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Civic Development Across the Transition to Adulthood in a National U.S. Sample: Variations by Race/Ethnicity, Parent Education, and Gender

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Despite a growing understanding about civic development, we know little about whether the developmental course of civic engagement is the same across different types of civic engagement or different groups of youth. To advance developmental science in this area, we documented age-related change in community service, political interest, electoral participation, and political voice across the transition to adulthood by race/ethnicity, parent education, gender, and their interactions. National multicohort probability samples of U.S. high school seniors from the Monitoring the Future study were assessed at baseline (age 18) and followed longitudinally via self-administered mail surveys across 6 follow-up waves to age 29/30. Of the sample (N = 12,557), 51.0% were women, 11.0% were Black, 7.0% were Latinx, 2.3% were Asian, and 75.4% were White. Community service decreased from age 18 to 24, then showed modest recovery. Political interest, electoral participation, and political voice increased steadily from 18 to 24 and less steeply thereafter. Intercepts and (to some extent) slopes varied by race/ethnicity, parent education, gender, and intersections of these factors. Black youth started and remained highest in community service and showed more accelerated growth in political interest and electoral participation. Young women reported higher community service, whereas gender gaps in political engagement trajectories favored young men. Black and Latinx young women stood out as having distinct civic trajectories. The role of parent education varied by race/ethnicity and gender. Diverse civic pathways advance theoretical understanding of civic development.

Keywords: political behavior, community service, political interest, civic inequality, intersectionality

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Civic engagement is a key developmental domain for young adulthood on par with work, family and career (IOM [Institute of Medicine] and NRC [National Research Council], 2015; Sherrod & Lauckhardt, 2009). Despite a growing body of longitudinal work on youth civic engagement, this field lacks precision in theorizing about developmental change and lacks evidence about how different aspects of civic engagement change over time. Some have argued that civic engagement should increase across adulthood as youth gain roles and experiences that increase civic commitments (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Kinder, 2006). However, upward growth may not be evident for all types of engagement (Wray-Lake, Schulenberg, Keyes, & Shubert, 2017) or for all youth. Youth may take different civic developmental pathways based on background and experiences (Lerner, Wang, Champine, Warren, & Erickson, 2014; R. Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011), yet few studies have examined whether variations in age-related change are evident for different sociodemographic groups of youth. Using national U.S. Monitoring the Future data, we focus on change in civic engagement (i.e., community service, political interest, electoral participation, and political voice) across ages 18 to 30. We contribute to civic developmental theory and research by documenting how these four types of civic engagement change over time across the transition to adulthood by race/ethnicity, parent education, gender, and their interactions.

Civic Development Across Young Adulthood

Wide variation in definitions, terminology, and measures of civic engagement can be found across disciplines (Barrett & Zani, 2015). Here, we define civic engagement as a multidimensional construct comprised of commitments and contributions to commu-

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nity and society (Wray-Lake, Metzger, & Syvertsen, 2017). Civic engagement can be prosocial, political, or both and includes behaviors and psychological commitments such as interest, intentions, and attitudes. Joining scholars across disciplines (Amnå, 2012; Haste & Hogan, 2006; Sherrod & Lauckhardt, 2009), we argue that it is important to consider multiple dimensions of civic engagement in a single study because youth can be engaged in different ways and types of civic engagement may show distinct patterns of development. We focus on four common indicators of civic engagement available in a large national longitudinal U.S. dataset: community service, political interest, electoral participation (voting and election-related intentions and behaviors), and political voice (intentions and behaviors related to boycotting, demonstrating, and writing to public officials). Community service is generally understood to be situated in the prosocial domain (Eisenberg, Morris, McDaniel, & Spinrad, 2009). Our other three measures are politically oriented, with one attitudinal measure (political interest) and two measures of behaviors or behavioral intentions. Thus, we take a multidimensional, albeit not comprehensive, approach to civic engagement.

During late adolescence and young adulthood, people experience many life transitions and developmental milestones. In addition to the "Big 5" transition markers of work, education, relationships, parenthood, and living independently (Settersten & Ray, 2010), civic engagement is a central component of the transition (Sherrod & Lauckhardt, 2009). The transition to adulthood (TTA) is a time when youth grapple with what they value and how they fit into the broader society (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Compared with adolescents, youth enter the TTA with more autonomy to explore their worldviews, values, and interests (Côté, 2009). The TTA has become increasingly protracted in Western democracies, meaning that youth, on average, are taking longer to find stable careers, get married, and become parents (Arnett, 2014). Despite the longer time to establish social roles, youth display wide heterogeneity during the TTA in life paths regarding school, work, residential and financial independence, marriage, parenthood, and civic engagement (Schulenberg & Schoon, 2012).

Divergent hypotheses have been posited for how civic engagement changes across the TTA. First, the political life cycle model (Kinder, 2006) suggests that civic engagement should grow across young adulthood as individuals increase their independence and responsibility and take on adult and community roles. Evidence lends some support for this expectation of age-related increases in civic engagement across the TTA. Political interest, knowledge, voting, boycotting, buycotting, contacting public officials, campaign contributions, and online political activity increase across young adulthood (Arens & Watermann, 2017; Jugert, Eckstein, Noack, Kuhn, & Benbow, 2013; Melo & Stockemer, 2014; Neundorf, Smets, & García-Albacete, 2013; Niemi & Klingler, 2012; Russo & Stattin, 2017).

Alternatively, civic engagement may decline across the TTA as other competing responsibilities are prioritized, such as the Big 5 markers of adulthood (Wilson, 2000). Learning to navigate new social roles can be stressful, and many youth lack institutional supports and opportunities for civic engagement after high school (Finlay, Wray-Lake, & Flanagan, 2010; IOM/NRC, 2015). Supporting this hypothesis, community service was found to decline across ages 18 to 26 using U.S. Monitoring the Future longitudinal data (Wray-Lake, Schulenberg, et al., 2017).

More nuanced hypotheses involve nonlinear trends in civic engagement across the TTA, which may vary by type of civic engagement. Young adults may postpone civic engagement until life situations are less uncertain and adult roles are stabilized (Flanagan & Levine, 2010), suggesting slow growth in the teens and early twenties, followed by accelerated growth after. This pattern may hold for voting, as youth delayed the age at which they first voted, but then voting became more frequent and habitual thereafter (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Regarding community service, although prior research has documented declines from 18 to 26 (Wray-Lake, Schulenberg, et al., 2017), the life cycle model anticipates a positive, upward trajectory in the late 20s as young adults become more rooted in communities (Kinder, 2006). A different nonlinear pattern may apply to political voice, a term for behaviors like protesting and demonstrating that are also called social movement actions or political activism (Lopez et al., 2006). With fewer roots in norms or institutions, youth may be more willing to challenge existing political, economic, and social systems earlier in the TTA compared with later, when they are more settled into social roles and institutions. Evidence suggests higher levels of political voice during one's early 20s compared with later (Melo & Stockemer, 2014; Norris, 2004; M. Watts, 1999).

By examining growth curves for four types of civic engagement from ages 18 to 30, we can document trajectories and add precision to developmental theorizing in the civic domain. We examined community service, political interest, electoral participation, and political voice. These types of civic engagement are well studied across disciplines, and examining evidence for the nature of age-related change in these constructs is theoretically informative. With a few exceptions (e.g., Niemi & Klingler, 2012; Wray-Lake, Schulenberg, et al., 2017), longitudinal studies of civic engagement across the TTA have been conducted in Western Europe. Longitudinal studies to chart civic development are needed for U.S. youth, as cross-sectional comparative evidence suggests that civic engagement varies in level and emphasis across the United States and Western Europe (Sloam, 2014). Moreover, life cycle theory and past longitudinal research on age-related change across the TTA often implicitly assume that the same patterns of age-related change apply across all youth. However, levels and rates of change in civic engagement across the TTA may vary in important ways across sociodemographic subgroups.

Sociodemographic Variations in Civic Development

Civic development unfolds differently based on lived experiences (Flanagan, 2013), and scholars have called for greater attention to variation in civic development across diverse groups (Hope & Spencer, 2017; Lerner et al., 2014). Examining sociodemographic variation in growth trajectories is one step toward a more culturally and contextually informed understanding of civic development. Our study examines main effects and interactions of sociodemographic categories of race/ethnicity, parent education, and gender to identify differences in age 18 levels and trajectories of civic engagement. This approach was conceptualized in the spirit of an intersectionality perspective, and aligns with some ideas of intersectionality while falling short of other tenets. This approach aligns with intersectionality by (a) recognizing heterogeneity in developmental experiences, (b) expanding beyond a single axis of experience, and (c) shedding light on groups that have been

traditionally overlooked to give new insight into their experiences (Cole, 2009; Santos & Toomey, 2018). The approach of interacting categorical variables has been termed "intersectionality-lite" (Katsiaficas, 2018), and Cole (2009) calls this method an "indispensable tool" for understanding patterns of disparities and pointing to unique trends for particular groups (p. 177). However, we fully acknowledge that identifying sociodemographic differences in growth curves is a cursory look at culture and context, and likewise Cole (2009) warns of oversimplifying intersectionality by reducing individuals' experiences to narrow categories. Our study does not measure oppression, identity, or other lived experiences of groups in any direct way, and we cannot shed light on variability within racial/ethnic groups beyond the categorical variables we have. Thus, we cannot fully apply intersectionality, as demographic combinations cannot be equated to the study of intersectionality. Despite these limitations, knowing how key subgroups differ on civic engagement across the TTA is a useful jumping off point for further culturally informed, intersectional developmental theory and research. Below, we highlight prior evidence on racial/ethnic, parent education (our marker of socioeconomic statis [SES]), and gender differences in civic engagement, and where possible, we comment on interactions. Our review is not exhaustive and emphasizes key findings from studies of adolescents or young adults.

Racial/Ethnic Differences in Civic Development

Youth of color navigate and process experiences of exclusion in ways that White youth do not (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002). Society's systematic exclusion of particular racial and ethnic minority groups shapes their opportunities, meaning, and experiences of civic engagement (Hope & Jagers, 2014; R. Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Wray-Lake & Abrams, 2020). Black and Latinx racial/ethnic groups have a long history of racial exclusion in the United States; Asian groups, although racialized and systematically discriminated against, have also historically experienced some racial inclusion; and White individuals enjoy racial privilege (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002). Perhaps because of this racial privilege, some studies find that White youth are more likely to vote, write to public officials, engage in community service, and report higher political interest compared with Black, Latinx, and Asian youth (Dávila & Mora, 2007; Foster-Bey, 2008; Gaby, 2017; Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012).

