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Predicting Positive Citizenship from Adolescence to Young Adulthood: The Effects of a Civic Context

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Abstract

Researchers have theorized that programs to promote positive citizenship should begin with an opportunity for adolescents to participate in civic activities, such as community service or political volunteering. In this article we extend the theory by arguing that a more systemic approach is needed, in which a civic context is developed to promote citizenship. We hypothesize that living within a consistent civic context leads to civic engagement in late adolescence and into young adulthood. We use a diverse, longitudinal dataset to test this hypothesis. We find that social interactions with peers, parent modeling of civic behaviors, and cultural factors, such as ethnicity-specific practices, cumulatively result in a higher level of civic activities among youth and that a continued context that includes these factors results in a higher level of civic activities into adulthood. The implications of our findings are discussed with regard to program and policy development.

Promoting Positive Citizenship: The Effects of a Civic Context

Although there is a relative dearth of conclusive research on the predictors of youth civic behaviors, there is enough research to suggest important contributing factors in youths' lives. Researchers have taken the theoretical perspective that engaging youth in civic activities is the most effective way to promote civic identity formation and subsequent civic engagement in adulthood (Youniss & Yates, 1999). However, the available research findings are subject to self-selection bias, and experimental research has not produced consistently positive results (Zaff & Michelsen, 2002). According to Erikson's (1966) theory of development, an identity search begins in early adolescence and internal and external experiences during childhood and adolescence are accumulated and lead to a commitment to particular values and beliefs. Colby and Damon's moral socialization theory (1999) operationalizes these experiences by noting that parents, peers, culture, and society socialize individuals to have a sense of moral commitment to various goals and behaviors; for instance, with a moral commitment to helping others or improving the state of society. Based on these theories and on the dialectical relationship between individual and contextual factors (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1992; Lerner, 1991), we posit that factors that exist both within the youth, such as values, and external to the youth, such as socializing agents, work in concert to encourage or deter civic identity development. We can consider this composite of individual and social

contextual variables to comprise a civic context. Further, consistent with Erikson (1966) and contextualist and ecological theorists (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1992; Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan, & Iver, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978), we theorize that an age-appropriate civic context should be in place throughout childhood in order to encourage the summative development of civic knowledge, skills, engagement, and eventual identity. In short, therefore, we posit that a broad civic context needs to be in place throughout childhood in order to maximize the development of a civic identity.

To begin, we present our assumption that encouraging civic engagement and identity development is essential for the healthy development of adolescents and the strengthening of a civil society. Adolescents can and do have the capacity to affect their communities positively. They act to make their homes, communities, schools, and society a better place by volunteering in community or political organizations, being environmentally active, and engaging in informal prosocial activities. Adolescent civic engagement has the dual effect of providing needed services to the community and society, and promoting psychological, social, and intellectual growth for the young citizen (Aguirre International, 1999; Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998; Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer, & Snyder, 1998; Zaff & Michelsen, 2002). As Youniss has theorized, long-term civic engagement is the result of a strong civic identity (Youniss & Yates, 1999).

Unfortunately, many youth do not participate in civic activities and are not developing a civic identity. For instance, although there is a trend toward greater youth participation in community service (Faison & Flanagan, 2001), 41% of youth actually participate in volunteer activities on an occasional or regular basis (Corporation for National and Community Service 2005). Similarly, aside from the spike in voter participation in 2004, recent data suggest a decrease in voting behavior, low levels of other forms of political activism and an increasing cynicism among youth about the political process (Donovan, Lopez, & Sagoff, 2005; Lopez, Kirby, & Sagoff, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Keeter, Zukin, Adolima, & Jenkins, 2002). Indeed, nearly 60% of 15–25-year-olds have been found to be disengaged from political and community life (Keeter, Zukin, Adolima, & Jenkins, 2002). These data are particularly important, considering as de Tocqueville (1969) posited, that broad participation in the political process and public life in general results in the strongest democracies.

These reported rates of political and community involvement do not mean that adolescents are disengaged from other aspects of their communities. In fact, nearly 80% of youth report being members of clubs, such as sports teams or academic and arts clubs (Ehrle & Moore, 1999; National Association of Secretaries of State, 1998). The key issue, then, is not how to engage youth in general activities, but how to engage youth in civic activities, sustain that involvement into adulthood, and encourage the development of a strong civic identity.

What We Know and What Still Needs to Be Learned

There has been a recent increase in efforts among social scientists, policy makers, and practitioners to improve rates of youth civic engagement. The Civic Mission of Schools, City Year, Public Allies, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement are just a few examples of organizations devoted to researching and promoting youth civic engagement. Additionally, the National Educational Goals for 2000, adopted by Congress, set forth youth community service participation as an objective for preparing the country's young citizenry. As noted below, parent, peer, gender, ethnicity, religious participation, societal, and cultural variables are all associated with civic engagement.

Family, Peers, and Demographic Characteristics—Parents who act as role models, who reinforce volunteering behavior in their children, and who participate in general activities with their children have children who are more likely to be involved in volunteering activities (Dunham & Bengston, 1992; Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 1998; Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000; Hashway, 1998). Other relationships, such as positive relationships with peers, also predict civic behaviors (Wentzel & McNamara, 1999; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Green, Gerber, & Nickerson, 2003) though the long-term effects of these relationships are unknown. Participation in religious activities is also related to a greater likelihood of participating in community service activities (Serow & Dreyden, 1990; Youniss, McLellan, Su, & Yates, 1999). These associations are consistent with the theories of social control and social capital in which social connections and social organizations create norms and an infrastructure to support civic engagement (Putnam, 2000).

On the individual demographic level, female youth are generally more likely to participate in community service and to be more knowledgeable about politics (Flanagan et al., 1998; NCES, 1999) and European American youth are more likely to vote and to volunteer in community service than African American and Hispanic American youth (Johnston, Bachman, & O'Malley, 1999).

