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# Adolescent Political Development

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**ADOLESCENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS**

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### **Abstract**

The present research is on parent influence on adolescent political development. The study surveys parent political behavior, parent warmth and quality of relationship with their child, and adolescent knowledge of parent political behavior to understand how these factors affect a match in party affiliation in parent and adolescent. 547 family groups are included in the study. I hypothesized that an adolescent's politics would be more likely to match that of their parent when the parent is politically involved and warm and the adolescent is aware of the parent's political behavior. This study is important because individuals' party affiliation determines their voting behavior, which determines many decisions made in this country. It is interesting to understand how people develop their party affiliation and what role parents have in this development.

### **Adolescent Political Development**

Adolescent political development is an important area of research because as Jennings and Niemi (1974) explain, in the United States in 1971, with the creation of the 26th amendment, it was decided that 18 year olds are cognitively and emotionally prepared for the responsibility of voting in US elections. This is a legal determination of a key point in adolescent political development, a time when we trust adolescents to hold their own views and be able to decide for themselves which candidates and policies are best for our country. Samuelsohn (2015) wrote a POLITICO article about presidential campaigns targeting 16 and 17 year olds who will be 18 by election day. Studies show adolescents are still especially impressionable and not necessarily ready to be the targets of biased political advertisements so young, as we have decided they are not mature enough to vote until age 18. Adolescents likely “lack the proper context and experience to make sense of so many brass-knuckle attack ads on complicated issues” (Samuelsohn, 2015). It seems these campaigns are aware that younger adolescents are more malleable and are vying for their votes while they are still impressionable. Campaigns are known to be “scouring local high school directories from Iowa to Florida, matching up data from public voter rolls with parents’ voting histories” (Samuelsohn, 2015). In this way, campaigns are making assumptions about adolescent party affiliation based on parent party affiliation. It is important to understand how adolescents develop political beliefs that lead to their party affiliation because party affiliation largely affects voting, and elected candidates are the people who make important decisions in America. Jennings and Niemi believe that “partisanship is unlike any other political stimuli in the degree to

which it is a permanent, salient, generalized posture toward the political world” (Jennings 1974, p. 61). If we understand how people develop their party affiliation as adolescents, we can think more deeply about why people have certain political leanings and this may help create more understanding between politically opposed people.

## **Literature Review**

### **Adolescent Development**

The future of democracy relies on young people, who are often uninformed about politics until they are educated and shaped, often by their parents. Connell (1971) surveyed children and adolescents in his book, The Child's Construction of Politics, providing examples of comically ignorant children and adolescents gaining and grappling with political knowledge. He explains that early political consciousness in young children centers on being aware of the world and the people in it. In a 1968 study of children in Sydney, Connell asked a five year old, “Do you ever hear about the Prime Minister?” ‘Only sometimes.’ ‘And what does the Prime Minister do?’ ‘I don't know what he does’” (Connell 1971, p. 10). The five year old has heard of politics but is not interested or informed. By ages 10 or 11 children have more of an understanding of political structure, for example, the 10 year old boy who could deliver the facts, “Mr. Gorton I think is in the Labor Party, and Mr. Whitlam is in the Liberal Party” (Connell 1971, p. 41). However, this might simply be a repetition of memorized facts, based on a 12 year old's answer about what the parties are, “Ah...two different groups of men and they're against each other” (Connell 1971, p. 46). While the child is not wrong, we see that at 10 or 12, children are still in a state of taking in and repeating information. This is a time

when children are politically malleable. When asked which political party they prefer, an 11 year old answered, “‘Labor’ ‘Why would you prefer that?’ ‘Because my parents voted for that’ ‘Why do you think they would prefer Labor?’ ‘I don’t know’” (Connell 1971, p. 70). Children working with a lack of information trust their parents' judgment. As children get older, they might base their political opinions on their personally developed feelings about certain issues. A 13 year old commenting on his stance against the Vietnam war answered, “‘Because we’re all human beings, and there’s a lot of bloodshed everywhere and there’s a lot of people dying” (Connell 1971, p. 89). Although these views could have also been instilled by a parent, the 13 year old is more eloquent and elaborative in his political thoughts.

