

Bowling Young: How Youth Voluntary Associations Influence Adult Political Participation

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Do the voluntary activities of youth increase political engagement in adulthood? Political participation is typically characterized by inertia: reproduced within families, highly correlated with social class, and largely stable after the onset of adulthood. This research illustrates an element of political socialization that occurs just before the transition into full citizenship, that mimics adult civic life, and that can be available regardless of family advantage. The authors use two longitudinal national datasets to identify the kinds of voluntary associations that encourage members to be more politically active later in life. They find that general involvement in extracurricular activities is important, but that in particular, involvement in youth voluntary associations concerning community service, representation, speaking in public forums, and generating a communal identity most encourage future political participation. The authors find these effects net of self-selection and causal factors traditionally characterized in political socialization research. The influence of youth voluntary associations on future political activity is nontrivial and has implications for both democratic education and election outcomes.

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The United States has long been characterized as a nation of joiners, whose democracy is rooted in civil society (Tocqueville [1848] 1988). The participation of American citizens in families, schools, workplaces, and

voluntary associations greatly influences their involvement in voting, campaigns, political parties, and community projects. As such, institutional affiliations shape the inputs that the American government receives from its citizens. Civic involvement, however, is arguably declining as adults participate less and less in voluntary associations (Skocpol and Fiorina 1999:2; Putnam 1995, 2000). The result is that only certain voices reach the government and that many citizens' concerns go unheard. The reality of political participation in the United States is that some citizens are active and others are not (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Schlozman, Burns, and Verba 1999; Putnam 2000; Edwards, Foley, and Diani 2001). Such inequality undermines the representativeness of American democracy, which, in an era of a closely divided electorate, has far-reaching consequences. Understanding how people become politically active (how they become "joiners") is thus crucial for scholars of social inequality and political reformers alike.

For most citizens, the process of becoming politically active (or inactive) begins in early adulthood when people initially become eligi-

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ble to vote, join political parties, and engage in adult civic organizations. Thereafter, political participation becomes a habituated behavior. By far the greatest determinant of political involvement is past political involvement, and the biggest predictor of noninvolvement is past noninvolvement (Plutzer 2002). Hence, it is really the period of youth and the transition to adulthood where many key institutions and causal levers of *initial* political activation should be found. While research on political participation argues that the period of youth greatly matters for political activation (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996; Putnam 2000), very little work actually explores how it does so and focuses instead on the period of adulthood. This article complements extant literature by focusing attention squarely on the period of youth, its voluntary associations, and the processes leading youth to become politically active adults.

Two explanations of political socialization dominate most scholarly accounts and help frame this article's research. On the one hand, some researchers describe a process of class reproduction: active citizens are disproportionately advantaged and are the children of parents who were active citizens themselves (Verba and Nie 1972; Beck and Jennings 1982; Sampson et al. 2005). On the other hand, other scholars describe a process of social learning where involvement in voluntary associations develops the capacities, motives, and relationships necessary for adult political involvement (Verba et al. 1995; Putnam 2000). Prior work has not fully assessed the extent to which class reproduction and social learning characterize the process of youth political socialization. Most quantitative studies inflate stories of social reproduction because they have rich information on background characteristics but little or no information on youth involvements. In instances where scholars acquire information on youth affiliations, they merely assess "general" membership in voluntary associations (e.g., "sports," or "clubs" more generally). Such a view fails to recognize what has already been noted about adult affiliations: they vary greatly in the kinds of activities and compositions of individuals that they entail, and this greatly affects the process of political activation (Stolle and Rochon 2001:143). Hence, while prior work identifies a membership effect, we know little about the internal dynamics of these associations

(their topics and activities) so as to explain how and why social learning occurs.

Moreover, even when scholars identify a more detailed array of voluntary associations, they fail to account for selection. Voluntary associations are "voluntary," and so members likely have attitudes, traits, and resources that lead them to join in the first place and that may account for any membership effect. As such, voluntary associations may act more as sorting venues than organizational fields wherein political and civic forms of social learning take place. Much prior work fails to identify membership effects net of selection, and thereby they overestimate the social learning component of membership experiences and confound it with factors of social reproduction (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001). Both the social reproduction and social learning stories of political socialization have intuitive appeal, and it is not our intention to refute them here. Rather, our goal in this article is to integrate these perspectives (McDonough 1997) and assess their relative importance in the process of youth political socialization.

THE PROCESS OF YOUTH POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION IN AMERICA

Integrating the views of social reproduction and social learning into a nuanced explanation of political socialization requires some elaboration. Pierre Bourdieu's influential theories focus on class reproduction (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Lareau and Horvat 1999). Bourdieu contends that class reproduction arises from actors entering various fields of activity (like schools and learning) with different reserves of experiences (*habitus*) and resources (*capital*). Upon entering a social setting like a classroom or a club, actors engage in various activities (*games*) in which they compete for dominance and resources. Persons with more reserves of resources and experiences salient to the activities tend to win in these power struggles and are conferred further resources and legitimacy that they can carry with them for use in social encounters in other fields. Given that classroom activities and their practices are more similar to those encountered in upper-middle class families than in working-class families (Bernstein 1971), youth from higher socioeconomic backgrounds experience an advantage over their working-class counterparts. Over

time, the alignment of experiences and resources with certain fields of activity creates a career structure where participants sense a degree of match/mismatch or inclusion/exclusion, and membership distinctions take on symbolic significance as gate-keeping devices (Lareau and Horvat 1999). Hence, Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction describes how class background permeates social life, establishes symbolic distinctions in organizational affiliations, and serves to form career paths and societal strata that get reproduced by actors' competitive efforts to dominate local activity within social settings (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1984:133–68, 1986). For political socialization, this means that youth from wealthier, educated, higher-status families will have resources and experiences that enable them not only to enter and lead various youth voluntary associations, but also to become active in adult politics years later.

However, there is a good deal of reason to believe that other factors serve to loosen such a deterministic conception of class reproduction. It is not enough simply to possess reserves of experience and capital. To be of value, they need to be activated (Lareau and Horvat 1999:39; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:94–107). People greatly vary in the extent to which they activate their knowledge and resources. Some use very little of their vast reserve, while others activate nearly all of what little they have (Erickson 2004:121). Hence, it is feasible to believe that the variance in activation loosens the class determinism and reveals a route of social learning that can expand political participation. For example, parents can adopt a variety of practices that encourage youth to become civically involved. When youth talk more with their parents about a range of topics, they learn about adult politics. If their parents are civically engaged, then greater parent–child exposure leads the youth to identify with their parents' behaviors and become similarly motivated (Verba et al. 1995: chap. 15). Mundane knowledge such as where the polls are, who runs for election, how they voted, and what adult responsibilities and issues come with citizenship, are all conferred when engaged parents converse with their children. Hence, family practices can generate motives and capacities to become politically engaged (Burns et al. 2001).

Schools and communities also afford youth a variety of organizational memberships that entail more formal activities and experiences that closely correspond with adult political activities. In comparison with no extracurricular involvement most any extracurricular affiliation (school or non-school) heightens future political activity of youth (Beck and Jennings 1982; McNeal 1995; Eccles and Barber 1999). However, certain extracurricular involvements encourage adult political participation more than others: for example, National Honors Society, service organizations, student council, debate, drama, vocational associations, and religious organizations outside of school. Arguably, these associations (fields) and their constitutive activities socialize youth (in ways independent of background) to have the *capacities, motives, and relationships* that facilitate adult political participation and directly correlate with the kinds of activities performed in adult politics (Verba et al. 1995; Burns et al. 2001).¹

Other youth affiliations do not entail activities that socialize youth to become more politically active adults. For example, certain academic clubs promote withdrawal from collaborative, public forms of association, such as computer clubs and book clubs (Putnam 2000). Other associations make such minor demands on member time that they fail to politically socialize youth (e.g., French club). Yet other organizations entail activities (e.g., most sports) whose form and content are less related to the topics and forms of interaction utilized in adult political endeavors.

Politically salient youth organizations entail a variety of activities that develop civic and political skills (political habitus), which in turn heighten the individual's sense of interpersonal competence and self-esteem upon entering new fields of activity. For instance, members of these youth organizations are asked to work together, run meetings, marshal resources, mobilize participants through tasks, listen to others' concerns, find common ground across different viewpoints, publicly speak and argue view-

¹ Verba's (1972) civic voluntarism model emphasizes social learning and features prominently in this section. This article attempts a partial synthesis of this perspective with Bourdieu's (1984) theory of social reproduction.

points, engage an audience (perform), and manage collaborative “drives” or larger efforts at community service (Verba et al. 1995; Burns et al. 2001). By acquiring skills that have direct application to adult civic activities, these affiliations serve to facilitate inclusion into adult politics. Their internal activities teach youth to be leaders and build their self-esteem so that the prospect of engaging in public political activity will seem less daunting (Marsh 1992; Holland and Andre 1987).