Individual Values—A desire to act for the greater good is predictive of civic engagement. Research suggests that collectivism, defined as putting community goals ahead of individual goals, is more predictive of civic engagement than individualism (Avrahami & Dar, 1993; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Perkins, Brown, & Taylor, 1996). There has been little research on individual values as a contributing factor to civic engagement, though having a moral commitment to community service has been linked to participating in civic activities (Colby & Damon, 1999; Faison & Flanagan, 2001; Hart, Yates, Fegley, & Wilson, 1995; Serow & Dreyden, 1990). Previous studies, though, have not included altruistic/communal values as unique components within a broader civic context.

Research also suggests that the social contextual variables discussed above promote the acquisition of the types of values that predict civic engagement. For instance, parenting strategies and parent civic behaviors are related to youths' values (e.g., Hoffman, 1975; Gunnoe, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1999; Pratt, Arnold, Pratt, & Diessner, 1999); peers and siblings can model empathy and values (Eisenberg, 2003; Volling, 2003); and the society and culture in which youth are raised may promote either individualistic or collectivistic values (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1988).

Civic Activity Participation and Civic Identity—Researchers have hypothesized that civic activities are formative contexts that develop a youth's civic identity (Youniss, McLellan, Su, & Yates, 1999). This identity then predicts future civic engagement. Additionally, activities that are not explicitly civic in nature, such as sports or the arts, could serve as microcosms of public life, thus providing the social capital and opportunities for social skill building that are related to later civic engagement. To examine this theory with regard to civic engagement, researchers have focused on whether participation in noncivic and civic activities leads to a civic identity, using civic engagement as a rough proxy for civic identity. For instance, participation in extracurricular activities in general during high school predicts a greater likelihood of voting and volunteering in young adulthood (Glanville, 1999; Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams, 2003), while engaging specifically in civic activities predicts future civic identity and civic engagement (Hahn, Leavitt, & Aaron, 1994; Youniss, McLellan, Su, & Yates, 1999). Other researchers provide evidence for an association between identity development and later activity participation, such as an emerging arts or athletics identity being associated with continued participation in the arts

and athletics (Fredericks et al., 2002), a vocational identity being associated with future vocational activities (Vondracek & Skorikov, 1997), and a more developed racial identity being associated with participation in campus organizations committed to racial causes (Mitchell & Dell, 1992). The association, then, between present and future civic engagement is potentially more complex than a direct relation, with a civic identity potentially mediating the relation between past and future civic participation.

In summary, the existing literature suggests that a civic context comprised of parents, peers, and the culture and society in which youth develop, influence subsequent civic behaviors. However, little is known about the specific causal processes involved in promoting civic engagement. There is the possibility that there are many direct and indirect relations between antecedents and the desired outcome. We theorize that the additive effect of the components of a civic context results in short-term civic engagement, with a continued civic context resulting in a sustained commitment to civic life.

To test this theory, we analyze data from a large, longitudinal survey of youth who were followed throughout high school and into young adulthood in order to address the following hypotheses about the structure of civic engagement promotion: (1) individual characteristics, social contextual factors such as parent, peer and societal influences, and cultural socialization predict the development of civic engagement in late adolescence; and (2) being part of a civic context throughout adolescence is related to sustained civic engagement in young adulthood.

Theoretical Model and Hypotheses

Original Model—Our original civic context model (see Fig. 1) illustrates the mechanisms through which we theorized that sustained civic engagement is formed. The first component is the civic context within which youth develop. The civic context includes parent and peer influences, ethnic and cultural traditions, and religious participation. We also include individual-level factors such as ethnicity and gender, as well as the values of the youth as a mediator that may predict civic engagement.

The second component of the model is a civic opportunity in adolescence. This component is mediated by the individual's altruistic/collectivist attitudes. The opportunity could be community service, political volunteering, environmentalism, or any other positive citizenship activity; though in the present study we restricted the scope of activities to volunteering and civic activism. We theorized that without the opportunity to participate in a civic activity, a youth will not be able to realize his or her full potential as a citizen. We hypothesized that a civic context encourages a youth to participate in civic activities as an adolescent.

The third component consists of the perception of participating in a civic activity in adolescence. For this, we included whether the youth felt as if he or she was fulfilled and engaged by the civic activity and whether the youth developed a civic identity. We hypothesized that the fourth component, in part, leads to participating in civic activities as a young adult. The fifth component, then, is whether the individual engages in civic activities as a young adult.

Revised Model—We revised our civic context model based on the findings of two earlier analyses that examined the first and second halves of the full model, respectively (Zaff, Malanchuk, Eccles, & Michelsen, 2002a, b). We made these revisions (see Fig. 2) in order to integrate the results into the full model and to fit the available data best. Both previous analyses used hierarchical regression to test mediation models. The following is a brief

discussion of the results. For a more comprehensive discussion, we refer the reader to the full reports.

In the first paper (Zaff et al., 2002a) we found that civic context predicted civic participation in late adolescence, above and beyond other relevant factors. Civic context includes higher parental education, parent participation in civic activities, youth participation in religious activities, positive characteristics of peers, and social support from adults in school. However, contrary to our initial hypothesis, we did not find that altruistic/communalistic values mediated the association between individual and contextual variables in early adolescence and civic participation in late adolescence.

In the second paper (Zaff et al., 2002b), we found that civic participation, coupled with continued civic context (in this case extracurricular activities, having open communication and support from friends, and higher parental education) in late adolescence predicts civic participation in young adulthood. In a subanalysis of the African American sample in which we included ethnicity-related civic context factors, we found that parent participation in the Million Man March and family involvement in ethnicity-related activities were associated with civic participation in young adulthood. Contrary to our initial model, we did not find that a civic identity or enjoyment of civic participation in late adolescence mediates the association between late adolescent and young adulthood civic participation.

