

# Adolescents' Sociopolitical Values in the Context of Organized Activity Involvement

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## Abstract

Sociopolitical values are hypothesized to form during adolescence, but the developmental and contextual origins of these values have been largely unexplored. A sample of 846 adolescents ( $M_{age} = 15.96$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ , range = 13–20 years) reported on their organized activity involvement (volunteering, sports, church, community clubs, arts/music, school clubs) and their sociopolitical values (patriotism, authoritarianism, spirituality, social dominance, materialism). Structural equation models (controlling for demographics and accounting for shared variance among variables) indicated that there were unique associations between activities and values. Greater church and sports involvement was related to higher levels of spirituality. Involvement in sports was also related to higher levels of materialism and authoritarianism. Greater volunteer involvement was related to lower social dominance, and involvement in arts/music was associated with less patriotism. These findings suggest that organized activity involvement may provide a context for adolescents' developing sociopolitical values. Implications and future directions are discussed.

## Keywords

organized activities, values, authoritarianism, social dominance, patriotism, materialism, spirituality

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Political theorists and developmental psychologists hypothesize that adult social and political values (hereafter referred to as “sociopolitical values”), including perceptions of authority, one’s country, spiritual connectedness, material wealth, and group dominance, have developmental roots in adolescence (e.g., Altemeyer, 1996; Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003). Values concerning the self and society are posited to be largely influenced by structured group experiences (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997; Zaff, Malanchuk, & Eccles, 2008). Organized activity involvement is one type of structured group experience that may be especially important for adolescent sociopolitical development. Engagement in organized activities provides youth with early exposure to social systems (Eccles & Barber, 1999) and structures that may challenge, promote, or deter developing values (Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005). However, the extent to which involvement in distinct types of organized activities intersect with values that concern social and political systems is relatively unknown. Therefore, the current study examined unique associations among a wide variety of organized activities (volunteering, sports, church, community clubs, arts/music, school clubs) and sociopolitical values (patriotism, authoritarianism, spirituality, social dominance, materialism).

Sociopolitical values are an integral component of adolescents’ political identity and represent a diverse set of personal priorities that guide specific attitudes concerning the nature of political and social systems (Bardi & Schwartz, 1996). These values consist of patriotism (attachment to one’s nation; Flanagan, Syvertsen, Gill, Gallay, & Cumsille, 2009), authoritarianism (reverence for authority and strong endorsement of hierarchy; Altemeyer, 1996), and spirituality (connection and belief in a higher power; Benson et al., 2003). Additional values such as social dominance (preference for the dominance of one’s own in-group over others; Duriez & Soenens, 2009) and materialism (view that material goods are important; Kasser, 2005) may also guild social and political attitudes. Patriotism, authoritarianism, spirituality, social dominance, and materialism are distinct values and several studies have found associations between these values and social and political attitudes such as racism (Hiel & Mervielde, 2005), environmentalism (Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008), immigration (Spry & Hornsey, 2007), and beliefs about civic responsibility (Metzger, Oosterhoff, Palmer, & Ferris, 2014).

The majority of research on the development of sociopolitical values has utilized socialization theories (e.g., Altemeyer, 1996) and typically focused on the conditions that facilitate parental value transmission (e.g., Min, Silverstein, & Lendon, 2012). However, other evidence suggests that individuals assume a more active role in forming their own values and beliefs (Larson, 2006). To account for these dynamic processes, scholars have

applied developmental systems theories when researching value development (e.g., Benson et al., 2003). Developmental systems theories postulate that different ecological contexts provide structures and opportunities that dynamically interact with adolescents' attitudes, beliefs, and values (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This emphasis on bi-directionality and person-context fusion has prompted a great deal of research on diverse facets of youth's micro-ecological systems, including organized activities (e.g., Lerner, 2013).

