

**Young Adults and Political Conversation:
Engagement and Avoidance**

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Abstract

This study investigated how young adults engage in or avoid political conversation and the influences behind that. I interviewed twenty-one undergraduate students at the University of Michigan who had not yet voted in a Presidential election. I asked them about their early political memories, their home, family, and hometown environments, and influences on their ideology and worldview. I asked how often and with whom they discuss political issues, which communities they consider themselves to be part of, what it has been like to come to college, and how they have changed politically since coming to college. Finally, I asked about their thoughts on the 2016 election and whether they intended to vote, and why or why not that was the case. Findings showed that the home environment is a critical influence in determining how one engages or avoids, people consciously select with whom they discuss politics, many avoid political conversation because they see themselves as non-confrontational, engagement at a young age often is unintentional and is understood later, voting is an important ideal and privilege to uphold, and religion plays a role in how people develop their approach to political conversation.

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Introduction

During a family vacation to Washington D.C. in 2006, we visited a souvenir shop at the airport just prior to returning home, as we had forgotten a gift for my grandma and needed to find something quickly. We looked around for a bit and then I heard my mother remark that she had found something my grandma would enjoy. It was a countdown to the Inauguration of the next president on January 20th, 2009, more than two and a half years away.

Despite his ascendance to the national political scene at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, in the summer of 2006, the mass public had not become familiar with Barack Obama, the man who would become the 44th President of the United States. It was at this point, shopping for a gift in the airport souvenir shop, that I was first exposed to my grandma's political opinions. My grandma strongly supported the Democratic Party and was quite excited for the conclusion of George W. Bush's presidency, as the countdown clock we bought for her clearly indicated.

This is one of my earliest political memories and one of my first exposures to political partisanship and discussion. I did not ask many questions, as I lacked the knowledge to engage in a conversation with my parents about why this mattered, about why Grandma had such strong feelings about President Bush. These early political interactions, while they did not make much sense in context, later took on more meaning as I grew older and began to learn more about politics, and to see it as something that mattered in my life.

The 2008 Presidential election campaign season also holds my first political memories besides the experience at the airport. It was one of the first times I watched news coverage of something other than sports, and it is during this period that I remember first beginning to form

my own ideas about political issues. I distinctly recall going up to my mother and telling her how I had watched a rally of one of the candidates for the party I was not supporting, and for the first time thought through some of the positions and opinions I had taken for granted. I realize now that prior to that moment my ideas were entirely learned from my parents, passed down through daily interactions and comments.

Throughout 2015 and 2016, the Presidential election was a constant topic in the news. I could not go anywhere and not hear talk of the election. It was a source of conversation around the dinner table, as well as a frequent topic among my group of friends. I also came across people that had never discussed political topics before or were not comfortable talking about their views. I had people look at me and tell me that they did not want to share their political beliefs or the name of the candidate they intended to support.

These conversations are what drew me to think about how people engage in political conversation, but primarily how some decide to avoid it, and what influences these decisions.

Countless questions went through my mind. What happens when people are approached with political conversations but do not wish to engage? Do young adults think about with whom they are discussing politics? What influences someone's decision to vote or decline to make a trip to the polls?

In such a contentious political climate, with people often shutting themselves off when politics is mentioned, it was clear to me that this was a topic worth researching and questions worth asking. This is something that, to my knowledge, has not been extensively researched. Much of the research in this field is regarding how party affiliation is transmitted between generations.

This study seeks answers to the questions of how people avoid political conversations and what has influenced these decisions, during one of the most tumultuous elections in decades. Engagement in the political sphere in some capacity is almost expected of those that live in a democracy, yet some elect to behave otherwise. In an era where people often only hear from people that have similar beliefs to them, whether that be in person or on their social media feeds, this study is important to understanding how young adults engage in or avoid such conversations.

Literature Review

To understand the experiences of young adults, I read studies on different facets of political conversation, how personality can play a role, along with socialization in the home. Social scientists have identified a number of factors that appear to shape the political inclinations and discussions of young adults, including political transmission, the family and home environment, the hometown, individual preferences toward conflict, unconscious selection of conversation partners, discussion with peers, structural factors such as an election taking place, and one's identity.

Political Transmission

Until recently, it was assumed, and studies supported the idea, that the transmission of political beliefs, ideology, and party affiliation from parent to child was very common, with children often developing the same partisan attitudes as their parents. It was often said that children were passive absorbers of their parents' ideals. Jennings and Niemi (1968) conducted a seminal study on whether values of the parent are transferred to the child. Though published in 1968, it continues to be a critical piece of scholarly literature in the field. They found a high correspondence between the party loyalties of their respondents and that of the parents of the respondents. There are also indications that other factors have weakened the party affiliations of the younger generation in their study. At this very moment, the same claims are being made about the 'younger generation' of today. Either party affiliation has continued to weaken over time, or it recovered in the period between this original study and is now in a period of weakening once again.

Somewhat surprisingly, the level of politicization of the household, defined as the frequency of political conversations either among the parents or between a parent and child, was not found to influence how often the parent and the child correspond about politics (Jennings and Niemi, 1968). Those who came from highly politicized households were no more likely to resemble their parents politically than those who did not.

Just a few decades ago, it was thought that the father exerted a greater influence on a child's socialization due to having more instrumental roles within the family as well as outside it (Acock and Bengtson, 1978). The highest degrees of predictability were found between the parent and the child in measurements of political orientation and religious orientation.

Most children either end up having the same political affiliation as their parents or identify as Independents. Children do not often acquire an affiliation with the opposite political party of their parents, according to Lewis-Beck and his colleagues in *The American Voter Revisited* (2008). However, the transmission of political beliefs from parent to child has been found to be more complex than previously assumed. How the child *perceives* the political affiliations of their parents also plays a role (Ojeda and Hatemi, 2015). This challenged the traditional model of direct transmission of political identity between parent and child. This is a double-edged sword, however, because if a child perceives the political affiliation of their parents correctly and wants to rebel against them, it would yield different results than if a child incorrectly perceived the political affiliations of their parents and rebels against them, only to end up holding the same beliefs and party affiliation. Though I was not looking directly at the strength of the relationship between the political affiliations of the parents and the child, this informs my research in understanding how young adults come to hold their beliefs.

Those that avoid political conversation in the family context could end up being affected in ways other than just with whom they discuss politics. A 2009 study by Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers found that children were more likely to have political beliefs that align with their parents if the family was more politicized and provided consistent cues over time. This aligned with social learning theory, whereby people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling. As this transition to early adulthood is made, views that were held at a younger age are often significantly revised among children who did not completely embrace the political views of their parents. This could certainly be the case if political conversation is not conducted in the home environment. These young adults experience a delayed pattern of political development and do not form solid, long-term opinions for some time.

The idea of parental transmission of political ideas to the child has been challenged in recent years. McDevitt and Chaffee (2002) do so when they posit that children do not merely learn from their parents, but that the parents also learn from their children and are transformed as well. In many previous studies, children are objectified and seen only as receivers of information. Though early on the transmission of information generally only flows in one direction, as the child grows older, the influence begins to flow in the opposite direction as well. This in effect shakes up the family unit, forcing the parents to seek more information and adapt.

An effort to reconcile traditional ideas of party affiliation through parental influence and a revisionist idea based on the performance of a party in the world affecting party loyalty are the subjects reviewed by Kroh and Selb (2009). Revisionism is a running tally of party performances and determining loyalty through that. While it sounds like a strain of being a political independent, they try and reconcile it with traditional perspectives of party affiliation through their theory. They conclude that attitudes learned independently from parents are more likely to

change than beliefs that are transmitted from parent to child. This is significant because children who disagree with their parents on political issues are likely to conduct research outside of that relationship to form their own opinions. But who do they talk to? This hole in the research is something my study seeks to fill.

Family and Home Environment

Researchers have also examined the role of family structure and its impact on politics within the family. Is there any difference in political outcomes for the children of single-parent households? Kathleen Dolan undertook a study to discover just that in the 1990s, when single-parent households were becoming much more common in the United States. She found that there is not a relationship between the structure of the family and almost all the variables she studied regarding the offspring of such households, including political efficacy, political knowledge, and political participation.

The influence of parents as it relates to the partisanship and polarization displayed by their children as they age also has an impact on political discussion. Though there is still a strong connection in terms of political orientation between the parent and the child, the political environment also weighs on the child and their orientation (Beck and Jennings, 1991).

There is the question of whom people select to discuss politics and other important life events with, and this often ends up being family members, spouses, co-workers, and close friends (Klofstad, McClurg, and Rolfe; 2009). It is suggested that people do not consciously select such individuals for political discussion; rather the people that end up in this circle are the same people that one discusses other important matters with. These networks are most often made up of people such as family members, spouses, co-workers, and close friends. Their research

suggested that the composition of these networks does not depend on the conversation subject. They conclude that most Americans discuss politics with the same people that they discuss other important matters with, not consciously selecting political discussants at all.

