



Mother–adolescent civic messages: Associations with adolescent civic behavior and civic judgments

Benjamin Oosterhoff*, Aaron Metzger

West Virginia University, Psychology Department, PO Box 6040, 53 Campus Drive, Morgantown, WV 26505, United States



ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 30 September 2014
Received in revised form 15 December 2015
Accepted 5 January 2016
Available online 25 January 2016

Keywords:

Adolescent civic engagement
Civic messages
Parent–adolescent civic discussion
Observational methodology

ABSTRACT

Observational and multi-informant survey data were used to examine associations among mothers' civic behavior, observed mother–adolescent messages about civic responsibility, and adolescents' judgments about civic duty and civic behavior. Adolescents ($N = 144$, $M_{age} = 14.49$ [12–18] years) and their mothers ($N = 144$) participated in a semi-structured, dyadic discussion task focused on civic responsibility and adolescents completed questionnaires assessing civic behavior and judgments about whether individuals should engage in different civic activities. Eight themes emerged within the parent–adolescent civic discussion task: *community service*, *vote*, *other standard political involvement* (e.g., political awareness), *follow regulations*, *be productive* (e.g., working and becoming educated), *help others*, *respect others*, and *respect country*. Mothers' community service involvement and messages concerning respect and helping were positively associated with adolescents' community service behavior. Mothers' messages concerning following regulations were negatively associated with teens' social movement judgments. Additionally, adolescents' own messages were associated with their civic judgments.

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Adolescence is a developmental period marked by substantial physical, emotional, and social-cognitive growth. During adolescence, youth also gain increased exposure to civic institutions and more frequently engage in community and political activities (Flanagan, 2013). The co-occurrence of social cognitive and emotional development coupled with greater exposure to social institutions may prompt youth to form more nuanced beliefs about the relation between self and society, including emerging notions of the social contract and civic responsibility. Forming positive beliefs about civic responsibility and participating in civic activities during adolescence are thought to undergird active engagement throughout adulthood (Metzger & Smetana, 2010). Thus, scholars interested in adolescent civic development have sought to identify social factors that promote favorable beliefs about civic duty and encourage civic involvement (Sherrod & Lauchardt, 2009).

Civic engagement broadly refers to attitudes and behaviors directed toward the betterment of society (Zaff, Hart, Flanagan, Youniss, & Levine, 2010). Civic activities are diverse, and may include standard types of political involvement (i.e., normative political activities that maintain effective democratic functioning, including voting and following political news; Walker, 2002) and non-standard social movement

involvement (i.e., political activities that seek to change the existing political or social structure, including protesting or boycotting; Youniss et al., 2002). Additionally, some scholars have proposed that civic engagement involves non-political community activities, such as engagement in community service (Flanagan & Faison, 2001). Participation in these political and community activities during adolescence is a central component of positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2005). In an effort to promote youth civic engagement, scholars have sought to identify contextual factors that contribute to adolescents' positive civic beliefs and increased civic participation, including organized activity involvement (Metzger & Smetana, 2009), supportive classroom climates (Lin, 2015), and parental modeling and messages (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

Parents may be an especially important social influence on adolescent civic behavior and beliefs. Parents foster adolescent civic development by modeling civic behavior and communicating expectations through verbal messages about civic duty (Rosenthal, Feiring, & Lewis, 1998). The majority of previous research has focused on links between self-reported frequency of parent–adolescent conversations concerning current events or politics and youth civic behavior (Zaff, Malanchuk, Michelsen, & Eccles, 2003). Scholars have not examined whether the content of parents' specific messages about civic duty are linked with youths' civic behavior and beliefs. The current study used both observational and multi-informant survey methodology to examine associations among mothers' civic behavior, mothers' and adolescents' observed messages about civic duty, adolescents' civic behavior, and adolescents' judgments about civic duty.

* Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, West Virginia University, PO Box 6040, 53 Campus Drive, Morgantown, WV 26505, United States. Tel.: +1 631 848 8720; fax: +1 304 293 6606.

E-mail addresses: boosterh@mix.wvu.edu (B. Oosterhoff), aaron.metzger@mail.wvu.edu (A. Metzger).

Parents and adolescent civic development

According to political socialization and developmental systems theories, parents are thought to influence adolescent civic judgments and participation through modeling civic behavior and discussing civic duty. Political socialization theory states that adolescents learn civic expectations from observing their parents' civic participation and listening to parents discuss politics and current events (Hess & Torney, 1967; Niemi, 1973; Sigel, 1970). Developmental systems theories propose a more transactional process, where adolescents' own attitudes and abilities dynamically interact with elements of their ecological contexts. From this perspective, parents modeling of civic behavior and engagement in civic discussion would be hypothesized to work in dynamic relation to adolescents' own beliefs about civic duty.

Political socialization theory and developmental systems theories suggest that parental civic modeling and parent–adolescent civic discussion may have important implications for adolescents' civic judgments and behavior. Parents who regularly engage in civic activities may exemplify the importance of participation and provide adolescents with opportunities for similar types of engagement. Additionally, political discussions with adolescents may provide parents with an opportunity to communicate personal and family values, social rules, and general expectations (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011). Evidence supporting the importance of parental civic modeling and parent–adolescent civic discussion is provided by a large number of studies that have found strong, positive associations among parent and adolescent civic behaviors (e.g., Bekkers, 2007; Plutzer, 2002; Zaff et al., 2003) and among the frequency of parent–adolescent political discussions and adolescent civic behavior (e.g., Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; McIntosh, Hart, & Youniss, 2007). However, previous measures of political discussion have primarily assessed the frequency of parent–adolescent conversations about current events and political news. Research has not yet examined links between the content of parent–adolescent discussions about civic duty and adolescents' civic behavior and judgments. Conversations about citizenship and civic duty may provide parents and adolescents with an opportunity to communicate messages about the importance of different types of civic activities and thus be more closely tied to adolescents' civic judgments and behavior.