Organized activities refer to an assortment of adult-sponsored, group organizations that exist outside of the traditional school curriculum, including volunteering, sports, church, community clubs, arts/music, and school clubs (e.g., Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). Participation in these activities exposes youth to social structures that contain distinct goals, group roles, and diverse viewpoints that promote the evaluation of one's personal values (Larson, 2006; Mahoney et al., 2005). For example, through organized activities, youth interact with diverse peers and non-parental adults in a collaborative effort to further the interest of the group (Yates & Youniss, 1998). A great deal of research has linked adolescent organized activity involvement to character development. However, the majority of this research has focused on the processes and conditions that cultivate academic and prosocial values (Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009), such as greater educational aspirations (Ludden, 2011; Milot & Ludden, 2009) and altruism (Denault & Poulin, 2009). Less research has examined the intersection between involvement in organized activities and values that concern social and political institutions.

Organized activities offer favorable conditions for shaping sociopolitical values (Linver et al., 2009) by allowing youth opportunities to "practice democratic governance" (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995, p. 425). Through activity involvement, adolescents are able to introduce, challenge, and be challenged by a variety of social and political perspectives. These perspectives may include group customs, norms, and values endorsed by activity leaders, peers, or the governing organization (Mahoney et al., 2005). For example, greater participation (regardless of the type of activity) is positively associated with adolescents' commitment to civil society (Denault & Poulin, 2009), which may indicate that organized activities expose youth to values concerning contribution and shared responsibility (Verba et al., 1995). However, a growing body of literature has highlighted that different organized activities comprise distinct types of experiences (e.g., Ferris, Oosterhoff, & Metzger, 2013). In addition, empirical evidence suggests that specific activities, including volunteering, sports, church, community clubs, arts/music, and school clubs may be linked with certain sociopolitical values.

Volunteering, such as feeding the homeless or helping victims of a natural disaster, typically entails a degree of self-sacrifice, which may challenge

values-focused self-enhancement. Consistent with this notion, previous research has shown that volunteering is negatively associated with materialism (Bekkers, 2005). Volunteer participation often involves direct aid for those who are less fortunate, and interactions with individuals of a lower socioeconomic status may prompt adolescents to see potential injustice in social hierarchies (Brown, 2011). In addition, qualitative evidence suggests that volunteer experiences may stimulate adolescents to think critically and question institutional authority (Yates & Youniss, 1998), which may lead to less authoritarian values.

In contrast, sports may provide a context that attracts and promotes competitiveness (Denham, 2009), which is a primary tenant of social dominance (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Previous research also suggests that sports may offer individuals a sense of purpose, meaning, fulfillment, and spiritual connectedness, and may contribute to youth's developing spiritual values (Parry, Robinson, Watson, & Nesti, 2007). In addition, sports involvement may be embedded within a larger "jock" peer culture that promotes materialistic values through an emphasis on social status, fame, and money (Miller, 2009). Although unexplored in adolescents, research using college samples has also found that school sports are positively associated with authoritarianism (LeUnes & Nation, 1982).

Participation in religious and community organizations may also be linked to emerging sociopolitical values. Religious organizations have long been regarded as "political cultures" due to their contribution to political attitudes and values (Wald, Owen, & Hill, 1988). In particular, adult members of religious congregations stress the importance of authority (Rigby & Densley, 1985) and spiritual connectedness (Benson et al., 2003), which may promote greater authoritarianism and spirituality. Community club organizations such as 4-H and scouting have also been recognized for their emphasis on obedience (Interactive, 2005; Lerner et al., 2005). Similar to religious involvement, engagement in community clubs may also be tied to positive appraisals of authority.

Less research has examined adolescent involvement in arts/music or school clubs (Eccles & Barber, 1999), especially with regard to developing value systems. However, performing arts is considered a "nonconformist" activity and an expression of individuality, which may ". . . result in minimal conventional social attachments" (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001, p. 447). Accordingly, involvement in arts/music may be tied to less favorable attitudes toward authority. Although scholars have yet to examine associations between school club involvement (e.g., language or academic clubs) and sociopolitical values, previous research with rural youth found school clubs to be uniquely associated with distinct academic and social outcomes (Ferris et al., 2013).