However, racial/ethnic minority youth are not always less civically engaged than White youth as typically assumed, and there is variation among racial/ethnic minority groups. In some national studies, Black youth reported higher likelihood of voting and belonging to political groups than Latinx, Asian, and in some cases, White youth (Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015; Lopez et al., 2006; Pritzker, 2012). Voter turnout rates from 2008, 2010, and 2012 elections showed that Black youth (ages 18–29) voted at higher rates than any other racial/ethnic group of youth (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement [CIRCLE], 2014). Black youth may also exhibit high levels of community service directed toward their own group: One study found that group-based discrimination and ethnic identity development predicted Black college students' prosocial behavior toward others in the Black community (White-Johnson, 2012). Many Latinx youth report feeling left out of formal politics, and have lower rates of voting than Black and White youth (CIRCLE, 2014; Lopez et al., 2006). However, Latinx youth have been found to protest at higher rates than other groups (Lopez et al., 2006). Likewise, analysis of participation norms suggested that Black and Latinx adults value nontraditional forms of political participation, like protesting, more than White adults (Anoll, 2018). Asian youth have the lowest voter turnout compared with other youth (CIRCLE, 2014; Godsay, Nover, & Kirby, 2010), and Asian adults tend to report lower political participation in campaigns and writing to public officials compared with Black and non-Latinx White adults (Wong, Lien, & Conway, 2005). Yet, Asian youth are more likely to volunteer and donate to charities compared with other racial/ethnic groups (Lopez et al., 2006). When various civic behaviors are considered together, White youth have higher overall levels compared with other groups, whereas Black, Latinx, and Asian youth may specialize in particular types of civic engagement (Lopez et al., 2006).

Although racial/ethnic variation in civic engagement trajectories have not yet been explored in the literature, such differences may signal distinct developmental processes. For some youth of color, experiences of exclusion motivate civic engagement to cope with marginalization and advocate for group rights (Hope & Jagers, 2014). Experiences of marginalization and injustice prompt the development of critical consciousness, which involves critical analysis of structural roots of inequality, the development of agency to make change, and sociopolitical action to address inequalities (Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016; Watts et al., 2011). These processes unfold over time and may be reflected in more accelerated trajectories of political interest or participation for youth of color. Some research suggests that processes of critical consciousness development may differ across Latinx and Black youth (Bañales, Mathews, Hayat, Anyiwo, & Diemer, 2019), but we do not know if or how civic trajectories may differ for these groups. Overall, racial/ethnic differences in civic trajectories across the TTA may signal different underlying developmental processes that should be further studied longitudinally with diverse samples of youth.

Socioeconomic Differences in Civic Development

For decades, SES disparities have been evident in civic engagement, with more advantaged individuals reporting higher community service, political interest, electoral participation, and political voice (APSA Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, 2004; Campbell, 2006; File, 2018; Foster-Bey, 2008; Lopez et al., 2006; Rotolo & Wilson, 2012; Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2012; Wray-Lake & Hart, 2012). These civic disparities are apparent in adolescence and even childhood, and have been attributed to inequality in developmental opportunities, educational systems, and neighborhood resources (Astuto & Ruck, 2017; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Levinson, 2012). Sloam (2014) points out that most forms of civic participation are structured in ways that inherently advantage those with resources. Likewise, lower SES youth report experiencing substantially more barriers to voting than higher SES youth (CIRCLE, 2018). Although indicators of youth SES are multifaceted and include parent education, income, material hardship, occupation, and subjective social status (Diemer, Mistry, Wadsworth, López, & Reimers, 2013), parent education has long been considered a highly relevant marker of SES. More educated parents tend to create political environments for

their children, model civic actions, and provide more resource-rich settings for growth and learning (Lechner, Pavlova, Sortheix, Silbereisen, & Salmela-Aro, 2018; Pacheco, 2008; Schlozman et al., 2012). Moreover, one's own educational attainment is strongly related to higher civic participation in adulthood (Campbell, 2009; CIRCLE, 2011; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996), and this effect is partly attributed to social class. Although we recognize the importance of multiple SES indicators (Diemer et al., 2013), our study is limited to parent education.

Surprisingly few studies have examined whether civic trajectories vary by SES. Our prior work examining community service from ages 18 to 26 using MTF data found that parent education predicted higher community service at age 18, but not the slopes; thus, this parent education difference remained steady across the TTA (Wray-Lake, Schulenberg, et al., 2017). Civic trajectories across the TTA may diverge by SES because of vast differences in institutional opportunities and life circumstances (Finlay et al., 2010). For example, youth from lower SES backgrounds are less likely to attend or graduate from college and more likely to take on work and parenting earlier in life (Maggs, Jager, Patrick, & Schulenberg, 2012; Oesterle, Johnson, & Mortimer, 2004). Adolescents with higher parent education may have more accelerated growth in various types of civic engagement across the TTA.

Gender Differences in Civic Development

Feminist theorists and others argue that girls and women have been and continue to be excluded from political participation, through both cultural norms and socialization (Walker, 2000). Gendered developmental contexts are thought to socialize girls to be helpers and boys to be leaders (Cicognani, Zani, Fournier, Gavray, & Born, 2012). A gender gap in adults' political engagement shows that men report greater political interest, knowledge, and participation than women (Burns, 2007; Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001; Conway, 2000; Jenkins, 2005). Adolescent girls tend to engage in more prosocial helping than boys (Metzger & Smetana, 2009), and community service is higher among girls compared with boys across White, Black, Latinx, and Asian racial/ethnic groups (Dávila & Mora, 2007). Despite the widely held notion that men are political and women are helpers, some studies find few or mixed gender differences in civic engagement (Cicognani et al., 2012; Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Hooghe & Stolle, 2004; Jenkins, 2005; Torney-Purta, 2002). A study of U.S. eighth graders found that girls expressed preference for community service and electoral participation, whereas boys expressed preference for political party membership, leadership, and more radical forms of civic participation (Hooghe & Stolle, 2004). International research has similarly shown that women were more likely to vote and men were more likely to engage in collective political action (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010). U.S. women are registered to vote at higher rates than men in every racial/ethnic group (Ansolabehere & Hersh, 2013). Prior research has been mostly cross-sectional and not specific to the TTA. Two longitudinal studies found no gender differences in adolescents' civic trajectories (Quintelier, 2015; Zaff et al., 2011). However, Wray-Lake, Schulenberg, et al. (2017) found that girls had higher community service in high school, reported lower levels than boys through the early 20s, and ended with similar levels by age 26. We build on extant literature by examining whether gender predicts age-related change in community service, political interest, electoral participation, and political voice from ages 18 to 30.

Interactions Among Sociodemographic Factors

Obviously, youth do not experience racial/ethnic, SES, and gender identities in isolation. An intersectionality approach calls for examining the meaning and significance of overlapping identities for human experiences (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991). Civic disadvantages may compound for youth who hold multiple marginalized identities, such as youth of color with less educated parents (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002). However, intersectionality theorists caution against simple assumptions of cumulative disadvantage across multiple marginalized identities (Cole, 2009). Some U.S. data suggest that lower SES Black adults vote at higher rates than lower SES White adults (Anoll, 2018). Perhaps youth of color with less educated parents become more civically engaged to address inequalities they experience (Hope & Spencer, 2017).

Ideas about intersectionality originated from Black feminists articulating their experiences of sexism and racism (Cole, 2009), and navigating these two oppressive forces in combination could increase empowerment and help young women of color resist oppression through civic action (Ginwright, 2010; Gordon & Taft, 2011). Some studies find that Black and Latinx women participate in politics at higher rates than White women (e.g., Cole & Stewart, 1996). In examining voter registration and turnout, Lien (1998) found no gender gaps for Latinx and Asian groups, but gender gaps favoring men emerged for other groups. Brown (2014) found that higher SES White and Asian women participated in more nontraditional political behavior than their lower SES counterparts. A cross-sectional study of national voting records suggested that women of color, particularly Black and Latinx women, had accelerated rates of voting with age compared with their male counterparts in young adulthood (Ansolabehere & Hersh, 2013). Although one clear pattern is not evident, existing work points to the importance of examining gender and race intersections in relation to civic engagement.

Our study examines whether variations in trajectories of civic engagement across the TTA emerge from Parent Education × Race/Ethnicity, Gender × Race/Ethnicity, Gender × Parent Education, and their three-way interaction. We offer no a priori predictions given the general lack of available literature, but we use a large national dataset that is adequately powered to test these interactions, making our study uniquely positioned to investigate these patterns.

Current Study

This study documents age-related change and sociodemographic differences in trajectories across the TTA for four types of civic engagement. Using national U.S. Monitoring the Future (MTF) data spanning ages 18 to 30, this study can add clarity to competing ideas about increases, decreases, and nonlinear change in civic engagement and spur further thinking about experiences that prompt racial/ethnic, parent education, and gender differences in civic development. Extant evidence on sociodemographic differences comes largely from cross-sectional estimates of main effects. By exploring main effects and interactions of sociodemographics in relation to civic trajectories, we contribute new insights about

civic development across the TTA. However, the groups we studied are not monolithic and vary in important ways that we cannot capture.

We used latent growth curve models. Slopes denote the rate of change over time, illustrating the shape, direction, and strength of age-related change. Sociodemographic differences in slopes denote variation in the course of development. Intercepts indicate average levels of civic engagement when youth were 18 and high school seniors. Sociodemographic differences in intercepts connote level differences evident in adolescence. When there are no sociodemographic differences in slopes, sociodemographic differences in intercepts convey variation that persists across the TTA.

Method

Participants

Data come from MTF, an ongoing national multicohort, multiwave longitudinal study initiated in 1975 to study substance use and general beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of U.S. youth (Miech et al., 2019; Schulenberg et al., 2019). MTF uses multistage random sampling to secure an annual sample of around 15,000 high school seniors from 130 public and private schools in the coterminous U.S. Approximately 2,450 students are selected from each annual 12th grade sample (modal age 18) for longitudinal follow-up. Biennial follow-ups begin 1 year after 12th grade (modal age 19) for a random half of the sample, and 2 years after 12th grade for the other half (modal age 20). Follow-ups span six time points: modal ages 19/20, 21/22, 23/24, 25/26, 27/28, and 29/30. Our sample consisted of youth from 28 cohorts (i.e., high school graduating classes) from 1976–2003 who completed from 0 to 6 biennial follow-ups through age 30 (N = 12,557). See Table 1 for sample demographics. A University of Michigan Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the original study, and this secondary analysis received expedited approval by the University of California, Los Angeles (IRB #16–001324; study title, "Secondary Analysis of Monitoring the Future Data").

Across cohorts, 50–75% of recruited 12th graders completed the first follow-up and 46–54% participated to age 30. In total, 15% completed the first wave only, and others completed one (9%), two (7%), three (6%), four (9%), five (18%), or all six follow-ups (35%; seven waves total). T tests and Cohen's d effect sizes indicated that those missing data on civic engagement variables at the second and last waves were more likely to be male, Black or Latinx, and have lower self-reported grades on average (Online Supplemental Materials Table S1).