Content specificity within parent–adolescent civic discussion

Conceptualizations of civic duty are diverse (Sherrod, 2003), and heterogeneity in beliefs about civic responsibility may be reflected in parent and adolescent messages concerning civic duty. Recent research has shown that parents and teens communicate a diverse array of civic responsibilities within parent–adolescent civic discussions, including following regulations, being loyal and courteous, working, becoming educated, and participating in community and political affairs (Oosterhoff, Metzger, & Babskie, 2015). The content of parent civic messages may be one source of social information youth use to inform beliefs and decisions about whether to engage in civic activities. For example, youth may draw upon parental messages concerning the importance of political and community involvement when making decisions concerning civic participation and evaluating whether others should engage in similar activities. A primary aim of the current study was to examine how the content of parent–adolescent discussions about civic duty is associated with adolescents' participation in specific forms of civic behavior and their judgments about whether others should engage in similar activities. Identifying the specific links between parents' messages about civic duty and adolescents' civic judgments and behavior may provide valuable insight into developmental processes related to civic engagement and individual differences in adolescent civic behavior.

While adolescents may draw on parental messages about civic duty to inform their civic beliefs and behavior, youth may also use civic

discussion with their parents to express views of what they believe constitutes 'good citizenship'. These messages may encompass beliefs about the importance of specific civic activities, but may also include broader social values that potentially conflict with certain civic duties. For instance, youth frequently state that following regulations is an important civic obligation (Oosterhoff et al., 2015), which may reflect values of obedience and upholding the status quo. Youth who communicate messages about the importance of following rules and laws may be less inclined to support civic activities that actively work against the status quo, such as boycotting, protesting, and other social movement forms of participation. An exploratory aim of this research was to examine whether adolescents' own messages about civic duty are linked with their civic judgments and behavior.

Assessing parent and adolescent messages about civic duty, however, presents a methodological challenge. Beliefs concerning civic duty are diverse (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), and self-report methods may not adequately capture the variety of messages parents and adolescents communicate to one another. Video-recorded semi-structured discussion tasks may be ideal for capturing the anticipated range of parent and adolescent messages about civic duty. These tasks allow researchers to document the content of parents' and adolescents' civic messages in real time (Metzger et al., 2013; Wakschlag et al., 2011), which may be especially useful for capturing the conversational dynamics of the discussion, such as which focal (parent or adolescent) initiated the message. Our previous research has found that both parents and adolescents initiate messages that reference a wide variety of civic responsibilities within a video-recorded semi-structured civic discussion task (Oosterhoff et al., 2015). Thus, structured observational discussion tasks may be a useful tool to determine if, and in what proportion, civic duty messages are represented in parents' and adolescents' civic discussion and how these messages are associated with teens' civic behavior and civic judgments.

The current study

The current study utilizes a developmental systems framework to examine associations among parents' civic behavior, parents' and adolescents' messages about civic duty, and adolescents' civic judgments and behavior. Based on previous research, it was anticipated that parents' civic behavior would be associated with teens' involvement and judgments concerning similar civic activities. Specifically, it was hypothesized that parents' engagement in community service, standard political, and social movement activities would be positively associated with adolescents' engagement in and judgments about community service, standard political, and social movement behavior, respectively. Furthermore, consistent with previous research (Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000), it was anticipated that parents' observed messages about civic duty would be associated with teens' involvement and judgments about similar activities over and above parents' civic behavior. Specifically, it was hypothesized that parents' messages concerning the importance of volunteering and helping others would be positively associated with teens' community service behavior and judgments and messages concerning voting and keeping up with politics would be positively associated with adolescents' standard political behavior and judgments. Given the dearth of research on adolescents' active role within civic discussion, associations among youths' civic messages, civic judgments, and behavior were explored.

Method

Participants

Participants were 145 adolescents and their mothers. One adolescent–mother dyad was missing all self-reported measures and was removed from further analyses, making the final analytic sample 144 adolescents and their mothers ($M_{age} = 44.00, SD = 7.22$). Adolescents

(60% female) were between the ages of 12–18 years ($M = 14.49, SD = 1.75$) and primarily Caucasian/White (78%), biracial (9%), or African American (3%). The remainder identified as Hispanic/Latino (2%), Asian-American (1%), Native American (1%), or others (5%), and one adolescent did not report their ethnicity. Although most adolescents lived in two-parent households (78%), the majority of teens participated in the study with mothers (88%, $n = 108$). The remaining adolescents participated with both parents (23%, $n = 36$).¹ The majority of mothers were biological parents, although some were adoptive parents ($n = 2$) and stepparents ($n = 3$). Two adolescents participated with another female relative that was their primary caregiver (aunt, grandmother) and were grouped with mothers. Mothers' education levels ranged from high school graduates (18%), business or technical school (13%), 4-year college/university degree (36%), and graduate/professional degrees (30%). Household income ranged from less than \$12,000 to more than \$150,000, with a median of \$75,000 to \$99,999. Participants were recruited from local high schools, community events, community clubs, doctors' offices, and religious organizations in and around a Mid-Atlantic University town with a population of 70,000. This mid-sized city is characterized as the economic, commercial, and medical epicenter of the region. Participants were given monetary compensation for their involvement.