Hometown

The environment of one's hometown is one of the most important contexts in which one develops politically. Scot D. McClurg (2006) completed a study which focuses on neighborhood partisan context and whether there is evidence about whether network disagreement demobilizes people in the minority and if there is any influence on the majority. There is evidence to suggest the demobilization of those in the political minority in their neighborhood. Previous research has said that there is a difference in how political minorities and majorities perceive the world because of the information they receive from their social contexts. He concluded that holding dissenting political views does serve as a demobilizing force and that no matter how often politics is discussed, this fact holds as something that decreases participation when compared with citizens who discuss politics with people that hold the same opinions. The context in which one grows up is shown to be critical.

Personality Traits

Research in the area of personality and its effect on political participation has shown that avoiding conflict plays an outside role in how one engages in political conversation. Stacy G. Ulbig and Carolyn L. Funk (1999) look at conflict and predict that individual differences in the extent to which people seek to avoid conflict will predict participation in acts that are prone to conflict. They look specifically at the acts of political protest, activities that support campaigns,

discussing politics, voting, and contacting officials. The strongest relationship found between conflict avoidance and participation was for discussing politics with others. The results suggest to them that individual preferences toward conflict are vital in understanding why citizens do or do not participate in democratic processes.

Pattie and Johnston (2008) address a similar topic, noting that recent research has indicated that exposure to political disagreement in discussions leads to less political participation. The effect of disagreement on participation has proven to be an issue that is difficult to settle. Some argue that disagreement should lead to increased mobilization, and others point to psychological principles of conflict-aversion that say acquiescence or silence is likely to result when conflict arises. They suggest that disagreement cannot be blamed for decreased mobilization. In some instances, disagreement ends up leading to higher levels of participation. The impact of disagreement varies depending on what type of participation one is analyzing. The likelihood of voting is slightly decreased, but those that encounter disagreement are more likely to be active in other forms of participation such as voluntary activities.

Much research has focused on how outside forces have shaped political discussion. Hibbing, Ritchie, and Anderson (2011) set out to study how personality traits influence how one discusses politics, if one does at all. Utilizing the “Big Five” personality traits, they contend that increased levels of conscientiousness discuss politics more frequently within their communities and with family members. Higher levels of emotional stability were also found to be associated with a higher likelihood of someone having a discussion partner that holds differing political viewpoints. They note that it is only natural for most people to discuss politics with friends and relatives that hold similar beliefs. But it is this high level of emotional stability that leads to a person being able to overcome this and discussing political issues with those that disagree with

them. They conclude that personality traits do in fact consistently wield influence on the nature of political conversations. However, they found that the potential to sway someone's opinion did not depend on their extraversion, agreeableness, or emotional stability. Being more "open," though, did lead to participants being more likely to be influenced by their discussion partners of differing political views.

Previous Political Discussions

Researchers have generally focused on factors at the level of the individual, rather than the social, and Klofstad wants to add to the body of research on the social. The population that was studied increased their participation in civic organizations significantly after engaging in political conversation with their roommates. The effect could be lasting because civic participation is largely self-reinforcing, as the more active one becomes, the easier it is for them to participate in the future. Klofstad concluded that the only thing that can account for civic participation in one's fourth year of college is civic participation during one's first year in college, and that political discussion has an instant effect on how active one chooses to be. Such a panel study is not possible in the context of an honors thesis, though the younger students in the study provide an interesting backdrop against which one can compare the students in their final year at the University of Michigan.

It is no surprise that the greatest amount of political socialization and conversation takes place during election seasons. Valentino and Sears (1998) put forth the idea that for children, politics are usually not of high visibility, generating low levels of communication on topics related to it. However, when there are critical events such as elections, partisan attitudes become more solidified due to an influx of information being provided. For a long time, it was presumed

that partisanship was mainly acquired by children in the context of the home and the family. However, they say that the external world may also play an important role. They utilized interviews with adolescents that were conducted over the course of two years, in three waves. Their results indicated that adolescents that more frequently discussed politics had larger gains in levels of crystalized attitudes throughout the course of the campaign. They also showed the larger increase in consistency of party identification. The process of political socialization appears to take place in a much broader sense than just within the family setting. However, the parents are still important in creating a climate in which one can be interested in and attentive to the campaign. Parents that are more politically inclined may initiate more political conversations, which can lead to the opportunity for increased socialization of the child, as well as an increased sense that the child should discuss politics with others. My study takes place a few years after the participants in their study in terms of where they are in life.

Identity

Some researchers have analyzed the gender gap that exists between young men and young women when it comes to political knowledge, with young women having much less political knowledge than young men. They analyze this in the context of a midterm election campaign using a panel of high school seniors. Though the campaign did not either widen or narrow the gap in political knowledge between young men and young women, the authors found that the campaign environment produced different reactions from these groups. This is almost certainly largely a result of socialization that takes place regarding gender roles. This comes about when one thinks about how socialization can lead to young adults considering themselves to be confrontational or non-confrontational, whether that is borne out in their actions or not.

Among young men, partisan conflict led to more learning, whereas young women benefitted more from environments marked more by consensus, rather than conflict. I was rather concerned with the approach that the authors took to trying to explain the gender gap in political knowledge. They repeatedly stated that there is simply a chance that young women were simply less interested in political issues than men, among other reasons. Yet the authors never tackled, nor acknowledged, the possibility that young men and young women are treated differently due to their gender. However, they are not informed by the background and ideas which I believe hold a large influence on what leads to the gender gap in political knowledge. The authors also found that talking with parents about politics is more likely to lead to gains in political knowledge among young women than young men. They do not posit why that may be the case, though it is still an interesting notion to consider.

Relation to My Study

The pieces described look at what influences political communication in the context of the individual and the characteristics and traits that they hold. They also analyze many other larger social factors such as the politicization of the family and even how often one discusses politics in their first year of college. I seek through my thesis to contribute to this literature. Many of these pieces of literature are far more narrow in scope than what I studied. A fair amount of research in this field is several decades old, having been made outdated by modern methods of communication. The idea that political discussants are not consciously selected seems suspect to me, and I look at this issue through my interviews and subsequent analysis.

My interviews took place near the conclusion of a lengthy Presidential election campaign, and this certainly influenced the frequency of political conversation. However, I

contend this likely only amplified what brings people to, or keeps them away, from participating in political conversation, and almost certainly did not change what those factors may be. The factors that influence how they participate certainly fall into this category, as they would have developed far before this most recent election season.

Methods

My goal in this project was to investigate how young adults either engage in or avoid political conversation and why that may be the case. I interviewed twenty-one undergraduate students at the University of Michigan. I conducted one-on-one interviews, utilizing a semi-structured interview process. I prepared an interview guide with questions and probes that I could use to follow up their answers, yet I found that I did not end up asking many of the questions that I had originally thought I would ask the participants, given the semi-structured nature of the interviews. Not every participant was asked the exact same set of questions, nor were they always asked in the same order. While this process was less systematic, it allowed the conversations to flow more naturally, engendering more trust with the participants, and eliciting more nuanced responses. It is easier to have a conversation than to be simply answering someone's questions one after another. I strove to create a comfortable, conversational environment.

Recruiting Participants

To learn from a variety of young adults on campus, I recruited participants to my project through an email sent to 2,002 random students enrolled at the University of Michigan. This was sent out at my request by Information and Technology Services and I crafted the recruitment message that was used. I received responses from thirty students that had received the email. Since my study was restricted to students that had not yet voted in a general Presidential election, and the email was sent to 2,002 random students at the University of Michigan, there were several people who responded that were unfortunately ineligible for my study after I followed up with them. Despite these efforts, I still ended up conducting an interview with one student who

had voted in the 2012 Presidential election. The data collected from this interview is not included in my findings.

It is almost certain that those that responded to the email requesting participants are more comfortable engaging in political conversation than others, as those that avoid it probably declined to even respond to the initial email. Thus, the pool from which I pulled is likely skewed toward those that discuss politics more frequently.

The pre-interview questionnaire was sent out to participants one to three days prior to the scheduled interview time, and each participant completed it before the interview. The questionnaire consisted primarily of demographic information: current grade-level, age, major, sex, race, and religion. In addition, the questionnaire also included questions about the parents of the participant, including the highest level of education attained by each parent and the political affiliation of each parent. The questionnaire also asked further questions about the participant, including rating their level of religious observance, rating where they stand ideologically, and how often they speak to their parents. Lastly, the questionnaire asked if the participant has ever worked on a political campaign before, rating how often they talk about politics, if they were eligible to vote in the 2016 election, and if they planned to vote in the election. Included below are tables summarizing key demographic information collected through the pre-interview questionnaire:

Table 1
What is your sex?

Answer	%	Count
Male	38.10%	8
Female	61.90%	13

Table 2

With which race(s) do you identify? Select all that apply.

Answer	%	Count
Asian	14.29%	3
Black	9.52%	2
White	80.95%	17
Hispanic	9.52%	2

Table 3

With which political party do you identify?