Isolating unique associations between organized activities and sociopolitical values may pose a methodological challenge. Several studies have shown that activity involvement and sociopolitical values systematically differ across adolescent gender, age, parents' education, and rural context (Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1976; Ferris et al., 2013; Hardré, Sullivan, & Crowson, 2009). In addition, adolescents typically engage in multiple organized activities simultaneously (Metzger, Crean, & Forbes-Jones, 2009). Patriotism, authoritarianism, spirituality, social dominance, and materialism are distinct values and may be uniquely associated with different organized activities, but several studies have found that these values are also correlated with each other (Duckitt, Wagner, Du Plessis, & Birum, 2002; McFarland, 2003; Roets, Van Hiel, & Cornelis, 2006). To account for these multiple sources of shared variance, the current study will identify consistencies across multiple structural models that control for shared variance in sociopolitical values and shared variance in organized activities. Furthermore, associations were tested over and above several demographic characteristics (i.e., adolescent age, gender, parents' education, and school location).

Based on the results of previous studies, it was hypothesized that greater volunteering would be associated with less materialism, social dominance, and authoritarianism. Adolescent sports involvement was hypothesized to be positively associated with social dominance, spirituality, materialism, and authoritarianism. Religious participation was hypothesized to be associated with greater authoritarian and spiritual values. Engagement in community clubs was hypothesized to be associated with greater authoritarianism. Involvement in arts/music was hypothesized to be negatively associated with authoritarianism.

## Method

### *Participants*

The initial sample consisted of 847 high school students in Grades 9-12 from two communities (i.e., small, rural town and mid-sized city) in a Mid-Atlantic state. Of the original sample, one participant was missing key study variables and was removed from further analyses. The final analytic sample consisted of 846 adolescents ( $M_{age} = 15.96$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ , range = 13-20 years, 59.5% female). Adolescents were Caucasian/White (87.9%), African American (2.8%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1.5%), biracial (5.4%), or Other (2.4%). Four participants failed to report their ethnicity. Students' report of their GPA indicated that 34.2% of the sample earned "Mostly A's." Adolescents' parents varied in education levels, ranging from high school graduates (38.1% mothers, 39.2%

fathers), completed college (37.4% mothers, 28.0% fathers), and completed a graduate degree (e.g., PhD, MBA; 15.7% mothers, 17.1% fathers). Some participants were unsure of either parents' education level (4.7%), and one participant was missing reports of both mother's and father's education. Mothers' and fathers' education levels were highly correlated ( $r = .57, p < .001$ ), and were combined to form a single measure representing parental education.

Relatively equal numbers of students were enrolled from each of the two sampled high schools (small, rural town: 52%; mid-sized city: 48%). Participating adolescents from the small, rural town resided in a community with a population of 7,000, which was located approximately 50 miles from the nearest city with a population of 25,000 or more. According to the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), the county from which these adolescents were drawn has been designated as "rural." Students from the mid-sized city resided in a community with a population of 70,000. This mid-sized city represents the economic, commercial, and medical epicenter of the region.

## Measures

**Organized activity involvement.** Adolescent organized activity involvement was assessed using a 14-item self-report measure adapted from previous research (Metzger et al., 2009). To ensure measurement equivalence across time demands (e.g., activities which meet daily versus once a week) and seasonal differences in activity participation, adolescents reported how often they were involved in a variety of organized activities in an average month (i.e., intensity of involvement; Bohnert, Fredricks, & Randall, 2010). Items were scored using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*).

To identify subscales of organized activity involvement, principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the organized activity items. Consistent with previous research (Ferris et al., 2013), six factors were identified: *volunteering* (three items; e.g., work for charity to collect money for a social cause), *sports* (2 items; e.g., participate with a school sports team), *church* (two items; e.g., attend religious services), *community clubs* (three items; e.g., participate in a community social club), *arts/music* (two items; e.g., take part in local or community art, music, or drama organization), and *school clubs* (two items; e.g., take part in a computer, language, or academic club at school), which accounted for 73.62% of the variance. Subscales were created from participants' mean scores within each organized activity category; higher scores represented higher levels of involvement in each activity. Cronbach's alphas ranged from .76 to .86, though community clubs and school clubs exhibited less robust internal consistency ( $\alpha = .54$  and .45, respectively).