Procedure

The majority of the data involving mother–adolescent dyads were collected in families' homes (71%), though some families (29%) participated at the research lab or in a public place (e.g., public library). Parents provided informed consent and permission for their children to participate and adolescents provided informed assent.

Adolescents and their parents participated in a 33-minute video-recorded semi-structured interaction task, which was divided into five separate discussions ranging from 5 to 7 minutes in length. The order of discussion topics was fixed for all parent–adolescent dyads, and presented in the following sequence: general family life, eating behavior, internet and cell-phone use, alcohol, and civic engagement. Similar to previous observational research, “flip card” methodology was used to facilitate the parent–adolescent interaction (Cui & Conger, 2008). Procedures were similar to research that has utilized flip card methodology to examine parent–adolescent discussion of civic engagement (Oosterhoff et al., 2015) and cigarette smoking (Wakschlag et al., 2011). Research staff gave instructions to families and provided them with cue cards that contained prompt questions designed to capture variability in discussion. Throughout the interaction, parents and adolescents alternated reading prompt questions. If families discussed all prompt cards within a segment, they were encouraged to return to any previously discussed prompt card within that segment. To improve the ecological validity of the discussions, researchers left the room during the task and returned only to introduce each topic.

Civic engagement was discussed in the final seven minute discussion segment. Six prompt questions were used to facilitate parent–adolescent discussion of citizenship and civic duty. The six prompts for the civic discussion task were as follows: (a) (teen reads) *Let's talk about how people in our family feel about being citizens of the United States. What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States?*, (b) (parent reads) *Do citizens 'have' to do anything? What do citizens have to do?*, (c) (teen reads) *Let's talk about some of the ways that people in our family participate in activities or groups in our community.*, (d) (parent reads) *Do people in our family talk about politics? If we do, what do we talk about and*

who does most of the talking?, (e) (teen reads) *Should teenagers be expected to contribute to their community, city, or country? If so, how?*, and (f) (parent reads) *If our family was asked to describe our community or city, what would people in our family say? How do we feel about our community or city?*

Upon completion of the interaction task, questionnaires were administered in separate rooms with research assistants present to answer questions. Due to slower reading abilities of younger adolescents, research assistants read survey items aloud to 7% ($n = 10$) of the adolescents and read part of the survey aloud to 1% ($n = 1$) of the adolescents. Responses to all study variables did not differ across collection location or whether the survey was read aloud.

Civic content coding

The civic content coding was similar to that used in previous research (Oosterhoff et al., 2015). The entire seven minute civic discussion segment was coded for the content of parent and adolescent statements that related to civic duty. A single codable statement began when participants started to speak and ended when the speaker willfully allowed the other person to speak. In some instances, interruptions occurred when either member of the dyad broke the continuity or flow of the other's statement. If a statement continued after an interruption, the entire statement (pre- and post-interruption) was coded as a single statement and the interruption was coded as a separate statement. The number of statements that qualified as distinct civic messages was recorded along with the actual content of the statements.

Eight coding categories capturing parent–adolescent civic messages were created based on previous research assessing adolescents' free-response conceptualizations of civic responsibility (Sherrod, 2003) and 10 video-recorded pilot civic discussions that were similar to that used in the current study. One primary and one reliability rater coded parent and adolescent statements for content aligned with the following categories: *community service, vote, other standard political involvement, follow regulations, be productive, help others, respect others, and respect country*. Example statements for each coding category are displayed in Table 1. Raters were trained using a subset (5%) of videos. Training continued until a criterion reliability level ($\kappa = .70$) was obtained for all coding categories. Once this criterion was met, an additional 30.5% of civic discussion interactions were coded by the reliability coder. Weekly consensus meetings were held between the primary and reliability coders to prevent coder “drift” and to make final decisions on discrepancies for double-coded interactions (analyses were conducted on these final “consensus codes”). To assess criterion reliability for count data, linear weighted Kappa coefficients were used. Final reliability coefficients and frequencies for all code categories are displayed in Table 1. All coding categories had acceptable reliabilities, ranging from .65 to 1.0.

Due to low frequencies, conceptually similar coding categories were collapsed. Specifically, *voting* and *other standard political involvement* were collapsed into one category representing *standard political involvement*, and *community service* and *helping others* were collapsed into category representing an obligation to *help community*. Despite collapsing, adolescents' *help community* ($n = 17$) and *respect others and country* ($n = 18$) messages still had extremely low frequencies, and were therefore excluded from analyses.

Questionnaire measures

Mother and adolescent civic behavior

Mothers' involvement in civic activities was measured through seven self-reported items and adolescents' civic involvement was assessed through seven self-reported items adapted from previous research (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Metzger & Smetana, 2009; see Supplemental Material A for all questionnaire measures). Parents reported how often (in an average month) they engaged in four types of activities: community service (3 items, $\alpha = 0.73$; e.g., volunteer to

¹ Due to the low number of participating fathers, analyses were conducted on mother–adolescent dyads only. Compared to mothers that participated with fathers, mothers that participated independently were slightly more involved in civic activities ($t(142) = -2.12$ to $-2.27, ps = .01$ to $.04$) but did not significantly differ on any civic message variables ($ps > .19$). Adolescents from these families did not significantly differ on any civic message variables ($ps > .28$), civic judgments ($ps > .52$), or civic behavior ($ps > .42$).