The internal activities of these youth organizations do not resemble Bourdieu’s description of fields as entailing internal power struggles and competition, and thereby they suggest a looser relation to processes of exclusion and inclusion. Most youth voluntary associations entail activities that call upon participants to engage in collaborative rituals, trans-individual tasks, and inter-group competition with other schools (Coleman 1959; Sherif et al. [1961] 1988). These task and reward structures afford a more even distribution of habitus and capital than other fields, like classrooms (McFarland 2001). Moreover, these internal activities lead youth to identify with their school and community, and in turn, this motivates participants to remain politically engaged as they transition into adulthood (Kelman 1961; Marsh and Kleitman 2002).

Last, these affiliations expose youth to social networks where persons will recruit or persuade them to continue being active and possibly even more so over time (McAdam 1988). Most every institution entails networks, but some afford their members more useful resources with regard to the salient outcome in question. Some networks encourage conformity and contagion of members’ motives and capacities (Coleman 1988; Broh 2002). Others are expansive, bridging networks that expose individuals to different forms of knowledge and information that they do not encounter in other social circles (Woolcock 1998). Hence, adolescents can find that they enter an organization and, through its activities, they are more exposed to their parents, or their friends’ parents, or students who are highly involved, and so on. These networks then reinforce youths’ motives and bolster their capacities to become politically active

That said it is important to keep in mind that both social background *and* youth voluntary associations play a role in political socialization.

Hence, Bourdieu is correct that class background has direct and indirect effects on political participation. Youth who participate in many of the politically salient clubs are more likely to be wealthy, have involved parents, have high educational and occupational expectations, and perform well in school. Therefore, clubs partly have a positive effect because they are weigh stations for persons who would be politically active anyway (Hanks 1981; Beck and Jennings 1982; Marsh 1992).

The indirect effects of social background, however, do not explain away all the positive effects that youth associations have on adult political participation. That is, there still is ample opportunity for social learning to arise in these clubs, independent of background or selection factors. The structural context of American society and its high school social systems may partly explain why class backgrounds have a looser hold on political socialization. European countries are more homogenous than the United States, and many of their membership structures have concentrically embedded affiliations that require consistency with class affiliations (Erickson 2004; Lareau and Weininger 2003). By contrast, memberships in American society have more of a spoke structure (Pescosolido and Rubin 2000) in which actors can move across fields with vastly different activities, enter inverse positions, and encounter entirely different populations of actors.

American high schools are also structurally different from their European counterparts, where Bourdieu’s original studies of class reproduction are set (Buchman and Dalton 2002). The literature on American high schools describes them as “shopping malls” where access is open, options are varied, and choice is the norm (Powell, Farrar, and Cohen 1985). For example, the extracurriculum is far more developed in American schools than elsewhere, and entry to most of the clubs is open to persons of differing background, experiences, and capacities. Many clubs do not have prerequisites or membership size constraints. Hence, there is a vast difference between the class-based, integrated culture described in European countries and schools (Bourdieu 1984; Willis 1977) and that found in American communities and high schools (Buchman and Dalton 2002), which potentially lessens the indirect effects of background on political activation.

Extracurricular activities may also encourage long-term political involvement by bringing parents and children into greater contact, thereby activating experiences and resources specific to the family (another field of activity) that were going untapped. So, in the car drive to and from club meetings, in passing discussions, or in those at the dinner table, parent and child converse about these salient activities and their correspondent forms in adulthood.² This process of political activation departs from a “strong” account of reproduction, because parenting practices can be learned and because they suggest that there is a degree of indirect social learning that comes about from participation in clubs.

In the end, involvement in politically salient youth voluntary associations still directly influences long-term political participation, net of the direct and indirect effects of background, and even net of parenting practices activated by club involvement. These associations retain an effect because the activities being performed within these organizations (or fields) are collaborative endeavors with trans-individual tasks that spread experiences and resources somewhat equitably across members. Moreover, through these activities youth develop the capacities, motives, and relationships that encourage future political activity. Through politically salient clubs, youth learn skills of leadership, organization, presentation, and negotiation; they develop self-esteem and expectations that make entry to new fields of adult political activity less daunting; and they develop motives for participation by instilling in them a sense of communal identity and obligations of service.

The process of youth political socialization in America therefore entails both social reproduction and social learning. Class background is clearly important and has direct and indirect effects (through voluntary associations) on political participation, but it is not an overriding determinant. American youth can and often do

enter fields and membership affiliations that fail to align cleanly with class background. The wide variety, open access, horizontally differentiated structure of politically salient organizational memberships in adolescence, and the collaborative nature of their internal activities, all encourage an expansion and enrichment of political participation that would not occur otherwise. Therefore, while there is a strong current of social reproduction in political participation, key youth voluntary associations educate youth in ways that broaden the pathway to adult political participation.

In effect, our empirical question concerning political socialization via youth organizations is threefold: whether youth voluntary associations generate future political participation by filling up with elites who will be politically engaged anyway; whether net of that, these memberships activate practices and resources that originate in a different field like the family; or whether, net of both priors, these affiliations generate new motives, capacities, and symbolic capital salient to adult political participation. Through analysis of two national longitudinal datasets, we reveal how the social reproduction of unequal political participation is clearly occurring through youth extracurricular activity. In addition, many of these associations bring youth and parents into greater contact, thereby activating important forms of familial capital and exposing youth to mundane activities salient to adult political fields. But most importantly, there remains strong evidence for a third effect: once students are in politically salient organizations, field-specific experiences are learned and form independent of those found in the family or elsewhere (McDonough 1997). These organizationally learned experiences and acquired resources afford benefits even to persons who would not normally enter such activities, and reveal a route to expanding and deepening adult political participation.

DATA AND MEASURES

DATA

We use the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS; U.S. Department of Education 1996) and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health; Udry 2003) to identify which extracurricular experiences in adolescence may affect the rate of political

² Extracurricular memberships indirectly socialize youth via family interactions because extracurricular activities are more frequently discussed than classroom activities. Extracurricula entail fantastic doings, like inter-school contests and collective performances, and therefore garner greater parental interest and involvement (see McFarland 1999: chap. 7).

participation in adulthood. Longitudinal data reveal whether lagged variables influence future outcomes. We use two national datasets to determine whether factors of political socialization can be generalized to the nation as a whole, and whether results are consistent across samples and different time periods. We use these two particular datasets because they have different strengths relevant to analyses of youth voluntary associations: NELS affords detailed information on a variety of associations that youth have outside school, and Add Health affords detailed information on a variety of associations that youth have inside school.

Our first set of analyses draws from the widely used National Educational Longitudinal Survey of 1988 (see U.S. Department of Education 1996; Broh 2002). NELS focuses on a stratified random sample of eighth graders nested within schools and surveys them in 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000. Hence, NELS follows a cohort of eighth-grade students over the span of 12 years (average age 14 to 26). Analyses select respondents who participate in all five waves of the study. The eventual sample consists of 10,827 students in 1476 schools. Designated weights correct for over sampling of various groups.

To acquire a data structure similar to that in Add Health, we collapse all secondary school reports of NELS into a set (1988, 1990, and 1992), and all the post-secondary school reports into another (1994 and 2000). As such, analyses test whether having particular experiences in high school influence future adult political participation. Because waves are collapsed, students have at least two opportunities to report a particular response on surveys, and therefore the rates of political participation and some forms of extracurricular participation are generally higher in NELS than in Add Health.

Our second set of analyses focus on Add Health data drawn from a nationally representative study of youth in grades seven through twelve that has been used extensively in prior studies (Udry 2003; Crosnoe, Johnson, and Elder 2004). Add Health respondents are interviewed repeatedly, making it possible to measure the influence of their experiences at one time on subsequent behavior. This article focuses on how Wave 1 responses regarding participation in school activities are related to those concerning political participation in Wave 3.

Wave 1 collection occurs in 1994–95 and represents the responses of 14,738 seventh through 12th graders who are interviewed in their homes. In August 2001 to April 2002, around 11,015 of the students from Wave 1 are surveyed in their homes again when they are 18–26 years old, and they are the focus of analysis in this article. Designated weights are again used to correct for over sampling of groups (Chantala and Tabor 1999).