Given these attrition analyses, data at least partially met the assumption of missing at random (MAR). To account for MAR missing data, we modeled predictors of missingness using a Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) approach with auxiliary variables as saturated correlates (Graham, 2003). See Online Supplemental Materials Table S2 for the 15 auxiliary variables, chosen based on correlations with civic engagement, correlations with demographics that predicted missingness, correlations with missingness on civic engagement, or correlations with missingness on other MTF variables (e.g., Schulenberg et al., 2016). In unconditional models, race/ethnicity, parent education, and gender were used as auxiliary variables along with other selected variables. FIML with auxiliary variables reduces attrition bias and increases power by fully using participants' data (Collins, Schafer, & Kam, 2001; Enders, 2010). FIML estimation depends on the quality and comprehensiveness of auxiliary variables, and our list is not exhaustive, but it is important to limit the number of auxiliary variables to minimize computational complexity. Thus, we carefully chose 15 available variables that best represented reasons for missingness.

Table 1
Sample Demographics

Race/ethnicity	Percentages/means
Black	11.0%
Asian	2.3%
Latinx	7.0%
Other	4.3%
White	75.4%
Female	51.0%
Parent education (1–6)	M = 3.67 (SD = 1.18)
High school grades (1–9)	M = 5.78 (SD = 1.99)

Note. N = 12,557; ranges in parentheses for continuous variables.

Measures

Means and longitudinal correlations for each type of civic engagement are reported in Online Supplemental Materials Tables S3–S6.

Community service was measured by one item. "How often do you participate in community affairs or volunteer work?" on the scale, 1 = *never*, 2 = *a few times a year*, 3 = *once or twice a month*, 4 = *at least once a week*, 5 = *almost every day*. Political Interest was also measured by one item: "Some people think about what's going on in the government very often, and others are not that interested. How much of an interest do you take in government and current events?" on the scale, 1 = *no interest at all*, 2 = *very little interest*, 3 = *some interest*, 4 = *a lot of interest*, and 5 = *a very great interest*. Single item measurement of volunteering or community service and political interest is common in large sample studies (Putnam, 2000; Russo & Stattin, 2017; Wray-Lake, Metzger, et al., 2017), whereas multiitem measures are more common for other types of civic engagement. Community service and political interest were treated as continuous, as they are on Likert-type scales and approximated a normal distribution.[1]

Political behaviors were assessed with six items measuring behavioral intentions and actual behavior on a 4-point scale: 1 = *I probably will not do this*, 2 = *I do not know*, 3 = *I probably will do this*, and 4 = *I have already done this.* Data were recoded such that a '4' was carried forward to later waves, so that once a person said they participated in a behavior, they were considered as having participated thereafter. This strategy was used because of the lack of survey prompt providing a time frame on which to

[1] We ran additional growth models (available upon request) treating these variables as ordered categorical; parameter estimates were similar to continuous variable models to multiple decimal places and fit was the same. Treating these variables as categorical would not have allowed us to estimate intercepts of growth models or use the FIML with auxiliary variables approach.

report behavior and has been used previously (Wray-Lake, Arruda, & Hopkins, 2019). Recoding offers a more conservative and precise interpretation of the data over time.

Political behavior items have been combined in different ways and given various names in past research, in part because specific political behaviors may load onto more than one factor (Campbell, 2009). We conducted factor analyses to determine the best-fitting solution. A two-level ordinal EFA with Quartimax oblique rotation, estimated in M*plus*, supported a two-factor solution (root mean square residual, RMSR = .03; Tucker-Lewis index, TLI = .96; root mean square error of approximation, RMSEA = .037; 90% confidence interval, CI [.034, .040]). Three items—"vote in a public election" ($\hat{\lambda}$ = .45), "give money to a political candidate or cause" ($\hat{\lambda}$ = .81), and "work in a political campaign" ($\hat{\lambda}$ .78)—loaded onto electoral participation. The other three items—"write to public officials" ($\hat{\lambda}$ = .32), "participate in a lawful demonstration" ($\hat{\lambda}$ = .55), and "boycott certain products or stores" ($\hat{\lambda}$ = .92)—loaded onto political voice, a label used in prior studies (Lopez et al., 2006). Two composites were formed (r = .46).

We conducted measurement invariance tests of this two-factor model using multigroup analysis in M*plus* to determine if measures were invariant across racial/ethnic (Black, Latinx, Asian, White, and Other) and gender (male, female) at baseline (see Online Supplemental Materials S8 for details). Metric and scalar invariance was achieved for gender, and partial scalar variable was achieved for race/ethnicity after freeing one intercept. These analyses gave us confidence that electoral participation and political voice were reasonably equivalent across race/ethnicity and gender. Parent education was not examined as a multigroup factor given its continuous nature.

Sociodemographics came from age 18. Race/ethnicity was dummy-coded into Black, Latinx, Asian, White, and Other. Parent education was the only available SES indicator and youth are relatively accurate in their reports (Diemer et al., 2013). Parent education ranged from 1 = *grade school education* to 6 = *graduate level education*. Parent education was averaged across mother and father education when both were available. Gender was available only as binary and coded *female* = 1 and *male* = 0.

High school grades were included as a control; academic grades and civic engagement have been positively linked (Dávila & Mora, 2007), and including this variable eliminates a potential confound associated with racial/ethnic, parent education, or gender differences (Levinson, 2012). High school grades were self-reported by an average plus or minus letter grade across the school year, ranging from A (93 to 100%) to D or below (69% or less). This variable was treated as continuous (ranging from 1 to 9), with greater values indicating higher grades. Given that data span high school cohorts from 1976 to 2003, cohort was included as a covariate. It was beyond this article's scope to consider cohort substantively and, thus, we chose a parsimonious approach to including cohort as a linear, continuous covariate.

Analytic Approach

Analyses were conducted separately for each type of civic engagement. Growth curve models were analyzed using M*plus* v.7 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) and FIML with auxiliary variables. Intercepts were estimated at age 18. First, in estimating unconditional models, we compared linear, quadratic, cubic, and piecewise models for each type of civic engagement. Piecewise models allow for differing growth rates and variance estimates for distinct developmental periods. Knots for piecewise models were estimated at 22, 24, and 26. After best-fitting models were identified, race/ethnicity, parent education, gender, and all two- and three-way interactions were included as predictors of intercepts and slopes.[2] Parent education was centered at the sample average for interpreting interactions. For associations involving race/ethnicity, models were estimated with every group as the referent group to examine all possible racial/ethnic differences. The "Other" race/ethnicity category was included but not discussed because of lack of interpretability. Effect size metrics include Cohen's *d*s for categorical predictors and standardized parameter estimates (γ) for continuous predictors.

Results

Moderate bivariate correlations at age 18 were found among types of political engagement ($r_{PI,PV}$ = .38; $r_{PI,EP}$ = .36; $r_{PV,EP}$ = .47), with weaker associations between community service and political engagement ($r_{CS,PI}$ = .17; $r_{CS,PV}$ = .20; $r_{CS,EP}$ = .20). Patterns were consistent across waves.

Unconditional Model Comparisons

Examining descriptives showed that sample averages were monotonic across time. Linear models provided acceptable fit. Quadratic trends converged when rescaled, but evidenced overfit, as highest-order estimates were essentially zero across all types of civic engagement. Cubic models either failed to converge or converged after using start values and rescaling but yielded collinear or impossible estimates. Comparing linear and various piecewise models, the piecewise model with a knot at age 24 was best-fitting for all types of civic engagement, given lowest AIC/BIC values, highest TLI, and smallest RMSEA (Online Supplemental Materials Table S7).

Final Unconditional Models

Model fit results revealed excellent unconditional model fit for piecewise models for each type of civic engagement (see bolded rows in Table 2). Additional model comparisons showed that slope variances and covariances should be estimated, as models constraining these parameters to zero resulted in worsened fit. See Online Supplemental Materials S9 for these covariances. Model tests also constrained Slope 1 and Slope 2 to equality, which resulted in worsened fit in all four models. That is, slopes for 18–24 years significantly differed from slopes for 24–30 years.

[2] Our decision to test two- and three-way interactions within growth curve models was reached after ruling out a multiple group modeling approach. We estimated latent growth models separately for each racial/ethnic and gender group and found that the same best-fitting model across specific groups (analyses available upon request). Thus, the overall shape of the curves did not differ across groups. Testing interaction terms was also favored for model parsimony (a multigroup approach would have required 16 groups to test interactions: 4 Racial/Ethnic Groups × 2 Gender Groups × 2 Parent Education Groups), to preserve parent education as continuous, to allow inclusion of cases with missing data on sociodemographics, and to facilitate reporting of effect sizes for interactions.

Table 2
Unconditional Models and Model Comparisons for Tests of Growth Parameters

Model	AIC	BIC	TLI/CFI	RMSEA	90% CI	χ^2	*df*	*p*	χ^2 change	*df* change	*p*
Community service	**734,473**	**738,497**	**.99/.99**	**.029**	**[.025, .032]**	**215.23**	**19**	**<.001**	—		
Constrain S1 Var/Cov @0	735,019	739,020	.94/.95	.052	[.049, .055]	766.64	22	<.001	551.41	3	<.001
Constrain S2 Var/Cov @0	734,946	738,947	.95/.96	.049	[.046, .052]	693.92	22	<.001	478.69	3	<.001
Constrain S1 and S2 Equal	734,721	738,737	.97/.97	.042	[.039, .045]	464.98	20	<.001	249.75	1	<.001
Political interest	**729,280**	**733,304**	**.99/.99**	**.022**	**[.018, .025]**	**129.99**	**19**	**<.001**	—		
Constrain S1 Var/Cov @0	730,014	734,016	.96/.97	.055	[.052, .059]	869.83	22	<.001	739.84	3	<.001
Constrain S2 Var/Cov @0	729,646	733,648	.98/.98	.042	[.039, .045]	501.61	22	<.001	371.62	3	<.001
Constrain S1 and S2 Equal	729,376	733,393	.99/.99	.029	[.025, .032]	227.71	20	<.001	97.72	1	<.001
Electoral participation	**667,266**	**671,290**	**.99/.99**	**.054**	**[.050, .057]**	**703.66**	**19**	**<.001**	—		
Constrain S1 Var/Cov @0	673,332	677,333	.86/88	.156	[.153, .159]	6775.00	22	<.001	6071.34	3	<.001
Constrain S2 Var/Cov @0	669,143	673,144	.95/.95	.096	[.153, .159]	1586.08	22	<.001	882.42	3	<.001
Constrain S1 and S2 Equal	668,540	671,557	.98/.98	.062	[.059, .065]	979.37	20	<.001	275.71	1	<.001
Political voice	**683,609**	**687,633**	**.99/.99**	**.051**	**[.047, .054]**	**632.37**	**19**	**<.001**	—		
Constrain S1 Var/Cov @0	688,566	692,568	.90/.91	.142	[.139, .145]	5594.97	22	<.001	4962.60	3	<.001
Constrain S2 Var/Cov @0	685,432	689,433	.95/.95	.094	[.091, .097]	2460.75	22	<.001	1828.38	3	<.001
Constrain S1 and S2 Equal	683,659	687,675	.98/.98	.051	[.048, .055]	683.84	20	<.001	51.47	1	<.001

Note. N = 12,557 for all models. AIC = Akaike information criteria; BIC = Bayesian information criteria; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval; Var = variance; Cov = covariance; S1 = Slope 1, the first piecewise slope from ages 18–24; S2 = Slope 2, the second piecewise slope from ages 24–30. Bolded values display unconditional model fit before any constraints were applied.