Answer	%	Count
Democratic Party	52.38%	11
Republican Party	0.00%	0
None/Independent	38.10%	8
Other: Libertarian	9.52%	2

Table 4

With which political party does Parent/Guardian 1 identify?

Answer	%	Count
Democratic Party	33.33%	7
Republican Party	33.33%	7
None/Independent	28.57%	6
Not listed, please describe:	4.76%	1

Other: I think parent 1 voted republican the past two elections, but maybe republican then democrat

Table 5

With which political party does Parent/Guardian 2 identify?

Answer	%	Count
Democratic Party	38.10%	8
Republican Party	38.10%	8
None/Independent	14.29%	3
Not listed, please describe:	9.52%	2

Other: Parent 2 has typically voted democrat but neither parent is strongly aligned, Libertarian Party

Table 6

Do you plan to vote in the 2016 election?

Answer	%	Count
Yes	76.19%	16
No	14.29%	3
Not Sure	9.52%	2

The participants in the study were primarily white, with 81% of those interviewed identifying as such. 62% of the participants were female and 38% of them were male. There was a diverse representation of religious views among the participants, with 25% of the participants identifying as Jewish, 25% identifying as Christian, and 20% identifying as Atheist. Even so, on average the participants did not identify as very religiously observant, averaging 3.1 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most religiously observant. In terms of political identity, the participants skewed Liberal. Just over half of them identified with the Democratic Party, none identified with the Republican Party, two identified as Libertarian, and 38% identified as Independents. The ideologies of their parents were much more evenly split, with the same number of Democrats and Republicans among both parents/guardians. At the time of the pre-interview questionnaire, 76% of the participants expressed that they planned to vote in the 2016 election. Typical educational attainment for the parents of the participants was markedly high. The demographic breakdown of the study participants as primarily white, liberal-leaning, and female likely had a significant impact on the results of this study.

The interviews ranged in length from 37 minutes at the shortest to an hour and 17 minutes at the longest. The interview itself, while semi-structured, can be broken down into several key parts. To begin, I got to know the participants by having them tell me a little bit

about themselves. The first big section of the interview focused on the early life of the participant. I would ask them about their earliest political memories, and often followed that up with a question about when they realized that what they had described was a political memory. Some participants would discuss when they first noticed politics as well as political issues. The next key section of the interview focused on the family and the influence that they had on the participant. I asked how their parents and family influenced their political ideology and worldview. Other questions included frequent topics of discussion when home, how often politics came up, and the frequency with which the participant went home during the academic year. I would also ask how often the participant would argue with their parents, and whether those arguments were ever about political issues. The goal of these questions was to learn more about the childhood of the participant, and often the conversation would expand far beyond the initial premise of the questions.

The next area covered during the interview was the participant's concept of community, and which communities they considered themselves to be part of. After they would describe their communities, I would ask the participant whether they noticed any norms around discussing political issues within these communities.

Another category of questions centered on college and their current experiences. I would start by asking what it was like to come to college and what the challenges they faced were. I then asked the participants about whether their political beliefs had changed since coming to college, or at all for that matter. Participants were then asked to expand on their response to the pre-interview questionnaire question on how often they discuss political issues with their friends. The next topic was the political beliefs of the participant's friends, specifically if they thought that most of their friends held similar political beliefs as them.

The interview concluded on the topic of the 2016 election. I specifically left the questions vague to see if any of the participants discussed anything other than the Presidential election. The last questions I typically asked related to whether the participant planned to vote in the election and if they had gotten into any arguments about the 2016 election.

Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted and audio recorded interviews with the consent of participants. Prior to the commencement of the interview, participants were provided with a consent form that they were then asked to read and sign if they would like to continue. I obtained consent not only to conduct the interview but to record the interviews as well. I also explained my procedures for protecting their confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process of collecting and analyzing the information from the interviews.

I completed a close listening approach to the data, whereby I summarized everything the participant said as I listened to the audio recording of the interview. Important quotes were taken down verbatim and I noted where in the interview they took place. The process for one interview took roughly 3-4 hours and resulted in roughly three to four single-spaced pages of text summarizing the content of the interview. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I was unable to transcribe the interviews verbatim.

After completing a close listening of the interviews, I began analysis of the data. Due to the research having a primarily inductive nature, the coding scheme was created during analysis of the data.

Standpoint

I identify as a white, heterosexual, cis-gender, liberal-leaning, man. This made me similar demographically to some participants in my study, though a majority of the people I interviewed did not match up with many of these categories.

I was conscious of my body language throughout the interviews and attempted to provide appropriate reactions no matter how I felt about the responses that the participant provided. I sought to keep my own political beliefs private and out of the realm of the participant's mind, though I am certain they thought about it as we conversed.

Having been involved on a political campaign and a former member of the campus chapter of the College Democrats, my affiliations make it possible that my participants had an idea of where I fall on the political spectrum, which could have changed how open the participants were in their responses. However, at no point in time did I feel that during an interview any of my participants were restrained in their responses due to their perceptions of me and my beliefs or identities. For the most part, participants were forthcoming with me, and often even surprised me with the level of detail with which they described their lives and experiences. As I have analyzed the data that I collected, I have continually considered my identities and how that may have affected the responses that were given by participants during our interviews.

Results

The 2016 election was undoubtedly one of the most contentious in the United States in recent memory. During this period, I interviewed 21 college students during the first Presidential election in which they might vote. In a system premised on the engagement of its citizens, the choice to engage in political conversations or avoid them has consequences for the future of democracy, political involvement, and elected office. Some avoided political conversations altogether, some engaged in it willingly, and others approached it with caution. I examined this political avoidance, asking about the circumstances under which people do and do not feel comfortable talking about politics. I also examined engagement; I sought to understand the influences behind how people engage such discussions.

Engagement

Engagement in political conversation is a critical aspect of civic engagement. This is especially true in the context of an election year, during which this study was conducted. There was not always a clear rationale for why participants engaged in political conversation, but notable influences on how they engaged included participants' early experiences with engagement, religion, conscious selection of conversation partners, and thoughts on voting.

Early Engagement

Early engagement in political discussion was not always positive or understood at the time, though it did correlate to increased political discussion as a young adult. There was not a

lot of political avoidance at a young age, though this was primarily the result of participants generally not knowing very much about politics, the political system, or policy. Even those that were knowledgeable about the system, such as Matthew, who was given an interactive toy at a young age which he used to learn all the Presidents and Vice Presidents, did not often discuss politics with his friends at the time. Similarly, for Ashley, who developed an interest in politics at a young age, did not discuss politics with her friends in her youth. However, this interest sparked in the home and encouraged by her parents translated to frequent engagement in political conversation.

Engagement in one's early years of life was primarily indicated by experiences that were rarely understood at the time they took place. David was one of many that referenced mock elections that took place in elementary school, a tradition he did not look back on fondly. Clearly these were not conducted with intent to harm, but they arguably served no purpose other than discovering the political ideologies of the parents of that students. Not one participant looked back at a mock election from their younger days in school and was thankful that they had been "exposed" to the political system in that way at a young age.

Jessica also viewed mock elections negatively. She has a recollection of George Bush and John Kerry facing off in the 2004 election. Her elementary school had a mock election, and since she did not have knowledge about the candidates or their policies, she inquired to her parents to see what they thought and to learn about the stances of the candidates. She now believes that mock elections serve to harm students, not even serving an academic or educational purpose. They knew nothing about the platforms, they just had to pick a candidate. At a young age, political conversation is rare. However, even when it does take place, as is the case with mock

elections experienced by many young students, few young people truly understand the involvement, even as they engage in it themselves.

Hayley, a junior who grew up in a heavily Conservative, Catholic, affluent, and white area, presciently noticed at the time of her elementary school's mock election for Michigan Governor that the process was pointless. Granholm lost by a landslide in the mock election, and she remembered thinking about how it was "totally everyone's parents voting, not the students." She had no recollection of even being educated on the platforms of the candidates, just the mock election taking place when she was in fifth grade.

Christopher, a freshman that does not often fight with his parents, remembered the election between Obama and McCain and being surprised that his peers had strong opinions on the matter, seeing as they were in fourth grade at the time. He recognized that it was probably because their parents had strong opinions on the candidates. At that point in time, he had yet to form political ideas for himself. This would not happen for several more years. But for fourth grade, there would be strong political opinions spouted by students who knew merely what they had been told by their parents. Daniel shared similar sentiments, noting that the things the students shared were not really what they believed; more likely the thoughts of their parents and the votes of their parents being shared with the class.

Even Ashley, who was interested in politics from such a young age, could not point to any significant first political memory. Even in her experience, she was still unable to have wide engagement with her peers, because even though she watched the news during dinner with her parents and discussed issues of the day, most people her age did not know enough to discuss politics outside of her speech team, with whom she consistently discussed politics, even at a young age.