MEASURES

An array of variables are drawn and constructed from NELS and Add Health to afford relatively comparable measures (for fuller details on how variables are constructed for each dataset, see Table S1 in the Online Supplement on the *ASR* Web site: <http://www2.asanet.org/journals/asr/2006/toc051.html>). The following relates the general logic and expected relations suggested by the literature on political socialization.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: AN INDEX OF ADULT POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation is measured in a variety of ways in the political socialization literature, but most research emphasizes three classes of political activity (see Verbal et al. 1995: chap. 15; and Burns et al. 2001:62–63 for review): voting behavior, participation in political campaigns and organizations, and participation in community service organizations. More specific items can be subsumed under these three categories (Hanks and Eckland 1978; Hanks 1981; Glanville 1999; Youniss, McLellan, and Yates 2001). In both NELS and Add Health there are five comparable items that concern the foregoing forms of political participation³:

Register: Are you registered to vote?

Vote: Did you vote in the presidential election?

Civic Service: Did you volunteer in a civic or community organization?

³ For details on the construction of these items and how item response theory is used to develop a dependent variable, see Table S1 (Online Supplement on the *ASR* Web site).

Campaign Involvement: Are you involved in a political campaign?

Political Membership: Are you a member of a political organization?

Using Rasch scaling methods, we render these five items into an index of adult political participation. A Rasch scale is developed because responses on these items can be predicted by a latent trait, and the relationship between respondents' selections and the trait guiding them can be described by a monotonically increasing Item Characteristic Curve (Hambleton, Swaminathan, and Rogers 1991). This curve (ICC), or function, specifies that as the level of the trait increases the probability of selecting multiple items increases.

Plotting the probability of affirmative response across the index of adult political participation reveals the ICCs. Figures 1 and 2 show them for the five items in NELS and Add Health. Both figures show that registering to vote is easier than voting, which is easier than doing civic service, which is easier

than having some sort of involvement in a political campaign, which is easier than joining a political party or political interest group. The general skew of items to the right suggests that a lower proportion of people are involved in political activities like service, campaigns, and party membership. Add Health is skewed further to the right than NELS, because respondents are surveyed only once after high school and because of the age range of the sample. The youngest Add Health respondents have just exited high school, and they have not had as many opportunities to engage in various political activities, whereas the entire NELS cohort will have had as many opportunities as the oldest students of Add Health. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the ordering of the ICCs is the same across datasets and suggests that these are comparable indexes of political participation.

Results for a simple composite and for the Rasch scale are very similar (.9+ correlation). However, the Rasch scale is preferred because the Cronbach alpha on the additive composite

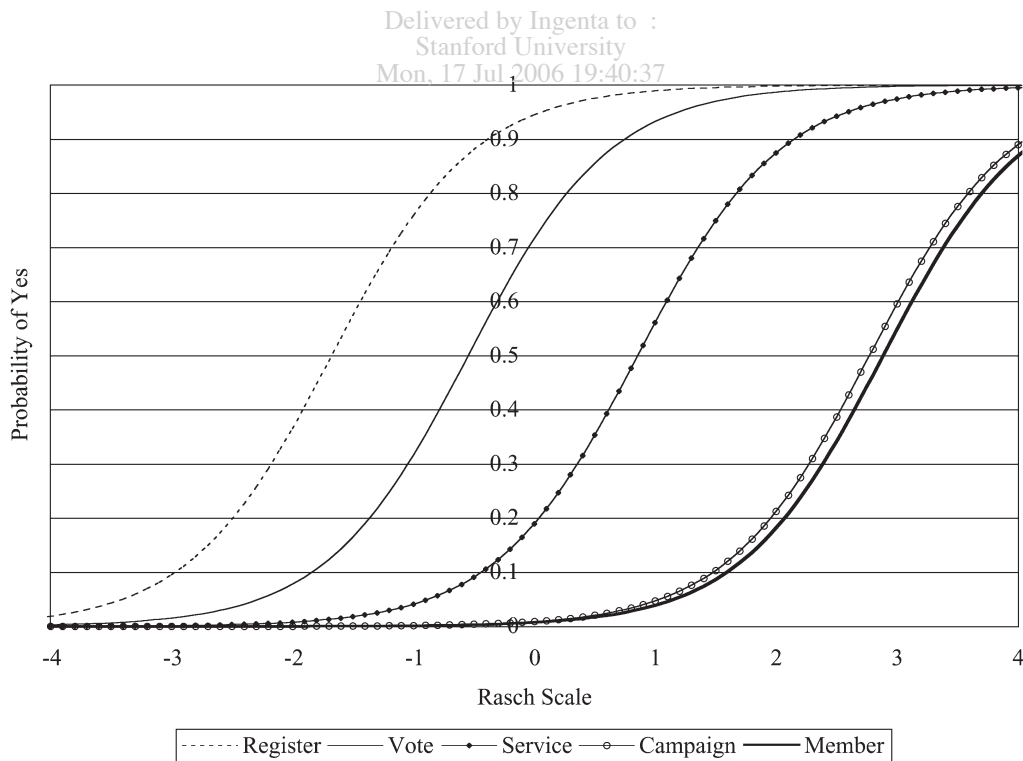


Figure 1. ICCs for the Rasch Political Participation Scale: NELS Data

Note: ICC = item characteristic curve; NELS = National Educational Longitudinal Study.

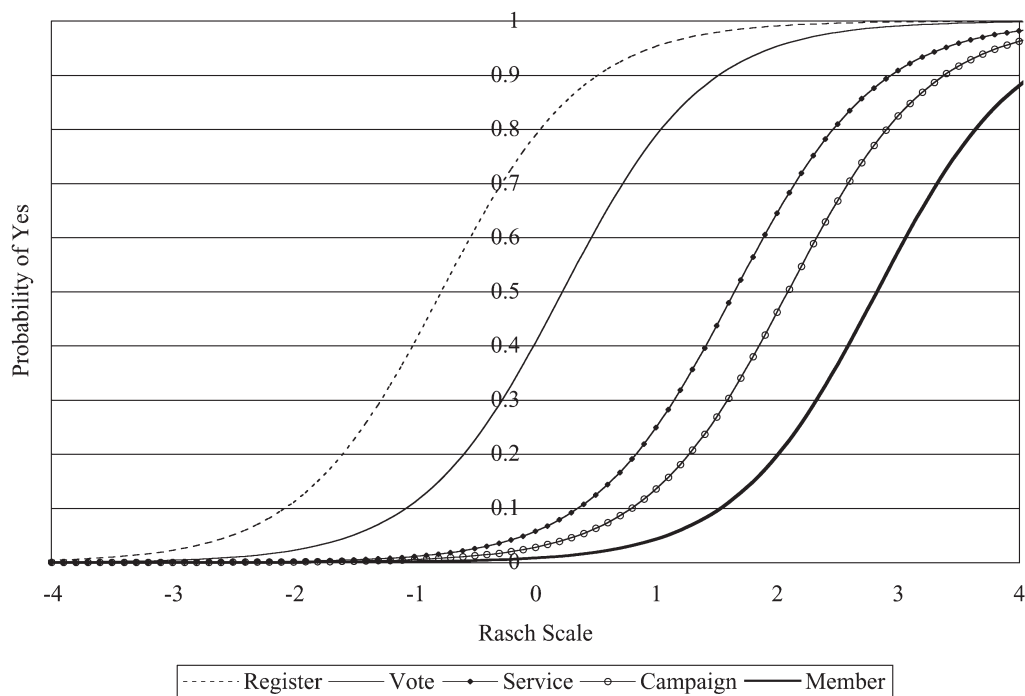


Figure 2. ICCs for the Rasch Political Participation Scale: Add Health Data

Note: ICC = item characteristic curve; Add Health = National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

is not as high as other research finds (i.e., $< .6$, see Verba et al. 1995; Burns et al. 2001), and the Rasch scale fits the data better because it accurately views the items as having varying difficulty (meaning that some items require greater political commitment than others).

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Lagged independent variables predict Rasch scores of adult political participation (for details on variable construction, see Table S1, Online Supplement on the *ASR* Web site: <http://www2.asanet.org/journals/asr/2006/toc051.html>). Both datasets entail information on school and non-school memberships, but Add Health affords information on over 30 different school activities and two non-school activities, while NELS entails consistent information on nine school activities and 12 non-school activities. The general categories of school memberships in NELS concern service clubs (e.g., key club, Students Against Drunk Driving), student council, National Honors Society, music groups, drama clubs, journalism clubs (yearbook, newspaper),

academic clubs (e.g., debate teams, subject matter clubs, computer clubs, book clubs), vocational clubs (e.g., Future Farmers of America), and sports teams (from cheerleading to football).⁴ Add Health's detailed list of memberships allows for more detailed analysis of the specific clubs than NELS affords (see Table 2). A variety of dummy variables are also created for non-school activities, such as religious group (e.g., church, synagogue, mosque), non-school sports teams (usually neighborhood based), community service projects, political campaign involvement, and environmental organizations. Add Health has information only on religious attendance and attendance at the local youth center (YMCA, JCC, etc.), whereas NELS includes the foregoing array and additional information on eighth-grade involvement in scouting, boys and girls clubs, and so forth.