Parameter estimates are summarized for each type of civic engagement in Table 3.

The community service intercept indicated that overall, 18-year olds reported modest community service, a few times per year (b = 2.03, SE = .008, p < .001). Slope 1 indicated an average linear decline in community service across 18–24 (b = −.041, SE = .002, p < .001). A positive Slope 2 reflected community service increased slightly on average across 24–30 (b = 0.01, SE = .002, p < .001).

The political interest intercept reflected some interest at 18 (b = 3.08, SE = .008, p < .001). Slope 1 reflected positive, linear growth on average across 18–24 (b = .031, SE = .002, p < .001) and nonsignificant change from 24–30 (b = .002, SE = .002, p > .05). In other words, political interest increased steadily from18 to 24, on average, and then flattened thereafter.

Electoral participation and political voice intercepts indicated fairly low intentions at age 18, on average (bs = 2.13/2.03; SEs = .005/.006, ps < .001). Both initial slopes indicated positive, linear increases over time from 18–24 (bs = .059/.051; SEs = .001/.001; ps < .001) and more gradual increase from 24–30 (bs = .030/.037; SEs = .001/.001; ps < .001). Given the response scale, trajectories represent increasing propensity to enact these political behaviors over time.

Regarding the magnitude of slopes, significant slope estimates ranged from .030 to .059, which are small increments on 5- or 4-point scales, and reflect an average amount of annual change. Growth rates double from one wave to the next, as waves are spaced 2 years apart.

Conditional Models

Full models were next tested with parent education, gender, race/ethnicity, and their interactions, as well as controls of high school grades and cohort, as predictors of growth parameters. The three-way interaction was not significant, with estimates near zero across models, and was subsequently dropped. Nonsignificant two-way interactions were also subsequently dropped after confirming this decision with model comparison tests. For community service, all two-way interactions were retained. For political interest and electoral participation, the Gender × Parent Education interaction was dropped. For political voice, the Gender × Race/Ethnicity interaction was dropped. Final conditional model fit was excellent (see Table 4). Full conditional model results are shown in Table 5.

Race/ethnicity differences in intercepts and slopes. Main effects of race/ethnicity on intercepts and slopes are described first. Some racial/ethnic differences are qualified by interactions, described later. All comparisons of race/ethnicity on intercepts and slopes were conducted by varying the referent group (see Table 6).

Regarding racial/ethnic differences in community service, on average, Black youth reported higher community service at 18 than White (d = .21) and Latinx (d = .23) youth (Figure 1a; Table 6, column 1). Asian and White youth declined in community service on average from 18 to 24, yet Black and Latinx showed no change (Table 6, column 3). White youth declined faster than Latinx youth from 18 to 24 (d = .15). From 24 to 30 (Slope 2), White youth increased on average, whereas Slope 2 estimates for other groups did not differ from zero (Table 6, column 5). White youth increased more than Latinx youth on average from 24 to 30 (d = .19).

Regarding racial/ethnic differences in political interest, White youth reported higher political interest at age 18 on average than Asian (d = .15) and Black youth (d = .15; Figure 1b; Table 6 column 1). Youth across all groups increased in political interest from 18 to 24 (Table 6, column 1). Black and Latinx youth accelerated faster in political interest than White youth on average across these years (ds = .27, .15). Slope 2 parameter estimates indicated that growth in political interest slowed across groups on average, with no differences between groups.

Regarding electoral participation, Black youth had higher levels than Latinx youth at age 18 on average (d = .14). Youth across

Table 3
Unconditional Growth Models for Each Type of Civic Engagement

Parameter	Community service	95% CI	Political interest	95% CI	Electoral participation	95% CI	Political voice	95% CI
Intercept mean	2.03***	[2.01, 2.05]	3.08***	[3.06, 3.10]	2.13***	[2.12, 2.14]	2.03***	[2.02, 2.04]
Slope 1 mean	−0.041***	[−0.045, −0.038]	.031***	[0.028, 0.034]	0.059***	[0.057, 0.061]	0.051***	[0.049, 0.054]
Slope 2 mean	0.010***	[0.006, 0.014]	.002	[−0.002, 0.006]	0.030***	[0.028, 0.032]	0.037***	[0.035, 0.040]
Intercept variance	0.419***	[0.395, 0.443]	.538***	[0.514, 0.562]	0.212***	[0.205, 0.220]	0.352***	[0.340, 0.360]
Slope 1 variance	0.010***	[0.009, 0.011]	.010***	[0.009, 0.011]	0.007***	[0.007, 0.008]	0.009***	[0.008, 0.009]
Slope 2 variance	0.010***	[0.009, 0.011]	.007***	[0.006, 0.008]	0.005***	[0.004, 0.006]	0.006***	[0.005, 0.006]
Int-Slope 1 Cov	−0.027***	[−0.032, −0.023]	−.025***	[−0.029, −0.021]	0.004***	[0.002, 0.006]	0.002*	[0.001, 0.003]
Int-Slope 2 Cov	−0.007***	[−0.011, −0.004]	−.005**	[−0.008, −0.002]	−0.005***	[−0.006, −0.004]	−0.005***	[−0.007, −0.004]
Slope 1-Slope 2 Cov	−0.003***	[−0.004, −0.002]	−.002***	[−0.003, −0.001]	−0.001***	[−0.001, −0.001]	−0.001***	[−0.001, −0.001]

Note. CI = confidence interval; Cov = covariance; *ns* = nonsignificant. Parameterized so that the intercept is at the first wave. Standard errors are in parentheses.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

racial/ethnic groups increased from ages 18 to 24, but Black youth increased at a faster rate than White ($d = .25$), Asian ($d = .31$), and Latinx ($d = .25$) youth on average (Figure 1c; Table 6, column 3). Across groups, growth in electoral participation slowed across ages 24 to 30 on average, with no group differences in this pattern.

No racial/ethnic differences emerged for age 18 political voice at average levels of parent education (Table 6, column 1) or in growth in political voice from ages 18 to 24 (Figure 1d). Youth in all racial/ethnic groups showed slower growth in political voice from ages 24 to 30 on average; yet, Latinx adults had slower growth on average than White adults ($d = .14$).

Parent education effects on intercepts and slopes. The association of parent education with all types of civic engagement at age 18 (i.e., intercepts) depended on race/ethnicity, as indicated by Parent Education × Race/Ethnicity interactions, which are described in the next section.

Parent education was not related to change from 18 to 24 or 24 to 30 for community service or political interest. Higher parent education was related to greater growth in electoral participation from 18 to 24 on average, but not from 24 to 30. Regarding political voice, higher parent education was related to greater growth in political voice on average from 18 to 24. From ages 24 to 30, parent education was not related to change in political voice.

Parent Education × Race/Ethnicity interactions. Interaction results are presented in Table 6 column 2 and Figure 2a–d and effect sizes are shown in Online Supplemental Materials Table S10. Regarding community service, parent education was positively related to age 18 community service, on average, for White ($\gamma = .11$) and Black youth ($\gamma = .10$), but not for Asian or Latinx youth (γs = .01, .03; Figure 2a). Regarding political interest, higher parent education was associated with higher age 18 political interest for White ($\gamma = .16$) and Black ($\gamma = .10$) youth on average, but not Asian or Latinx youth (γs = .12, 04; Figure 2b). Regarding electoral participation, higher parent education was associated with higher age 18 electoral participation for White ($\gamma = .23$) and Asian ($\gamma = .14$) youth on average, but not for Latinx or Black youth (γs = .05, .05; Figure 2c). Regarding political voice, parent education was positively associated with age 18 political voice on average for White ($\gamma = .19$), and Black ($\gamma = .13$) youth, but not Asian or Latinx youth (γs = .07, .09; Figure 2d).

One Parent Education × Race/Ethnicity interaction on slopes emerged, showing differences between Black and White youth on political voice Slope 2. However, the interaction was not substantively meaningful because associations between parent education and political voice slopes from 24 to 30 were not significant for either group.

Gender differences in intercepts and slopes. Table 5 and Figure 3a–d show gender findings. Starting with intercepts, women had higher community service ($d = .12$), lower political interest ($d = .35$), and lower political voice ($d = .13$) than men at age 18, on average, yet similar levels of electoral participation ($d = .00$). Regarding gender differences in trajectories, Figure 3a shows that women decreased in community service at a faster rate than men on average from ages 18 to 24 ($d = .13$).

Gender × Parent Education interactions. Parent Education × Gender interactions showed that the positive links from parent education to age 18 community service and political voice were stronger for young women than young men on average (see Figures 4 and 5). From ages 24 to 30, men and women increased

Table 4
Model Fit for Conditional Civic Engagement Models

Model	*N*	AIC	BIC	TLI/CFI	RMSEA	90% CI	χ^2	*df*	*p*
Community service	12,557	733,972	740,681	.99/.99	.015	[.013, .016]	317.07	87	<.001
Political interest	12,557	708,000	714,411	.99/.99	.014	[.012, .015]	278.66	83	<.001
Electoral participation	12,557	645,680	652,091	.98/.99	.026	[.024, .027]	763.23	83	<.001
Political voice	12,557	762,034	767,597	.98/.99	.026	[.024, .028]	682.62	71	<.001

Note. AIC = Akaike information criteria; BIC = Bayesian information criteria; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval.

in community service, with young women increasing faster than men on average (d = .10). Political interest trajectories showed no gender differences (Figure 3b). Regarding electoral participation, women increased more slowly than men from ages 18–24 and 24–30 on average (ds = .09, .08; Figure 3c). Political voice trajectories showed no gender differences overall (Figure 3d).

Gender × Race/Ethnicity interactions. Regarding community service, as noted above, young women decreased faster in community than young men from 18 to 24 on average, and a Gender × Race/Ethnicity interaction showed this gender difference was greater for Latinx youth (d = .43). As shown in Figure 6, Latinx women declined more than Latinx men in community service from 18 to 24, before recovering to similar rates by age 30, and Latinx women had greater declines in community service than women from other racial/ethnic groups. Although men had higher political interest at age 18 than women on average, a Gender × Race/Ethnicity interaction showed this difference was smaller for Black youth compared with other racial/ethnic groups, on average (see Figure 7). Regarding electoral participation, women increased more slowly than men on average, and a Gender × Race/Ethnicity interaction showed that Black women increased more in electoral participation from 24–30 than women from other racial/ethnic groups, making Black women's trajectories similar to Black men's, although the effect size was small (d = .02; see Figure 8).

Gender × Parent Education interactions. Although no gender differences in political voice trajectories emerged overall (Figure 3d), a Gender × Parent Education interaction showed that the positive association of parent education with growth in political voice from 18 to 24 was stronger for young women (γ = .20) than for young men (γ = .16), on average.

