Direct and Interactive Roles of Parental Civic Socialization Practices and Autonomy Support in Predicting Children and Adolescents’ Civic Engagement

Laura Wray-Lake, University of Rochester
Amy K. Syvertsen, Search Institute
Aaron Metzger, West Virginia University
Parental Socialization Strategies for Civic Engagement

Civic Modeling

• Parents’ civic engagement is a strong predictor of adolescents’ civic engagement (Bekkers, 2007; Fletcher et al., 2000; van Goethem et al., 2014; Verba et al., 1995; Zaff et al., 2008).

Civic Discussion

• Discussion of political and social issues with parents is associated with a range of civic values and behaviors (Boyd et al., 2011; Hooghe & Boonen, 2015; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; McIntosh et al., 2007).
The Role of Autonomy Support

- According to **Self Determination Theory** (SDT), parental support of autonomy, competence, and relatedness facilitates youth’s intrinsic values and prosocial behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné, 2003; Grolnic et al., 1997; Kasser et al., 1995).

- Parental warmth and support linked to adolescents’ civic engagement (Bebiroglu et al., 2013; Lenzi et al., 2014).

- Parental autonomy support may make socialization strategies more effective (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Grolnic et al., 1997; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994).
Civic Engagement: A Multidimensional View

- Commitments and contributions to society reflected in values, beliefs, skills, and behaviors (Amnå, 2012; Sherrod & Lauckhardt, 2009).

- Distinct correlates of helping and political forms of civic engagement (Crocetti et al., 2012; Duke et al., 2009; Metzger & Smetana, 2009).
Study Goals

• Examine unique roles of modeling, discussions, and autonomy support.
  – Does one strategy matter more than the others?
  – Do strategies differentially predict various civic engagement indicators?

• Test hypothesized interactions, based on SDT:
  – Autonomy support x modeling
  – Autonomy support x discussions
Sample

- 2467 youth (55.7% female)
- Planned missing (3-form) design
- $M_{age} = 13.35$
  $SD = 2.66$
- Grades 4 – 12
  - 512 Elementary (grades 4-5)
  - 813 Middle (grades 6-8)
  - 1135 High (grades 9-12)

### Race/Ethnicity
*(Check all that apply)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Measures: Civic Engagement

**Social Responsibility Values** “It’s important to consider the needs of others.”
4 items, $\alpha = .69$; 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely)

**Political Beliefs** “People should keep up with current events.”
2 items, $\alpha = .62$; 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

**Volunteering**
1 item; 1 (0 hours) to 6 (5+ hours)

**Informal Helping** “I helped a neighbor for no pay.”
6 items, $\alpha = .73$, 1 (never) to 5 (very often)

**Environmental Behavior** “I limit how much paper I use.”
3 items, $\alpha = .71$; 1 (never) to 5 (very often)

**Voting Intentions**
1 item; 1 (I wouldn’t do this) to 5 (I will or have already done this)

**News Consumption**
1 item; 1 (never) to 5 (very often)

**Civic Skills** “Create a plan to address a problem.”
6 items, $\alpha = .88$; 1 (I definitely can’t) to 5 (I definitely can)
Measures: Socialization & Support

Modeling of Civic Behavior (4 items, $\alpha = .74$)
- My parents volunteer in our community.
- My parents vote in elections.
- My parents follow news about politics and current events.
- My parents are active in improving our neighborhood.

Civic Discussions (3 items, $\alpha = .80$)
- In my family, we talk about politics and current events.
- In my family, we talk about times when people are treated unfairly.
- In my family, we talk about problems facing our community.

Autonomy Support (6 items, $\alpha = .90$)
- My parents respect my opinions.
- My parents give me positive feedback when I do something well.
- My parents always tell me I can succeed at my goals.
- I feel close and connected to my parents.
- My parents accept me as I am.
- I trust my parents.

Response Options: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)
Analytic Plan

- Structural equation modeling using Mplus 7.11
- FIML with principle components as auxiliary variables to handle missing data (Little et al., 2008)

1. Full Measurement Model
2. Structural Model – Main Effects

3. Latent Variable Interaction Model 1: Autonomy x Modeling
4. Latent Variable Interaction Model 2: Autonomy x Discussions

- Control Variables: age, gender, ethnicity (Black, Hispanic, Other), parental education, perceived financial security
Results: Main Effects

- Social Responsibility: .21***
- Political Beliefs: .29***
- Volunteering: .17***
- Informal Helping: .27**
- Environment Behavior: .54***
- Voting Intentions
- News Consumption
Results: Main Effects

- Discussion
- Modeling
- Autonomy Support

- Social Responsibility: .19*
- Political Beliefs: .55***
- Volunteering: .90***
- Informal Helping: .26***
- Environment Behavior: 1.16***
- Voting Intentions: .41**
- News Consumption:
Results: Main Effects

Discussion

Modeling

Autonomy Support

Social Responsibility

Political Beliefs

Volunteering

Informal Helping

Environment Behavior

Voting Intentions

News Consumption
Results: Main Effects

- Discussion
- Modeling
- Autonomy Support
- Social Responsibility
- Political Beliefs
- Volunteering
- Informal Helping
- Environment Behavior
- Voting Intentions
- News Consumption

Correlation Coefficients:
- .21***
- .14***
- .20***
- -.22***
Results: Interactions

Environmental Behavior

Informal Helping
Results: Interactions

Social Responsibility Values

Political Beliefs
Discussion

• Civic modeling and discussions as uniquely important socialization strategies.

• Autonomy support encourages more inherently intrinsic values and behaviors, but appears less relevant for political engagement.

• Moderation findings support self-determination theory, suggesting that socialization efforts are more effective in the context of autonomy support.
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School Districts and Participating Schools

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