**Patriotism.** Participants completed four items from an established measure, which assessed patriotic beliefs and American identity (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; e.g., *I am proud to be an American*). Items were scored using a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicated greater patriotic values and American identity ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

**Authoritarianism.** Five items adapted from previous research were used to investigate adolescents' authoritarian values (Altemeyer, 1996; e.g., *Authorities such as parents and our national leaders generally turn out to be right about things, and the radicals and protestors are almost always wrong*). Items were scored using a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicated greater authoritarian values ( $\alpha = .81$ ).

**Spirituality.** Seven items adapted from previous research were used to assess adolescents' spirituality (Seidlitz et al., 2002; e.g., *Maintaining my spirituality is a priority for me*). Responses were given on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores indicating more transcendental spiritual values ( $\alpha = .97$ ).

**Social dominance.** Participants completed eight items measuring social dominance values, which were taken from an established measure (Pratto et al., 1994; e.g., *Some groups of people are simply not the equal of others*). Participants rated each of the eight items on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very negative*) to 7 (*very positive*). Higher scores indicated greater social dominance values ( $\alpha = .77$ ).

**Materialism.** Participants completed six items which examined materialistic views (Richins & Dawson, 1992; e.g., *Some of the most important accomplishments in life include getting material things*). Items were scored using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicated greater importance of material possessions ( $\alpha = .74$ ).

## Procedure

Questionnaires were administered in participants' social studies classrooms during regularly scheduled class time. Only students who obtained both signed parental permission and completed adolescent assent forms were allowed to participate in the study. Members of the research team were available to answer participants' questions and to ensure that participants

understood all survey items. Participants were eligible to win randomly drawn cash prizes ranging in value from US\$25 to US\$100.

### **Analytic Strategy**

Structural equation modeling was used to test whether involvement in specific types of organized activities was uniquely associated with distinct sociopolitical values. To control for potential overlapping variance across both organized activities and sociopolitical values, two separate structural models were analyzed. The first structural model accounted for shared variance between organized activities by modeling organized activities as exogenous predictors of sociopolitical values. To account for shared variance between sociopolitical values, the pathways were reversed for the second structural model, which examined values as predictors of youth organized activity involvement. In both models, several demographic characteristics were added as controls (adolescent age, gender, parents' education, school location). The purpose of utilizing an additional structural model with reversed pathways was to account for overlapping variance among sociopolitical values and not to compare an alternative theoretical approach. Accordingly, consistencies among both models were identified to isolate distinct associations between organized activities and sociopolitical values (Figure 1).

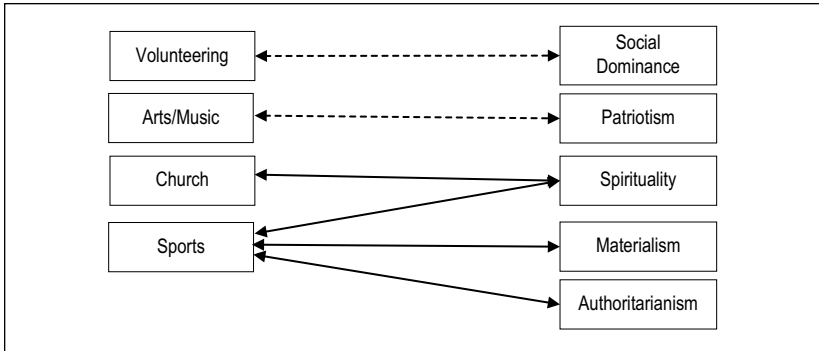
### **Results**

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for key study variables are presented in Table 1. All organized activities were moderately to strongly correlated ( $r_s = .19-.51$ ), though sports and arts/music involvement were uncorrelated. Spirituality was uncorrelated with social dominance and materialism, and authoritarianism was uncorrelated with social dominance. All other sociopolitical values were moderately to strongly correlated ( $r_s = .11-.50$ ). Furthermore, many organized activities and sociopolitical values were significantly associated, though there was substantial variation in the strength of these significant associations ( $r_s = .08-.70$ ). Both the magnitude and the significance level of these correlations should be interpreted in light of the large study sample size.