As mentioned, we revised our full model based on these previous findings, but we kept the same theoretical grounding that civic context in early adolescence predicts civic participation in late adolescence. This civic participation, coupled with a continued civic context, subsequently leads to sustained civic engagement in young adulthood. We did not include youths' altruistic/communalistic values as a mediator between social contextual factors and later civic engagement, as originally hypothesized.¹ In order to have a more complete picture of the process for promoting civic engagement in adolescence and adulthood, we included additional pathways between early adolescence and late adolescence variables that are based on previous studies of predictors of positive friendships and participation in extracurricular activities (Bukowski, in press; Heath, 1998). Furthermore, we explored the potential influence of ethnicity on the development of civic engagement among African American males and females.

Method

Data

Overall Description—The Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS) was conducted for two main purposes: to examine how social context influences psychological determinants of behavioral choices, and to examine various developmental trajectories during adolescence and into adulthood. This survey is intentionally rich with information on family background, parenting, peer influence, schools, neighborhoods, ethnic socialization, and several individual-level characteristics. The data were collected during a historical period in which a major opportunity to participate in a civic activity was present: The Million Man March. Much organization of the march took place in Prince George's County (the location of MADICS), which borders Washington, DC, the location of the march.

Many of the questionnaire items were derived from other large-scale longitudinal studies and from previously validated scales. A multitude of open-ended questions were also asked

¹We continue to theorize that civic values are a mediator between social contextual factors and later civic engagement, but we believe that we need a more refined measure of such values to demonstrate the mediation.

in order to allow for richer responses to underexplored areas of youth development, such as the youths' motivations and values.

The survey was begun in 1991 and so far six waves (two in 7th grade and one each in 8th grade, 11th grade, one year post-high school, and three years post-high school) have been collected. We used only the 8th grade, 11th grade, and one year post-high school waves for the present study, because these waves took place during the transition into high school, at the end of high school, and during the transition into young adulthood, respectively. This is an especially important developmental period for civic behaviors and attitudes, since adolescents have opportunities for independently directed civic action and begin the development of their civic identity. The investigators used a mixture of self-administered questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and telephone interviews to collect the data. For the purposes of the present study, the respondents were the target youth and the primary caregiver, who was most often the youth's mother.

Participants

Approximately 1,000 youth were followed from 7th grade into early adulthood (three years post high school). The primary caregiver was followed through 11th grade. The sample is composed of 51% males and 61% African Americans. The youth came from families that represent a broad range of socioeconomic statuses, with a median income for African Americans between \$50,000 and \$55,000 and for European Americans between \$60,000 and \$65,000. Fifty-four percent of primary caregivers were high school graduates, with 40% college graduates. The participants came from a diverse mix of neighborhoods, including low-income, high-risk urban; middle-class suburban; and rural (see Table 1 for a breakdown by ethnicity).

The respondents in the MADICS study are a purposive subsample of a larger school evaluation study that contacted all 7,841 students in the 7th grade in a mid Atlantic school district in September 1991. Of these, 5,452 parents or guardians authorized their child's participation. The MADICS subsample was based on parents' willingness to participate and on a stratified sampling procedure designed to get proportional representations of families from each of 23 middle schools in the district. Although not a random sample, very little systematic bias was evident in a comparison of this sample and the larger sample from which the participants were drawn. The longitudinal data can be described as a complex pattern of complete and missing data. Importantly, 1,356 participants (92% of both Blacks and Whites) responded to at least two waves of data collection through wave 6 (three years out of high school), allowing us to address questions using the majority of the initial sample. The participants who dropped completely out of the study ($N = 211$ through wave 6) tended to be the least well-functioning people in the initial subsample. Nevertheless MADICS retained a sufficient number of participants from the full range of our primary indicators (e.g., values and parental participation) to adequately address questions about the impact of an early civic context on later civic engagement. More specifically, over 70% of the original sample of 1,482 families was retained at waves 3 and 4 (8th grade and 11th grade) and over 60% at waves 5 and 6 (1 year and 3 years out of high school). These retention percentages, when viewed within the context of the entire study, are actually 86%, 81%, and 84% respectively because the number of youth who dropped completely out of the study is much smaller than the number of youth who missed a given wave of data collection.

Measures

We used measures that assess individual, parent, peer, and cultural constructs to describe the civic context. Several of these are scales created using factor analysis and response item

analysis based on the entire sample of respondents; alphas for these are noted. The following is a brief description of the different constructs included in our analysis.

Demographics—Measures of gender (male or female), ethnicity (African American, European American, or mixed/other) and parent education (i.e., highest educational attainment in household) were included as demographic variables. We used data only from the European American and African American participants.

Youth Activity Participation in 8th Grade—We used two measures for 8th grade to assess the level of activity participation among youth. The first measure, *civic engagement*, assessed the level of participation in civic activities by asking about participation in civic activism and volunteering for community service. The index was summed resulting in a civic engagement index ranging from 0 to 2. *Other extracurricular activities*, such as sport or club activities, were measured on a scale from 0 to 6 based on the number of activities in which youth were involved.

Youth Activity Participation in 11th Grade—These measures of activity participation included civic participation and participation in other extracurricular activities. *Civic participation* includes six questions from 11th grade on civic activism and volunteering. *Civic activism* includes a question asking if youth had participated in the Million Man March and a question asking if they had participated in any other form of civic activism. For the Million Man March question, we considered positive responses to be either in attendance at the March or intentionally watching the March on television. We included intentionally watching the March as an indicator of civic engagement so that we could include the responses of females since the attendance at the Million Man March was restricted in its mission to males. Other questions asked if youth had volunteered for any community service activities, whether youth had participated in service activities or religious organizations, or whether they had tutored a student. A civic participation index ranging from 0 to 6 was then created based on the total number of activities in which youth were involved, with each activity given equal weighting. *Other extracurricular activities*, such as sport or club activities, were measured on a scale from 0 to 4, based on the number of activities in which youth were involved.