Connell (1971) provides an original theory of stages in the development of political belief in which the four stages include intuitive thinking, primitive realism, construction of political order, and ideological thinking. In the first two stages, politics are not considered problematic, meaning they do not trouble the individual, and judgments are inconsistent, while in the latter two stages, politics are considered problematic and positions are consistently held. Characteristics of the first stage, “intuitive thinking,” include confusing political and non-political material. The second stage, “primitive realism,” is defined by realizing there is a political world. In stage three, “construction of political order,” concrete political details are understood, including the relationships between actors. Finally, in stage four, “ideological thinking,” the individual is able to use abstract terms and understand societies as a whole. This is one model that accounts for how adolescents develop their political understanding over time.

Sense of community and political development are closely linked. Adelson and O'Neil (1966) discuss the growing sense of community adolescents develop over time. They have empirical evidence from a study in which they interviewed adolescents. They explain that before age 13 it is hard for adolescents to go past the personal and see social consequences, and before age 15 it is hard to see the community as a whole; the government is more understood as tangible services. In these early adolescent years, even conceptualizing the future is difficult. Adelson and O'Neil believe that younger adolescents who are used to discipline in their homes and schools would be more likely to accept authoritarian solutions and are less focused on individual liberties based on their life experiences. Later on in adolescence there is often a gradual increase in using philosophical principles and a decline of authoritarianism. There is also an increasing understanding of the needs of a community over time. Adolescents are more able to take in and retain knowledge as they grow older and their cognitive capacity increases. This leads to developing ideology as older adolescents are able to hold onto ideas and argue when cross-questioned, as opposed to young adolescents who may reverse their ideas. Adelson and O'Neil believe, based on their data, that the biggest time of growth is between ages 11 and 13, when there is the most cognitive change. Adelson and O'Neil also state that by age 15, there is clear formal thought, the only thing lacking is political information. The only difference they see at age 18 is possessing more information, so the 18 year old is able to communicate more clearly and effectively.

Rekker, Keijsers, Branje, and Meeus (2015) found that adolescent political attitudes were less extreme and more stable with age. This supports the idea that political

attitudes mature largely during adolescence and less so during emerging adulthood.

Russo and Stattin (2017) studied how adolescents gain and lose interest in politics over time and determined that political interest is the most important determinant of political behavior. Sears' lifelong hypothesis states that people are open to change through life (Sears, 1983). On the other hand, the lifelong persistence theory argues that political attitudes are resistant to change (Sears, 1983). Krosnick and Alwin's impressionable years hypothesis says political attitudes change during late adolescence, but once adult, are more stable (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989).

### **Parental Involvement**

It seems likely that children develop political ideas from their parents. Parenting styles may play a role in this. Fraley, Griffin, Belsky, and Roisman (2012) studied politics of 18 year olds in relation to parenting attitudes and child temperament. They found parents' authoritarian attitudes when their child is 1 month old produced conservative attitudes in those children at age 18. They also believe early childhood temperament predicted political differences.

Gotlieb, Kyoung, Gabay, Riddle, and Shah (2015) studied parent-child dyads to understand how adolescents are socialized to participate in politics. They studied future voting intention, which they found to be rooted in socialization as compared to political consumerism. They found age differences that showed younger adolescents are more influenced by socialization agents, while older adolescents focus on communication practices, including those online. The researchers argue that for older adolescents, digital



media is crucial in political behaviors and parent socialization is important for younger adolescents.

Smollar and Youniss (1989) discuss in their paper how individualization is necessary in order for an adolescent to develop a self separate from parents. The paper is a summary of work in the field of individualization but adds the insight that “the value of the concept of individuation for understanding adolescence is proposed to lie in its focus on the child in the context of relationship with others rather than as a separate entity. This focus is seen as providing a basis for attending to the social context in the study of adolescence” (Smollar and Youniss ,71). This is a key idea in relation to political development because relationships and community are key to political identity, and this individualization from parents is what allows children to develop their political identity as they mature.

Šerek and Umemura (2015) studied how political interaction with parents, peers, and news during election time affected voting intentions and behavior of first-time voters. Although adolescents who talk to their peers about politics are more likely to vote, those who talk to parents and watch the news are not more likely to vote. Interestingly, talking more with parents led to talking more with peers, possibly because it provides adolescents with the necessary skills to have these discussions outside the home. They call this idea the family as a playground. This is a clear way parents can be involved in a positive change in adolescents’ politics. While this study focuses on voting behavior, and the measure in the present study is party affiliation, the information is still useful in terms of understanding political engagement. Umemura and Šerek (2016) also studied the different reasons adolescents come to trust politicians. They found that parent warmth as

rated at age 13 led adolescents to have higher trust in politicians and beliefs in a just world at ages 15 and 17. In this way, parent warmth is essential in political development.