Table 1
Civic coding category example statements, descriptive statistics, and linear weighted Kappas.

Coding category	Example statements	Ns M (A)	Ranges M (A)	Weighted Kappas M (A)
Follow regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obey Laws • Follow rules • Pay taxes 	52 (65)	0–6 (0–5)	.94 (.88)
Voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote 	49 (35)	0–3 (0–2)	.81 (.92)
Other standard political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your representatives 	13 (4)	0–3 (0–1)	.88 (1.0)
Be productive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work • Pay Bills 	25 (22)	0–3 (0–3)	.70 (.83)
Respect for country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take pride in your country • Support the troops 	17 (11)	0–2 (0–2)	.81 (.85)
Respect for others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat each other kindly • Respect others 	17 (7)	0–3 (0–1)	.65 (.66)
Helping others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping others 	32 (6)	0–2 (0–1)	.70 (1.0)
Community service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community service 	23 (11)	0–2 (0–2)	.70 (.90)

Note. M = Mother, A = Adolescent.

help poor, sick, or disabled people in your community), standard-political (1 item; i.e., keep up with current events and politics), and social movement (3 items, $\alpha = 0.67$; take part in a political protest or rally). Identical items measured adolescents' involvement (in an average month) in the same types of civic activities: community service (3 items, $\alpha = 0.74$), standard-political (1 item), and social movement (3 items, $\alpha = 0.67$). Responses were given on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). Higher scores corresponded to greater involvement in civic and community activities.

Adolescent civic judgments

Using 13 items adapted from previous research (Metzger & Ferris, 2013; Metzger & Smetana, 2009), adolescent civic judgments were assessed through ratings of whether people living in the United States “should” participate in three types of civic activities, including community service (4 items; $\alpha = 0.90$), standard political (5 items; $\alpha = 0.86$), and social movement behavior (4 items; $\alpha = 0.71$). Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*doesn't matter*) to 5 (*definitely should*). Higher scores indicated stronger belief that individuals should engage in each behavior.

Analytic approach

To create a continuous indicator of parent and adolescent civic messages, proportion scores were calculated for all civic message variables. For each participant, proportion scores represented the frequency of specific codes divided by the total number of codable statements. Six hierarchical regression models were then used to assess predictors of adolescents' civic behavior and judgments for community service, standard political, and social movement activities. The first step consisted of theoretically relevant demographic controls identified by previous research, including adolescent age, gender, parents' education, and household income (Metzger & Ferris, 2013; Zaff et al., 2003).² The second step included mothers' report of the civic behavior that corresponded to the adolescent's civic outcome (e.g., mothers' community service behavior

for models predicting adolescents' community service behavior and judgments). Mothers' civic message proportion scores (*follow regulations*, *standard political involvement*, *be productive*, *respect others and country*, and *help community*) were entered in the third step. The fourth step consisted of adolescents' civic message proportion scores (*follow regulations*, *standard political involvement*, *be productive*).

Results

Bivariate correlations for key study variables are displayed in Table 2 and unstandardized regression weights and standard errors for the final step of all regression models are presented in Tables 3 through 5.

Community service

Mothers' community service modeling, certain adolescent civic messages, and certain mother civic messages were significant predictors of adolescents' community service behavior ($F(12, 131) = 2.66$, $p = .01$; Table 3). Mothers who reported greater community service participation had adolescents who were more frequently involved in similar community service activities. Mothers who expressed proportionally more observed messages about *respect for country* and *help community* had adolescents who reported higher levels of community service participation. Furthermore, adolescents who communicated higher proportions of observed *be productive* (e.g., about the importance of work and education) messages reported less frequent engagement in community service. The model assessing predictors of adolescents' judgments about community service was non-significant ($F(12, 131) = 1.51$, $p = .13$).

Standard political

Adolescents' age was the only predictor of teens' standard political involvement ($F(12, 131) = 1.92$, $p = .04$; Table 4). Older adolescents were more likely to keep up with current events and politics. Adolescent age, mothers' standard political modeling, and certain adolescent civic messages predicted adolescents' judgments about standard political involvement ($F(12, 131) = 2.51$, $p = .01$). Older adolescents and teens with mothers who reported more frequent engagement in standard political activities endorsed stronger judgments that others should participate in standard political activities. Additionally, adolescents who expressed proportionally greater observed *standard political* messages

² Analyses were performed controlling for age, gender, household income, and parent education. Parents' education and household income were not a significant predictor of any dependent variables and were not bivariate correlated with any outcome. Thus, these variables were dropped for the final model. The pattern of significant individual predictors did not change when household income and parents' education were included in the model.

Table 2
Correlations among mother civic behavior, mother and adolescent civic messages, adolescent civic judgments, and adolescent civic behavior.