Family Involvement—There were two questions used in the present study pertaining to family involvement. The first, asked of the primary caregiver, was how often the primary caregiver (mostly mothers) had been involved in their parent, teacher, student association (PTSA) while the youth was in the 8th grade. The second question, asked only of the African American sample from 11th grade, asked whether the primary caregiver had either attended the Million Man March or watched it on television when the youth was in the 11th grade.

Ethnic Socialization—The African American youth were also asked about ethnicity-related activities. This question, used in 11th grade wave, asked the youth about the types of ethnicity-related activities in which they were involved with their family ($\alpha = 0.71$), such as studying their ethnic traditions and history.

Religiosity—A youth religiosity measure in 8th grade asked youth about the types of religious activities in which they were involved with their family ($\alpha = 0.72$); the religiosity measure was standardized.

Peer and Adult Support—These measures tapped the different types of supports that youth had in their lives in 8th and 11th grades. The first measure dealt with positive peer

influences, asking questions such as how important school, church, and college were in their peers' lives ($\alpha = 0.81$). A second peer question about communication and support asked youth about different issues they might discuss with their friends, such as how things were going in their life or with their families and whether they were having problems in school ($\alpha = 0.85$). Another measure asked about social support from adults in school, such as whether they sought help with schoolwork from tutors or teachers ($\alpha = 0.64$).

Civic Values—This measure assessed the desire that youth had to better society and was constructed from open-ended questions asking: (1) what youth would do if they had three wishes, (2) what they would do if they had one million dollars, and (3) what type of person they wanted to be when they grew older (Possible Selves: Hopes and Fears). There were three possible mentions each for the Three Wishes and Million Dollars questions for a range of 0 to 6. Responses were originally coded by the MADICS Principal Investigators for a wide range of responses (355 possible codes) from material possessions to family concerns to personal characteristics to ideals or altruistic goals. These original codes were then coded again for mentions of altruism defined as prosocial behaviors or attitudes of an individual that are beneficial to others but not necessarily beneficial to the individual (e.g., take care of family member(s); give money to charity; better world). There were four possible mentions each for the Possible Selves (Hopes and Fears) and 150 original codes each. The original Hopes responses were recoded for proactive values or the desire to be a good person within society; that is, striving to have characteristics that are helpful for the common good. Examples: positive behavior toward others (kind, nice, supportive); positive feeling/expression toward others (understanding, sympathetic); good/appropriate behavior (not in trouble generally, nonviolent). The original Fears responses were recoded for reactive values or the desire to avoid being a bad person within society; that is, striving to avoid characteristics that are detrimental to the common good. Examples: negative “gossipy” behavior toward others (backstabber, gossip); bad feeling towards others (hating, unconcerned, racist); negative violent/aggressive behavior toward others (bully, fighter). The Hopes and Fears responses were coded separately for a range of 0 to 4 each.

Four judges reviewed the new coding schemes (Three Wishes/Million Dollars; Hopes; and Fears) for face validity on altruism/communalism with a high average agreement for the three new codes (average percent of agreement across categories and judges = .93). Discrepancies were discussed and resolved by the authors. The final composite was a count of any mention on the three indices that indicated altruism, the desire to be helpful for the common good, and the desire to avoid being detrimental to the common good, for a range of 0 to 3. We used this measure as an indication of altruism/communalism values at 8th grade.

Civic Engagement in Young Adulthood—This index, measured in young adulthood (one year after high school) is the dependent variable in the present analysis. It is comprised of a question asking how often participants had participated in a range of prosocial activities including participating in discussions with friends on social issues, helping friends, giving money to a charity, giving money to a social group, and participating in a charitable organization. The response categories ranged from 0 to 5 (never participated in the past two years to participated 10 or more times in the past two years). A mean score was derived from the responses to the five choices.

Data Analysis and Model Testing

We used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test our civic context model (see Fig. 1). SEM is a statistical method of simultaneously testing multiple pathways within a proposed model. Each pathway is tested while controlling for the effects of the other pathways. SEM also enables us to assess whether our model fits the data. In the present study, we tested

whether individual and social contextual factors predict the development of civic engagement in late adolescence and whether late adolescent civic engagement leads to civic engagement in young adulthood.

The model was estimated using Amos 5.0 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999) with direct maximum likelihood using all available data, thereby allowing for the ability to have the model tested on the complete sample. Given that each of the various goodness-of-fit indices operates on differing assumptions, we used multiple indices of overall fit for a consistent evaluation (Hoyle & Panter, 1995). Therefore, the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudek, 1993) were used. The CFI ranges from 0 to 1 with 0 indicating the absence of model fit and 1 indicating perfect model fit. Values of approximately 0.9 or above are usually interpreted as evidence of good model fit (Bollen, 1989; Hoyle & Panter, 1995). Root mean square error of approximation values of less than 0.05 are generally accepted as indicators of good model fit in the social sciences; those between 0.05 and 0.08 are indicative of an adequate model fit (Browne & Cudek, 1993). In addition, because the chi-square statistic is sensitive to both sample size and model complexity, the chi-square ratio, which adjusts for model complexity, is reported. Although the cutoffs for interpreting this statistic vary, in general, a chi-square ratio between 1 and 3 indicates good fit (Arbuckle & Worthke, 1999).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 lists the descriptive statistics for the predictor and outcome variables used in the analyses. European American youth had higher levels of civic engagement than African American youth in 8th grade, but lower levels of civic engagement in 11th grade and post-high school. African American students also had higher levels of religiosity. With regard to social support, females, regardless of ethnicity, had more peers with positive characteristics and higher levels of peer support than their male counterparts. Females also had higher levels of communal/altruistic values in 11th grade.