### **Social Learning Theory**

Bandura's social learning theory states that people learn from observing others. Researchers in the field of adolescent political development argue this theory applies to adolescents learning political behavior and opinions from their parents. Jennings and Niemi (1974) discuss how in observational learning, a form of social learning theory, people practice modeling, imitation, and cue-taking. Meeusen and Dhont (2015) found that adolescents who discuss politics more with their parents have more similar politics to their parents than those who do not discuss politics. Adolescents show stronger correspondence through direct discussion than indirectly, such as a parent simply having a strong commitment to an attitude but not discussing it. Jennings and Niemi (1974) describe families as agents of change. Of course, just as parents teach kids how to tie their shoes and ride a bike, parents are the agents that inform children about politics. Santrock (2016) discusses parents' role in adolescents' lives. Parents help adolescents make decisions, navigate school and social life, establish healthy routines, and monitor possibly unsafe activities. Adolescents vary in how much of their lives they disclose to their parents and therefore how much the parent can be involved. Adolescents crave more autonomy as they get older, yet are at a time when they still need to fall back on their parents. Striking a balance in these relationships is essential to the adolescent's development. Parents have to balance instilling political values and leaving room for autonomy.

Rico and Jennings (2016) studied how people come to identify with one political party by looking at parent-child pairs through the theory of direct transmission. They argue that there are three ways to acquire political beliefs: social learning within the family, status inheritance factors, and genetic inheritance. Social learning happens through “observing, modeling, imitating, identifying with, and internalizing the behavior and attitudes of those immediately surrounding them” (Rico & Jennings 2016 p. 238). Rico and Jennings also discuss how, through social learning, parents who are extreme in their politics are less likely to influence their children in their own political direction. They believe this is because generational political differences may lead a child who feels slightly different from their parents to take a shortcut to completely disagreeing with them if the parents come off too politically strong. There is also evidence that there is some genetic basis for political opinions (Alford, Funk, & Hibbing, 2005). The issue in twin studies is that people with similar genetics also have similarities like race, upbringing, and socioeconomic status. The idea that people could be born with political predispositions is problematic because people are so quickly influenced by the situation they are born into.

We know that social learning is a legitimate theory, and the following study addresses how parents specifically influence their children’s politics. Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2009) discuss how children are more likely to adopt their parents’ politics “if the family is highly politicized and if the parents provide clear and consistent cues over time” (Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009 p. 1). This statement is based on social learning theory. They say that when political learning happens earlier in childhood, it is more stable over life. They found that when parents are very engaged and discuss politics

often, their children are more likely to align politically. This happens most often during elections. It might matter what developmental stages people are at during elections because adolescents may develop differently depending on what is happening in the world during ages that are considered spurts of learning, for instance 13-15 years old. A highly charged political time during this development might lead adolescents to be more polarized in their politics. They found that when parent views are stable on many topics, that helps transmit opinions and that children adopt partisan orientations more than any other political characteristics. Hooghe and Boonen (2015) add the insight that even outside two-party systems, including their study performed in Belgium, there is a strong correspondence in child-parent voting intention.

Parenting decisions may play a role in political similarity and create situations where parents and children disagree politically. Robert Urbatsch (2014) raises the issue of people whose politics oppose that of their parents. For example, Republican leaders Ronald and Nancy Reagan's children are both Democrats. Urbatsch argues that the decision of conservative mothers to work or stay home can influence their children's politics. He explains that Nancy Reagan continued working while her children were young, so the children were exposed to other role models while they grew up, which influenced their politics. It seems that this should also apply to the father's decision to work or stay home. It is important to consider how parent actions other than parent political activity affect the child's politics. Ekehammar, Sidanius, and Däcker (1984) discuss, based on results of their study, data showing that girls who are close to their mothers were less likely to deviate politically from the mother. They also argue that the strength of the father's political conviction affects deviation in both sexes. Jennings and

Niemi (1974) argue that while a single parent or parent unit's politics hugely influences the child, there is an issue when parents don't have the same politics.