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. Age	-.01	.05	.11	.05	.00	.05	.01	-.08	-.06	-.11	-.04	-.03	.04	.12	-.11	-.10	.20*	.05	.17*	.21*	.16*
2. Gender ^a		.01	.04	-.02	-.15	.00	-.09	-.05	-.05	.10	.20*	-.13	-.06	-.01	.18*	.17*	.08	.09	.11	.06	.06
3. Parents' edu			.26**	.14	.16	.18*	-.03	.08	-.10	-.02	-.05	.00	.02	.12	.04	-.02	.12	-.01	-.03	.07	.04
4. Income				-.07	.09	-.12	-.06	.01	-.07	.06	-.09	.17*	.05	.16	.00	.04	.04	-.06	.01	.12	-.15
Mother behavior																					
5. Community service					.24**	.40**	-.11	.13	-.22**	-.06	-.16	.16	.02	.10	.05	.06	.08	.20*	.24**	.09	.11
6. Standard political						.34**	-.17*	.11	.12	-.05	-.13	.11	-.02	-.03	-.09	.09	.18*	.14	.03	.03	-.09
7. Social movement							.10	.16	-.07	-.07	-.17*	-.04	.07	.13	-.16	.00	.21*	.13	.16	.10	.16
Mother messages[†]																					
8. Follow regulations								-.11	-.08	-.12	-.15	.28**	-.04	-.04	.01	-.08	-.09	-.20*	-.12	-.11	.06
9. Standard political									-.09	-.14	-.04	-.11	-.19*	.15	.08	.02	.07	.08	-.09	-.01	-.14
10. Be productive										-.10	-.09	-.16	.07	-.08	.07	-.09	.00	-.02	-.13	.06	.08
11. Respect others											.04	.02	.10	-.11	-.08	.08	.03	.03	.04	-.13	-.07
12. Respect for country													-.18*	.01	.08	.11*	.09	.00	.00	.14	.08
13. Help community														-.01	.05	.00	.03	-.08	-.01	.17*	-.04
Adolescent messages[†]																					
14. Follow regulations															-.26**	-.06	-.13	-.17*	-.13	.09	-.18*
15. Standard political																-.14	.23**	.24**	.24**	.09	.24**
16. Be productive																	.02	.04	.03	-.15	-.08
Adolescent judgments																					
17. Community service																		.53**	.66**	.25**	.27**
18. Standard political																			.70**	.21*	.53**
19. Social movement																				.38**	.42**
Adolescent behavior																					
20. Community service																					.23**
21. Standard political																					
22. Social movement																					.48**
																					.26**

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

^a 1 = Male, 2 = Female.

[†] Variable proportion scores were used.

Table 3
Hierarchical regression predicting adolescent community service behavior and judgments.

	Adolescent community service behavior			Adolescent community service judgments		
	ΔF (adj. R^2)	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	ΔF (adj. R^2)	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Demographics (step 1)	2.81 (.03)			2.86 (.04)		
Age		.07	.04		-.07	.05
Gender ^a		.22	.14		.29	.17
Mother behavior (step 2)	8.43** (.07)			.67 (.01)		
Community service		.23*	.08		.04	.10
Mother messages (step 3)	1.62 (.10)			.33 (.02)		
Follow regulations		.04	.23		-.21	.28
Standard political		.03	.25		-.23	.30
Be productive		.04	.35		-.32	.42
Respect others		.14	.48		.41	.58
Respect for country		1.01*	.40		.06	.49
Help community		1.00*	.48		-.10	.59
Adolescent messages (step 4)	2.25* (.12)			3.20* (.06)		
Follow regulations		.15	.17		-.15	.21
Standard political		.03	.23		.76**	.28
Be productive		-.76*	.33		.11	.40

* $p < .05$.
 ** $p < .01$.
^a 1 = Male, 2 = Female.

more strongly viewed that others should engage in standard political activities.

Social movement

The model assessing predictors of adolescents' social movement behavior was non-significant ($F(12, 131) = 1.10, p = .37$; Table 5). Certain mother and adolescent civic messages predicted adolescent social movement judgments ($F(12, 131) = 1.90, p = .04$). Specifically, mothers who conveyed a greater proportion of *following regulations* messages had adolescents that less strongly viewed that others should participate in social movement activities. Additionally, adolescents who expressed proportionally greater observed *standard political* messages endorsed stronger judgments that others should engage in social movement activities.

Discussion

Adolescence is a time of substantial social cognitive growth when youth develop a more nuanced understanding of the self, society, and

the social contract (Flanagan, 2013). During adolescence, youth are forming beliefs about the nature of civic responsibility and are becoming increasingly involved in different forms of civic activities (Metzger & Smetana, 2010). The current study contributes to civic development scholarship by highlighting the potential implications of parents' civic behavior and messages concerning civic duty for adolescent civic development. The use of a semi-structured interaction task elucidated a potential source of adolescents' civic beliefs: discussions with parents about civic duty. Additionally, this methodological approach helped to illustrate the heterogeneity in parents' and adolescents' conceptualizations of civic responsibility, which were evident in their varied messages about civic duty. Using both observational and multi-informant self-report measures, results from the current study pointed to multiple associations among parents' civic behavior, observed messages about civic duty, and adolescents' civic behavior and judgments.

Mothers' civic modeling and adolescents' civic engagement

Previous research suggests that the parent–adolescent relationship represents a context that promotes active citizenship through political

Table 4
Hierarchical regression predicting adolescent standard political behavior and judgments.