The correlation matrix displayed in Table 3 shows numerous significant associations among this study's measures. Notably, the civic engagement measures for each time period are significantly associated with each other, but at modest levels. More robust associations were found between youth's religiosity and 11th grade civic participation, and between youth's religiosity and family involvement in ethnicity-related activities in 11th grade. Support from adults in eighth grade is associated with having peers with positive characteristics and with family involvement in ethnicity-related activities in 11th grade.

SEM Analysis and Summary

The SEM analysis corroborated the results from our two previous studies on civic engagement in early and late adolescence (Zaff et al., 2002a; Zaff et al., 2002b), as well as supporting our hypothesis that individual and social contextual variables in early adolescence promote civic participation in late adolescence, which appears to predict civic participation in young adulthood. The SEM of the full model on the whole sample, including ethnicity, indicated it was a good fit (CFI = 0.999; RMSEA = 0.008; chi-square (18) = 18.358, $p = 0.432$). Because we expected there to be differences by race and gender based on our earlier analyses and previous research on civic engagement, we ran several multigroup SEM analyses on the data available for both gender and racial groups. There was neither support for a racial difference (Blacks versus Whites (CMIN(19) = 20.734, $p = 0.352$) nor a gender difference (CMIN(19) = 26.587, $p = 0.115$). However, a comparison of the various race by gender groups revealed that the coefficients for African American males

and European American females were significantly different from one another ($\text{CMIN}(19) = 39.585, p = 0.004$). (See Table 4 for the coefficients for all these groups).

We not only tested for differences by race and gender but we also tested two different models for the African American respondents. Model 1 is identical for all four groups. In Model 2 we added two additional factors that we thought might be significant for African American youth: whether their parent attended or watched the Million Man March, which took place shortly before our data collection when the youth were in the 11th grade, and a scale that indicates how often there was family involvement in ethnicity-related behaviors, such as talking about racial discrimination, studying racial traditions or history, participating in community activities with same-race individuals, or celebrating special days connected to one's racial background. Although there is no difference by gender for Model 2 ($\text{CMIN}(22) = 30.030, p = 0.118$), Model 1 appears to be a better fit for African American males ($\text{CFI} = 0.983$; $\text{RMSEA} = 0.02$; $\text{chi-square}(17) = 1.24, p = 0.221$) than Model 2 ($\text{CFI} = 0.941$; $\text{RMSEA} = 0.03$; $\text{chi-square}(32) = 1.52, p = 0.031$) because it is more parsimonious even though it indicates a strong impact of family involvement around race on 11th grade civic behavior ($\text{beta} = 0.22, p < 0.001$), which is itself affected by 8th grade extracurricular activities ($\text{beta} = 0.19, p < 0.01$), but it does not add significant explanation to post-high school social behavior. The two models have similar fits for the African American females (Model 1: $\text{CFI} = 0.983$; $\text{RMSEA} = 0.03$; $\text{chi-square}(17) = 1.33, p = 0.161$; Model 2: $\text{CFI} = 0.980$; $\text{RMSEA} = 0.03$; $\text{chi-square}(32) = 1.25, p = 0.153$), also indicating a strong impact of family involvement around race on 11th grade civic behavior ($\text{beta} = 0.26, p < 0.001$), which is related to 8th grade religiosity ($\text{beta} = 0.26, p < 0.001$) and 8th grade extracurricular activities ($\text{beta} = 0.20, p < 0.01$). The difference is that, for African American females, partaking in ethnicity-related events with one's family in 11th grade also has a big impact on post-high school social behavior ($\text{beta} = 0.26, p < 0.001$).

In summary, the SEM analysis supports our initial hypothesis that a civic context in early adolescence predicts civic participation in late adolescence. Civic participation in late adolescence, along with a continued civic context, subsequently predicts civic engagement in young adulthood. These findings are particularly important since they illustrate the need for program developers to think holistically when constructing program models, such as engaging parents and peers in civic activities, instead of solely implementing civic activities as their strategy.

Discussion

The results from our analysis provide an important first step toward supporting the theory that living within a civic context contributes to the development of civic engagement from early adolescence into adulthood. Our theory builds on the work of Youniss (e.g., Youniss & Yates, 1999), who posits that participating in substantive and formative civic activities encourages the development of a civic identity. The results from the current study provide preliminary support for a broader contextual theory in which we posit that (1) a civic context that includes multiple factors within a youth's environment, such as family and peer influences, culture, religion, and participation in noncivic activities, predicts later civic engagement and subsequent civic identity development; and (2) consistency is key; that is, a civic context in middle childhood or early adolescence needs to be followed up with a civic context in later adolescence and early adulthood, key time periods in a youth's identity development. Additionally, and importantly, we found that ethnic socialization is a substantive predictor of civic behaviors for African American youth.

We note that the coefficients are moderate in size, but the relations are significant and hold for both subgroups of Whites and Blacks. The overall model accounts for between one-sixth

to one-fifth of the total variance for civic engagement in young adulthood. For late adolescent civic engagement, the model explains approximately one-third of the variance across racial and gender groups. Importantly, the specific predictors of short- and long-term civic identity differ by gender and race. Indeed, the models for Black and White females include a broader array of significant predictors than for Black and White males, though, interestingly, the overall variance accounted for in the models is relatively consistent across groups. Considering the findings on ethnic socialization, we discuss the findings by racial group.