### **The Present Study**

Studies on adolescent development have shown that early adolescents rely on their parents for political information and only later in adolescence begin to understand relationships between actors and societies as a whole (Connell, 1971). It has also been found that political attitudes become more stable with age, with a majority of development happening during adolescence (Russo & Stattin, 2017). Parental involvement has been found to relate to adolescent political development in terms of parenting attitudes (Fraley, Griffin, Belsky, & Roisman, 2012), room for individualization (Smollar & Youniss, 1989), political discussion, and parent warmth (Šerek & Umemura, 2015). Finally, Bandura's social learning theory supports the idea that adolescents learn political behavior from watching their parents, receiving cues, parental political agreement (Jennings & Niemi, 1974), and parent gender roles (Urbatsch, 2014).

A large portion of political research specifically recording party affiliation is limited to those 18 and up, when researchers are able to collect polling information on these new voters. It is important to consider the political development that adolescents go through during their entire adolescence. There is an issue of assuming masculine dominance in influence over politics as studied by Jennings and Niemi (1974); it is important to measure both parents so masculine dominance isn't assumed, and so that parent agreement can be used to consider the issue of a politically divided house. As Umemura and Šerek (2016) studied, parental warmth led to trust in politicians. Although

trust in politicians is different than party affiliation, it seems that parent warmth is an important factor in political development, and therefore could be used to predict party affiliation match.

The current study measures parent political activity, parent warmth and quality of relationship, and adolescent knowledge of parent political activity to predict a match between parent and adolescent party affiliation. This study will focus on political affiliation because as Jennings and Niemi stated, partisanship is an especially useful measurement because it is so central to a person's political feelings. This study also focuses on parent-adolescent relationships because this seems to affect political development. The current study offers a new way to examine the topic by testing whether the adolescent is aware of and correct in their observations of their parents' political behavior over time; other studies merely assume this fact.

I hypothesize that the parent and adolescent will have the same political party affiliation. I hypothesize that at the initial measurement, at age 12, it will be more likely for the parent and adolescent to have the same political party affiliation if the parent is highly politically involved than if they are less politically involved; if the parent is warm and the quality of the relationship is good than if the parent is not warm and quality of relationship is bad; and if the adolescent can correctly identify their parents' political behavior than if they cannot.

I hypothesize that it will be more likely for the parent and adolescent to have the same political party affiliation if the parent becomes more politically involved over time or stays the same, than less so over time; if the parent becomes warmer and quality of relationship becomes better or stays the same than if it gets worse over time; and if the

child becomes more able to correctly identify their parents' political behavior over time or stays the same than if that ability decreases over time.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The target population is adolescents ages 12-18 in the US and their parents. The participants for this study will include family groups with adolescents age 12 at the initial stage of the study and their two parents. Based on Meesuen (2015), this study is predicted to have a small effect size. To achieve a power of .8, assuming a significant alpha of .05, the required number of participants is 547 family groups (Cohen, 1992). This will be a convenience sample, but it will work to be representative of American families by recruiting participants from many diverse areas across the country. Participants will be recruited with newspaper and online ads as well as posters located in places where parents of young adolescents frequent like classes, playgrounds, and shops. Participation will require an adolescent living in a home with two parents.

### **Materials**

This study will include three original scales, one measuring parent political activity, the second measuring parental warmth and quality of relationship, and the third measuring adolescent knowledge of parent political behavior.

Before beginning the three main scales, all participants will be asked; "What is your political/party affiliation?" (Republican/Democrat). A match variable will then be created to represent to match between parent party affiliation and adolescent party affiliation. While there are other parties in the American system, these two major parties will be used to establish clear matches and mismatches. The parent survey, but not the

adolescent survey, will then ask: “Do you and your partner have the same party affiliation?” (Yes, No). Anyone who does not have a party affiliation will be removed from the data and will not continue participating in the study. Any two parents who don’t have the same answer about whether their partner has the same affiliation as themselves will be removed from the data and will not continue participating in the study.