	Adolescent standard political behavior			Adolescent standard political judgments		
	ΔF (adj. R^2)	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	ΔF (adj. R^2)	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Demographics (step 1)	3.56** (.04)			3.59* (.05)		
Age		.16*	.07		.13*	.05
Gender ^a		.16	.25		.14	.19
Mother behavior (step 2)	.21 (.03)			6.07* (.07)		
Standard political		.02	.11		.20*	.08
Mother messages (step 3)	.75 (.02)			.62 (.05)		
Follow regulations		-.44	.41		-.29	.31
Standard political		-.26	.45		.01	.34
Be productive		.51	.59		-.11	.45
Respect others		-.95	.83		.73	.63
Respect for country		.52	.69		-.34	.52
Help community		-.01	.85		-.97	.65
Adolescent messages (step 4)	3.55** (.07)			4.00** (.11)		
Follow regulations		-.55	.30		-.33	.23
Standard political		.76	.40		.79*	.31
Be productive		-.47	.57		.55	.43

* $p < .05$.
 ** $p < .01$.
^a 1 = Male, 2 = Female.

Table 5
Hierarchical regression predicting adolescent social movement behavior and judgments.

	Adolescent social movement behavior			Adolescent social movement judgments		
	ΔF (adj. R^2)	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	ΔF (adj. R^2)	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Demographics (step 1)	2.46* (.07)			.81 (.01)		
Age		.07*	.03		.02	.05
Gender ^a		.11	.12		.09	.17
Mother behavior (step 2)	1.82 (.01)			2.30* (.01)		
Social movement		.13	.09		.19	.12
Mother messages (step 3)	.53 (.02)			1.11 (.01)		
Follow regulations		.09	.19		-.77**	.27
Standard political		-.15	.21		-.35	.29
Be productive		.31	.27		-.24	.39
Respect others		-.21	.39		.25	.55
Respect for country		.16	.32		-.49	.46
Help community		.11	.40		-.79	.56
Adolescent messages (step 4)	.27 (.01)			3.84* (.07)		
Follow regulations		-.02	.14		-.22	.20
Standard political		-.13	.19		.73**	.27
Be productive		-.19	.27		.44	.38

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

^a 1 = Male, 2 = Female.

and civic modeling (Andolina et al., 2003). Consistent with this research, mothers' self-reported community service behavior was positively associated with adolescents' reported involvement in community service activities (Andolina et al., 2003). A desire to strengthen social ties is a key motivator for community service involvement (Clary & Snyder, 1999). Potentially, parents and adolescents who are currently involved in community service activities recruit one another to engage in volunteering (Taylor & Chatters, 1986).

Some findings also support previous research that suggests that parents' civic modeling may be linked with adolescents' beliefs about civic duty (Kelly, 2006). Mothers that were more involved in standard political behavior had adolescents that more strongly endorsed that others should participate in standard political activities. Previous research utilizing a social cognitive domain approach indicates that adolescents view standard political involvement as an important social convention (i.e., a behavior that upholds social order; Metzger & Smetana, 2009). Consistent with a social domain perspective, parents are thought to enforce social conventions and cultural norms because they wish to instill competencies that will allow teens to productively navigate society (Smetana, 1999). Adolescents may use mothers as an important source of information for activities that concern appropriate social expectations and obligations that sustain social order, including voting and following current events (for a lengthier discussion of social domain theory and civic engagement, see Metzger & Smetana, 2010). Thus, teens may view their mother's news consumption as a demonstration of the importance of standard political involvement and incorporate this knowledge into their understanding standard political activities.

Mother–adolescent civic discussion and adolescents' civic engagement

The parent–adolescent relationship is also thought to influence youth civic development through political and civic discussion (e.g., McIntosh et al., 2007) even when parents are not engaged in civic activities (Fletcher et al., 2000). Consistent with this research, mothers' messages concerning respect for country and helping one's community were positively associated with adolescents' community service behavior over and above mothers' engagement in community service. Parents that stress respecting the country and helping others may motivate teens to become more involved in prosocial activities, including community service. Alternatively, parents may use their adolescent's community service experiences as a way to communicate broader principles that underlie the importance of volunteering, which may include notions of respecting one's country and helping others. Future research should employ experience sampling to elucidate

the temporal sequence of these associations and determine whether these messages motivate or are in response to community engagement.

Interestingly, some findings from the current study suggest that parents may communicate message that are less supportive of certain types of civic involvement. Mothers' observed civic duty messages that concerned following the rules and obeying laws were *negatively* associated with adolescents' judgments about whether others should engage in social movement activities. Whereas obeying laws involves adherence to structure and order, social movement activities, such as protesting and boycotting, involve opposition to the established order and attempts to change the status quo (Zaff et al., 2010). Mothers that stress following rules may place a greater emphasis on maintaining social order which may potentially lead their adolescents to view good citizens as those who do not challenge existing laws or policies.

Though far less research has examined adolescents' active role within parent–adolescent civic discussion, the current study suggests that adolescents' own civic duty messages may support their beliefs about community service, standard political, and social movement activities. For instance, adolescents' standard political messages were positively associated with their judgments about standard-political and social movement activities. Further, although the overall model was non-significant, similar trends were present for adolescents' community service judgments. It is unclear why adolescents that communicate a greater proportion of standard political messages have more favorable beliefs about all types of civic activities. Qualitative interviews may be a useful tool to help explicate this pattern of findings.