Role of Religion

Religion was also an influence on political discussion in some capacity for almost every participant in the study. There were instances in which a participant's political ideology was influenced by religious ideas when being formed, but once exposed to ideas outside those that were strictly religious, participants had a strong tendency to think differently than before. Many participants stated that their religious beliefs either had a small impact or had a negative association in their minds between religion and political beliefs. Religion provided more of a community, rather than a direct influence on political ideology and discussion for many participants.

David noted that religion has had an influence on how his political beliefs formed, though not so much on his participation in political conversation. He was raised Jewish, and the fact that a vast majority of Jews are liberal likely had an effect of syncing his ideology with that of those that surrounded him, to an extent. The communal aspect of Judaism was the most salient aspect of the religion in his life as it related to politics.

Hayley was not exposed to a lot of outside ideas in her early years of life. Growing up in a relatively non-political home, she was enthused when the Defense of Marriage Act was struck down by the United States Supreme Court. She was surprised that her beliefs on the matter, along with the beliefs of her family members, did not line up with those of Christianity. The area in which she grew up was pretty conservative. Most the people were affluent, white, and Catholic. When she transitioned from middle school to high school, she thought of it as her eyes being opened. She learned new ideas that contradicted what she had been taught through Christianity. She developed the ability to think critically about these issues, and ended up

developing an aversion to Catholicism. While religion played an important role for her earlier in life, it no longer affects how she thinks about or engages in political discussion.

The religious tendencies of one's hometown tended to be a critical aspect of any sort of political influence. Kevin grew up in a non-religious household, but his hometown was populated predominantly by people with strong religious beliefs. When he first heard stories that came from the Bible, he thought they were funny. He thought they were supposed to be interpreted in a metaphorical sense. He heard these stories in a home setting where religion was not forced upon him, and his parents did not have strong beliefs. However, he realized that people in his community thought that these Biblical tales were to be taken literally. He remarked that if you live in a household that is very religious, it will naturally be reflected in your political beliefs.

When Kevin was young, he saw the positive aspects of what people around him said about Jesus, about the ideals for which he stood. He then ran into problems in politics when people believed things that were the exact opposite of those ideals, yet they still claimed to support this figure. Examples of this included killing during war, the hatred of the gay community, and the shaming of poor people. This confused him. He would also often fight against ideas that his teachers put forward in school that were clearly motivated by their religious beliefs.

Religion played a role in Kevin's early life, though not directly. For him, it was more peripheral in that he interacted with it daily, even though it was not his own political beliefs with which he was engaging. Religion did not have a substantial influence on his political ideology, yet he was confronted with the beliefs of others, he often engaged with them on the interaction

between their political beliefs and their religious beliefs, and how they had become inextricably connected.

Emily grew up in a conservative household for some time, eventually living with people who had more liberal viewpoints. Utilizing religion as a justification to oppress people that are part of a minority community ran counter to what she supported. Though religion did not directly affect her political beliefs or how she thinks about different issues, she wanted to understand how religion played into other people's beliefs. She appreciated that religion did not have a negative connotation in others' lives in the way that it did for her while she was growing up. This was the only time that someone expressed an appreciation for how religion matters to other people. Participants largely appeared to understand that this was the case, but many expressed their own opinions on it and did not seem to want to garner an appreciation for what religion meant to others' political ideas. Rather, they belittled those that expressed these views. This was most evident with Kevin, who would publicly dispute both political and nonpolitical ideas put forward by others that were clearly motivated or rooted in religious belief.

Christopher, having developed his views through countless interactions in online forums, primarily Reddit, described his political ideology as "anarchist socialist." He had a strong distaste for hierarchies, and would prefer to live in a world where there is no social or economic hierarchy. He stated that with these political views, it was hard to be religious on the basis of his views against hierarchy. Religious beliefs did not have an effect on his political beliefs.

Ashley put forward the notion of religion as a moral compass, creating core values, rather than instilling beliefs. While religion has not had a direct influence on how she has chosen to engage in political conversation, it has played a big role in how her personal ideology formed. She was in touch with her Jewish identity, and stated that the core values of Judaism translated

into a lot of her political beliefs. This was clear in conveying that she believed that everyone should be given equal respect and equal opportunities to succeed. She also grew up in an area with a large Jewish population, which gave her the opportunity to develop these beliefs and worldview in the context of people who were demographically and religiously similar to her.

For many of the Jewish students in my study, their references to religion tended to be associated with things such as community, core values, and broad ideas. Those that came from a Christian tradition more often mentioned hot-topic political issues that the Church has weighed in on in the past, such as abortion and rights for same-sex couples. Though religion often did not play a big role in the lives of the participants, there was more active rebellion against religion when it came to participants that grew up in a Christian household. None of the Jewish students referred to any specific areas of policy that had been influenced by their faith.

Jessica displayed the most overt contempt toward religion and its connection to the political sphere. Not only was she not religious, but she detested the idea that religion and politics were tied together, though she understood how they evolved together socially. One of her best friends was very conservative, with views dictated from her religion. Most of the people from her hometown were like that as well. She avoided engaging in any political discussion with this particular friend. One of her relatives, knowing that Jessica was not religious, still brought up things in the Bible and treated them as if they were fact. She engaged in arguments with this relative about religion fairly often. It even got to the point where she partially avoided going home during holiday breaks because she did not want to hear the opinions of this relative. She used to want to be an active member of the political sphere, but now she has only distaste and negative feelings towards both religion and politics.

Disagreement with ideology advocated for by religious institutions also affected how participants felt about it. Nicole never felt a connection to any religious beliefs, and her family was not very religious. She had trouble reconciling the fact that the Catholic Church was against gay marriage, but her mom has friends that are gay and she also has friends that identify as gay. This is also the case with abortion and a woman's right to choose. She was not fond of the idea that one's beliefs can be pushed onto other people, which is what religion represented to her. This caused her to abandon the idea of Catholicism as a religious ideal as well as a bedrock of her political principles, even though it was an expectation for her to believe these things. She was yet another example of young adults engaging in politics without religious ideals as one of the founding ideological principles.

Daniel had similar interactions with religion. When he was younger, faith had a larger influence on him than it has recently. His views changed similarly to how his household's view of religion changed a lot, with their leanings toward social liberalism putting them at odds with the teachings of the Church. He had strong beliefs in a woman's right to choose and equal rights for members of the LGBTQ community. Now, religion is not a big part of his political ideology or conversation.

For Jeremy, religion has had a direct impact on his political engagement. Coming from a Jewish family, his grandparents were persecuted. Understanding and appreciating that he has not been subject to this persecution while growing up in the United States has played into how he engages in politics. He also had the added factor of growing up in a highly Jewish area, where most of the Jews identified as liberal. This gave him free rein to engage in political conversation with anyone he pleased while being able to correctly ascertain their political ideology without

even asking. Within the Jewish community, this made it easy to discuss politics whenever he so desired.

Thoughts on Voting

In the waning days of the 2016 Presidential election, attitudes toward voting were a default part of political conversation among my study participants. Only a couple of the people interviewed stated that they did not plan to vote, because they were either not fans of the democratic system at-large or the pervasiveness of the two major parties. Though several of them expressed dissatisfaction with the candidates of the two major political parties, most of the students expressed a strong desire to vote, many of whom stated that to them it felt like part of their civic duty. Participants often recognized that the right to vote was one that has been fought for by many different groups, including the Women's Suffrage Movement and the Civil Rights Movement, just a generation or two prior to theirs. Many participants expressed that the importance of registering to vote and casting a ballot was impressed upon them by their parents. Even for those that did not like to discuss their personal political beliefs with those around them, at the very least, the importance of being informed, registering to vote, and casting a ballot were aspects of politics that even they felt comfortable sharing with their peers. Students whose families did not discuss politics even had conversations about registering to vote. While voting is itself a political act and a form of political engagement, the non-partisan nature of registering to vote and ensuring that your voice is heard resonated with people as a safe way to engage without opening themselves up to criticism or conflict.

Voting was largely viewed as a moral imperative and an expression of one's civic duty. It is unlikely that every participant that expressed a strong desire to vote ended up following

through. However, this does diminish the fact that one's opinion of voting was a major factor in how young adults engaged in political conversation throughout what was arguably one of the most contentious elections in recent American history. Those that did not like to discuss politics brought up voting as an alternative to discussing the issues. This was true for Naruka, who prefers to avoid discussing specifics of political issues, choosing instead to ask whether they are registered to vote. Those that enjoyed discussing politics more frequently also engaged in discussions about voting with their friends and families. Whether they had made up their mind on if they would vote or not, young adults seemed to have a philosophy on voting, indicating it was something they had thought about.

Outside of those that did not believe in our system of government, the importance of voting was a commonality in the perspectives of the participants. Matthew remarked that he believed you should care about the world around you, and voting is an expression of that. He had no respect for apathy and those that portray it. He expanded by saying that voting in all elections matters, such as state and local elections, not just Presidential elections, was important. David expressed a similar idea, noting that his first vote was actually in Fall 2015 in a local election. Despite the polls having been open for quite a while, his was only the second ballot cast that day. He hated the argument that statistically speaking, it was highly unlikely that your individual vote would be the deciding vote in an election. He said, "It costs you so little to vote, but the benefit is huge to be able to take part in your own government."

