increasing importance of online communication among older adolescents for the socialization of lifestyle politics. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

These findings provide additional clarity to questions surrounding the nature of socialization; i.e., the extent to which it occurs as a top-down process and the extent to which youth themselves play a more active role. Overall, our findings are consistent with the notion that youth are indeed active agents in their own socialization (Haste, 2010; Lee et al., 2013), especially the socialization of lifestyle politics (political consumerism), but we also find that socialization agents and communication practices vary in their influence across age groups.

Of particular interest is the more pronounced association between online communication and political consumerism among older adolescents. It is important to note the difference in the strength of this relationship across age groups was not simply rooted in more frequent engagement in online political messaging among our older respondents. In fact, the comparison across age groups did not reveal significant mean differences for this variable, demonstrating that younger and older adolescents engage in online political messaging at similar rates. We believe this difference instead may be attributed to the different ways in which younger and older adolescents engage with digital media.

Developmental scholars highlight the functional role of everyday online activities (e.g., e-mail, instant messaging, social networking, blogging, online gaming) for identity construction and forging interpersonal connections (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). They explain that compared to face-to-face communication, online communication offers enhanced controllability of self-presentation and self-disclosure activities (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). In particular, it affords anonymity, asynchronicity, and accessibility, thus providing youth with a comfortable space to express their views, reflect on their thoughts, and engage in discussion around topics of interest with known (e.g., family, friends) as well as unknown others (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011; see also, Anderson & McCabe, 2012; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Valkenburg, Schouten, & Peter, 2005). Among younger adolescents especially, anonymous interaction with unknown others provides an important opportunity for identity experimentation, in which individuals alter aspects of their identity such as age, appearance, and personality (Anderson & McCabe, 2012; Valkenburg et al., 2005). However, among older adolescents, such interaction also provides an important opportunity to practice and refine their identities (Anderson & McCabe, 2012; see also McMillan & Morrison, 2006).

We argue this opportunity for older adolescents to practice and refine their identities is particularly relevant for the socialization of the host of civic practices, such as political consumerism, that provide young citizens with the means to address issues that are central to their personal identities (see Bennett, 2008). Indeed, online communication was not even associated with future voting intention. Only, the more traditional face-to-face communication practice was associated with this more dutiful civic practice.

Limitations

Overall, our research demonstrates the importance of communication practices in mediating the influence of parents, school, and peers, confirming the core aspects of our theorized model. It also reveals meaningful and interesting differences in the processes of lifestyle and conventional politics as well as differences across age groups. However, these contributions are limited by our data in a few ways.

The first set of limitations relates to the cross-sectional nature of our analysis. The observed relationships among socialization agent variables, communication practices, and political participation, while providing support for the causal structure proposed in our model, are not causal in nature. As such, we cannot completely rule out alternative explanations. Although our model does highlight parents, school, and peers as key agents of influence, we do not assume socialization merely occurs as a top-down process. Another plausible explanation is that young citizens endorse democratic values that promote political participation along with political discussion and seeking out news. Future research might explore how these values are developed and consider the possibility that the influence of parents may occur indirectly through the transmission of such values (see Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Benavides, & Shubert, 2014).

Also, we cannot assume the strong relationship between parent and child political consumerism is strictly one way; that is, children likely exert some degree of influence over parents' use of ethical purchase considerations. There is also the possibility of conflation between child and parent political consumerism. For example, purchases made by parents for (or with) their children may have been captured in the responses of both the child and parent.

Lastly, examining these processes at one point in time also meant we had to rely on comparisons across age groups to examine how adolescent development interacts with the contributions of socialization agents and communication practices. A better approach would be to examine how their contributions shift over a large span of time as youth move through the various stages of adolescence and into emerging adulthood.

The second set of limitations relates to the methodology of the Future Voters Study. Although measures were taken to protect the privacy of respondents, including asking parents and children to complete their portions of the survey independently and employing a physical design to encourage such independence, privacy was not guaranteed. As such, it is possible that children's responses were subject to some degree of social desirability.