**Parent political activity.** How politically active a parent is likely influences their child’s perception of politics and therefore their party affiliation. The scale of parent politics will contain 13 items. The scale asks questions about whether and how often the person votes, how often they talk about politics with their child, and how politically active they are. These main topics are scored from 1-10. The questions: “How frequently do you talk about politics with your child?” and “How politically active are you?” are each followed by more detailed questions for further information on these topics, and each of these sub-questions is scored from 1-5. See full scale in Appendix A. The scale will be scored by counting up the points, with a high score representing high political activity and a low score representing low political activity. The score will be coded so that parents staying the same or becoming more active is coded as 1 and parents becoming less active is coded as 0 for the change over time tests.

**Parent warmth and quality of relationship.** Parent warmth and quality of relationship with their child may be related to parents and their children having the same party affiliation. An original parental warmth/quality of relationship scale is used. The scale will be taken only by the adolescent and be taken once for each parent during each session. It contains 6 items. It asks questions about how warm and close the adolescent feels with each parent. The first 3 items ask about how often the parent is warm, how



often they do nice things for the child, and how often the child feels that their parent loves them. These are scored 1-10. The final 3 items ask how often the parent disciplines the child, how often they are unfair to the child, and how often the child feels unloved. These are reverse scored 1-10. See full scale in Appendix B. The scale will be scored by counting up the points, with a high score representing high political activity and a low score representing low political activity. The score will be coded so that parents staying the same or becoming more warm is coded as 1 and parents becoming less warm is coded as 0 for the change over time tests.

**Adolescent knowledge of parent political behavior.** It is important for an adolescent to know about their parent's political behavior in order to be effected by it, so this knowledge is measured. The adolescent will be surveyed to find out how much they know about their parents' political behavior with another original scale. It contains 16 items. It asks the adolescent what the parent's party affiliation is and how active they are politically. The same questions from the first scale (Appendix A) are used but phrased as "your parent" instead of "you" in order to check for any differences between parent answers and child perceptions. See full scale in Appendix C. Part 1 makes sure that the adolescent knows their parent's party affiliation. A cutoff point will be established so that if the adolescent gets this essential question wrong, they will be rated as having very low knowledge of their parent's political activity. Instead of the points counting up to a final score, each question will be compared to its counterpart in scale A. The difference in scores for each question will be calculated and the final score will be determined by adding up all the differences, with a high number meaning the adolescent knows less

about their parent's political activity and a low score meaning they know more; their answers closely match their parent's self report. The score will be coded so that adolescents staying the same or becoming knowledgeable is coded as 1 and adolescents becoming less knowledgeable is coded as 0 for the change over time tests.

### **Procedure**

The study is a longitudinal study on adolescent-parent triads performed when the child is 12, 14, 16, and 18. Because it would be hard to get both parents to come into a lab with their child 4 times over a long period of time, the survey will be conducted both in a lab and online. The adolescent segment is to be done in a lab so that the parent isn't watching over the adolescent on the computer and correcting their answers, or the adolescent isn't asking the parent for answers. Because it would be too hard to have both parents come in at the same time, and the aforementioned issue does not exist for the parent surveys, these surveys will be emailed to parents after they bring the adolescent into the lab each time. This will help with drop-out because an online survey is easy to complete.

First, in the lab, parents will give consent for their children before the initial adolescent survey. Then the adolescents will give assent before beginning the initial survey. Demographic information of the adolescents will be collected including age, ethnicity, and gender. The adolescent survey will consist of two sets of questions, one about knowledge of parent political activity which will be done first and the second about parent warmth. This order will be fixed because it makes the most sense to answer the straightforward questions about political activity before delving into the parent-child relationship. At the end of the survey, participants will be thanked and debriefed. After

the adolescent survey has been completed the parent survey will be sent. Parents will give consent at the beginning of their online survey. First, demographic information will be collected including age, ethnicity, gender, education level and occupation. Parents will next answer questions about their own political activity. At the end of the survey, participants will be thanked and debriefed.

The survey should take about 15 minutes for each person each session. Compensation will be \$15 given to each family group for every session. This payment will be received via mail after the adolescent and parent surveys have been completed every two years. After the 4 surveys, they will have made \$60 from the study. This amount is meant to not be too coercive and seems reasonable for the time and effort.

This study is meant to generalize to American adolescents because these measures are within the American system. The study will occur during non-presidential election years so that particular political issues don't affect the sample too much.