⁴ Add Health data do not provide a service club designation, and so the term "other clubs" captures that. However, "other clubs" could also entail ethnic pride groups and political groups (Close-up, Boys State, Girls State, etc.) not listed in either dataset.

Dummy variables for NELS eighth-grade memberships are omitted from analyses for the sake of simplicity because they fail to acquire significant results. A final variable is introduced for noninvolvement (not involved) so as to determine whether there is a cost to forgoing any memberships. The inclusion of this variable does not undermine any reference category for membership effects, because there is no such baseline comparison group to begin with. Most youth belong to multiple clubs (average five to six), and so memberships are not mutually exclusive categories like race or gender. This means that membership dummy variables capture the effect of being in a particular club or not.

SOCIAL BACKGROUND. Other variables diminish spurious relations and help to explain how extracurricular activities influence future political participation. A variety of variables reflect social background characteristics, such as age, citizenship (i.e., born in USA), language minority status, gender (female), and race. Racial categories reflect usual groupings of black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American in comparison to whites (baseline), but Add Health allows respondents to mark multiple categories, and so another category for other multiracial is constructed. In addition, several items reflect class background differences, such as parents' education, parents' income, and parents' occupational prestige. Opportunities for political participation differ by the respondent's age and citizen status. Older youth have more opportunities for initial adult political participation than younger youth, and citizens have access to political participation while non-citizens do not. Net of these opportunities, prior research finds that language minorities have a more difficult time getting involved in the political system (Stepick and Stepick 2002). In addition, political scientists find that women are less politically involved than men (Schlozman, Burns, and Verba 1994, 1999; Verbal et al. 1995:260–263), and that net of class background, African Americans will be more likely to engage in politics, while Hispanics and Asians will be less so in comparison with whites (Guterbock and London 1983; Lien 1984; Ellison and London 1992). Finally, scholars consistently find that persons of privileged class background will become more politically active than persons of working-

class origins (Verbal et al. 1995: chap. 15; Miller and Shanks 1996).

PARENTING PRACTICES. The effect of parenting practices on future political participation is captured via behavioral items reflecting parental contact with their children and being an exemplary citizen, and via attitudinal items reflecting attainment values. The behavioral items concern the presence of mothers or fathers in the home (e.g., no resident mom, no resident dad), the extent to which parents know the parents of their children's friends (parental closure; Coleman 1988), the range of topics parents discuss with their child, and the parents' level of civic involvement (Putnam 2000; Harris 2004). The final two measures are additive indexes, with the former pertaining to topics such as shopping, school, dating, and so on. For NELS, the civic involvement index focuses on parental participation in school events and meetings, while for Add Health, the index concerns PTA participation as well as involvement in civic, social, hobby, and sports organizations. The attitudinal items concern parents' college expectations for their child (or said involvement in such decision for NELS), and a set of items from Add Health concerning parents' attainment values for their child (e.g., parents want their child to become a leader, a star athlete, a brilliant scholar, or to be popular).

STUDENT-PEER PRACTICES. Another cluster of variables concerns student-peer practices. These practices reflect youth capacities (disposition and skill), motives, and social capital, which encourage future political involvement (Verba et al. 1995).⁵ A variety of items in NELS and Add Health are proxies of these practices but only some are comparable measures across datasets. Several variables are proxies for students' learned capacities and credentials: e.g., self-esteem, delinquent behavior, achieved

⁵ A fourth class of mechanism would be the credential effect, or cultural capital effect of belonging to salient activities. It is difficult to identify this influence because it requires information on others' perceptions of the activity as a marker of access to other associations. To some extent, the unexplained, residual effect of the memberships themselves might reflect this mechanism.

grades, track placement (NELS only), government class credit (NELS only), and leadership experience (NELS only). A variety of items in Add Health and NELS are used to construct self-esteem composite variables. Students lacking in self-esteem will likely avoid joining clubs, speaking in public forums, and even forms of civic participation (Holland and Andre 1987; Marsh 1992:471). Delinquent behavior is constructed as a composite measure of everyday acts of deviance, from skipping school to theft. Students with the capacity and experience for delinquency are seen as developing skills antithetical to civic society. In contrast, achieved grades (Peck and Kaplan 1995; Plutzer 2002; Hanks and Eckland 1978) and higher track placement (Oakes, Gamoran, and Page 1992) are seen as proxies for success in school and a prerequisite for entering certain clubs (National Honor Society, student council). Last, it is assumed that knowledge and experiences gained from taking government classes (Niemi and Smith 2001) and occupying leadership positions in clubs (Kuhn and Weinberger 2005) will afford youth skills and capacities of direct relevance to adult political activity.

Other variables concern student motives of hypothetical relevance to adult political participation. Both Add Health and NELS have items on the importance of religion or the religiosity of the student, and this is viewed as leading youth to attend religious meetings and get involved in community service (Verba et al. 1995). Other items reflect the educational expectations and occupational expectations (NELS only) that youth have (Acock, Clarke, and Stewart 1985), and these likely motivate them to get involved in voluntary associations and political affairs for instrumental reasons. Other motives concern identification or attachment to teachers, school, and neighborhood (Finn 1989; Marsh 1992:471–72; Youniss and Yates 1997; Eccles and Barber 1999; Crosnoe et al. 2004). Items concerning school and neighborhood attachment are available only in Add Health. Whereas NELS lacks information on attachments, it does include a series of 13 items asking respondents how important they find various future accomplishments, such as getting married, having good friends, having children, getting a job, being successful, moving away from home, and serving one's community. Factor analysis reveals that there are four clear-

ly distinguishable factors that explain nearly 60 percent of the variance in these items.⁶ These factors concern the importance of future family, importance of future success, importance of future independence, and importance of future service. These variables all reflect reasons or motives that may drive students to engage in (or avoid) political and civic affairs.

Beyond the influence of a student's own motives and capacities are the influences of peers, or peer social capital (Borgatti and Foster 2003; Putnam 2000). In Add Health, there is a measure for popularity that reflects the number of friendship selections individuals receive from others (indegree centrality). Popular students are likely at the center of peer recruitment efforts and therefore salient to the process of political activation. In NELS there is an item asking the respondent to report their friends' achievement level, and in Add Health friendship reports can be coupled with reported grades to create a mean of friends' achieved grades. Both measures estimate the effects of peer contagion, and assume, that by hanging out with better students, a student will become more civically involved. Last, Add Health data affords a measure for friends' club involvement. What diffuses here is not achievement but involvement more generally. It is assumed, that by associating with persons who are highly engaged in the extracurriculum, a youth will get recruited more into political and civic activities. In many regards, all these variables concerning student capacities, motives, and peer relations illustrate the way in which voluntary associations educate and imprint their members, and so there is some expectation that these variables will mediate and account for some of the membership effects on political participation.

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS. Our final set of control variables tap school characteristics that the literature suggests are associated with civic involvement. We construct dummy variables for school charters, and they compare private and public schools (Banks and Roker 1994; Bryk, Lee, and Holland 1993; Galston 2001). In addition, we construct dummy variables that

⁶ For details on factor components and their explanatory power, see Table S1 (Online Supplement on the *ASR* Web site).

compare urban and rural schools to their suburban counterparts (Guest and Schneider 2003; Hart and Atkins 2002; McLaughlin, Irby, and Langman 2001). Last, we construct a variable reflecting the opportunities that schools afford their members for extracurricular participation (i.e., number of activities available). Prior research suggests that private schools, suburban schools, and those affording greater extracurricular opportunities develop more civically engaged citizens.

METHODS

This article ascertains whether participation in various youth voluntary associations increases political participation later in adulthood. In this manner, we identify certain avenues by which positive forms of political socialization are accomplished (i.e., increased political engagement of most any form). Answering this question, however, requires developing statistical models that confront issues of selection, missing data, and clustered responses.