#### ***Structural Model Predicting Sociopolitical Values***

A structural model was used to examine organized activities as predictors of sociopolitical values controlling for demographic characteristics. Organized activities were allowed to covary with one another and with all of the demographic variables, and error variances for the sociopolitical values were also





**Figure 1.** Significant associations between organized activities and sociopolitical values that appeared in both models.

Note. Solid lines indicate positive associations; dashed lines indicate negative associations.

allowed to covary. Non-significant pathways were trimmed, leading to the removal of the school location, community clubs, and school clubs, as these variables were not significantly associated with any of the sociopolitical values. The resulting model had an excellent fit ( $\chi^2/df = 3.12$ , comparative fit index [CFI] = .97, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .05). Parameter values are presented in Table 2. After controlling for parents' education and gender, greater church involvement corresponded with stronger spirituality, patriotism, and authoritarianism, but less materialism. Involvement in sports was associated with stronger endorsement of patriotism, authoritarianism, spirituality, social dominance, and materialism. Volunteering was associated with less spirituality and social dominance. Involvement in arts/music was associated with less spirituality, patriotism, and authoritarianism.

### *Structural Model Predicting Organized Activities*

A second structural model was used in which sociopolitical values predicted organized activities controlling for demographic characteristics. Sociopolitical values were allowed to covary with one another and with each demographic variable. Furthermore, to account for shared method variance, error variances were allowed to covary among organized activities. Non-significant pathways were trimmed, leading to the removal of age. The resulting model had an acceptable fit ( $\chi^2/df = 5.17$ , CFI = .92, RMSEA = .07). Parameter values are presented in Table 3. After controlling for parents' education, gender, and school location, greater church involvement was associated with greater

**Table 1.** Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations Among Key Study Variables.

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Gender <sup>a</sup>	-.04	.05	.06	.11**	-.07*	.09**	.13***	.21***	.23***	.08*	.05	-.02	-.17***	-.12***
2. Age	—	.00	.02	-.06	-.07	-.05	-.03	-.05	-.09**	.00	-.07*	-.08*	.03	-.05
3. Parents' education	—	—	.31***	.14***	.23***	.17***	.20***	.12**	.09*	.03	-.05	-.03	-.16***	-.04
4. School location <sup>b</sup>	—	—	—	.03	.07	-.04	.03	.02	-.02	.04	-.02	.01	-.07*	-.02
Organized activities														
5. Church	—	—	—	—	.32***	.31***	.26***	.32***	.19***	.70***	.35***	.29***	-.08*	-.06
6. Sports	—	—	—	—	—	.27***	.25***	.27***	.02	.25***	.21***	.16***	.06	.13***
7. Community	—	—	—	—	—	—	.40***	.51***	.30***	.16***	.13***	.08*	-.05	-.01
8. Clubs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.42***	.32***	.11**	.05	-.01	-.09*	-.00
9. Volunteering	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.34***	.17***	.13***	.08*	-.18***	-.06
10. Arts/music	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.04	-.03	-.13***	-.15***	-.08*
Sociopolitical values														
11. Spirituality	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.50***	.44***	.01	-.04
12. Authoritarianism	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.50***	.03	.14***
13. Patriotism	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.11**	.13***
14. Social Dominance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.25***
15. Materialism	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M	—	—	—	2.54	2.88	1.90	2.00	2.28	2.25	4.11	3.95	4.88	2.73	2.68
(SD)	—	—	—	1.32	1.43	0.87	1.03	0.99	1.39	1.50	0.96	1.07	1.05	0.73

<sup>a</sup>0 = female, 1 = male.