Regarding the measures, although the wording of the political consumerism items used in the survey is in line with the wording used in other surveys reaching a youth sample (see Zukin et al., 2006),² it is possible that some of the younger child respondents did not fully grasp the intended meaning of the questions asking how often they make purchase decisions based on their values. However, our concern diminishes when we consider evidence showing that by the early stages of adolescence youth develop a set of values that guide their attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Wray-Lake et al., 2014).

Also, there was some discrepancy across our measures of parent and peer influence. Whereas we examined parents' active encouragement of their child to engage in political discussion and watch the news, our measure of peer influence focused more on the perceived presence of social norms. Although the ways in which parents and peers exert their influence on adolescents are likely to be quite different, future research would benefit from the use of more parallel measurement that would allow for a more direct comparison of influence. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that our measures of parent role modeling and encouragement were obtained directly from parents and not merely based on the perceptions of children, which we believe is a strength of our study.

A final limitation is in the discrepancy across our measures of political consumerism and future voting intention. Whereas the former measures actual past behavior, the latter measures future behavioral intention, offering a possible explanation for why these two outcomes were uncorrelated in the analysis.

Implications and future directions

Despite the above limitations, this research has important theoretical and practical implications. First, it suggests that practitioners (e.g., educators, directors of civic youth organizations) and policymakers concerned about youth civic development and education may need to be more cognizant of the developmental trajectories of adolescence. For example, the stronger direct association between school and news use among younger adolescents supports the importance of introducing civic education programs that encourage participatory learning early in their education. Likewise, the stronger direct association between use of online communication and political consumerism among older adolescents suggests the importance of providing these individuals with opportunities to voice their concerns and connect to larger networks of likeminded others in safe and comfortable environments. In particular, practitioners might capitalize on the centrality of social media in the everyday experiences of adolescents by developing new, as well as adapting existing, online platforms that similarly afford young people autonomous space to engage in "creative civic expression," such as through the production and sharing of content around issues of personal concern (Bennett et al., 2010).

Second, this research suggests the importance of exploring the broader implications that lifestyle politics have for future engagement among youth in conventional, or "dutiful," politics. As noted above, disagreement among scholars exists regarding the normative implications of this shift toward engagement in more individualized political activities. Whereas some fear a "crowding out" of conventional politics

² Zukin et al. (2006) similarly asked those 15 years and older whether they had ever "NOT bought something because of conditions under which the product is made, or because you dislike the conduct of the company that produces it" and "Bought a certain product or services because you like the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it."

(e.g., Putnam, 2000), others more optimistically argue that engagement in lifestyle politics, and specifically political consumerism, may be an "undertapped vehicle" that holds potential for "organizing and mobilizing younger Americans" (Zukin et al., 2006, p. 210). Torney-Purta and Amadeo (2011) similarly argue that "emergent participatory citizenship" practiced in these less conventional venues is critical for the development of full citizenship potential in late adolescence and early adulthood. Whether and to what degree political consumerism can act as a gateway to collective participation in the public sphere among young citizens is a question that must engage practitioners and researchers alike. There needs to be further discussion about how to build the connection between lifestyle and conventional politics into youth civic development and education programs (see Bennett, 2008). Also, future research needs to examine the processes by which civic competencies are likely to be developed among young political consumers, as well as transferred to other, more conventional modes of engagement later in life.

Funding

These researchers are grateful for the support received from the following sources: The Diane D. Blair Center of Southern Politics at the University of Arkansas; the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications and the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas; the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research Program at the University of Michigan; the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri; the University of Texas office of the vice president for research; and the Hamel Faculty Fellowship, the Graduate School, and the Department of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin.

Authors' note

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supporting sources or participating faculty.

Acknowledgments

The collection of the data presented here was undertaken by a consortium of communication and political science faculty from six major universities: University of Arkansas (Todd Shields and Robert Wicks), University of Kansas (David Perlmutter), University of Michigan (Erika Franklin Fowler), University of Missouri (Esther Thorson), University of Texas (Dustin Harp and Mark Tremayne), and University of Wisconsin (Barry Burden, Ken Goldstein, Hernando Rojas, and Dhavan Shah). Shah organized this team of scholars and served as the principal investigator for this survey panel.

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