Ascertaining whether youth voluntary associations influence adult political participation is difficult because students enter the associations voluntarily (Eccles and Barber 1999; Larson 2000). As such, there is an issue of selection where the effects of a high school club on adult political engagement may simply be the result of active individuals selecting into those memberships to begin with, and not because of any socialization effect of the membership. A standard means of addressing this problem is to use longitudinal data and to include in the models those variables that reflect student interest and knowledge that may have led them to join the clubs to begin with. In addition, it helps to include variables that control for spurious relations. The models in this article use as many of these variables as could be located, but ultimately, the results are limited by the data available and may not fully overcome issues of selection.⁷

⁷ Heckman (1979) described a two-stage sample selection procedure developed to deal with issues of selection (Burns et al. 2001; Schlozman et al. 1999). Such analyses were performed on the data, and they are available (with SAS code) upon request from the authors. By assuming memberships are endogenous to the model, effect sizes for memberships are about

Another methodological concern is the sizeable amount of missing data in NELS and Add Health that is not missing at random. To treat this concern, we use multiple imputation techniques (Allison 2002:27). Multiple imputation uses information gleaned from other variables and respondents in the dataset to create predicted values for missing cases. In this manner, values are as close as possible to what would be there if all respondents fill out the questionnaire. We impute five samples from the original dataset, and run predictive models separately on each, averaging the results across them.⁸ Because the use of sample weights is recommended, we first impute the data without weights and then include them in the ensuing predictive models.

The final methodological concern is the clustered nature of the data within each school. To manage this, we utilize multivariate, multilevel models (Singer 1998). Standard regression analysis is not adequate because it assumes that coefficients are fixed between groups and that error terms are uncorrelated. A two-level model overcomes aggregation bias and miss-estimation of standard errors common to traditional OLS analysis and helps to discern accurately group-level (school-level) and individual-level (student-level) effects on future political participation (see Singer 1998; Allison 1999). We estimate the effects of school-level characteristics on adult political participation after controlling for a number of independent variables. We use a two-level, random intercept model to acquire these estimates. Level two consists of schools and level one consists of students:

$$\gamma_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}x_{ij1} \text{ (student characteristic)} + \dots + \beta_{kj}x_{ijk} + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \text{ (school characteristic)} + \dots + \delta_{01} \quad (2)$$

one-third smaller than those presented in Tables 1 and 2. Results from these more complex, two-stage models, however, do not alter the substantive results and argument of this article.

⁸ The non-imputed results with list-wise deletions produce very similar values. As such, imputation does not change our story any, but it does afford more accurate and statistically powerful models of national samples.

Instead of treating β_{0j} as representing a set of fixed constants, we assume each β_{0j} is a random variable with a specified probability distribution.

All student-level independent variables are group-mean centered within schools. That is, the mean of each variable for each school is subtracted from the value of the variable for the individual respondent. This produces the equivalent of fixed effects coefficients that control for all school characteristics, whether measured or unmeasured. In addition, it reveals the gain or loss that an average student in each school would experience if he or she adopts or experiences the individual characteristic (whether it be a membership, background trait, parenting practice, or student-peer practice). In contrast, the school-level independent variables are grand-mean centered within the sample so that the mean of each variable in the sample is subtracted from the value of the variable for each school. This makes level 2 coefficients reflect the gain or loss that an average school would experience from adopting the listed school characteristic. In addition, this further distinguishes level 1 and level 2 effects, and makes it possible to introduce school-level variables that will not alter the effects that student-level factors have on political participation.

RESULTS

We present results from multilevel models predicting adult political participation in Tables 1 and 2. Tables 1 and 2 present results where the coefficients for youth affiliations reflect the gain that an average student experiences when joining the listed club. Each table introduces the variables in theoretical groups so as to illustrate when background characteristics, parenting practices, and student-peer practices mediate the effects of youth affiliations and decrease the magnitude of membership coefficients (Baron and Kinney 1986).

The findings across Tables 1 and 2 can be succinctly summarized as follows: involvement in politically salient youth voluntary associations has significant, positive returns on adult political participation seven to twelve years later, and this effect is sustained even in the most conservative models where the most extensive battery of controls are used (Model 4). The introduction of various controls reduces the magnitude of membership coefficients by 30 to

50 percent and greatly tempers such claims. Models that fail to include any of these controls will grossly over-estimate the effects of youth voluntary associations on political socialization.

The influence of youth affiliations on political participation follows a similar pattern across NELS and Add Health datasets. In both datasets, not being involved in any activities has a negative effect on political participation. When average students are not involved in any extracurricular clubs, they experience a .05 to .10 standard deviation (SD) decline in adult political participation. Both datasets also show that being involved in National Honors Society, service clubs, Student Council, drama clubs, musical groups, and religious groups, all have positive returns on adult political participations. Model 4 reflects the most conservative effects sizes for these memberships and suggests that an average student at each school experiences a .07 to .20 SD increase in adult political participation from joining any of these clubs.⁹

In both datasets, vocational clubs have an interesting relation to adult political participation. Vocational clubs fail to directly effect adult political activity until all controls are added to the model. This suggests that the effect of vocational clubs is confounded by other factors, and that it only becomes clear in the final model where an average student experiences a gain of .07 to .16 SDs in adult political activity by joining such clubs. This result also suggests that vocational associations may be influencing adult political participation differently than our theoretical groups of independent variables suggest.

Results across datasets also reveal that certain memberships are not salient to political socialization. Both non-school sports and school sports fail to have positive associations with long-term political involvement. School sports teams drop from significance after background factors are taken into account. More careful inspection of the wide array of sports affiliations in Add Health reveals that sports teams are often settings where gender selection and socialization play out. Hence, football has a positive

⁹ Effect sizes are slightly smaller for NELS than Add Health, because NELS concerns membership at any time over two waves of data collection, while Add Health reflects having been a member during Wave 1 data collection only.

Table 1. Multilevel Models Predicting Adult Political Participation Using Lagged Variables: NELS Data

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
School Affiliations				
Not involved	-.119*	-.116*	-.080	-.028
National Honors Society	.223***	.195***	.169***	.077**
Service clubs	.121***	.122***	.107***	.088**
Student council	.172***	.142***	.118***	.077*
Drama clubs	.149***	.131***	.127***	.109***
Music groups	.082**	.074**	.054*	.041
Journalism clubs	.084**	.076**	.068**	.040
Academic clubs	.082***	.083***	.068**	.044*
Vocational clubs	.015	.030	.042	.073**
Sports teams	.106**	.066	.029	.005
Non-School Affiliations				
Religious activities	.129***	.103***	.075**	.047
Non-school sports	.032	.042	.017	.020
Community service	.212***	.189***	.164***	.138***
Political volunteer	.014	-.005	.001	.003
Environment volunteer	.113	.092	.087	.077
School Features				
Private school	.259***	.288***	.288***	.288***
Number of clubs school offers	.005	.004	.004	.004
Urban school	.004	.004	.003	.003
Rural school	-.042	-.034	-.033	-.033
Social Background				
Age (years)	—	-.005	.002	.016
Born in USA	—	.480***	.464***	.503***
Language minority	—	-.047	-.035	-.040
Female	—	.022	-.003	-.043*
Black	—	.114**	.105**	.100*
Asian	—	-.226***	-.189**	-.214***
Hispanic	—	.031	-.028	-.042
Native American	—	-.016	.011	.025
Parents' education				
Family income	—	.066***	.058***	.055***
Parents' occupational prestige	—	.047***	.037**	.022
Parenting Practices				
No resident mom	—	—	-.012	-.015
No resident dad	—	—	.029	.035
Parental closure	—	—	.029*	.025*
Parents' range of talk with child	—	—	.065***	.054**
Parents attend school events	—	—	.048**	.026
Parents' college expectations	—	—	.035**	.001
Student-Peer Practices				
Self-esteem	—	—	—	.024*
Leadership experience	—	—	—	.114***
Government class credit	—	—	—	.025
Track level	—	—	—	.078***
Achieved grades	—	—	—	.027*
Delinquent behavior	—	—	—	-.029**
Importance of religion	—	—	—	.009
Educational expectations	—	—	—	.067***
Occupational expectations	—	—	—	.024*
Teacher attachment	—	—	—	.012
Importance of future family	—	—	—	.009
Importance of future success	—	—	—	.007
Importance of future independence	—	—	—	-.003
Importance of future service	—	—	—	.049***
Friends' achievement level	—	—	—	-.004
Intercept	.061***	.043**	.043**	.045**
Model Fitness (BIC/df)	31616/20	31270/31	31178/37	31049/52
Explained Variance				
Between school	4%	4%	11%	11%
Within school	10%	13%	15%	17%
Total variance	9%	12%	14%	16%

Note: All continuous independent variables and the dependent variable are standardized. NELS = National Educational Longitudinal Study; BIC = Bayesian information criterion; df = degrees of freedom.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

effect while cheerleading, field hockey, and volleyball have negative effects. Net of social background, however, only one sports activity remains significantly related to adult political

participation: cheerleading. This effect is negative (-1 SD), suggesting that the activity may be generating self-conceptions (possibly gender-related) that counter the positive political social-