<sup>b</sup>0 = small, rural town, 1 = mid-sized city.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 2.** Unstandardized Estimates and Standard Errors of Organized Activity Involvement Predicting Sociopolitical Values.

	Patriotism		Materialism		Authoritarianism		Social dominance		spirituality	
	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE
School location <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Age	0.09***	0.03	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gender <sup>b</sup>	—	—	-0.16**	0.05	—	—	-0.24***	0.07	—	—
Parents' education	-0.12*	0.05	—	—	-0.16***	0.04	-0.22***	0.05	-0.16**	0.05
Church	0.25***	0.03	-0.04*	0.02	0.26***	0.03	—	—	0.82***	0.03
Volunteering	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.18***	0.04	-0.13***	0.04
Sports	0.07**	0.03	0.07***	0.02	0.08***	0.02	0.10***	0.03	0.06*	0.03
Arts	-0.14***	0.03	—	—	-0.06**	0.02	—	—	-0.08**	0.03
Community	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clubs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

<sup>a</sup>0 = small, rural town, 1 = mid-sized city.

<sup>b</sup>0 = female, 1 = male.

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

**Table 3.** Unstandardized Estimates and Standard Errors of Sociopolitical Values Predicting Organized Activity Involvement.

	Church		Sports		Community		Clubs		Volunteering		Arts/music	
	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE
School location <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	—	-0.14 <sup>***</sup>	0.05	—	—	—	—	—	—
Age	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gender <sup>b</sup>	—	—	-0.31 <sup>***</sup>	0.09	—	—	—	—	0.20 <sup>***</sup>	0.06	—	—
Parents' education	0.21 <sup>***</sup>	0.05	0.47 <sup>***</sup>	0.06	0.24 <sup>***</sup>	0.04	0.27 <sup>***</sup>	0.05	0.13 <sup>**</sup>	0.05	0.13 <sup>*</sup>	0.06
patriotism	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.20 <sup>***</sup>	0.04
Materialism	—	—	0.23 <sup>***</sup>	0.06	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
authoritarianism	—	—	0.15 <sup>**</sup>	0.05	0.07 <sup>*</sup>	0.03	—	—	0.07 <sup>*</sup>	0.04	—	—
Social dominance	-0.08 <sup>**</sup>	0.03	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.13 <sup>**</sup>	0.03	-0.13 <sup>**</sup>	0.04
Spirituality	0.63 <sup>***</sup>	0.02	0.20 <sup>***</sup>	0.04	0.07 <sup>***</sup>	0.02	0.07 <sup>**</sup>	0.02	0.08 <sup>***</sup>	0.02	0.10 <sup>**</sup>	0.01

<sup>a</sup>0 = small, rural town, 1 = mid-sized city.

<sup>b</sup>0 = female, 1 = male.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

spirituality and less social dominance. Sports involvement was associated with greater materialism, authoritarianism, and spirituality. Community clubs involvement was associated with greater authoritarianism and spirituality. Involvement in school clubs was associated with greater spirituality. Volunteering was associated with greater authoritarianism and spirituality, but less social dominance. Arts/music involvement was associated with less patriotism and social dominance, but greater spirituality.

### **Consistencies Across Models**

Figure 1 displays consistent associations found across both structural models. Regardless of whether the model controlled for shared variance between organized activity involvement and shared variance in sociopolitical values, church involvement was consistently associated with greater spirituality, and participation in sports was associated with greater spirituality, authoritarianism, and materialism. In addition, volunteering was consistently associated with less social dominance and arts/music was negatively associated with patriotism.

### **Discussion**

Participation in organized activities may be a critical component of adolescent social identity development (Mahoney et al., 2005). The current study explored the intersection between adolescents' developing sociopolitical values and involvement in distinct types of organized activities. In the current study, substantial coordination was found across organized activities and emerging sociopolitical values. Shared variance between specific types of organized activities and sociopolitical values were accounted for by identifying patterns across models where structural pathways were reversed. When controlling for overlap between values and organized activities, consistent associations were found with engagement in sports, church, volunteering, arts/music, and several sociopolitical values. Together, these findings suggest that involvement in specific organized activities may provide youth with a set of developmental experiences that are intricately tied to values concerning authority, group equality, spiritual connectedness, material possessions, and national attachment.