Discussion

Our study set out to examine trajectories in four types of civic engagement and sociodemographic variation in those trajectories across the TTA. We demonstrated that political interest, electoral participation, and political voice increased from ages 18 to 30 on average, with less rapid increases from 24 to 30, whereas community service declined from 18 to 24 and modestly increased from 24 to 30, on average. Civic engagement starting points and (to some extent) slopes varied by race/ethnicity, parent education, and gender, and their interactions. Notably, Black youth started and remained highest in community service on average and showed the most accelerated growth in political interest and electoral engagement. Young women reported higher community service and lower political interest and voice than young men at age 18, on average, and showed different trajectories of community service and electoral participation. Parent education more strongly and positively related to age 18 civic engagement for White youth compared with other groups, on average, and was more strongly associated with higher age 18 community service and growth in political voice from 18–24 for women compared with men. Black young women had higher age 18 political interest and more accelerated growth in electoral participation from ages 24–30 compared with other women. Latinx women declined more in community service from ages 18 to 24 than other women, on average.

The overall trajectories of civic engagement offer some clarity regarding theoretical arguments about the course of civic engagement during the TTA. Sociodemographic main effects and interactions contribute new information about variability in civic development. Although our study was necessarily limited to broad sociodemographic categories, results can inform more in-depth research on civic development experiences of particular groups that draws on intersectionality. Below, we discuss theoretical implications of our overall trajectory findings, and suggest explanations for sociodemographic variation in trajectories.

Civic Trajectories During the TTA

By examining age-related change in four types of civic engagement from ages 18 to 30, we filled several major gaps in the literature. Specifically, we contribute evidence from a national U.S. sample to a body of work that largely comes from Western Europe, we included multiple types of civic engagement to add nuanced insight into civic development, and we demonstrated important variability in civic trajectories across sociodemographic groups. Race/ethnicity, parent education, gender, or their interactions were highly predictive of age 18 levels of civic engagement, yet sociodemographic variations in slopes were more modest. Thus, overall trajectory findings—showing increases in political interest, electoral participation, and political voice and decline then recovery in community service—may generally reflect the experiences of youth across these sociodemographic groups, on average. Although relatively small, the overall amount of change in these types of civic engagement accumulates over years and represents meaningful, incremental developmental change. Results support the view that specific types of civic engagement develop differently (Metzger & Smetana, 2009), and add clarity to competing ideas about how civic engagement changes across the TTA.

The political life cycle model anticipates increases in civic engagement across adulthood as individuals become more mature, responsible, and connected to communities and institutions (Kinder, 2006). This theory originates from political science, and

Table 5
Conditional Growth Models for Civic Engagement

Parameter	Community service	Political interest	Electoral participation	Political voice
Intercept	1.87 (.018)***	3.42 (.018)***	2.26 (.011)***	2.15 (.013)***
Slope 1	−0.034 (.004)***	0.024 (.004)***	0.075 (.002)***	0.054 (.003)***
Slope 2	0.014 (.004)**	0.013 (.004)***	0.038 (.002)***	0.051 (.002)***
Intercept on covariates				
Gender (1 = female)	0.120 (.018)***	−0.341 (.018)***	0.000 (.011), *ns*	−0.088 (.012)***
Race (Ref = White)[a]				
Asian	0.014 (.078), *ns*	−0.154 (.078)*	−0.060 (.046), *ns*	−0.021 (.042), *ns*
Black	0.216 (.039)***	−0.104 (.039)**	0.020 (.023), *ns*	0.014 (.020), *ns*
Latinx	−0.019 (.052), *ns*	−0.066 (.051), *ns*	−0.055 (.030), *ns*	−0.010 (.028), *ns*
Other	0.083 (.057), *ns*	−0.139 (.057)*	−0.014 (.033), *ns*	0.038 (.030), *ns*
Parent education	0.062 (.011)***	0.098 (.008)***	0.089 (.005)***	0.097 (.008)***
Parent Ed × Asian	−0.055 (.044), *ns*	−0.023 (.044), *ns*	−0.032 (.026), *ns*	−0.062 (.033), *ns*
Parent Ed × Black	−0.007 (.025), *ns*	−0.037 (.025), *ns*	−0.072 (.014)***	−0.032 (.018), *ns*
Parent Ed × Latinx	−0.080 (.027)**	−0.071 (.027)**	−0.068 (.015)***	−0.074 (.019)***
Parent Ed × Other	−0.056 (.034), *ns*	0.017 (.034), *ns*	−0.060 (.020)**	−0.062 (.033), *ns*
Female × Asian	−0.045 (.107), *ns*	0.037 (.107), *ns*	0.021 (.063), *ns*	NA
Female × Black	−0.092 (.053), *ns*	0.180 (.053)**	−0.038 (.031), *ns*	NA
Female × Latinx	0.055 (.066), *ns*	0.115 (.064), *ns*	0.032 (.038), *ns*	NA
Female × Other	−0.032 (.079), *ns*	0.221 (.080)**	0.041 (.046), *ns*	NA
Female × Parent Ed	0.050 (.014)***	NA	NA	0.024 (.010)*
High school grades	0.074 (.004)***	0.080 (.004)***	0.035 (.002)***	0.048 (.003)***
Cohort	0.017 (.003)***	−0.039 (.003)***	−0.029 (.002)***	−0.017 (.002)***
Slope 1 on covariates				
Gender (1 = female)	−0.021 (.004)***	−0.007 (.004), *ns*	−0.008 (.002)**	−0.006 (.002)*
Race (Ref = White)[a]				
Asian	−0.015 (.018), *ns*	0.019 (.017), *ns*	−0.006 (.011), *ns*	0.001 (.009), *ns*
Black	0.018 (.010), *ns*	0.043 (.009)***	0.022 (.006)***	−0.001 (.005), *ns*
Latinx	0.025 (.013)*	0.025 (.012)*	0.000 (.008), *ns*	0.004 (.006), *ns*
Other	0.002 (.014), *ns*	0.023 (.013), *ns*	−0.028 (.008)**	−0.014 (.006)*
Parent education	−0.003 (.002), *ns*	0.001 (.002), *ns*	0.010 (.001)***	0.008 (.002)***
Parent Ed × Asian	0.006 (.010), *ns*	−0.004 (.009), *ns*	0.001 (.006), *ns*	0.002 (.007), *ns*
Parent Ed × Black	−0.006 (.006), *ns*	0.004 (.006), *ns*	0.002 (.004), *ns*	−0.003 (.004), *ns*
Parent Ed × Latinx	0.009 (.006), *ns*	0.004 (.006), *ns*	0.001 (.006), *ns*	−0.001 (.004), *ns*
Parent Ed × Other	0.004 (.008), *ns*	0.004 (.007), *ns*	−0.005 (.005), *ns*	−0.005 (.005), *ns*
Female × Asian	0.001 (.024), *ns*	−0.015 (.023), *ns*	−0.009 (.015), *ns*	NA
Female × Black	−0.015 (.013), *ns*	−0.037 (.012)**	−0.002 (.008), *ns*	NA
Female × Latinx	−0.050 (.016)**	−0.026 (.015), *ns*	−0.003 (.010), *ns*	NA
Female × Other	0.001 (.018), *ns*	−0.032 (.017), *ns*	0.018 (.011), *ns*	NA
Female × Parent Ed	−0.001 (.018), *ns*	NA	NA	0.004 (.002)*
High school grades	−0.003 (.001)**	−0.004 (.001)***	0.003 (.001)***	0.002 (.001)**
Cohort	0.001 (.001), *ns*	0.002 (.001)**	−0.003 (<.001)***	0.000 (<.001), *ns*
Slope 2 on covariates				
Gender (1 = female)	0.017 (.004)***	−0.002 (.004), ns	−0.007 (.002)**	0.000 (.002), *ns*
Race (Ref = White)[1]				
Asian	0.014 (.019), *ns*	−0.028 (.017), *ns*	0.000 (.010), *ns*	−0.013 (.008), *ns*
Black	−0.011 (.012), *ns*	−0.005 (.011), *ns*	−0.012 (.006), *ns*	−0.004 (.004), *ns*
Latinx	−0.031 (.015)*	−0.021 (.005), *ns*	−0.007 (.008), *ns*	−0.017 (.006)**
Other	−0.005 (.015), *ns*	−0.032 (.014)*	−0.007 (.008), *ns*	−0.009 (.006), *ns*
Parent education	−0.001 (.003), *ns*	0.002 (.002), *ns*	0.000 (.001), *ns*	−0.002 (.002), *ns*
Parent Ed × Asian	−0.002 (.010), *ns*	0.011 (.009), *ns*	−0.001 (.006), *ns*	−0.004 (.006), *ns*
Parent Ed × Black	0.001 (.007), *ns*	0.000 (.006), *ns*	0.003 (.004), *ns*	0.009 (.004)*
Parent Ed × Latinx	0.004 (.007), *ns*	0.004 (.007), *ns*	−0.001 (.004), *ns*	0.001 (.004), *ns*
Parent Ed × Other	0.000 (.009), *ns*	−0.005 (.008), *ns*	0.004 (.005), *ns*	0.009 (.005), *ns*
Female × Asian	−0.021 (.025), *ns*	0.021 (.023), *ns*	−0.013 (.014), *ns*	NA
Female × Black	−0.003 (.015), *ns*	0.014 (.014), *ns*	0.020 (.008)*	NA
Female × Latinx	0.034 (.018), *ns*	0.019 (.016), *ns*	0.004 (.010), *ns*	NA
Female × Other	0.011 (.020), *ns*	0.029 (.019), *ns*	0.014 (.011), *ns*	NA
Female × Parent Ed	−0.006 (.003), *ns*	NA	NA	0.002 (.002)
High school grades	−0.003 (.001)**	−0.001 (.001), *ns*	−0.001 (.001), *ns*	0.000 (.001), *ns*
Cohort	−0.002 (.001)**	−0.002 (.001)**	−0.001 (<.001)*	−0.003 (<.001)***
Variances and covariances				
Intercept variance	0.375 (.012)***	0.477 (.012)***	0.194 (.004)***	0.325 (.006)***
Slope 1 variance	0.010 (.001)***	0.010 (<.001)***	0.007 (<.001)***	0.009 (<.001)***
Slope 2 variance	0.009 (.001)***	0.007 (<.001)***	0.005 (<.001)***	0.006 (<.001)***
Intercept-Slope 1 Cov	−0.026 (.002)***	−0.025 (.002)***	0.002 (.001)*	0.000 (.001), *ns*

(*table continues*)

Table 5 (*continued*)

Parameter	Community service	Political interest	Electoral participation	Political voice
Intercept-Slope 2 Cov	−0.006 (.002)**	−0.006 (.002)***	−0.005 (.001)***	−0.006 (.001)***
Slope 1-Slope 2 Cov	−0.003 (<.001)***	−0.002 (<.001)***	−0.001 (<.001)***	−0.001 (<.001)***

Note. NA = not estimated in model; ns = nonsignificant; Ed = education. Cov = covariance. Parent education and high school grades were centered at the sample average. Reference group for conditional intercepts and slopes is White men of average parent education and high school grades in 1976. Standard errors in parentheses.