Table 2. Multilevel Models Predicting Adult Political Participation Using Lagged Variables: Add Health Data

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
School Affiliations				
Not involved	-.120***	-.092**	-.079**	-.048
National Honors Society	.298***	.237***	.216***	.132***
Service clubs	.169***	.147***	.133***	.103***
Student council	.181***	.145***	.123***	.081*
Drama club	.183***	.160***	.149***	.152***
Music groups				
Band	.136***	.102***	.087**	.052
Orchestra	.126	.088	.073	.056
Chorus	.058	.057	.048	.038
Journalism Clubs				
Newspaper	.112*	.082	.073	.064
Yearbook	-.073*	-.065	-.067	-.054
Academic Clubs				
Debate team	.172*	.134*	.146*	.146*
History club	.004	.038	.041	.038
German club	.079	.035	.041	.036
Latin club	.003	.018	.017	.024
Math club	.027	.018	.008	.003
French club	-.028	-.030	-.033	-.045
Spanish club	-.042	-.037	-.041	-.046
Science club	-.021	-.044	-.046	-.068
Book club	-.079	-.068	-.043	-.012
Computer club	-.127*	-.082	-.072	-.070
Vocational Club				
Future farmers	.126	.122	.129	.166*
Sports Teams				
Football	.087**	.053	.050	.052
Track	.060*	.034	.036	.020
Tennis	.059	.062	.062	.054
Baseball/softball	.036	.024	.010	.001
Other sport	.038	.026	.020	.020
Wrestling	-.005	.013	.011	.013
Basketball	.021	.008	.004	-.011
Soccer	.018	-.009	-.012	-.015
Ice hockey	-.014	-.017	-.008	.007
Volleyball	-.070*	-.055	-.062	-.064
Swimming	-.094*	-.072	-.074	-.071
Field Hockey	-.227*	-.184	-.173	-.137
Cheerleading	-.100**	-.087*	-.094**	-.095**
Non-School Affiliations				
Religious group	.100***	.085***	.079***	.034
Local youth center	.099***	.082***	.071**	.050*
School Features				
Private school	.363***	.360***	.360***	.361***
Number of clubs school offers	.256**	.275**	.274**	.271**
Urban school	-.095	-.088	-.088	-.086
Rural school	-.039	-.041	-.042	-.041

(Continued on next page)

Table 2. (Continued)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Social Background				
Age (years)	—	.062***	.051***	.061***
Born in U.S.	—	.150**	.153***	.167***
Language minority	—	-.084	-.094	-.096*
Female	—	-.016	-.030	-.037
Black	—	.108**	.117**	.130***
Asian	—	-.246***	-.239***	-.273***
Hispanic	—	-.044	-.039	-.027
Native American	—	-.151	-.158	-.113
Other multi-race	—	-.013	.001	.014
Parents' education	—	.151***	.128***	.110***
Parents' income	—	.034*	.024	.021
Parents' occupational prestige	—	.055***	.043**	.032*
Parenting Practices				
No resident mother	—	—	-.031	-.020
No resident father	—	—	.013	.024
Parental closure	—	—	.021	.012
Parents' range of talk with child	—	—	.052***	.040***
Parents' civic involvement	—	—	.049***	.047***
Parents' college expectations	—	—	.047***	.028**
Parents want brilliant child (baseline)	—	—	—	—
Parents want leader	—	—	.010	.009
Parents want star athlete	—	—	-.097	-.094
Parents want popular child	—	—	-.005	-.001
Student–Peer Practices				
Self-esteem	—	—	—	.040***
Achieved grades	—	—	—	.078***
Delinquent behavior	—	—	—	.009
Importance of religion	—	—	—	.030**
Educational expectations	—	—	—	.047***
Attachment to teachers	—	—	—	.004
Attachment to school	—	—	—	.026*
Attachment to neighborhood	—	—	—	.012
Popularity (received friendship noms)	—	—	—	-.004
Friends' club involvement	—	—	—	.029*
Friends' achievement level	—	—	—	.013
Intercept	.029	.037	.037	.036
Model Fitness (BIC)	37853/39	37440/41	37379/50	37244/61
Explained Variance				
Between School	18%	19%	19%	20%
Within School	5%	9%	10%	11%
Total Variance	6%	10%	10%	12%

Note: All continuous independent variables and the dependent variable are standardized. Add Health = National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

ization efforts occurring in other activities (Eder and Parker 1987). Surprisingly, volunteer work in political and environmental campaigns fails to encourage adult political activity net of other memberships. This may arise because these types of volunteer work are more sporadic than community service efforts and arise only with election cycles and yearly environment cam-

paigns (e.g., Earth Day). In contrast, community service work is frequently a consistent, yearlong endeavor.

Other affiliations have mixed results across datasets. Add Health results show that being in a debate club and attending the local youth center are significantly related to long-term political involvement. The most conservative

estimates (Model 4) show respective effect sizes of .15 and .05 SD in political participation. In contrast, NELS results in Model 4 show that academic clubs and performing community service outside school have positive returns of .04 and .14 respectively. The effect of academic clubs arises only in NELS because it lists debate as an exemplary “academic” club along with math club, etc. In contrast, Add Health asks respondents about a variety of individual academic memberships, and so we can assess their effects independently. Fine-grained analyses find that debate is the only academic club to have a positive relation with future political involvement, and clubs concerning academic subject matters (e.g., history, science, math, foreign languages, books, or computers) have no effect. Some academic clubs suggest a negative influence on political socialization, and these clubs typically reflect withdrawal from public life (e.g., book and computer clubs) as Putnam’s work suggests (2000). These effects, however, are suggestive at best, and most likely because these memberships make minimal demands on member time and meet less often than any other club memberships. Simply put, a club that meets twice a semester for culinary events will likely have little impact on adolescent development (e.g., French club).

In sum, what is notable across all the models is that youth organizations that demand student time commitments and that concern service, political activity, and public performance, have the most significant, positive relation to long-term political participation after controlling for an array of items and determinants of membership selection. The following discussion turns to the factors that account for these positive membership effects.

Changes in model fitness (Bayesian information criterion [BIC]) and explained variance reveal that youth affiliations, student backgrounds, and student–peer practices provide the greatest improvement in model fitness and explanatory power.¹⁰ The introduction of social

background factors in Model 2 greatly improves model fitness and suggests that unequal patterns of political participation are being reproduced and rest on ascribed traits. The introduction of parenting practices in Model 3 significantly improves model fitness. This suggests that there is a degree of social learning arising through parenting practices. Model fitness greatly improves from the introduction of student–peer practices in Model 4. These variables have strong effects and suggest that learned practices reflecting changes in student motive, capacity, and recruitment are important means of political socialization.

Changes in the magnitudes of membership coefficients parallel the changes in model fitness, and reveal which theoretical clusters of variables account for the influence of youth affiliations on adult political participation. The introduction of background factors in Model 2 drops the magnitude of politically salient membership coefficients by an average of 11 to 17 percent, depending on the dataset. This drop shows that background characteristics are aligned with certain memberships and are reproducing levels of political participation that ascribed differences create. Closer inspection of these models finds that much of this effect is due to the opportunities that age and citizenship afford the individual as well as racial differences, and secondarily class background. The introduction of parenting practices in Model 3 reduces membership coefficients by an average of 8 to 16 percent depending on the table. Parenting practices have some salience to membership effects, but less than social background does. Supplemental models were run and reveal that it is mostly the parents’ behavioral practices, such as talking with their children and being civically involved, that mediate membership effects, and less so their expressed attitudes and expectations. Last, Model 4 introduces student–peer practices reflective of student motives, capacities, and peer relations. Here, the largest change in membership coefficients is observed: 21 to 23 percent of membership effects seem to operate through these variables. Given that these variables are introduced after all other controls, this is quite a significant difference. Supplemental models reveal that school activities are mostly mediated by leadership experience, self-esteem, and friends’ level of club involvement (capacity and recruitment factors),

¹⁰ With information on changes in degrees of freedom and changes in BIC scores, it is possible to estimate chi-square values and their corresponding significance levels. In every table, the introduction of theoretical groups of variables significantly improves model fitness ($p < .001$).

whereas non-school activities are mediated by self-esteem and attachment to the community (capacity and motive). Hence, the introduction of different clusters of variables influences the magnitude of membership effects, and helps to explain how memberships are influencing political participation. Results show that social learning occurs net of social reproduction processes associated with social background factors.