African Americans

Our results suggest that ethnicity-related variables, peer factors, parental participation in civic activities, and individual values predict civic behavior in late adolescence and early adulthood for these young men and women. Specifically, the importance of ethnicity in the youths' families predicted concurrent and later civic engagement, suggesting that ethnic socialization can facilitate group-based youth civic engagement. This is consistent with previous research on the influence of family-level cultural factors, such as family religiosity and church attendance, on youth civic engagement (Smetana & Metzger, 2005). This family ethos may be expressed within the females' own religiosity and having a more communal values system, which predict later civic engagement in our model. Unfortunately, few studies have addressed the connection between racial socialization, ethnic pride, or participation in ethnic-specific activities and civic behaviors. Further research is needed on the relation between different cultures and a variety of forms of civic behaviors, including the aggregate norms and social capital of ethnic and cultural communities (Ginwright, 2005). Given this caveat, we suggest, based on the assumption that different cultures have different social norms, that program developers and policy makers take into account the cultural context within which their targeted youth are raised so that they can create programs that promote the positive values and goals consistent with the youth's culture and leverage the social capital in a young person's community.

Ethnic socialization by the family possibly confounds the relationships found, since the association between civic behaviors in late adolescence and early adulthood is erased for African American females when ethnic socialization is introduced into the model, as well as the association between peer and activity participation for both males and females. The reader should not necessarily conclude that previous civic engagement or the other factors do not matter. Rather, we would argue that ethnic socialization is deeply intertwined with concurrent civic behaviors, with the decision to interact with peers who share certain attitudes, or the decision to engage in a variety of activities, thus consuming the variance accounted for by civic behaviors and other predictive factors.

Civic engagement is also predicted by the attitudes and behaviors of the youths' peers and the activities and social status of their parents. Previous research has found similar relations, whether through the encouragement of group norms for peers (Wentzel & McNamara, 1999; Yates & Youniss, 1998), the role modeling and socialization of civic opportunities and norms by parents (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2001; McDevitt & Chafee, 2000), or the opportunities that are presented in a community based on the parent's social status (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1998). Our results suggest that civic programs should leverage the influence of peers and engage parents in activities with their children. More research is necessary to uncover the transmission process of civic behaviors from youth to youth and from parents to youth to determine, for instance, whether the influence is based on modeling of behavior, taking youth to civic activities, or in other ways. We also note that there is no research on the extended family system as an influence on youth civic engagement. For instance, families in which grandparents, parents, and siblings are civic minded might create a civic ethos that influences the civic opportunities and

subsequent behaviors of youth. Creating family-level aggregate measures that include civic involvement of siblings, parents, and extended family members are needed to study these possibilities.

Program developers and policy makers should also be aware that promoting youths' values and goals can lead to later civic engagement. More specifically, our findings for African Americans (directly for females and indirectly for males) are consistent with those of other studies showing that communalistic and altruistic ideologies in early adolescence predict citizenship among older adolescents and adults (Avrahami & Dar, 1993; Batson & Shaw, 1991; Colby & Damon, 1995; Omoto & Snyder, 1995). There is a plethora of local, state, and national character education initiatives designed to socialize these values and goals. What are needed now are good quantitative measures of values and goals so that these initiatives can be evaluated accurately. Our measure of civic values is relatively rudimentary and likely does not capture the full complexity of this construct. We also acknowledge that other, more individualistic motivations may predict civic behaviors, as well. For instance, we could imagine that youth looking to improve their college applications might participate in community service activities (Friedland & Morimoto, 2005).

European Americans

The model for European American females illustrates the potentially comprehensive set of factors needed to be in place for youth to develop a civic identity. Early adolescent civic and noncivic activity participation is associated with participation in later adolescence, and civic and noncivic participation in later adolescence is associated with civic participation in young adulthood. Therefore, we conclude that engaging youth in positive activities, and particularly civic activities, predicts future civic participation. This is consistent with previous research (e.g., Youniss et al., 1999; Zaff et al., 2003) and with youth development research and practice fields (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). These acknowledge the necessity of providing youth with safe, supportive, and engaging activities in order to promote adolescent well-being and a smooth transition into adulthood. Researchers have also found that it is important to engage youth in the specific activities we would like to see in the future (Youniss & Yates, 1999; Zaff & Moore, 2002). Program developers and policy makers should not, however, misconstrue this finding as indicating that previous civic engagement alone results in future civic engagement. Indeed, the coefficient is relatively small and there are multiple other factors that we found to be significant predictors, including peer support and parent's education. There is also a strong possibility that experiences earlier in childhood promote initial civic behaviors in early adolescence.

Religiosity in early adolescence, assessed in part as youth participation in religious activities, also predicts civic engagement in young adulthood. Religiosity could be considered a proxy of altruistic values since most religions place an emphasis on charity and kindness; though we do not know whether the religious tenets were internalized by youth while they were participating in religious-related activities. Additional research that focuses on civic identity and religiosity is necessary to have a more concrete understanding of the effects of religiosity and civic identity development on later civic behaviors, including whether youth have begun to internalize these values by late adolescence.

Our model for European-American males further illustrates that friends are important supporters of youth civic engagement. Young adolescents with friends who have positive academic, social, and health aspirations and engage in civic behaviors are more likely to be engaged in civic behaviors themselves. In addition, having friends with positive characteristics in early adolescence predicts civic participation in later adolescence. Also, having supportive and communicative friends in late adolescence predicts civic participation in young adulthood. Although our data do not allow us to rule out the possibility that youth

who have positive aspirations and engage in positive behaviors seek out friends with the same attributes, it is quite likely that having such friends reinforces civic engagement and supports continued civic engagement. Program developers and policy makers should find ways to take advantage of these potential resources in designing new programs. Interestingly, and somewhat inexplicably, the predictive factors for European American males are consistent with those for African American females.