[a] For ease of model presentation, we chose the largest racial/ethnic group (White) as the referent group for this table only. Analyses varied the reference group and results describe all possible combinations.

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

likewise, our findings suggest that this idea was most strongly supported for three types of political engagement (political interest, electoral participation, and political voice). In contrast, by declining from 18 to 24, the initial trajectory for community service aligns with the hypothesis that some types of civic engagement take a backseat as youth navigate new social roles and balance competing priorities (Wray-Lake, Schulenberg, et al., 2017). The modest increase in community service across ages 24 to 30 could be because of settling into communities and adult roles, as suggested by the life cycle model (Kinder, 2006), but different psychological and social processes likely underlie distinct trajectories for community service versus political engagement.

Given the dissonant trajectories for community service and political engagement across the TTA, new theorizing is needed that integrates competing theoretical perspectives and explains the coexistence of these opposing patterns. We offer three possible explanations for increasing political engagement and decreasing community engagement across ages 18 to 24. First, a "new challenge" argument suggests that as adolescents transition to adulthood, they have increased autonomy and prioritize the development task of mastering new settings and experiences. Sense of mastery has been shown to increase across ages 19 to 25 (Surjadi, Lorenz, Wickrama, & Conger, 2011). The political domain is often less familiar to youth as they transition out of high school, and thus, political engagement may help youth achieve developmental needs for mastery. In contrast, community service is more common for adolescents than politics. Perhaps community service declines from ages 18 to 24 as youth seek to achieve mastery through new experiences.

A second argument pertains to age-graded opportunity structures for civic engagement. Political engagement opportunities tend to increase at and beyond age 18, because youth are legally allowed to vote, can join political parties and organizations, and may be more financially or autonomously capable of making campaign donations. For youth who attend college, courses and climates can sometimes spark a political awakening, when youth clarify their political views and become passionate about issues (Alwin, Cohen, & Newcomb, 1991). Although political opportunities are limited in adolescence, more opportunities for community service are often available. Extracurricular activities, school

Table 6
Differences in Civic Engagement by Parent Education and Race/Ethnicities

Race/ethnicity	Intercept at 18	Parent Ed → Int at 18	Slope 1 (18–24)	Parent Ed → Slope 1	Slope 2 (24–30)	Parent Ed → Slope 2
CS						
Asian	**1.97**	.007	**−.049**	.002	.028	−.003
Black	**2.08**^{L***W***}	**.057**^{L*}	−.017	−.009	.003	.000
Latinx	**1.85**^{B***}	−.017^{B*W**}	−.009^{L*}	.005	−.018^{W*}	.003
White	**1.87**^{B***}	**.062**^{L**}	**−.034**^{W*}	−.003	**.014**^{L*}	−.001
PI						
Asian	**3.27**^{W*}	.076	**.042**	−.003	−.015	.013
Black	**3.32**^{W**}	**.064**	**.066**^{W***}	.005	.008	.002
Latinx	**3.36**	.027^{W**}	**.049**^{W*}	.006	−.008	.007
White	**3.42**^{A*B**}	**.098**^{L**}	**.024**^{B***L*}	.001	**.013**	.002
EP						
Asian	**2.19**	**.057**	**.069**^{B*}	.011	**.038**	.002
Black	**2.27**^{L*}	.018^{W***}	**.097**^{A*L*W***}	**.013**	**.026**	.002
Latinx	**2.20**^{B*}	.021^{W***}	**.075**^{B*}	**.012**	**.031**	−.001
White	**2.26**	**.089**^{B***L***}	**.075**^{B***}	**.010**	**.038**	.000
PV						
Asian	**2.12**	.035	**.055**	.010	**.039**	−.006
Black	**2.16**	**.066**	**.053**	.006	**.047**	.007^{W*}
Latinx	**2.14**	.024^{W***}	**.057**	.008	**.035**^{W**}	−.003
White	**2.15**	**.097**^{L***}	**.054**	**.008**	**.051**^{L**}	−.002^{B*}

Note. CS = community service; PI = political interest; EP = electoral participation; PV = political voice. Bolded parameter estimates are significantly different than zero, *p*s < .05. Superscripts reflect groups are significantly different from other racial/ethnic groups. A = Asian, B = Black/African American, L = Latinx, W = White, with significance levels; estimates are controlling for covariates. These estimates did not vary by gender, given the nonsignificant three-way Gender × Parent Education × Race/Ethnicity interactions.

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

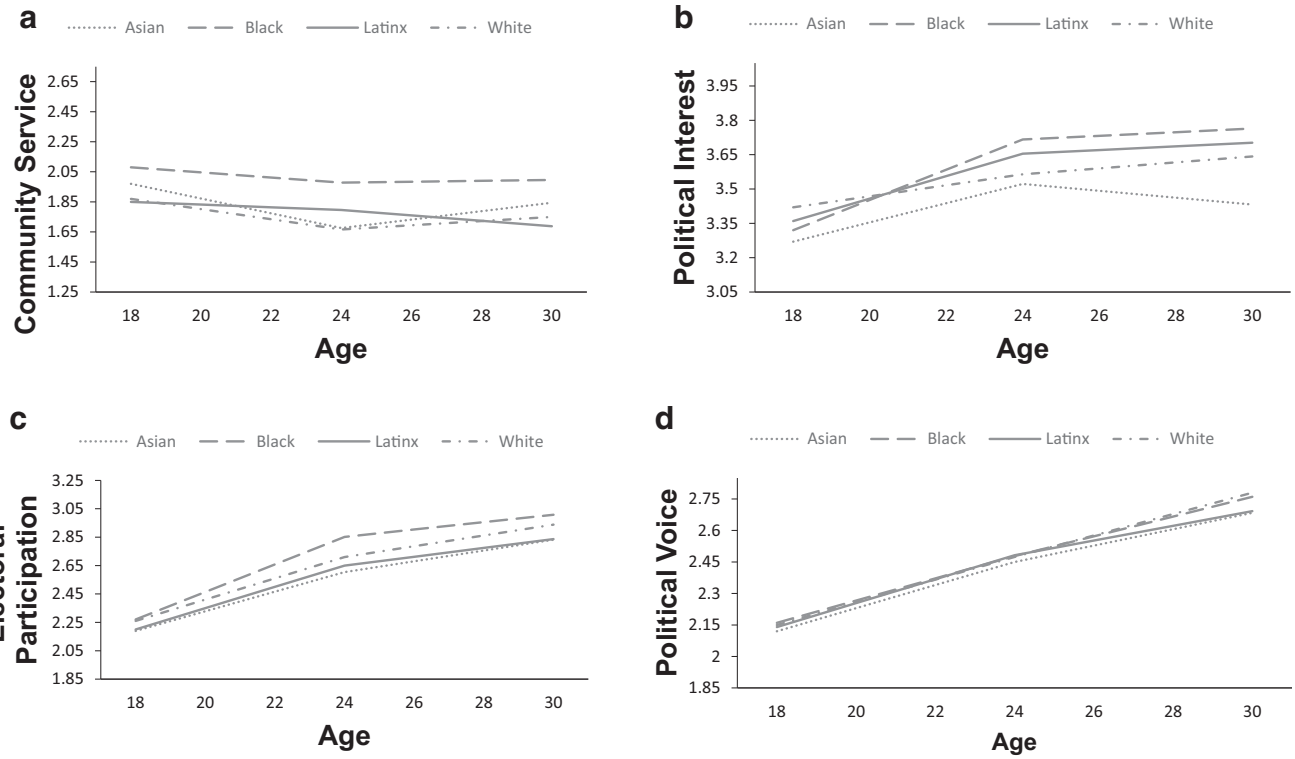

Figure 1. (a–d). Intercept and trajectories across types of civic engagement by race/ethnicity at average parent education.

service requirements, and college admissions expectations for service contribute to a developmental context for many (but certainly not all) adolescents that is conducive to community service (Hart & Youniss, 2017). Community service may be difficult to sustain across the TTA, as youth experience less residential stability and less knowledge or access to opportunities (Finlay et al., 2010). Perhaps youth are drawn to civic activities available in their contexts, and opportunities shift in age-graded ways from community service to political engagement across ages 18 through the mid-20s. Service opportunities may increase again in the late 20s as individuals establish more stable connections to workplaces or communities.

A third idea that cuts across both explanations is that youth may see political engagement as part of what it means to become an adult (Sherrod & Lauckhardt, 2009). Community and societal norms typically assume that political decisions and discourse are relegated to adults, and the TTA may be a time of increasingly adopting new behaviors that characterize adulthood. For some, this transition may temporarily involve moving away from past patterns and contexts common in adolescence, such as community service, in favor of emphasizing political engagement. We hope this work sparks more research that tests these or other explanations to lead to a more integrated understanding of civic development across the TTA. We now turn to discussing variations in civic engagement that emerged between sociodemographic groups.

Civic Trajectories for Black Youth

Civic engagement trajectories were most distinct for Black youth. Black youth started and remained higher than others on community service on average, despite declines for all. Additionally, although starting at similar levels as others on political interest and electoral participation, Black youth ended higher at age 30 on both types of political engagement. Most existing work suggests racial/ethnic disparities in civic engagement favoring White youth, but our findings flip this script. These results are unlikely to be spurious, given that we have a national sample and the pattern aligns with other studies finding Black youth are higher in community service and political engagement than others (CIRCLE, 2014; Lopez et al., 2006). Some argue that Black adults have higher civic engagement than White adults, after controlling for SES (Holbrook, Sterrett, Johnson, & Krysan, 2016). A shared history of oppression, experiences of discrimination, or a sense that one's own fate is tied to the African American community (known as linked fate) may motivate Black youth to prioritize helping their own communities or mobilize political participation (Dawson, 2003; White-Johnson, 2012). Some show that linked fate predicts electoral and political voice participation for Black adults more than for other racial/ethnic minority groups (Brown, 2014; Gay, Hochschild, & White, 2016). Black youth may have many other experiences, such as participation in consciousness-raising church or community organizations, that increase awareness of inequality and commitments to racial and social justice, and could