### **Ethics**

The benefits of the study greatly outweigh the risk to participants. The benefits of the study are high and risk is below minimum risk. The benefits of the study to society can be understood by considering the importance of young people being politically knowledgeable and active. Understanding of adolescent political development in relation to their parents could be applied to change how parents engage with adolescents in order to create engaged and independently thinking adolescents. Increasing the knowledge base on this topic would greatly benefit all those affected by the US government. The study may also include a benefit to participants by reminding parents and adolescents about

political activity and involvement, which may increase positive political involvement and discussion between parents and adolescents.

On the other hand, the risk to participants is below the level of minimal risk because it is a simple survey with no sensitive information conducted four times. The study includes minors, which is a protected population. Use of minors is necessary because it is specifically a study of adolescent development, no other group could be used and then generalized. To protect this population, consent will be obtained from their parents and assent from them. Familiarization time will be used so that the adolescents are comfortable and all questions will be made understandable, even to the youngest adolescents. This study does not ask participants to reveal any sensitive information. It is possible that questions about politics might lead to slight discomfort, especially if the study occurs at a politically charged time. The questions will not be overly probing so that participants do not feel judged for their answers or fear their private information will be released. The data collection will be anonymous. Names or identification numbers will be used to organize different surveys from the same people over time but this information will be erased by the time data are analyzed and names will not be released.

Participation in the study is voluntary. It will be advertised but there will be no unnecessary reward or punishment involved in participating or not participating. There will be compensation that is representative of the time taken but not so much that it is coercive. The study involves no deception. The study is potentially very helpful to participants and the larger community and involves very little risk.

## Results

Data cleaning and tests of normality will be done first. An outlier analysis will be done and appropriate steps will be taken to remove outliers from the data. A chi-square will be conducted to test the hypothesis that a significant number of parents and adolescents will have the same political party affiliation. Tests will be done on the normality of the data and if the data is found not to be normal, transformations will be done. Reliability of the scales will be tested with item to total tests. If items are found to be unreliable, they will be replaced. Reliability will be cutoff at .8. Three models will be used to test the main hypotheses using the following three scales. The same models will be used at each time point to see whether there are changes in the models over time. The variables in the match will be measured by counting the numerical answers to each question to create a composite score. These scores can then be compared against each other between time points. Match will be defined by comparing answers on the “What is your political/party affiliation?” question. If the adolescent and parent match in their answer, it will be coded as 1-match, and if they do not it will be coded as 0-no match. Match is the higher-coded category, there will be a variable read as 0= no match and 1= match. The model predicts membership in the higher coded category.

In order to test the following six hypotheses, logistic regressions will be used. I hypothesized that at the initial measurement, there would be a significant main effect of parent political activity, such that the significant prediction of a match increases as parent political involvement increases; for every one point increase in parent political activity, the odds of match will increase. I hypothesized that at the initial measurement, there

would be a significant main effect of parent warmth and quality of relationship, such that the significant prediction of a match increases as parent warmth and quality of relationship increases; for every one point increase in warmth, the odds of match will increase. I hypothesized that at the initial measurement, there would be a significant main effect of adolescent knowledge of parent political activity, such that the significant prediction of a match increases as adolescent awareness of their parents' political behavior increases; for every one point increase in warmth, the odds of match will increase.

I hypothesized that there would be a significant main effect of change in parent political activity over time, such that the significant prediction of the match was higher when the parent was increasing their political activity or keeping it the same than decreasing it. This change will be measured at each time point and will be created by subtracting the old match score from the new one.

I hypothesized that there would be a significant main effect of change in parent warmth and quality of relationship over time, such that the significant prediction of the match was higher when the parent was increasing their warmth and quality of relationship or keeping it the same than decreasing it. This change will be measured at each time point and will be created by subtracting the old match score from the new one.

I hypothesized that there would be a significant main effect of change in adolescent knowledge of parent political activity over time, such that the significant prediction of the match was higher when the adolescent was more able to correctly identify their parent's political behavior or had the same ability as before than a

decreasing ability to identify this behavior. This change will be measured at each time point and will be created by subtracting the old match score from the new one.

### **Discussion**

These predicted results are important because adolescent party affiliation is the most important predictor of who and what adolescents will vote for in US elections, which matters significantly for the future of America and therefore the world. If we understand how adolescents develop the thinking that leads them to these decisions, we can better understand and predict how US political decisions and elections will turn out. We can think more deeply about how parents should relate to their children in terms of politics if they hope to transmit their political beliefs to the next generation. Alternatively, we can consider more deeply how adolescents can develop their own individualized political thought and whether that is ever possible considering the effect their parents have on them politically. These ideas matter because political ideas are held onto fervently, yet many people would likely hold different beliefs if they were born to different parents. Understanding how we all develop our own deeply held beliefs can help us understand others as products of their parents and hopefully understand each other better and get along more politically.