Limitations—There are three notable limitations to our study. First, our data were derived from a community-based sample of African American and European American youth. Although this was a relatively large sample, the reader should recognize that the amounts and types of civic engagement are not necessarily generalizable to all communities and ethnic subgroups in the United States, especially since the Million Man March was a unique and potentially powerful event in the young African Americans' lives. Nevertheless, our focus is on the processes involved in the development of youths' civic engagement, including having a substantive and meaningful event occur in their lives. These general principles are likely to generalize to other populations but this hypothesis needs to be tested using other data sets.

We also did not examine the quality of the activities in which participants were involved. As researchers and practitioners of service learning theorize, engaging youth in the design and implementation of activities as well as teaching them about the importance of their participation could be the most effective method for promoting citizenship (e.g., Katula, 2000). Similar to other survey data, our data did not allow for this level of specificity. Additionally, we focused only on one type of civic engagement, a selection of prosocial behaviors. We did not include indicators of political involvement or social activism. While there are quite possibly different sets of factors that predict different types of civic behaviors, we recommend that future research on these types of civic engagement should explore the broader contexts that influence civic development.

Finally, we acknowledge that we used a relatively rough measure of values in our model. Even so, we still found that this variable had a significant and unique effect on later civic engagement. We will seek and we advocate for others to seek more evidence of this process and to develop and use more refined measures of civic values.

Implications—Researchers have theorized that programs to promote positive citizenship should begin with an opportunity for adolescents to participate in civic activities, such as community service or political volunteering. In this report, we expand this theoretical perspective by arguing that programs to promote civic engagement need to begin by focusing on social relationships in youths' lives with parents and peers and the environment in which youths live, such as neighborhoods and schools, as well as on promoting civic values. We hypothesize that these influences in early adolescence lead to civic engagement in late adolescence, which in turn predicts civic engagement in young adulthood.

In thinking through program and policy implications, we emphasize that previous civic participation works in concert with other social contexts that influence youth civic engagement. Ethnic socialization, friends who have positive aspirations and attitudes, friends who give support to youth, and participation in civic and noncivic activities appear to create a social atmosphere that promotes civic participation. Matching program activities to cultural values as well as making these activities salient and related to youth's goals and values could prove to be more effective than generic program packages.

Promoting youths' values and goals could further promote youth and young adult civic behaviors. We found a direct relation between civic values in early adolescence and civic

engagement in later adolescence. Though more research is needed to confirm this finding, we suggest that youths' value systems could be an integral target outcome of youth development programs; how to influence these values (e.g., through community norms, family socialization, child-level interaction) is an important line of inquiry.

We note that we do not yet have a clear understanding of how social capital promotes youth and young adult civic behaviors. The social contextual variables that we included could be considered proxies for social capital present in youth's lives. However, we used measures on an individual level, so we do not know whether social capital on a family, community, or cultural level uniquely promotes civic engagement. In addition, we do not know the specific mechanism through which social capital influences civic engagement, whether through modeling of behaviors, providing an infrastructure for civic activities or creating social norms that are consistent with civic engagement, among other possible pathways. Additional research using family, community, and cultural-level variables could provide a more precise estimate of the process through which youth become engaged in civic activities.

We recognize that factors included in our models across racial and gender groups might not necessarily resonate with these groups. There are quite possibly qualitatively different and unique factors for any given racial/ethnic and gender group. Much more additional research is obviously needed before making any definitive statements about the specific factors that comprise a civic context for various racial/ethnic groups. The present study is a first step, however, toward demonstrating the relation between a civic context and the development of civic engagement. We found that parents, friends, and ethnicity are all significant contributors. Individual-level factors, such as having altruistic/communalistic values are also important. These findings have potentially important program and policy implications, suggesting that civic engagement initiatives should take a more holistic approach than only implementing civic activities for youth.

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Figure 1.
Model of positive citizenship development.

Figure 2.
Revised model of youth positive citizenship development (full sample).

Table 1
Demographics of Survey Sample

	African American	European American
Sample Size	<i>N</i> = 612	<i>N</i> = 323
Median Family Income (1993)	\$50–55,000	\$60–65,000
Highest Education in Household	38% College Degree	60% College Degree
Family Structure	51% Intact	71% Intact

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics by Gender and by Ethnicity (N)

	Total	BM	BF	WM	WF
Youth Civic Engagement					
Post high school prosocial behavior	2.15 (781)	2.08 ^a (161)	1.99 ^a (253)	2.22 (109)	2.42 ^b (168)
11th grade civic engagement	2.17 (914)	2.24 ^a (308)	2.43 ^a (240)	1.82 ^b (153)	1.91 ^b (163)
11th grade other engagement	1.43 (939)	1.38 (313)	1.33 (303)	1.54 (155)	1.57 (168)
8th grade civic Engagement	0.26 (938)	0.17 ^a (337)	0.21 ^a (278)	0.36 ^b (155)	0.41 ^b (172)
8th grade other engagement	2.23 (656)	2.27 (334)	2.17 ^a (282)	2.49 ^b (155)	2.53 ^b (173)
Family Involvement					
11th grade parent	1.99 (536)	2.01 (267)	1.97 (269)	–	–
Million Man March participation					
Family Involvement in own-ethnicity activities	2.89 (515)	2.90 (256)	2.88 (259)	–	–
Parent PTSA Membership	1.18 (896)	1.17 (292)	1.24 (262)	1.16 (167)	1.14 (175)
Youth's religiosity	-.01 (790)	-.04 ^a (276)	.10 ^a (236)	-.18 ^b (126)	-.12 ^c (152)
Social Support					
Positive characteristics of peers	3.21 (936)	3.12 ^a (331)	3.33 ^b (278)	3.04 ^a (155)	3.33 ^b (172)
Peer communication and support	3.94 (863)	3.59 ^a (282)	4.26 ^b (275)	3.40 ^a (147)	4.53 ^b (154)
Social support from adults	2.92 (942)	2.95 ^a (333)	3.10 ^c (281)	2.65 ^b (155)	2.80 ^d (173)
Values					
11th grade communal/altruistic values	2.22 (942)	2.13 ^a (334)	2.32 ^b (280)	2.02 ^a (155)	2.39 ^b (173)

Superscript *a* indicates a significant difference at least at the 0.05 level from means with superscript *b*.