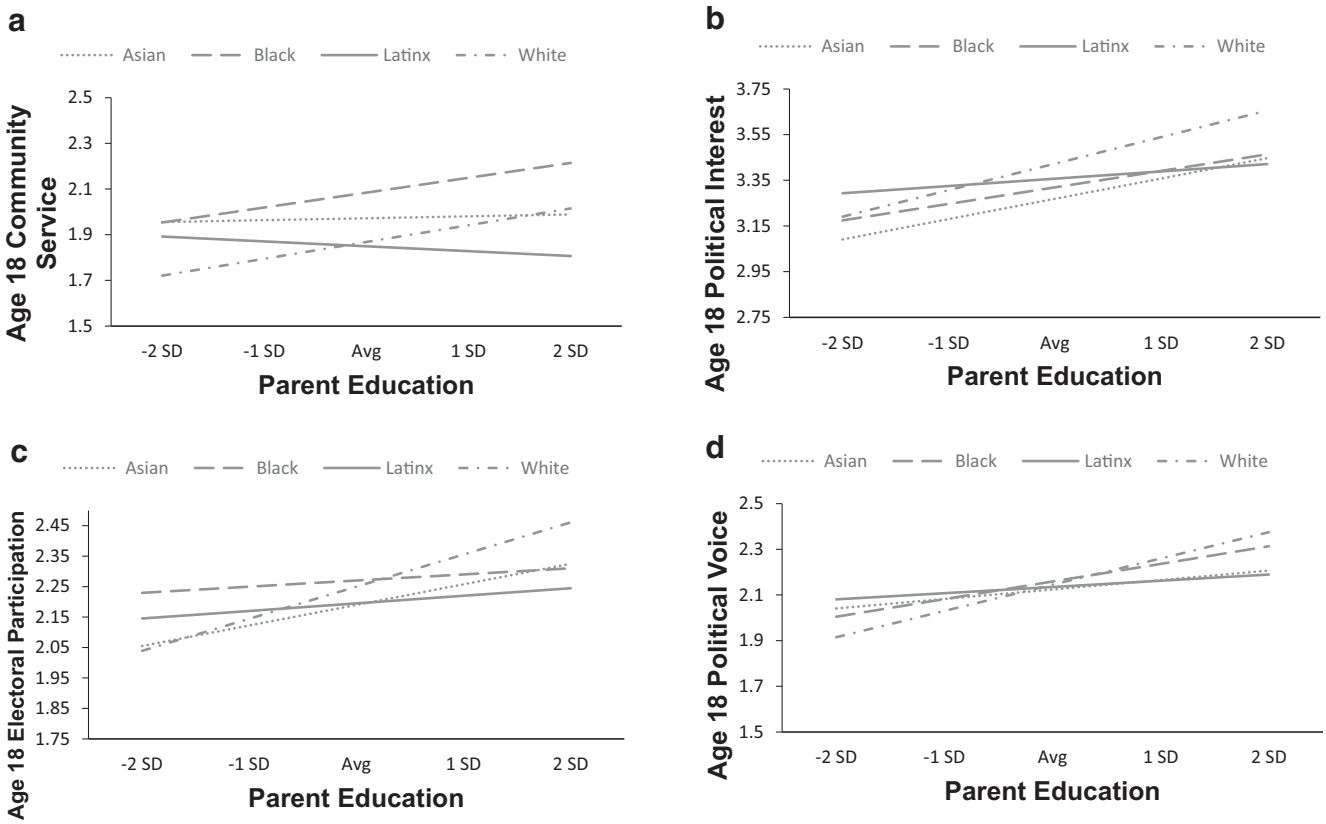

Figure 2. (a–d). Parent Education × Race/Ethnicity interaction predicting age 18 civic engagement controlling for covariates.

enhance political development (Ginwright, 2007; R. Watts & Guessous, 2006), although youth from various backgrounds could also have these experiences. Our findings of Black youth's greater growth in community service, political interest, and electoral participation across the TTA are a call to center Black youth in future research and accumulate more evidence highlighting civic strengths of this group as a whole. Black youth are not a monolithic group and research is needed into how and under what conditions civic engagement increases in diverse samples of Black youth.

We found distinct patterns of civic development for Black young women, who had accelerated growth in electoral participation from ages 24 to 30 and higher age 18 political interest, on average, than other women. Intersectionality is historically rooted in experiences of Black women and Black queer women who harness power through social justice-oriented civic actions to combat intersecting oppressions (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991). Black women's rates of voting across young adulthood increase faster than rates for Black men and other women (Ansolabehere & Hersh, 2013). Qualitative research highlights themes of empowerment among Black adolescent girls, who often are more represented than Black adolescent boys in social movement spaces (Ginwright, 2010). In one study, Black youth explained that Black girls may be more politically active because of gender socialization in families that leads girls to be more optimistic and hopeful about social change (Gordon & Taft, 2011). However, Black families also tend to report heightened parental monitoring and rule expectations for daughters (Varner & Mandara, 2013) in ways that could counter political engagement and voice, and the media often portrays Black girls and young women as loud, angry, and sexualized (Muhammad & McArthur, 2015). Black young women's experiences are undoubtedly multifaceted and deserve concerted attention to better understand their heightened civic development.

Civic Development Among Latinx Young Women

Latinx young women showed steeper declines in community service across ages 18 to 26 than other women. Some show that Latinx women vote more than White women (Ansolabehere & Hersh, 2013), which we did not find. A national study found that Latinx young adults were less civically engaged compared with other racial/ethnic groups (CIRCLE, 2014), yet Gender × Race/Ethnicity interactions may reveal important nuances. Some Latinx young women take on family responsibilities, which may entail centering helping within the family and sacrificing one's own interests (such as in community activities) to fulfil family roles (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). Such family helping may leave less time for traditional community service. High expectations for family commitments produce stress and mental health risks for Latinx young women (Zayas, Lester, Cabassa, & Fortuna, 2005), which could deter community ser-

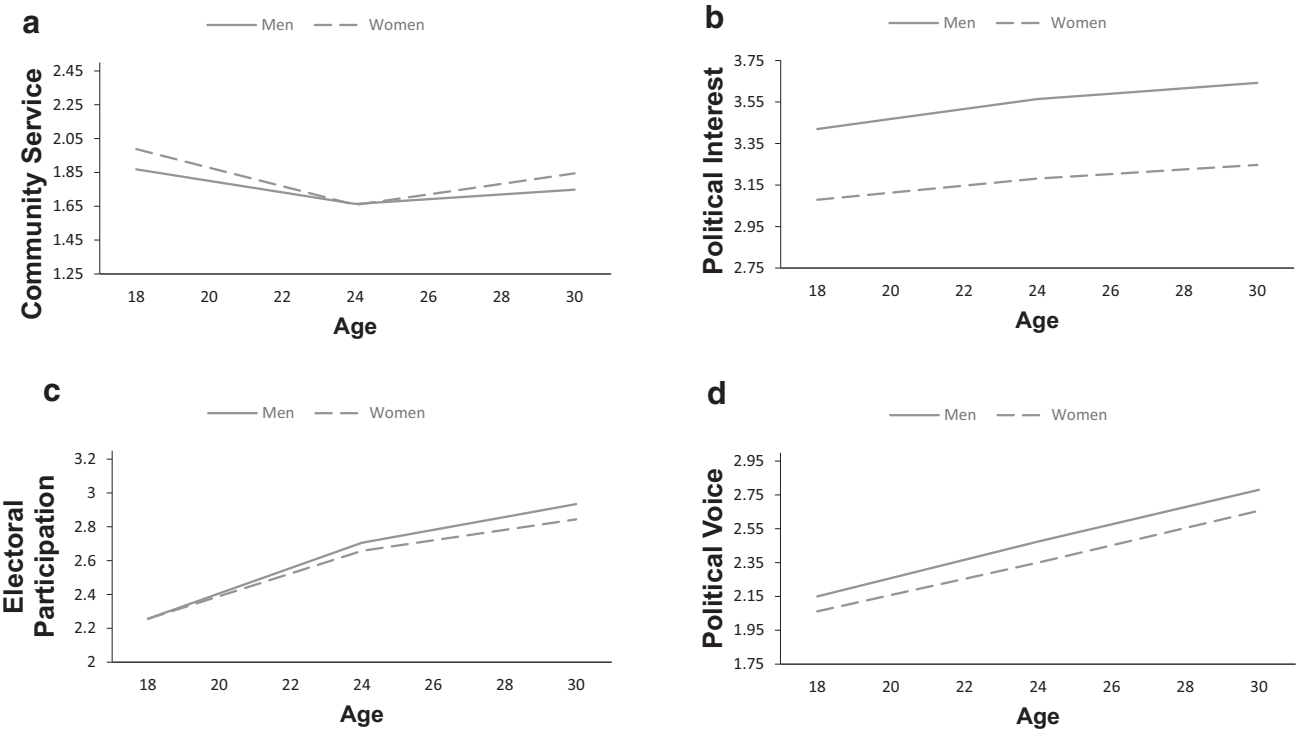

Figure 3. (a–d). Intercept and trajectories across types of civic engagement by gender at average parent education.

vice across the TTA. Of course, these processes may apply to other groups, as well. MTF uses a single item measure of community service. Examining community service alongside family responsibilities and informal helping would offer a richer, more nuanced view of helping behavior and how it varies over time and within and across racial/ethnic, gender, and cultural groups (Wray-Lake & Abrams, 2020).

Asian Youth and Political Interest

Asian youth started and remained lower on political interest across the TTA than other youth on average, aligning with studies showing that Asian youth are less politically engaged than White, Black, and Latinx youth (Godsay et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2005). Some explanations draw on the model minority stereotype, perpetuating the view that Asian Americans are more interested in achievement than politics and are passive observers rather than political participants; yet, this stereotype fails to recognize barriers to civic engagement including discrimination and exclusion (Wray-Lake, Tang, & Victorino, 2017). Asian youth's community service, political voice, and electoral participation were on par with White youth, yet they expressed less political interest. Lower political interest may be because of Asian youth not seeing people like them or issues that matter in politics (Masuoka & Junn, 2013). Research also suggests that linked fate, or shared identity and connection, among Asian Americans may not be as strong or stable as linked fate among Black Americans (Junn & Masuoka, 2008),

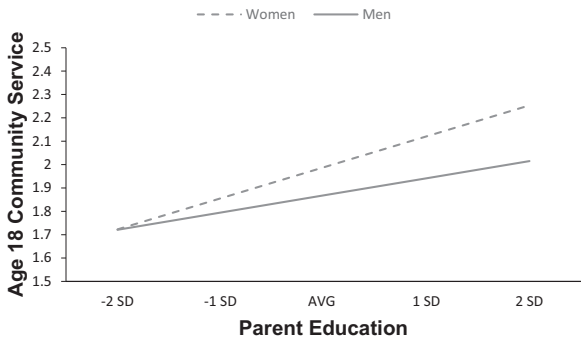

Figure 4. Gender × Parent Education interaction for age 18 community service.

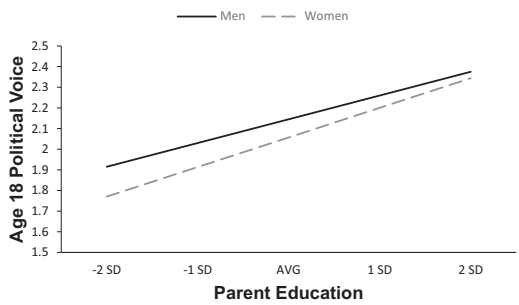

Figure 5. Gender × Parent Education interaction for age 18 political voice.