The specific results in each model reveal consistent patterns of coefficients. The second set of variables in each table reveals the direct effects of school-level factors on future political activity. Results show a strong positive effect for private schooling in comparison to public schooling (Galston 2001). Effect sizes suggest that the average school's student body would experience a .3 to .4 SD gain in levels of adult political participation if its school became private. A second interesting school effect is that of the opportunity structure, or the number of available extracurricular activities that a school affords. Schools that offer more extracurricular clubs encourage their students to become more politically active as adults.¹¹ Results for Add Health suggest that the mere presence of three additional clubs in an average school will result in a .36 SD increase in a school population's level of adult political participation. Rural and urban schools do not significantly differ from suburban schools in how they politically socialize youth, albeit they have consistent negative coefficients. In sum, significant relations at the school level suggest that school charters and extracurricular opportunities play a significant role in the process of youth political socialization.

Both datasets reveal consistent patterns of coefficients for background variables. Citizens (.15 to .50 SD) and older youth (.06 SD) have more opportunities to be politically active than non-citizens and younger youth. Asians (–.2 to .3 SD) are the racial group least likely to be politically active adults, while blacks are the most likely (.1 SD) to be politically active adults. Similarly, lower SES individuals are less likely to be politically active than higher SES individuals (SES coefficients vary from .03 to .15,

with parents' education being strongest). Notably SES variables have smaller coefficients than other social background variables, and this suggests that race and social opportunities for political involvement are explaining more of the variance in individual political participation. In both datasets, the negative effect of gender drops out when gender-specific activities are listed in Add Health (e.g., cheerleading), and memberships are introduced in NELS. This suggests that gender disparities in political participation may be partly arising through socialization experiences in certain youth voluntary associations (Lever 1976).

The effects of background differ across datasets in a couple instances. In Add Health, age influences the student's likelihood of being politically active because older youth have had more chances to do so. In contrast, age has a negligible effect for NELS because the sample concerns a single cohort. Another difference concerns language. Add Health shows that non-native English speakers experience a degree of exclusion from political participation (–.10 SD), but the same effect is not observed in NELS.

In sum, the results for social background factors suggest that they are substantively related to patterns of political participation and that these inequities are partly being reproduced via youth voluntary associations. Such finds reinforce the social reproduction argument. The variety of social background factors being reproduced is more varied, however, than class background arguments portray. In fact, racial differences are the inverse of those seen in other domains of social life. These results suggest that the social reproduction process influencing political participation is more complex and different than found in studies of achievement.

A variety of parenting practices influences political participation net of social background characteristics. In Add Health, parents who talk to their children about a range of topics, are civically involved, and have high educational expectations, encourage their children to become politically involved. One SD gain in each variable results in a .04, .05, and .03 SD gain in the adolescent's long-term political involvement. The same relations exist in NELS but are less robust when student–peer practices are introduced. In addition, NELS finds an effect for parental closure (.03), while Add Health does not. These differences may reflect how the items

¹¹ This measure is arguably more accurate for Add Health than NELS because it is constructed from more fine-grained membership categories (see Table S1 in Online Supplement on the *ASR* Web site).

were reported on the surveys. For Add Health, these items were constructed from parent reports, while for NELS they are student reports. The fact that parent responses on talk, civic involvement, and college expectations are more robust for Add Health suggests that it is the parents' perceived interactions with their child that matter slightly more on those dimensions. In contrast, the fact that student responses on parental closure have greater salience suggests what matters is the youth's perception of parental monitoring. Regardless of the differences, the results consistently show that parenting practices have a modest, additive effect on youth political socialization net of background.

Student-peer practices are introduced in the final model of each table. Each dataset affords different items as proxies for student capacities, motives, and relations, and so it is difficult to identify practices that have consistent effects across samples. Certain student capacities are significantly related to long-term political involvement. For example, perhaps the most salient item concerns leadership experience in NELS. This skill mediates membership effects and increases political participation by .11 SD for an average student at each school. Other relations are more modest. A SD gain in track placement (e.g., from general to honors), achieved grades (from B to A), and self-esteem results in a .08, .03–.08, and .02–.04 SD gain in political involvement respectively (see table of variables in Online Supplement on the *ASR* Web site).

Proxies for student motivations also are salient to political socialization. The students' educational and occupational expectations, net of their parents' expectations for them, have a significant positive return on political involvement (.05–.07 and .02 SD gain each). This relation suggests that instrumental motives may lead youth to join clubs and get involved. Identification with the school and the student's religiosity has small returns on political participation in Add Health data (.03 SD each). Similarly, youth interest in serving their community has a mild positive effect (.05 SD). Supplemental models find that identification and interest mediate the effects of service clubs and religious affiliations.

The final set of controls concern peer relations. Here, a proxy for peer recruitment into activities has a significant influence on long-

term political involvement. A SD increase in mean of friends' extracurricular involvement (from .6 to 1.2 average involvements) translates into a .03 gain in long-term political involvement. This result suggests that involved peers reinforce and further youths' participation and net of their current involvements. The same effect is not found for the effect of popularity or peers' achievement. Therefore, being central to networks and befriending good students has no influence on political socialization.

DISCUSSION

The core finding of this article is that membership experiences in politically salient youth organizations (e.g., service organizations, student council, drama clubs, musical groups, and religious organizations) have modest, significant, additive, positive effects on adult political participation, and net of indirect and direct effects of social background characteristics. Each of these affiliations entail activities of public speaking, debate, community service, communal representation, and communal rituals, which in turn, develop relations, skills, knowledge, identities, and interest in political systems that hold over into adulthood (Youniss et al. 2001). As one might expect, none of these affiliations has effects of enormous magnitude, but the fact that a membership in adolescence can retain an effect on adult political behavior 6 to 12 years later is quite interesting and remarkable (Entwistle, Alexander, and Olson 2005). Moreover, many of these memberships are constant and have cumulative effects over time (Verba et al. 1995).

In the most conservative models of Tables 1 and 2, the average return from joining a politically salient membership is a .1 SD improvement in adult political participation. Both datasets, however, report students belonging to an average of around three school clubs (Add Health) and two to three non-school clubs (NELS). If one assumes that selective memberships can be encouraged for the average student, then it is reasonable to expect an increase in adult political participation by .4 to .5 SDs. If less conservative results from Model 2 are believed, then an even greater gain of .6 to .7 SDs in political participation can be expected.

These gains have different substantive meaning depending on where a student lies on the

Rasch scale for political participation. Using the item characteristic curves (ICC; see Figures 1 and 2), it is possible to reveal how a gain for someone low on the scale will mean different behavioral likelihoods for registering to vote, actually voting, doing community service, campaigning, or joining a party than when compared to someone who is average or high on the scale. To give the reader some idea of what small gains of .1 to .5 SDs will do at different points

of the scale, we constructed Table 3 to reveal how percent likelihoods for “yes” responses on the five items of the Rasch scale shift. These changes in percent likelihoods reveal what these gains mean in substantive terms for the national population.

These gains are reported for youth populations who are less likely (–1 SD) to be politically active as adults (e.g., Asians, language minorities, and lower SES); who have an average like-

Table 3. Substantial Population Gains: Percent Increase in Likelihood of “Yes” Response on Political Participation Items Due to Varying Magnitudes of Membership Effects

Gains by Group	Register to Vote	Actually Vote	Community Service	Assist Campaign	Party Member
NELS					
Low Likelihood (–1 SD)					
+ .1 SD	3%	4%	1%		
+ .2 SD	6%	8%	2%		
+ .3 SD	8%	12%	3%		
+ .4 SD	10%	16%	4%		
+ .5 SD	12%	20%	5%		
Average Likelihood (0)					
+ .1 SD	1%	3%	3%		
+ .2 SD	2%	6%	6%		
+ .3 SD	2%	9%	9%	1%	
+ .4 SD	3%	12%	13%	1%	1%
+ .5 SD	3%	14%	16%	1%	1%
High Likelihood (+1 SD)					
+ .1 SD		1%	4%	1%	1%
+ .2 SD		2%	8%	2%	1%
+ .3 SD		3%	12%	3%	2%
+ .4 SD	1%	3%	16%	4%	4%
+ .5 SD	1%	4%	19%	6%	5%
Add Health					
Low Likelihood (–1 SD)					
+ .1 SD	4%	2%			
+ .2 SD	8%	4%			
+ .3 SD	13%	6%	1%		
+ .4 SD	17%	9%	1%	1%	
+ .5 SD	21%	11%	1%	1%	
Average Likelihood (0)					
+ .1 SD	3%	4%	1%		
+ .2 SD	5%	8%	2%	1%	
+ .3 SD	7%	13%	3%	2%	1%
+ .4 SD	9%	17%	5%	3%	1%
+ .5 SD	11%	21%	7%	4%	1%
High Likelihood (+1 SD)					
+ .1 SD	1%	3%	3%	2%	1%
+ .2 SD	1%	5%	7%	5%	2%
+ .3 SD	2%	7%	11%	7%	3%
+ .4 SD	2%	9%	15%	10%	4%
+ .5 SD	3%	11%	19%	13%	5%

Note: NELS = National Educational Longitudinal Study; SD = standard deviation; Add Health = National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

likelihood (0); and who have a greater likelihood (+1 SD) to be politically active as adults (e.g., Blacks, native English speakers, and higher SES). Gains for low-scoring and average populations result in greater voter registration and voting, while the gains for politically engaged populations will result in greater community service and campaign involvement. Even if youth are encouraged to join only one salient club and experience a .1 gain, then populations with low-to-average levels of political engagement will register to vote at a 3 to 4 percent higher rate and actually vote at a 2 to 4 percent greater rate. Populations with high levels of political engagement will increase their level of community service by 3 to 4 percent and campaign contributions by 1 to 2 percent. These are not sizeable gains, but it is reasonable to believe that these effects are meaningful at the population level given the outcomes of recent elections.