Similar to some messages from parents, one observed adolescent civic message theme was associated with lower levels of adolescent civic behavior. Teens who expressed messages that stressed the importance of work, becoming educated, and speaking English as key civic duties were less likely to be involved in community service activities. A possible explanation is that adolescents who view citizenship in terms of productivity and self-improvement may be less inclined to engage in activities that have less apparent and tangible personal benefit. These findings further demonstrate adolescents' dynamic role within civic discussion, and suggest that teen's messages concerning civic duty may be tied to broader value systems that at times, potentially conflict with involvement in certain types of civic activities.

Age differences in adolescents' civic behaviors and beliefs

While not a central aim of this study, consistent age differences were found in adolescents' standard political involvement and judgments about standard political activities. Adolescent age was positively

associated with their standard political involvement. With age, teens have increased opportunity to become involved in political activities, and older adolescents may be more likely to seek out and have the resources to become invested in political affairs. Similar to previous research, older adolescents also more strongly endorsed that others should participate in standard political involvement (Metzger & Ferris, 2013). Older adolescents typically have greater experience within high school civic courses, some of which may entail mandatory participation in different forms of civic activities (Flanagan, Galloway, Gill, Galloway, & Nti, 2005). Furthermore, older youth may have more prolonged exposure to other political socialization agents, such as community organization leaders (Flanagan & Faison, 2001). The accumulation of experience within civic education and potential exposure to other socializing agents may be responsible for age differences in politically-related beliefs and behavior.

Study limitations and future directions

These findings should be taken in light of certain study limitations. Concordant data does not allow for the examination of causal effects or intra-individual change and longitudinal data is needed to gain a richer view of how these processes develop over time. Examining the long-term consequences of parent civic behavior and messages and how these processes intersect with normative developmental tasks (e.g., expanding autonomy) may help us better understand the role of parents in facilitating adolescent civic development. Participants were primarily White/Caucasian, well educated, and living in a mid-Atlantic city. Future research is needed to assess whether similar processes are present for adolescents with foreign born parents and those from less educated backgrounds. Youth with foreign born parents may be exposed to a different array of messages concerning civic duty, which may support conflict with their civic beliefs. Additionally, all analyses were conducted on mother-adolescent dyads only and mainly focused on the specific content of the discussion. Research is needed to examine whether similar patterns exist with fathers, and explore whether global elements of the parent-adolescent interaction (e.g., democratic conversation dynamics, warmth, support) may be associated with adolescents' civic behavior and beliefs. Parents that utilize more democratic conversation styles within civic discussion may indirectly model values and skills important for engaged citizenship, such as mutual respect, tolerance, and perspective taking. Parent and adolescent report of standard political behavior was examined using a single item assessing political knowledge, and although acceptable, alpha coefficients for the self-reported scales were low. To gain a deeper understanding of these processes, future research is needed that uses scales with greater internal consistency and incorporates multiple forms of parent and adolescent political participation, including involvement in online political communities and voting (Cohen et al., 2012).

Although several steps have been taken to ensure the ecological validity of the discussion task, the extent to which the parent-adolescent interaction task is representative of naturally occurring conversations within families is unclear, and associations among civic messages and adolescent civic outcomes were modest. The low number significant associations among these constructs may be due to sample characteristics, but may also potentially indicate that parents assume a more indirect role in facilitating adolescent civic development. Experiential sampling and qualitative interviews may be especially useful tools to explore the frequency of unprompted civic messages throughout everyday family interactions and capture the indirect ways parents may contribute to adolescent civic development.

Despite these limitations, findings from the current study have important implications for youth civic programs. Youth programs designed to enhance adolescent civic participation should be aware that some teens may have parents that stress messages and values that are less supportive of certain types of involvement. Recruiting youth from these families may require an adapted approach that is more sensitive

to potentially conflicting messages. Furthermore, youth programs that seek to increase involvement in specific types of civic activities could also target parents' civic participation or stress the importance of parent-adolescent civic discussion.

The current study helps to further elucidate adolescent civic development within the parent-adolescent context and also demonstrates the importance of considering parent-adolescent discussion concerning distinct civic behaviors. Findings from this study suggests that parents' messages about civic duty may support or conflict with engagement in civic activities. Research should continue to examine parental influences on the cognitive components of engaged citizenship and how these processes differ across civic activities. Additionally, future research is needed to explore adolescents' active role in facilitating their own civic development across other facets of their micro-ecological contexts.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2016.01.001>.