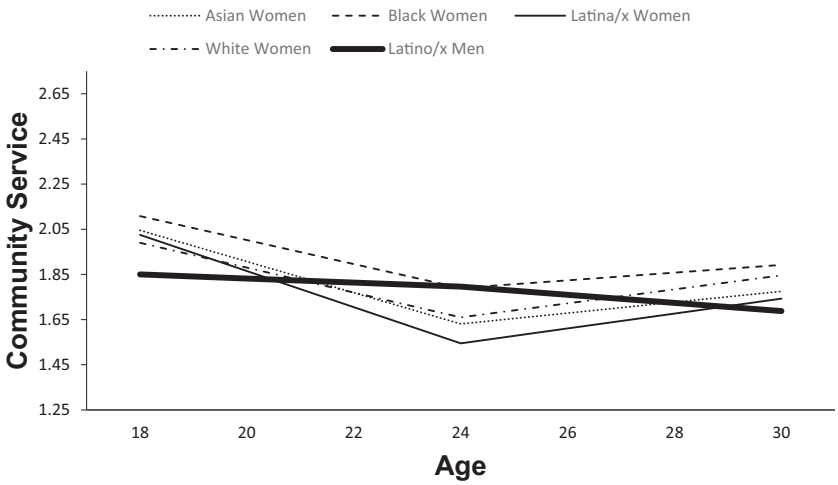

Figure 6. Gender × Race interaction for community service trajectories.

suggesting that being Asian may not lead to shared political positions and behaviors as racial/ethnic identity may for other groups. Variation in Asian college students' political engagement has been related to country and culture of origin (Wray-Lake, Tang, & Victorino, 2017). Our work highlights relative, average differences across racial/ethnic groups, but future research should extend beyond pan-ethnic categories to understand Asian and other groups' experiences more deeply.

Parent Education and Civic Development

Our study contributes two new findings related to parent education and civic engagement. First, advantages conferred by parent education grew across ages 18 to 24 for electoral participation and political voice, on average, across racial/ethnic groups. Not only is civic inequality evident in adolescence, but this inequality seems to become magnified across young adulthood, a time when life paths become more differentiated by social class (Settersten & Ray, 2010). Prior studies of parent education and youth civic engagement have been largely cross-sectional; data spanning ages 18 to 30 enabled us to document evidence of growing civic inequality across young adulthood. Parent education is related to civic knowledge and access to civically engaged adults and to resources and opportunities conducive to civic engagement (van Deth, Abendschön, & Vollmar, 2011). Youth with higher parent education may have the knowledge, support, or confidence to engage in electoral participation and political voice earlier in young adulthood.

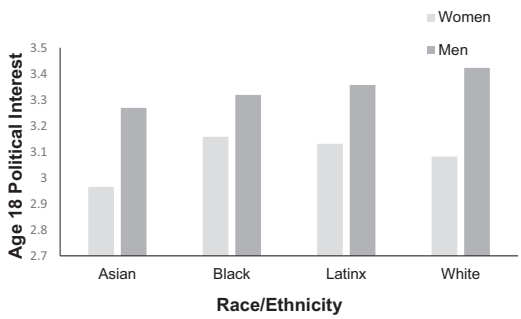

Figure 7. Gender × Race/Ethnicity interaction for age 18 political interest.

Little research has examined whether parent education differentially predicts youth civic engagement across racial/ethnic groups. Parent education was more strongly linked to age 18 civic engagement for White youth, with parent education-civic engagement associations weaker, less consistent, or nonexistent for other groups. White youth follow the expected pattern from decades of existing literature. In contrast, parent education may not hold the same meaning or offer the same civic advantages for racial/ethnic minority families and youth. For some, immigration may explain why parent education does not always offer civic advantages; highly educated, newly arrived parents may lack civic knowledge about the U.S. political system or social capital to support local civic engagement. More broadly, racial/ethnic minority families and particularly Latinx and Black families experience high discrimination despite their SES (Chong & Kim, 2006). For example, Black middle-class families often live alongside poor Black families, in part because of housing and other forms of discrimination faced by middle and upper class Black families in other neighborhoods (Pattillo, 2013). Economic status is not related to more perceived opportunities by Black or Asian Americans (Chong & Kim, 2006), further suggesting that education and economic success may not confer the same advantages for people of color in the United States given persistent institutional racism.

Our findings also suggest that White youth with less educated parents reported lower civic engagement than youth of color with less educated parents. This result fits with the finding that low-SES Black adults vote at higher rates than low-SES White adults (Anoll, 2018). From an intersectional lens, perhaps the dual marginalization of lower parent education and racial/ethnic minority status creates greater awareness of inequality, which may motivate civic engagement for some (Diemer et al., 2016). Our explanations gloss over specific instances where parent education does matter for certain types of civic engagement at age 18 for certain racial/ethnic groups. We have no ready explanation for these nuanced findings, but future research should seek to replicate findings in

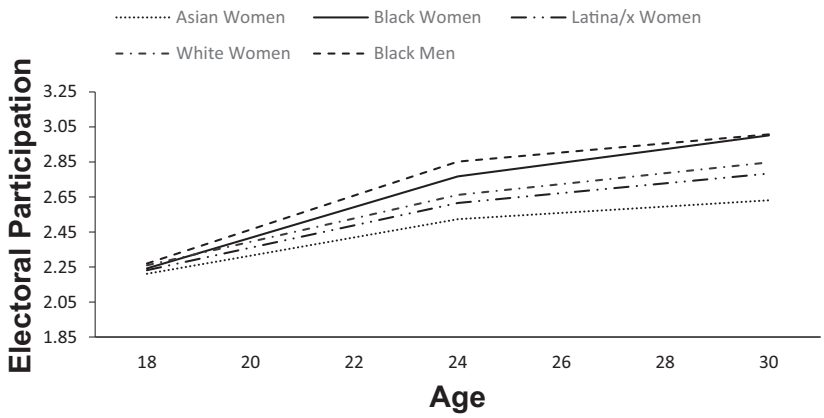

Figure 8. Gender × Race/Ethnicity interaction for electoral participation trajectory.

other samples and clarify the mechanisms by which parent education confers opportunities for civic engagement depending on race/ethnicity.

We also found that parent education may confer more civic advantages for young women compared with young men in terms of widening a gender gap in community service favoring women and shrinking the gender gap in political voice that favors men. Research on social class differences in parenting suggests that more educated parents tend to emphasize concerted cultivation, which focuses on formal education and extracurricular activities such as community service (Lareau, 2011). These parenting practices are especially common among highly educated parents with daughters (Cheadle & Amato, 2011). Additionally, gender role attitudes of parents and children tend to be more egalitarian in families with higher parent education (Marks, Lam, & McHale, 2009), which may mean that daughters are taught to exercise their voice through politics and otherwise as they transition to adulthood. These ideas merit further investigation.

Gender and Civic Development

Main effects of gender on age 18 civic engagement support prior work that adolescent boys and young men are more politically engaged and adolescent girls and young women are more engaged in community service (Jenkins, 2005). We demonstrate a pattern of slower growth in political interest and electoral engagement for young women, indicating widening gender gaps across young adulthood. Gender differences in civic engagement are generally attributed to socialization practices in families and elsewhere (Cicognani et al., 2012; Hooghe & Stolle, 2004). We show a long arm of gender socialization, such that gender gaps remain steady or widen as youth leave home and launch into adulthood. Gender roles may remain fairly entrenched with respect to civic development for many youth. Yet, some argue that in the #metoo era, gender dynamics have shifted toward more political participation by women (Vachhani & Pullen, 2019). Our data stop in 2012 and, thus cannot capture new trends, but changing gender dynamics should be further explored. Considering gender in the context of race/ethnicity and SES can illuminate groups who are able to deconstruct gender barriers to civic engagement. In our sample, Black young women and young women with highly educated parents had trajectories of political engagement that looked more like their male counterparts.

Limitations

Several study limitations are notable. This study was limited by the cursory, categorical treatment of sociodemographic factors, which were the only measures available and crude approximations for cultural experiences, opportunities, and upbringing. Gender was measured as a binary variable, parent education was the only marker of SES, and race/ethnicity was examined using broad, monolithic categories that could not capture diversity within groups. The field would be well-served by research that moves beyond sociodemographic categories and simple interactions and toward a richer intersectional approach that more fully captures experiences of culture and marginalization in relation to civic development (Santos & Toomey, 2018).

Regarding our measures, more items could have comprehensively captured community service and political engagement. Response options for electoral participation and political voice had several limitations: The scale combined intentions and behavior, and does not capture frequency of behavior. Studies estimating frequency of political participation over time may show different results. We assumed that "don't know" was a scale midpoint, but youth could have differentially interpreted this option, introducing error. An unclear time-frame of reference for these items led us to take a conservative approach of carrying forward answers when youth indicated they had acted; a clearer time frame such as behavior in the past 12 months would have enabled more variation and could have produced more nuanced patterns. However, the fact that political engagement shows similar upward growth across the TTA as other measures and samples somewhat allays these measurement concerns (Jugert et al., 2013; Melo & Stockemer, 2014; Niemi & Klingler, 2012; Neundorf et al., 2013; Russo & Stattin, 2017).

Additional limitations include the lack of high school drop outs in the MTF sampling frame and potential differential attrition with respect to civic engagement; these limitations suggest that our findings may overestimate civic engagement across the TTA. Black and Latinx youth were more likely to drop out of the study. Our missing data approach minimized bias because of differential

attrition, but it is possible that Black and Latinx youth who remained in the study had distinct patterns of civic engagement than those who dropped out. Our data included cohorts from 1976 to 2003, and models controlled for cohort, but future work could more thoroughly consider results in historical context. Our auxiliary variables did not fully account for the nested nature of individuals within schools and regions. We elected not to take a multilevel approach given model complexity and, thus, standard errors may be biased. Finally, we interpreted statistically significant results, but given our study's large sample size and multiple parameter estimates, readers should consider effect sizes in interpreting findings.

Conclusion

Using longitudinal data on four distinct type of civic engagement spanning ages 18–30 from a large, national, and racially/ethnically diverse sample of U.S. youth, we show that different types of civic engagement change in different ways across the TTA. We offer reasons why community service declines whereas political interest and engagement increase across the TTA, integrating competing ideas about developmental change in civic engagement. We view this knowledge as a significant step forward for developmental theory in the civic domain that we hope spurs future research into underlying mechanisms. Understanding ebbs and flows in civic engagement across the TTA is important from a societal perspective, and can point to times in life when youth have greater tendency to engage and times when engagement is less normative.

Our study also presents evidence suggesting that youth leave adolescence with different civic starting points and have different rates of change over time depending on their social positions and experiences. The size and scope of our sample made it uniquely possible for us to examine sociodemographic variations and test interactions among sociodemographic factors in relation to four different civic trajectories. This longitudinal work moves beyond cross-sectional racial/ethnic, parent education, and gender differences to document how these factors and their interactions shape civic development. Results need replication but counter stereotypes of youth of color as less engaged and highlight SES disparities and gender gaps that are concerning from an equity point of view. Our study sets the stage for research using an intersectionality lens that could explore the distinct patterns we identified. Future research, as well as community practice and programming, should continue identifying opportunities and barriers that shape different civic trajectories for distinct subgroups of youth.

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