Because the average student is involved in multiple clubs, it is far more reasonable to assume that extracurricular participation can have a larger gain of +.4 SDs. This effect results in substantial changes of voter registration (low = +10–17%, average = +3–9%, high = +1–2%), voter turnout (low = +9–16%, average = +12–17%, high = +3–9%), and community service (low = +1–4%, average = +5–13%, high = +15–16%), not to mention campaigning (low = +0–1%, average = +1–3%, high = +4–10%) and party membership (average = +1%, high = +4%) for those already heavily invested in adult politics. When viewed in this fashion, the effects of youth voluntary associations have great implications for the nation and the inputs that citizens make in the American political system.

The magnitude of extracurricular effects on adult political participation has even further merit when compared to major educational reforms that have been carefully studied, heralded as relative successes, and retain bipartisan political support. Both Head Start (Currie and Thomas 1995; Garces, Thomas, and Currie 2002) and the Tennessee Class Size Study (Mosteller 1995; Mosteller, Light, and Sachs 1996; Grissmer 1999) find that their programs produce gains in achievement and other student outcomes by .1 to .2 SDs. When the studies look at lasting effects after the treatments have ceased, they find the effect sizes are even smaller. Hence, our results suggest that pro-

moting extracurricular involvement in politically salient clubs may benefit American society in a manner at least on par with other programs being touted as a national success and receiving many millions of dollars in public funding.

CONCLUSION

This article contributes to extant research on political socialization by focusing on youth affiliations and the processes by which they influence political activation in adulthood. The use of multiple longitudinal national samples affords detailed information on a wide variety of youth affiliations and enables exploration of possible mechanisms that explain how certain activities politically socialize their members. Statistical analyses reveal that selective extracurricular involvement in politically salient clubs encourages long-term political involvement seven to twelve years later, and net of a variety of background and selection factors. In the most conservative models, results show that if youth engaged in an average number of clubs (e.g., five to six) and selected among the politically salient ones listed earlier, then there would be substantial changes in political participation at the population level: the average adolescent would become, as an adult, 3 to 9 percent more likely to register to vote; 12 to 17 percent more likely to actually vote; 5 to 13 percent more likely to perform community service; and 1 to 3 percent more likely to be involved in a political campaign. Youth least likely to be involved will experience even higher gains for voter registration and turnout, while youth most likely to be involved anyway will experience higher gains of political campaign involvement and party membership.

We analyzed the data using a variety of tests to ensure the effect of clubs partly arises from social learning factors and not just the class and social background characteristics of their members. First, we introduce a wide array of variables to remove spurious relations and selection factors. Second, we run the same regressions after rendering memberships endogenous to the model, and they show that the politically salient memberships retain significant effects on political participation net of membership determinants (i.e., Heckman two-stage model). We even performed interactions between class

background and memberships in supplemental analyses. Of the many tests, the only significant interaction arose for religious attendance. There, youth from wealthier backgrounds experienced a slightly higher return on religious attendance than working-class youth. All the other politically salient clubs, however, afforded equal benefits to youth of different SES backgrounds. Last, by introducing controls in theoretical groups, we found some indication of how memberships influence political participation. Results across datasets suggested that an average of 11 to 17 percent of membership effects on political participation operate through background differences (SES, race, age, and citizenship); around 8 to 16 percent of these effects operated through parental practices; and around 21 to 23 percent operated through student–peer practices.

In sum, these results offer strong evidence that certain extracurricular clubs are important sites of political socialization and citizen development, and independent of class background and other school memberships. It is true that extracurricular settings are sites where differences in background are significantly reproduced in political participation. However, they are also sites where distinct learning experiences arise and encourage long-term political involvement. A significant proportion of this social learning cannot be reduced to social background factors, and thereby represents a legitimate avenue to expanding political participation.

If the key to broadening and deepening future political participation and the vibrancy of our democratic institutions relies on youth political socialization, then key voluntary associations in adolescence will be central engines of such development. The results presented in this article offer relatively detailed insight into which associations matter and why, so that scholars, educators, and parents can better understand the political socialization process and how it can be managed to maximum effect. Results show that the modest effects of youth affiliations could substantially widen entry into the political system and energize community service efforts. Nevertheless, the implications of this work should be kept relatively modest. Requiring students to perform community service, to engage in debate clubs, and so forth, may be a premature prescription if the voluntary

nature of the activities is important to their effectiveness at political socialization. The lack of a significant effect for participation in government classes may be a case in point. That said, these results reveal there is civic relevance to performing arts and various “soft” associations that have been overshadowed by calls for achievement and the primacy of math and science. Results suggest that cuts in performing arts programs like drama and music will have deleterious effects on the breadth and depth of American political and civic involvement. This article affords evidence as to how schools do more than generate technically skilled workers via required classes: they also afford youth the opportunity to join organizations whose activities create more communally oriented people who are engaged, critical citizens willing to work together to improve our pluralistic democratic society. For that reason, particular extracurricular clubs are very relevant and worth reinforcing both financially and rhetorically. If there is a concrete policy prescription from this article, it is that schools should provide the opportunities, time, and resources for students to participate in politically salient voluntary associations, such as Student Council, service clubs, performing arts (drama, debate, music), and various volunteering programs outside of school. Moreover, such opportunities should be extended to home-schooled children such that the widest possible net is cast for including youth in these political socialization experiences. Given that privileged students disproportionately use these pathways, concerted efforts to encourage the participation of underprivileged students and schools could have the greatest positive societal impact. Furthermore, it should be a policy goal to develop research and practice that will further enrich these experiences so that the future polity is more vibrantly engaged.

That said, the findings of this research must be kept in perspective. Immediate factors in adulthood are also salient to adult political participation. How close someone lives to the polls, whether it rains on election day, how polarized debates are, and so forth, all matter, as do the voluntary associations experienced in adulthood (Verba et al. 1995:446–47; Putnam 2000; Gimpel, Lay, and Schuknecht 2003) and the social networks they entail (Putnam 1995, 2000). The analyses of this article focus on

youth factors reflecting socialization, but admittedly further work can be done to develop life-course models that take a broader spectrum of these factors and their ordering into account. This will likely require more detailed, longitudinal data on political socialization than NELS and Add Health currently afford.

A number of limitations constrain the research presented here. The identified statistical relations are likely underestimated and hide the full potential that such organizations can have on creating active citizens. In both datasets, respondents merely report having participated in an activity, not whether they were core members, nor what the quality of that membership experience was. It may be that student councils and other activities are quite varied in quality, and therefore hide mechanisms that can greatly influence political socialization. As such, scholars should continue detailed study of these organizations so that better information on political socialization can be collected in future national longitudinal samples.

Future research can improve on this study by doing more than just detailed study of youth associations and those in adulthood. In particular, future work should consider multilevel effects of youth voluntary associations more carefully. In many instances the presence of a voluntary association can influence the wider student body. As such, school-level measures for the presence or absence of these organizations (say the presence or absence of a student council), may reveal effects that extend to non-members as well. Preliminary analyses of school-level effects for specific organizations like student councils have already been performed using Add Health. The preliminary results suggest that the absence of such programs have negative consequences for the wider population of students who do not participate in student councils directly. It is likely that this effect exists only for a narrow array of youth voluntary associations that serve the interests of the school populace (e.g., newspapers). In sum, then, a focus on political socialization would benefit from the continued enrichment of research on youth voluntary associations so as to better specify how these contexts create more active citizens.

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