When asked about her thoughts on voting, Samantha remarked that she believed everyone should vote, saying there was no reason not to vote, and that if you did not vote, you cannot complain about policy decisions that are made. She was also one of many people that remarked on the historical significance of being able to vote. "I get a rush from it. It's kind of

dorky, but a lot of people in the world can't vote. In the past, women couldn't vote. I do think about that. It's dorky, but I do think about that. I think it's a silly thing not to do."

Nicole also looked back on history and within it found a rationale to vote. She has the time and capacity, and did not see a reason not to vote. She noted that a lot of people fought for her right to vote, and many people around the world did not have a say in their representation. Having the knowledge of how many people fought for this right has always weighed on her mind and influenced her mindset toward voting.

Many spoke of the "civic duty" inherent in voting in elections. There were many different expressions of this idea. Dylan thought it was one's civic duty to vote, but also sees choosing not to vote as an expression of that right as well. He was not a fan of the policy in some other countries where voting is required and you can be fined for not voting in an election. Naruka was motivated by this same civic duty. She connected it to the 2016 election and noted that the candidates running made it especially important to vote in this election.

Christopher was one of the participants that did not plan to vote in the 2016 election. He thought that contributing to the democratic process justified it, and he did not believe in either candidate (Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton), as they were "capitalists who believe in the government." He did not want to be connected to their decisions in any way, or for their actions to be traceable back to him. When asked if he thought he would ever vote, he said he did not think he would if his current political beliefs as a socialist anarchist stayed consistent. He was not inflammatory about it, saying that he was open to having his mind changed, and that people certainly change as they get older.

Ashley also articulated the importance of engaging in the civic duty of voting in the election. She thought it was empowering to have the responsibility to learn about the issues. She

also noted that a lot of people did not like either of the candidates and were planning to sit out the election, but she thought a lot was at stake and wanted her voice to be heard. When it came to social media, a lot of people posted things attacking the candidate of whom they were not a fan. Her goal when engaging is for people to become more informed, to have an appreciation for politics and the process as she does. She posted reminders on social media for people to register to vote before the deadline passed in October.

Jeremy, who has been politically active for several years, shared his thoughts on the importance of voting:

If enough people turn out and vote, you can do something incredible. I think every person that is 18 and up not only should be automatically registered to vote, I think it's dumb that we force people to register. It should be an automatic thing, just like how you get your new license. Everyone should vote, because it affects everyone...too many people have fought and died for our ability to do that, and that is the greatest expression of freedom that everyone should be voting.

He went on to say that self-improvement and societal improvement should be at the top of everyone's list of priorities, and a big way to make those things happen is by voting and getting involved politically. It is an obligation to be educated on politics and political issues.

Daniel learned the importance of voting directly from his parents. Civic duty was emphasized growing up in his household, as well as through his involvement in Boy Scouts. His parents always voted and told him that one should always vote. People would die for the right to vote. He said he has noticed a culture of apathy, with citizens viewing voting as a chore and not a right. People around the world are fighting for the right to vote, and people here in the United

States sometimes squander that right. He has voted in every primary and special election since he could register. He certainly encourages others to vote.

Courtney's mother expressed similar sentiments as the parents of Daniel. She told Courtney that you should vote in every election. Since it was her first election, she was considering voting, even though she was not initially planning to vote because she does not like Trump or Clinton. She was leaning toward voting because her family wants her to vote. Though she found herself discussing both candidates in a negative light and thought that either one will bring a lot of negatives to the office, the urging of her family for her to vote appeared to be having an impact.

Conscious Selection

When engaging in political conversation, it was clear that participants consciously selected with whom they chose to converse. This is somewhat contradictory to the findings from the article by Klofstad, McClurg, and Rolfe (2009), where they claimed that people do not consciously select their conversation partners on political topics. Rather, the authors conclude that people simply discuss things with the people that they already discuss important life matters with. Now, that is not to say that my study proves that people discuss politics primarily with people other than those with whom people already discuss important life matters. However, it was clear that there was more to the story than that. Interviews made it clear that participants knew the people with whom they discussed politics. Even if they were not the one to bring it up, if they were not actively avoiding such conversation, they were conscious of the people that they allowed to bring politics into their daily conversations and who they would shy away from having those conversations with.

Dylan provides a perfect example of this phenomenon. When asked if he engages in political conversation, he responded by saying it depended on the audience. He does not like to be antagonistic, and generally steered clear from political discussions until he got to know a person better. He was not afraid of having conversations with people with whom he disagrees, but thought it was important to be cautious at first. He thought politics can be a sensitive subject, and thus you cannot be too blusterous when first bringing up political topics.

Recently, as Kim was scrolling through her Facebook news feed, she came across a post by a former high school classmate. When they were in high school, she recalled not always agreeing with his views. The post he had just made was anti-immigrant in nature, and as a child of two immigrants to this country, it did not sit well with her. This was a person that she had not spoken with in several years. She was unsure what to do, and after sitting on it for a week, she decided to send him a Facebook message to explain why she found his post to be inappropriate and why it made her feel uncomfortable. She checked it over and made sure it did not come off as an attack. The back and forth that followed ended up being civil, and their conversation reminded her that people are a product of all their experiences. This conversation, conducted entirely through social media and private messaging, was a choice made by this participant.

Christopher, the self-described anarchist socialist, participated in conscious selection of conversation partners for politics. Most of his engagement came through forums on Reddit, which he would be on during his free time when he was in high school. Since he did not explain how his views were developing to his parents, he would decide not to throw in his two cents when they were having conversations related to electoral politics. He stated that he could not do so because he was working from an entirely different frame of reference than them. The conversations he was having at the time, mainly with people on Reddit and a select few of

members of the Reddit group over Skype, were much more rooted in political philosophy than the issues of the day. Even though he was not opposed to or fearful of discussing politics with his parents, he chose to restrict his main conversations to those that were in the same boat as him, who understood the framework he was utilizing, rather than participate in discussions that his parents were having.

Ashley had very clear factions of people in her life. One faction, made up of her friends in her pre-law fraternity, discussed politics often. The other faction, made up of members of her social sorority, does not engage in political discussion as often. During the lead-up to the election, Ashley ended up watching one of the debates with her sorority sisters, which gave her a taste of their lack of engagement in the issues. For the most part though, Ashley did not discuss politics with her sorority sisters. If she was with them while reading an interesting article related to politics, rather than discuss it with the people around her, she would send it to her friends in her pre-law fraternity who she knew would find it more interesting. She selected with whom she wanted to discuss these issues, even going so far as to privilege digital communication to in-person conversations.

Elizabeth chose to talk about political issues with people her own age, rather than people older than her. She did not like to discuss politics with people older than her or hold some higher position than her, because she felt that they were smarter and wiser than her. She was fine discussing politics with people that disagree with her, though only when they were closer to her in age. She has often clashed with her father, who treats anything related to identity or sexual orientation as a joke. She was a major proponent of inclusivity and tolerance, far different than the beliefs of her father.

A big part of conscious selection also has to do with the negative experiences with political conversation that are described elsewhere in this paper. One of the aspects of conscious selection was who was consciously selected to not discuss politics with. Part of many of the stories of conscious selection was an awareness of the people that not only fit into that category, but also who did not fit the mold. Often it was people of different identities or roles in the lives of participants, along with specific people that they had had negative experiences with around politics that fell into this category. The decision by Daniel's immediate family to skip the Thanksgiving gathering with their extended family is an example of this. By choosing not to go, not only was their family unit deciding not to engage in political conversation with people with whom there is a high potential for conflict, they also effectively decided that they would prefer to discuss politics among themselves. Daniel often discussed politics with his parents, and though the decision in this context was more of a subconscious one, nonetheless it provided an interesting comparison with his family's decision to avoid the family Thanksgiving gathering.

Avoidance

While participation in political discussion is not surprising, avoidance of such topics proves to be worth analysis. In a society where enfranchisement is invaluable, choosing to remove oneself from engaging in activities that complement voting is significant. Factors that influence why people express avoidance of political discussions include their home environment growing up and having a self-described non-confrontational personality.

Home Environment

Avoidance of political conversation was seen most often in the context of the family. Whether it was the result of a general lack of political discourse in the home or early negative political memories that dictated why political conversation would be avoided, this was common.