Of particular note was youth involvement in organized sports. Consistent with previous research, adolescent sports involvement was distinctly associated with greater authoritarianism, materialism, and spirituality (Denham, 2009; LeUnes & Nation, 1982; Parry et al., 2007). Although previous research has also found links between sports and positive attitudes toward societal

competition (Denham, 2009) and patriotism (Edim, Okou, & Odok, 2012), associations among sports, social dominance, and patriotism became non-significant when accounting for shared variance among other values.

The structure of youth sports may promote more favorable attitudes toward obedience to authority and the importance of material gains. For instance, sports require athletes' to cede authority to coaches, who are typically viewed as "experts" in their chosen activity. In addition, athletes usually value the player-coach relationship and believe their coach teaches character skills that can be applied to sports and non-sport environments (Steinfeldt et al., 2011). Potentially, adolescents highly involved in sports may subscribe to greater authoritarian values because they believe the hierarchical structure within sports leads to success in competition. Alternatively, those with high authoritarian values may also seek out organized sports to gain social praise from non-parental adults. In addition, high-profile sports emphasize individual achievement and external metrics (e.g., fame, money, social status) as indicators of athletic success (Miller, 2009), which may be a prominent component of adolescents' "jock identity" (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Miller, 2009). Thus, sports involvement may attract and promote greater materialistic values, and findings from the current study support this hypothesis.

Previous research also highlights the importance of sports for spiritual connectedness (Parry et al., 2007). Religious and spiritual beliefs are often used within sports as a means to cope with challenges and uncertainties of competition (Lee, 2004). For example, prayer may be used by coaches and athletes to manage stressful situations, such as athletic injuries during games or practices (Eitzen & Sage, 1997). However, sports and spirituality also both provide adolescents with meaning, purpose, and fulfillment, and cultivate discipline and initiative (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003). Adolescents seeking to nurture these principles may also be drawn to organized sports. In the current study, sports participation was associated with spirituality over and above involvement in church and other organized activities, as well as when controlling for other sociopolitical values, suggesting that sports may be a distinct context in which adolescents practice and explore spiritual values.

The unique association between sports and spirituality is particularly noteworthy considering the magnitude of the relation between church and spirituality. Spirituality was the only sociopolitical value that remained significantly associated with church after controlling for overlap among other values. Churches have been viewed as "political communities" (Wald et al., 1988), especially in rural areas (King, Elder, & Whitbeck, 1997). Spirituality is explicitly taught in religious congregations (Benson et al., 2003) and nationwide polling data indicate that spiritual growth and guidance are the most

frequently reported reasons for attending church (Gallup & Newport, 2008). These findings replicate previous research (Denton, Pearce, & Smith, 2008) by demonstrating that the connection between church and spirituality is evident as youth begin to explore religious principles.

Whereas church and sports may be tied to stronger spiritual values, volunteering may be an organized activity that promotes the endorsement of equality. Greater involvement in volunteering was related to less endorsement of group-based hierarchy, indicated by social dominance values. Volunteering typically entails direct contact with the less fortunate, which promotes democratic ideals of equality, social justice, and concern for others (Flanagan, 2003). These experiences may challenge beliefs about the legitimacy of group-based hierarchies. Experimental research using a college sample has shown that students randomly assigned to complete mandatory community service had lower social dominance scores 9 weeks later (Brown, 2011), suggesting that experiences gained within volunteering may lead to decreases in social dominance. The current study extends previous research by demonstrating that these processes may be present prior to the college years and outside service learning contexts.