Superscripts *c* and *d* indicate significant differences at least at the 0.05 level from means with superscripts *a* and *b*.

Table 3
Correlation Matrix for Background and Outcome Variables for Full Sample

	Parent Education	Post High School Social Behavior	8th Grade Civic Engagement	8th Grade Other Participation	11th Grade Civic Engagement	11th Grade Other Participation	8th Grade Parent PTSA	11th Grade Million Man March	Family Involvement in Ethnicity-Related Activities	8th Grade Positive Peers	Peer Communication	8th Grade Support from Adults	Youth's Religiosity	Communal/Altruistic Values
<i>Parents' Education</i>														
Post-high school social behavior	0.202 *													
8th grade civic engagement	0.158 *	0.167 *												
8th grade other participation	0.218 *	0.177 *	0.282 *											
11th grade civic engagement	0.257 *	0.198 *	0.175 *	0.269 *										
11th grade other participation	0.235 *	0.182 *	0.174 *	0.353 *	0.269 *									
8th grade parent PTSA	0.283 *	0.101 *	0.149 *	0.213 *	0.187 *	0.226 *								
11th grade parent Million Man March	0.041	0.045	0.048	-0.021	-0.166 *	0.019	-0.00							
Family involvement in ethnicity-related activities	0.087 *	0.151 *	0.076 *	0.245 *	0.219 *	0.102 *	0.064	-0.149 *						
8th grade positive peers	0.125 *	0.102 *	0.049	0.179 *	0.234 *	0.093 *	0.054	-0.060	0.250 *					
11th grade peer communication	0.057	0.242 *	0.073 *	0.118 *	0.210 *	0.125 *	0.053	-0.073 *	0.147 *	0.177 *				
8th grade support from adults	-0.100 *	-0.023	0.011	0.098 *	0.050	-0.049	-0.021	-0.049	0.263 *	0.273 *	0.139 *			
Youth's religiosity	0.129 *	0.074	0.144 *	0.176 *	0.289 *	0.052	0.077 *	-0.074	0.364 *	0.249 *	0.071	0.222 *		
Communal/altruistic values	0.075 *	0.079 *	0.114 *	0.140 *	0.203 *	0.089 *	0.018	-0.011	0.043	0.140 *	0.126 *	0.080 *	0.108 *	

* Indicates significance at least at the 0.05 level.

Table 4
Standardized Beta Coefficients from SEM Models by Race and Gender

	Model 1				Model 2			
	BM	BF	WM	WF	BM	BF	WM	WF
Post HS prosocial behavior								
11th grade Peer support	0.11	0.19 *	0.26 *	0.4	0.12	0.14 *		
11th grade civic beh	0.16	0.14 *	0.11	0.33 *	0.16	0.06		
11th grade passive acts	0.07	0.22 *	0.03	0.10	0.08	0.18 *		
Parents' education	0.23 *	0.13 *	0.10	0.10	0.24 *	0.12		
Parents' MMM	–	–	–	–	0.12	0.11		
11th grade family/race	–	–	–	–	0.03	0.26 *		
SMC	0.14	0.16	0.11	0.19	0.15	0.20		
11th grade civic behavior								
8th grade activist	0.01	0.09	0.06	0.19 *	0.00	0.11		
Parents' education	0.26 *	0.09	0.12	0.18 *	0.26 *	0.05		
PTSA	0.10	0.09	–0.01	0.04	0.07	0.08		
8th grade Adult support	–0.05	–0.10	–0.6	0.10	–0.06	–0.10		
8th grade positive peers	0.19 *	0.06	0.14	0.07	0.20 *	0.03		
8th grade religiosity	0.00	0.15 *	0.16	0.28 *	0.00	0.11		
11th grade passive acts	0.13 *	0.10	0.11	0.21 *	0.11 *	0.07		
11th grade peer support	0.12 *	0.09	0.11	0.27 *	0.09	0.06		
11th grade good person	0.14	0.12 *	0.19 *	0.09	0.14	0.12 *		
8th grade passive acts	0.13 *	0.18 *	0.23 *	0.10	0.10	0.16 *		
Parents' MMM	–	–	–	–	–0.01	–0.10		
11th grade Family/race	–	–	–	–	0.22 *	0.26 *		
SMC	0.28	0.26	0.33	0.39	0.31	0.32		
11th grade passive acts								
8th grade activist	0.13 *	–0.01	0.12	–0.04	0.13 *	–0.01		
Parents' education	0.03	0.13 *	0.23 *	0.28 *	0.03	0.14 *		
PTSA	0.12	0.14 *	0.19 *	0.07	0.12	0.14 *		

	Model 1		Model 2	
11th grade Peer support	0.06	0.14 *	0.09	0.05
8th grade passive acts	0.28 *	0.29 *	0.20 *	0.33 *
Parents' MMM	-	-	-	-
SMC	0.14	0.18	0.24	0.28
11th grade peer support				
8th grade good person	0.12 *	0.08	0.06	0.09
8th grade pos peers	0.20 *	0.03	0.10	0.18 *
SMC	0.06	0.01	0.02	0.04
11th grade family/race				
8th grade Religiosity	-	-	-	-
8th grade passive acts	-	-	-	-
SMC	-	-	-	-
Parents' MMM				
11th grade Family/Race	-	-	-	-
PTSA	-	-	-	-
Parents' Education	-	-	-	-
SMC	-	-	-	-
(N)	(469)	(410)	(215)	(235)
			(471)	(426)

* Indicates significance at least at the 0.05 level.