This principle was most clearly demonstrated in the response of Naruka, who stated “We never really talked politics much in my house.” She went on to say that to this day, she does not often talk politics, even when with her friends. She is a senior in college, and had one of the more extreme answers to the question of whether her friends had similar political beliefs to her or not. She answered by saying she really had no idea. She could guess, based on what they talk about and their general attitudes toward things, but since she rarely discussed political things with them, she had no way to know for certain. She was conscious of the fact that politics is not a topic they discuss. She explicitly stated that she believed that this was a result of how she was raised; she saw her home environment as having a direct impact on her willingness to talk about politics as a young adult. Along with political topics being avoided, family finances were also not discussed in her home. She tended to discuss broad concepts with her friends, such as making sure they are registered to vote, but that was the extent of the conversation. This was an example of how early home environment plays a role in the political conversation of the young adult after they leave home.

The home environment at a young age was of great import to avoidance of political discussion. Homes in which there was more political discussion were more likely to produce young adults that engage in political discussion. However, while some parents actively encouraged pursuing political growth and knowledge, many families were not that way. For example, Hayley’s parents never discussed politics with her or her brother while they were

growing up. The restrictions were not only limited to the world of politics, though. Along with that, as with Naruka, family finances, as well as anything considered “beyond her reach,” or topics she was presumed to not understand, were not topics of conversation. This was the case until more recently when she was much older. This lack of conversation led to Hayley not having many early memories related to politics as well as having a limited worldview for a long time. This sort of sheltering went beyond her home, as for many years she went to a school with a homogenous student population. Thus, when she got to high school, she started to question everything all at once. The participant began to think about political topics and met people that were different from her. The confluence of circumstances, starting with the lack of political conversation in the home ultimately led to a jarring experience of transitioning from middle to high school as she was simultaneously exposed to a multitude of new people and ideas.

Kim had a similar experience when it came to the existence of a bundle of topics that were avoided. Along with a lack of conversation about politics in the home, family finances were a taboo subject. Her mom said they preferred to be “low-key” about a lot of things. It was not that she was forbidden from having those conversations, it was just generally understood that one should not bring it up. To her parents, it was a private matter. Because of this, she did not start to think about how socioeconomic status affects people and their lives until she got to college. As she came from a family in which both of her parents were practicing doctors, she was afforded the ability to avoid confronting these topics beforehand. In her experience, the political sphere has been an area where she decides for herself. Her parents did not force their opinions and ideas on her, which was not the experience of every participant.

Grace, who tended to avoid political conversation to this day, grew up in a household where her parents were never outspoken about politics. Outside of the household, her parents did

not want to get involved in politics. She strongly believed that growing up in that sort of home environment greatly contributed to her current mindset of keeping her political views to herself.

Arguments about politics were one of the primary factors that led to avoidance of political conversation. These arguments primarily took place in the context of the family environment, frequently with extended family members rather than just with the immediate family present. After having these negative experiences, participants took varying approaches to political discussion. Some simply chose not to engage politically with the person with whom they engaged in an unpleasant argument, and others took it further, refusing to speak at all with someone who had shown them a lack of respect, and in some cases, even contempt.

Many interviewees spoke of the negative experiences they had with family members who yelled at each other at family gatherings. Daniel's family is notorious for always getting in at least one fight at the dinner table during their family gatherings. It got so bad that, as mentioned previously, he and his family did not plan to attend the family Thanksgiving gathering; they wanted to avoid the madness that would almost certainly come from discussion around the 2016 election. This was not unique to the 2016 election, though. He spoke of a trend of these types of arguments long before this election. Despite this, he tended to be politically active, often embracing conversation with people that held different political beliefs than him. He made sure to note, however, that he could only engage with people on all sides of an issue if they were willing to discuss it, rather than vilify others for their beliefs, which was what he experienced when he came to college.

Matthew grew up in a liberal household, and was engaged in politics and political discussion from a young age. He has always clashed with his step-grandfather and his grandmother, though this was not the cause of the biggest blowout that he experienced. He no

longer spoke to his great uncle because of the fight that they had. At one of their family gatherings, in front of about 20 people, Matthew's great uncle yelled at him and told him that he was going to live off the country for the rest of his life, and that he was wasting his time with his education at the University of Michigan. This was spurred by their watching the news and the great uncle saying Obama was a terrorist, was running ISIS, and was a Muslim. This went on for a while, after which Matthew tore into him for several minutes, and the great uncle was insulted, saying Matthew had no respect, was a degenerate, and was living off his parents. This was almost two years ago, and they have not spoken since. They have seen each other since the incident, with both attending family gatherings, but Matthew has actively avoided interacting with his great uncle. His parents have never screamed at him in anywhere near the tone that his great uncle used. To Matthew, it was about being respectful, which his great uncle clearly was not. He often engages politically with people that have different views than he holds, but they do not scream at each other when they have discussed political issues. He even enjoys instigating a bit, saying things he knew that his friends would not agree with, as some of them hold conservative beliefs. Again, though, it was about having a respectful conversation. He has not instigated when he has been with his grandparents, preferring to allow them to bring up topics they wish to discuss.

Samantha shared an emotional experience that she had with her grandmother at a restaurant. She asked her grandma what she thought was a tame question near the beginning of the primaries for the 2016 election, asking which of the numerous Republican candidates for President she planned to support. Samantha identified as a liberal, so she was shocked when her grandma responded to this question in an aggressive manner toward President Obama.

And she just started shitting all over Obama. And I got so frustrated that I started crying and we were like in a restaurant and I told her that I was upset about something else cause I didn't like, I couldn't vocalize it, how frustrated. She was literally, the way she was saying it, you could tell it was just soundbites from Fox News. And all I had been wondering was which candidate she liked the most. That was all that I had asked. That's what it got into.

She also described various entanglements that she has had with her brother in recent months. They were usually small arguments, and she felt like he just was not as informed as her when making his arguments. She liked to pretend that he has changed his views, but cannot know for sure since they do not often discuss political topics.

Non-Confrontational Personality

A sense of self as non-confrontational was one of the biggest predictors of avoidance in the participants. Individuals were included in this category if they described themselves as non-confrontational during the interview or effectively did so through their remarks, independent of whether they came off as having a non-confrontational personality. Participants did not all express their identity as non-confrontational in the same manner. Rather, this non-confrontational nature took on many forms, with some simply seeking to avoid conflict, and others avoiding conversations they thought would be unproductive.

Emily noted that she did not engage with others that were aggressive about their views. She said that there was a time in the past that she acted in that way toward other people. She realized that people did not like it, and so she changed her behavior to avoid engaging in it herself. For her, respecting the views of others was important. If someone is willing to talk and

be respectful while they do it, she was more than willing to engage in discussion. However, a lack of respect for another's views would shut her down. She noted that if someone approached her with a political conversation, she would engage with them. "If I see that they're getting aggressive because they really don't agree with me, then I'm just like hey you know what, don't worry about it, I'm not going to change my mind, you're clearly not going to change yours, and if you don't want to talk about it we don't have to." She experienced a lot of anger and hostility in her younger days, and did not want to go back to it. She concluded by aptly saying, "As long as the conversation can be either productive or respectful or a combination of the two, then it's a conversation that I want to be a part of, because I find it really interesting and I like opening up my perspective to a bunch of different people from all walks of life. But if it's going to be aggressive and not productive and just going to leave both people walking away angry, I just cut it off."

Grace also described herself as non-confrontational for a similar reason. She does not talk about politics because she has no interest in trying to sway anyone or have someone else try to sway her opinion. To her, at that point, it is just about people projecting their opinions for no reason. She did not like the confrontation and was unsure how to counter an emotional response to an issue. Thus, she tended toward avoiding the confrontation at all. She did not connect this to any specific past experiences, though earlier in the interview she did note that she has fought with her grandfather on social issues, as he tended towards social conservatism, while she fell on the more socially liberal side.

Amanda related her identity as being non-confrontational to how she was raised. She actively avoided any opportunity for her views to come into play or to let others start an argument with her over politics. During this most recent election, a friend of hers asked her who

she planned on voting for while a few of them were watching one of the Presidential debates, and she shut down the conversation by saying it was a private matter. She does not even let political conversation get to the point where it could even become a confrontation. Growing up, Amanda never discussed politics with her parents. They never talked about it at all, not even saying who they were voting for in elections. They took the stance of emphasizing that she should form her own opinions. In that same vein, it was no surprise that the participant's parents were not a big influence on her political ideology, as growing up she did not even know their stances on political issues. Growing up, discovering things for herself, not having any semblance of political conversation in the home, led to her non-confrontational approach to political discussion.

Amanda's mother recently remarried, and her political beliefs shifted quickly afterwards. Her mom recently expressed her support for Trump, and even went to a campaign rally near their hometown. But as much as she disliked Trump and did not like that her mom and step-dad were supporting him in the election, she has refrained from saying anything to either of them about it because she believed they are entitled to their own opinions. She expressed that if someone wanted to engage with her on a political topic, she was fine with that, but does not enjoy confrontation and would actively avoid it.

There was also the aspect of spending one's time efficiently. Elizabeth did not like to waste her time explaining her point of view if it was not going to make a difference. Exchanging ideas and understanding the logic of others was something she could get behind, but if it became clear that the person with whom she was speaking was adversarial and oppositional, she would quickly shut down due to her non-confrontational nature. At that point, she would simply listen, rather than fully participate in the conversation. When this has happened, she just stops talking, says "Ok," and allows the other person to share their thoughts.