Findings from the current study also suggest that participation in arts/music may be related to less national attachment. Across both models, arts/music was negatively associated with patriotism. Previous research has highlighted that multiculturalism is a large component of arts/music curricula (Volk, 2004). Fostering an appreciation for other cultures may reduce youths' national attachment (Spry & Hornsey, 2007). In addition, those involved in arts/music may be part of a broader peer culture that is more inclined to reject conventional social attachments (Barber & Eccles, 1999). Possibly, adolescents who participate in arts/music groups may feel less loyal to the nation and its symbols, and thus endorse patriotic values to a lesser extent. However, those with a decreased sense of national attachment may also seek out activities such as arts/music to be a part of peer culture that values self-expression.

Inconsistencies across both models emerged for associations between volunteering, arts/music, and spirituality. When controlling for involvement in other organized activities (Table 2), arts/music and volunteering were negatively associated with spirituality. However, when pathways were reversed, these associations were positive and significant (Table 3). It is unclear why those who are involved in either arts/music or volunteering and are uninvolved in other activities have lower spiritual values. Bivariate correlations (Table 1) show that church was strongly correlated ( $r = .70$ ), volunteering was moderately correlated ( $r = .17$ ), and arts/music was uncorrelated ( $r = .04$ ) with spirituality. Furthermore, there was moderate overlap between church and volunteering ( $r = .32$ ) and church and arts/music ( $r = .19$ ). It is

possible that the significant associations between arts/music, volunteering, and spirituality are the result of negative suppression due to large amount of variance accounted for by church involvement (Darlington, 1968). Future research is needed to replicate these findings.

School and community clubs were not significantly associated with any sociopolitical values after demographic characteristics and involvement in other organized activities were controlled. Participation in community and school clubs may be more informal and focused on socializing or idiosyncratic hobbies when compared with other types of organized activities (Mahoney, Eccles, & Larson, 2004). Although consistent with previous research (Ferris et al., 2013), adolescents' community and school clubs measures exhibited less robust internal reliability, which may have limited the ability to capture associations with sociopolitical values. Future research should utilize a wider array of items to assess these constructs.

### *Study Limitations*

Findings from the current study should be taken in light of several limitations. Concordant data do not allow for causal interpretations of associations. Thus, findings from the current study are unable to disentangle whether organized activity involvement leads to the endorsement of values or whether adolescents with stronger values are more likely to engage in specific organized activities. Cross-lagged autoregressive longitudinal research is needed to examine whether involvement in organized activities influence sociopolitical values or vice versa. Although participants varied in their socioeconomic status, the majority of subjects identified as being White/Caucasian and resided in rural communities or a mid-sized city. Some research suggests that experiences within extracurricular activities may vary for schools that have an increased minority population (Hoffmann, 2006) or are from different rural contexts (Ferris et al., 2013). Future research is needed to explore whether these processes differ for youth in schools with greater racial/ethnic diversity and those located within different rural communities. Measures of authoritarianism, patriotism, social dominance, and materialism were assessed through abridged scales adapted for adolescent samples. Although these scales demonstrated strong internal reliability and were differentially associated with organized activity involvement, they may not have fully captured adolescents' endorsement of these values.

Despite these limitations, findings from the current study provide important initial evidence that adolescent organized activities are differentially associated with sociopolitical values. Although the data were cross-sectional, we attempted to reduce potential confounds associated with correlational



research by testing models that accounted for sources of shared variance among both organized activities and sociopolitical values. Confidence in the robustness of these unique associations is also bolstered by the inclusion of multiple important demographic characteristics (adolescent age, gender, parents' education, and school location) in our tested models.

Adolescence is a developmental period marked by an expansion of personal belief systems, the formation of one's social identity, and a budding sense of sociopolitical agency (Christens, Peterson, Reid, & Garcia-Reid, 2012; Eccles et al., 2003; Youniss et al., 1997). Findings from the current study add to the growing scholarship on developmental contexts that facilitate social development by examining the intersection between involvement in organized activities and values that concern social and political institutions. These findings point to substantial coordination among activity participation and sociopolitical values, and further demonstrate the importance of considering organized activities as distinct developmental contexts that can promote emerging views of the social world. Scholars and educators should be aware of the social and political implications of organized activity involvement, and future research is needed to explore the mechanisms through which these contexts influence adolescent value development.

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