The significance of the predicted results is that parent political behavior, warmth, and adolescent's knowledge of their parents' political behavior are significant predictors of adolescent political party affiliation. These predicted results are consistent with the information presented in the introduction of this paper which predicted that these factors would be important predictors of adolescent party affiliation.

Further research could look into what other family factors influence adolescent party affiliation, such as sibling, teacher, or peer influences, divorce, moving to a new community, or traumatizing incidents in the community, such as environmental disasters or mass shootings. All these factors could influence how adolescents come to think about politics and would be important to study. Future studies could also include an examination of political lessons adolescents learn from teachers, peers, and other members of their community. It would also be interesting to study adolescents living in communities with opposing politics to those of their parents and whether the opposing ideas in their communities would intervene in their likely political match with their parents.

One limitation of this study is that political and world events happening over the course of the longitudinal study would be very likely to influence the politics of the adolescents, especially in times when a younger generation is in conflict with their parents' generation. With unlimited resources, this study could be done several times over multiple generations. Another limitation is that because this study requires an adolescent living with two parents, information cannot be collected from adolescents with one parent or divorced parents. This is unfortunate because these adolescents are important to understand, as well, and their information could help us understand how people with unique family backgrounds differ in their political development. A further study could focus on these adolescents specifically.

Adolescent political development is an area that deserves attention because while people hold so strongly onto their politics, many do not consider how much their parents



shaped those ideas. It is essential to understand this development more deeply to get to a place of deeper political understanding and empathy between people.

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## Appendix A

### Parental Political Activity

Do you vote? (Yes/No) (Yes scored as 10, no scored as 1)

How often do you vote? (1-10 never to always)

How frequently do you talk about politics with your child? (1-10 never to every day)

How often do you discuss elections? (1-5 never to very often)

How often do you discuss current events? (1-5 never to very often)

How often do you discuss politicians? (1-5 never to very often)

How politically active are you? (1-10 not at all to very)

How often do you campaign for candidates? (1-5 never to very often)

How often do you work at election headquarters? (1-5 never to very often)

How often do you do door to door campaigning? (1-5 never to very often)

How often do you contribute money to a campaign/political cause? (1-5 never to very often)

Have you ever run for office? (yes/no) (Yes scored as 5, no scored as 1)

If so, at what level? (Local, State, Federal) (Local scored as 3, State scored as 5, Federal scored as 7).

## **Appendix B**

### **Parental Warmth/ Quality of Relationship**

How often is your parent warm toward you? (1-10 never to very often)

How often does your parent do nice things for you? (1-10 never to very often)

How often do you feel that your parent loves you? (1-10 never to very often)

How often does your parent discipline you? (1-10 never to very often) (reverse scored)

How often do you feel your parent is unfair to you? (1-10 never to very often) (reverse scored)

How often do you feel unloved by your parent? (1-10 never to very often) (reverse scored)

## Appendix C

### Adolescent Knowledge of Parent Political Activity

#### Part 1

What is your parent's party affiliation? (Republican, Democrat) (Correct scored as 10, Incorrect scored as 1)

#### Part 2

Does your parent vote? (Yes/No) (Correct scored as 10, Incorrect scored as 1)

How often does your parent vote? (1-10 never to always)

How frequently do you talk about politics with your parents? (1-10 never to every day)

How often do you discuss elections? (1-5 never to very often)

How often do you discuss current events? (1-5 never to very often)

How often do you discuss politicians? (1-5 never to very often)

How politically active is your parent? (1-10 not at all to very)

How often do they campaign for candidates? (1-5 never to very often)

How often do they work at election headquarters? (1-5 never to very often)

How often do they do door to door campaigning? (1-5 never to very often)

How often do they contribute money to a campaign/political cause? (1-5 never to very often)

Has your parent ever run for office? (yes/no) (Yes scored as 5, no scored as 1)

If so, at what level? (Local, State, Federal) (Local scored as 5, State scored as 8, Federal scored as 10).