Participants self-identified as having a non-confrontational nature, though others may not describe them as such. There were several forms of being non-confrontational evident. Those that described themselves in this fashion seemed to take pride in it. None of the participants appeared to be ashamed of being non-confrontational. Rather, it was an identity that they embraced. For the most part, those that identified as being non-confrontational backed it up in their actions and forms of engagement and avoidance of political conversation, especially when they would choose to cease to engage. Once it became clear that a conversation was not going to go anywhere, even before one started, the participants would disengage. For most, it was less a matter of self-preservation as it was a conversation that was unnecessary to have at all.

The gender dynamics of who described themselves as non-confrontational stood out. Eight participants actively described themselves as non-confrontational, and only two of them identified as male. This likely does not say much about the actual personalities of the participants. Rather, it is likely a statement about how young adults in this society are socialized to see themselves and behave in different contexts.

Discussion

Avoidance was often experienced by participants in the context of their families and home environment. Many described an atmosphere in their home in which politics was simply avoided as a topic of conversation. Participants also shared stories of arguments at family dinners leading to future avoidance, with one participant's immediate family even skipping out on a family gathering.

Seeing oneself as having a non-confrontational personality was often a justification for avoidance of political conversation. Those that described themselves in this manner did not avoid political conversation altogether. Rather, they would often engage until they could tell that a conversation was no longer going to be productive or would just avoid talking politics with people that they suspected would engage in a more heated debate.

Early engagement in politics tended to be unintentional, with many participants mentioning mock elections held in their elementary and middle schools. Most of the students had yet to form their own views, making the exercise almost pointless, even negative, in their eyes.

Religion was important to the political discussion of participants, whether they considered themselves to be religious or wanted nothing to do with it. For many, it provided them with a sense of community. For others, it helped form their political ideas when they were younger. Later, these participants tended to look back and see how they were taught what to believe. Similarly, participants remarked that they did not like the idea of religion being used in what they perceived as a negative way. The dichotomy between students of different faiths and how they interacted with religion and its effects on their political interactions stood out. Participants from a Jewish background discussed how their religion taught them values, whereas

participants from a Christian background focused on how they interacted with specific views of the Church.

The participants' thoughts on voting provided an interesting point off which to work. Most of the participants interviewed expressed strong opinions about the importance of voting. Yet, the voting rate among young adults remains astonishingly low. There are other factors that play a role in this, such as the structural factors that prevent citizens from exercising their right to vote. Even so, such low rates of voting directly contradict what the participants intimated were their feelings about voting in elections. The strong opinions of the participants in favor of voting rights suggests that issues of enfranchisement could be an area around which young people could be mobilized, especially those that do not like to engage in much political conversation outside of discussions around ensuring people are registered to vote. However, as voting rights is an incredibly politicized topic, this could lead to conflict and debate, alienating the non-confrontational among those that think voting is important.

Engagement in political conversation took on many forms among the participants. Some, like Kim, took to social media to express their beliefs and concerns, and engage with others through those mediums. This was also the case with Christopher, who most frequently engaged politically via participation in Reddit forums. I studied influences on engagement, but study of how young adults prefer to engage is an area that deserves more research.

More research needs to be done on civic engagement and how it is affected by parenting style. Many of the parents of the participants seemed to attempt to shield their children from everything they possibly could. What implications does this parenting style have for all aspects of being a citizen? Will fewer young adults seek political office because of this shielding? Will voter turnout rates be lower for this generation than previous generations? Will more

engagement take place from the sidelines and on social media? Most of the interview sample came from students with many privileges: Primarily white students with parents that had high educational attainment. Parenting styles may be different in different situations, adding a factor to be analyzed when studying how said style affects civic engagement.

The pointlessness but pervasiveness of mock elections in elementary and middle schools deserves more attention. It appears to be one of the primary ways that children first engage with political ideas and candidates for public office, yet most people have negative experiences with this form of exposure. Are there better ways for children to learn about politics and government in school? It can be difficult because a teacher that peddles their viewpoints would not be viewed favorably, and that is always a risk when teaching students about government. Holding a mock election seems to be the safest bet, where one's views are not shared. Pedagogy around engaging young students on political topics does not seem to be settled, and recent research in the field could lead to further developments (Hess and McAvoy, 2015).

My research was limited by the restrictions of being an undergraduate student. Time was restricted, and there are many other obligations to tend to, forcing the scale of such a project to be smaller than what would be ideal. Funding also proves to be a limitation. Since I did not end up offering any monetary incentive to participate, it is likely that those that chose to respond to the email requesting participants have a great interest in politics or engage in political conversation, leaving open the possibility of bias in my sample toward those that feel more comfortable engaging. There was still a significant amount of avoidance cited by participants in the study.

Klofstad, McClurg, and Rolfe (2009) claimed that people do not consciously select with whom they discuss politics. Through my conversations with participants, it became clear to me

that people were consciously selecting their conversation partners when it came to politics. Sure, they may have also been the same people that they also discussed important life events with, but that does not take away the fact that this was on the minds of participants. They knew who not to talk about these issues with. Sometimes that meant staying quiet when someone in a store is wearing an inflammatory shirt, and sometimes that meant not speaking about politics with a family member who may have strong opinions. Either way, my findings did not line up with the claims made by the authors of the previous study. More research is needed on the topic of with whom people choose to discuss political issues. The fact that people choose not to engage in these encounters could lead others to incorrectly think that others agree with them. Research on what the other participant in those conversations thought had happened would be worth pursuing.

The gender dynamics of someone considering themselves to have a non-confrontational personality were notable, as nearly all of the people that described themselves this way were female. This lines up well with the study by Wolak & McDevitt (2011), who were studying the roots of the gender gap in political knowledge among high school seniors. They found that, not surprisingly, young men and women are treated differently when it comes to politics. They stated that when it comes to politics, young men seem to learn better through conflict and young women seem to learn better through consensus. Defining themselves as non-confrontational and avoiding conflict, which I found to be more common among the young women in my study, can easily be seen as preferring to learn through consensus. What the authors did not address, and what I was unable to analyze in this study, were the implications for how women are able to participate in both political discussion and in the political sphere itself. Even though they make up roughly 50% of the population, women are still woefully underrepresented in political office, making up close to 20% of Congress. This is an area that deserves further research.

Conclusion

Our current moment in politics and policy is like few, if any, that we have seen before. Engaging in political conversation is often seen as something risky, an opportunity that is simply safer to avoid. Some avoid political discussion because they have a distaste for conflict, while others have bad memories of conversations gone awry earlier in life. Understanding why some people engage in political conversation and others choose not to is critical to increasing our ability as a society to reach people and learn how to better their lives. This could lead to new means and methods of reaching people and bringing a more representative group of people into these critical conversations. People engage in different ways and for different reasons. Some choose to avoid political discussion altogether, and this is worth understanding as well. There is much more to learn in this arena, and I hope that this study leads to new inquiries that will further these investigations in the future. No one can say for certain what the future holds, but it is undoubtedly true that people will have thoughts and ideas about policies and decisions that are made. Whether they share those opinions, however, is another matter entirely.

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Appendix A – Pre-Interview Questionnaire

What is your participant identification number? This was sent to you in the email with the link to this survey.

Please indicate your current grade level.

- First-year undergraduate
- Second-year undergraduate
- Third-year undergraduate
- Fourth-year undergraduate
- Fifth-year undergraduate
- Not listed, please describe: _____

What is your major?

What is your age?

- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- Not listed, please describe: _____

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Intersex
- Not listed, please describe: _____

With which race(s) do you identify? Select all that apply.

- Asian
- Black
- White
- Hispanic
- Native American
- Native Hawaiian
- Not listed, please describe: _____

With which religion, if any, do you identify?

- Christianity
- Judaism
- Islam
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Atheism
- Agnostic
- Not listed, please describe: _____

On a scale from 1-10, with 1 being the least religiously observant, and 10 being the most religiously observant, how religious would you say you are?

What is the highest level of education completed by Parent/Guardian 1?

- No schooling completed
- Middle school
- Some high school completed
- High school
- Some college completed
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Professional Degree
- Doctoral Degree

What is the highest level of education completed by Parent/Guardian 2?

- No schooling completed
- Middle school
- Some high school completed
- High school
- Some college completed
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Professional Degree
- Doctoral Degree

How often do you speak with one or both of your parents/guardians (Includes forms of communication such as texting, phone calls, video calls, in person, etc.)

- Less than once a week
- Once a week
- Several times a week
- Once a day
- Several times a day

On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being the most conservative, and 10 being the most liberal, how do you identify politically?

With which political party do you identify?

- Democratic Party
- Republican Party
- None/Independent
- Not listed, please describe: _____

With which political party does Parent/Guardian 1 identify?