References

- Andolina, M., Jenkins, K., Zukin, C., & Keeter, S. (2003). Habits from home, lessons from school: Influences on youth civic engagement. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 36(2), 275–280.
- Bekkers, R. (2007). Intergenerational transmission of volunteering. *Acta Sociologica*, 50, 99–114.
- Clary, E. G., & Snyder, M. (1999). The motivations to volunteer theoretical and practical considerations. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8(5), 156–159.
- Cohen, C., Kahne, J., Bowyer, B., Middaugh, E., & Rogowski, J. (2012). *Participatory politics: New media and youth political action*. Oakland, CA: Mills College School of Education, MacArthur Network on Youth Participatory Politics.
- Cui, M., & Conger, R. (2008). Parenting behavior as mediator and moderator of the association between marital problems and adolescent maladjustment. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 18(2), 261–284.
- Eccles, J., Barber, B., Stone, M., & Hunt, J. (2003). Extracurricular activities and adolescent development. *Journal of Social Issues*, 59(4), 865–889.
- Flanagan, C. A. (2013). *Teenage citizens: The political theories of the young*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Flanagan, C. A., & Faison, N. (2001). Youth civic development: Implications of research for social policy and programs. *Social Policy Report*, Vol. XV (1), Ann Arbor, MI: Society for Research in Child Development.
- Flanagan, C., Galloway, L., Gill, S., Galloway, E., & Nti, N. (2005). What does democracy mean? Correlates of adolescents' views. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 20(2), 193–218.
- Fletcher, A., Elder, G., & Mekos, D. (2000). Parental influences on adolescent involvement in community activities. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 10(1), 29–48.
- Grusec, J. E., & Goodnow, J. J. (1994). Impact of parental discipline methods on the child's internalization of values: A reconceptualization of current points of view. *Developmental Psychology*, 30(1), 4–19.
- Hess, R., & Torney, J. (1967). *The development of political attitudes in children*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Kelly, D. (2006). Parents' influence on youths' civic behaviors: The civic context of the caregiving environment. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 87(3), 447–455.
- Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J. V., Almerigi, J. B., Theokas, C., Phelps, E., Gestsdottir, S., et al. (2005). Positive Youth Development, participation in community youth development programs, and community contributions of fifth-grade adolescents findings from the first wave of the 4-H study of Positive Youth Development. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(1), 17–71.
- Lin, A. (2015). Citizenship education in American schools and its role in developing civic engagement: A review of the research. *Educational Review*, 67(1), 35–63.
- McIntosh, H., Hart, D., & Youniss, J. (2007). The influence of family political discussion on youth civic development: Which parent qualities matter? *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 40(3), 495–499.
- Metzger, A., & Ferris, K. (2013). Adolescents' domain-specific judgments about different forms of civic involvement: Variations by age and gender. *Journal of Adolescence*, 36(3), 529–538.
- Metzger, A., & Smetana, J. (2009). Adolescent civic and political engagement: Associations between domain-specific judgments and behavior. *Child Development*, 80(2), 433–441.
- Metzger, A., & Smetana, J. (2010). Social cognitive approaches to civic engagement. In L. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, & C. Flanagan (Eds.), *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Metzger, A., Wakschlag, L. S., Anderson, R., Darfler, A., Price, J., Flores, Z., et al. (2013). Information management strategies within conversations about cigarette smoking: Parenting correlates and longitudinal associations with teen smoking. *Developmental Psychology*, 49(8), 1565–1578.

- Niemi, R. G. (1973). Political socialization. In J. N. Knutson (Ed.), *Handbook of political psychology* (pp. 117–138). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Oosterhoff, B., Metzger, A., & Babskie, E. (2015). What do citizens have to do? Parents' and adolescents' messages about civic duty. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 30*(3), 365–389.
- Plutzer, E. (2002). Becoming a habitual voter: Inertia, resources, and growth in young adulthood. *The American Political Science Review, 96*(1), 41–56.
- Rosenthal, S., Feiring, C., & Lewis, M. (1998). Political volunteering from late adolescence to young adulthood: Patterns and predictors. *Journal of Social Issues, 54*(3), 477–493.
- Sherrod, L. (2003). Promoting the development of citizenship in diverse youth. *PS: Political Science and Politics, 36*(2), 287–292.
- Sherrod, L., & Lauchardt, J. (2009). The development of citizenship. In R. M. Lerner, & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology (3rd ed.)*. Contextual influences on adolescent development, Vol. 2. (pp. 372–407). New York: Wiley & Sons.
- Sigel, R. S. (1970). *Learning about politics: A reader in political socialization*. New York: Random House.
- Smetana, J. G. (1999). The role of parents in moral development: A social domain analysis. *Journal of Moral Education, 28*(3), 311–321.
- Taylor, R. J., & Chatters, L. M. (1986). Patterns of informal support to elderly black adults: Family, friends, and church members. *Social Work, 31*(6), 432–438.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K., & Brady, H. (1995). *Voice and equality, civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Wakschlag, L., Metzger, A., Darfler, A., Ho, J., Mermelstein, R., & Rathouz, P. (2011). The Family Talk About Smoking (FTAS) Paradigm: New directions for assessing parent-teen communications about smoking. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research, 13*(2), 103–112.
- Walker, T. (2002). Service as a pathway to political participation: What research tells us. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*(4), 183–188.
- Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal, 41*(2), 237–269.
- Wray-Lake, L., & Syvertsen, A. K. (2011). The developmental roots of social responsibility in childhood and adolescence. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 2011*(134), 11–25.
- Youniss, J., Bales, S., Christmas-Best, V., Diversi, M., McLaughlin, M., & Silbereisen, R. (2002). Youth civic engagement in the twenty-first century. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 12*(1), 121–148.
- Zaff, J. F., Hart, D., Flanagan, C. A., Youniss, J., & Levine, P. (2010). Developing civic engagement within a civic context. In M. E. Lamb, & A. M. Freund (Eds.), *Social and emotional development. The handbook of life-span development, Vol. 2.* (pp. 590–630). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley (Editor-in-chief: Richard M. Lerner).
- Zaff, J. F., Malanchuk, O., Michelsen, E., & Eccles, J. (2003). *Socializing youth for citizenship. A report prepared for the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.