- Democratic Party
- Republican Party
- None/Independent
- Not listed, please describe: _____

With which political party does Parent/Guardian 2 identify?

- Democratic Party
- Republican Party
- None/Independent
- Not listed, please describe: _____

Have you ever worked on a political campaign?

- Yes
- No

On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being the least often and 10 being the most often, how often would you say you talk about politics?

Are you eligible to vote in the 2016 election?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Do you plan to vote in the 2016 election?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

Appendix B – Pre-Interview Questionnaire Responses

Please indicate your current grade level.

Answer	%	Count
First-year undergraduate	28.57%	6
Second-year undergraduate	19.05%	4
Third-year undergraduate	14.29%	3
Fourth-year undergraduate	33.33%	7
Fifth-year undergraduate	4.76%	1
Not listed, please describe:	0.00%	0
Total	100%	21

What is your age?

Answer	%	Count	Other:
17	0.00%	0	22
18	19.05%	4	22
19	23.81%	5	
20	19.05%	4	
21	28.57%	6	
Not listed, please describe:	9.52%	2	
Total	100%	21	

What is your sex?

Answer	%	Count
Male	38.10%	8
Female	61.90%	13
Intersex	0.00%	0
Not listed, please describe:	0.00%	0
Total	100%	21

With which race(s) do you identify? Select all that apply.

Answer	%	Count
Asian	14.29%	3
Black	9.52%	2
White	80.95%	17
Hispanic	9.52%	2
Native American	0.00%	0

Native Hawaiian	0.00%	0
Not listed, please describe:	0.00%	0
Total	100%	21

With which religion, if any, do you identify?

Answer	%	Count
Christianity	25.00%	5
Judaism	25.00%	5
Islam	5.00%	1
Hinduism	0.00%	0
Buddhism	5.00%	1
Atheism	20.00%	4
Agnostic	15.00%	3
Not listed, please describe:	5.00%	1
Total	100%	20

Other:

Non-religious

On a scale from 1-10, with 1 being the least religiously observant, and 10 being the most religiously observant, how religious would you say you are?

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
On a scale from 1-10, with 1 being the least religiously observant, and 10 being the most religiously observant, how religious would you say you are?	1.00	7.00	3.10	1.90	3.61	21

What is the highest level of education completed by Parent/Guardian 1?

Answer	%	Count
No schooling completed	0.00%	0
Middle school	0.00%	0
Some high school completed	4.76%	1
High school	9.52%	2
Some college completed	14.29%	3
Associate's Degree	4.76%	1

Bachelor's Degree	19.05%	4
Master's Degree	19.05%	4
Professional Degree	14.29%	3
Doctoral Degree	14.29%	3
Total	100%	21

What is the highest level of education completed by Parent/Guardian 2?

Answer	%	Count
No schooling completed	0.00%	0
Middle school	0.00%	0
Some high school completed	4.76%	1
High school	4.76%	1
Some college completed	23.81%	5
Associate's Degree	0.00%	0
Bachelor's Degree	38.10%	8
Master's Degree	14.29%	3
Professional Degree	9.52%	2
Doctoral Degree	4.76%	1
Total	100%	21

On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being the most conservative, and 10 being the most liberal, how do you identify politically?

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being the most conservative, and 10 being the most liberal, how do you identify politically?	4.00	10.00	7.05	1.84	3.38	21

How often do you speak with one or both of your parents/guardians? Includes forms of communication such as texting, phone calls, video calls, in person, etc.

Answer	%	Count
Less than once a week	9.52%	2
Once a week	33.33%	7
Several times a week	42.86%	9
Once a day	9.52%	2
Several times a day	4.76%	1
Total	100%	21

With which political party do you identify?

Answer	%	Count
Democratic Party	52.38%	11
Republican Party	0.00%	0
None/Independent	38.10%	8
Not listed, please describe:	9.52%	2
Total	100%	21

Other:

Libertarian

Liberation

With which political party does Parent/Guardian 1 identify?

Answer	%	Count
Democratic Party	33.33%	7
Republican Party	33.33%	7
None/Independent	28.57%	6
Not listed, please describe:	4.76%	1
Total	100%	21

Other: I think parent 1 voted republican the past two elections, but maybe republican then democrat

With which political party does Parent/Guardian 2 identify?

Answer	%	Count
Democratic Party	38.10%	8
Republican Party	38.10%	8
None/Independent	14.29%	3
Not listed, please describe:	9.52%	2
Total	100%	21

Other:

Parent 2 has typically voted democrat but neither parent is strongly aligned

Libertarian Party

Have you ever worked on a political campaign?

Answer	%	Count
Yes	28.57%	6
No	71.43%	15
Total	100%	21

On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being the least often and 10 being the most often, how often would you say you talk about politics?

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being the least often and 10 being the most often, how often would you say you talk about politics?	3.00	10.00	6.86	2.12	4.50	21

Are you eligible to vote in the 2016 election?

Answer	%	Count
Yes	95.24%	20
No	4.76%	1
Not sure	0.00%	0
Total	100%	21

Do you plan to vote in the 2016 election?

Answer	%	Count
Yes	76.19%	16
No	14.29%	3
Not Sure	9.52%	2
Total	100%	21

What is your major?

Cellular Molecular Biology: Biomedical Engineering

PitE

Political science, economics, International Studies

Political Science

Sport Management

Spanish & BCN

Political Science

Undeclared/Pre-Law

International Studies and Asian Studies

Undecided

Art History

Communication Studies and Linguistics

Psychology

Psychology

Gender & Health

Engineering

Cellular and Molecular Biology

Environmental Engineering

Sociology

Nuclear engineering

Appendix C – Interview Guide

Before we begin, I would like to tell you a little bit about my research project. The purpose of my study is to find out why young adults either speak about political issues or avoid discussing them, essentially engaging or avoiding political conversation. I'm interested in trying to determine what affects this in terms of the home, and political socialization while growing up. To aid in this, I want to hear about your story and some of your experiences.

To start, just tell me a little bit about yourself.

- a. Where are you from?
- b. What is your major?

Early

- Do you remember your first political memory?
 - Anything from your parents?
 - Can you tell me about any memories you have from your time in school in relation to politics?
 - Any memorable conversations you may have had with classmates or teachers?
 - Which memories from conversations with friends stand out?
 - Would you be comfortable sharing a story or two?

Family

- What do you think has influenced your political identity/worldview?
 - How have your parents influenced on your political identity?
 - Siblings?
 - Can you give me an example describing a discussion about politics you've had with your parents?
- How often would you say you go home during the academic year?
- When you're at home, what kinds of things do you discuss with your parents?
 - I know for me, we often discuss classes, student orgs, internships, etc.
- How often do you discuss political issues when you go home?
 - Is it central to your conversations?
 - If not, do you avoid them? Or does it just not come up?

- How do you describe your relationship to your parents/family?
 - When a significant event happens in your life, do you call them right away?
- Do you often fight with your parents?
 - About what?
- Have you ever fought with your parents or other family members about a political issue?
 - Can you describe what happened?
 - Where and when did this fight take place?
 - How did it come about?
 - How did you feel afterward?
 - Have you discussed this issue with your parents in any sort of capacity since this disagreement?
 - Would you say you are not as close with your parents as a result of this disagreement?
- Do you avoid going home or interacting with your family as a result of political conversations you have had with family members?

Community

- What communities would you describe yourself as part of?
- Are there any norms about discussing political issues in these communities?

College

- What was it like to come to college?
 - Was it your first time living away from home?
- How would you say your political views have changed since coming to college?
 - What experiences have you had that have contributed to this change?
 - i.e. Student orgs, your friend group, living in the dorms
- How have your beliefs on any topics significantly shifted over time?
 - What do you think influenced these changes?
 - When did they take place?
- How often would you say you discuss political issues with your friends?
 - Do you bring up things with which you know your friends will not agree?
 - If so, why?
- Do a lot of your close friends hold similar political beliefs as yourself?

- Do you often discuss political issues with those that you don't agree with?
- Do you discuss the political beliefs of your parents with your friends?
 - In what context?
 - How does that come up?

2016

- Do you plan to vote in this year's election?
 - Why or why not?
 - What's motivating you to vote or not vote?
- How do you talk about the candidates? Positively? Negatively?
- Have you gotten into any arguments about the 2016 election?

Appendix D – Consent Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of the Project: Engaging or Avoiding Political Conversation Among Young Adults

Principal Investigator: Noah Betman, BA in Honors Sociology, University of Michigan Class of 2017

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Sandra Levitsky, Professor of Sociology, University of Michigan

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Elizabeth Armstrong, Professor of Sociology, University of Michigan

You are invited to participate in a research study about political conversation among young adults. The purpose of this study is to learn about what affects this in terms of political socialization while growing up, the home, and the like.

Information

Approximately twenty to thirty students at the University of Michigan will be invited to participate in this research study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to first complete a brief questionnaire and then an in-person interview at your convenience.

The questionnaire will ask you about your age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, some questions about your parents, your political affiliation, and your relationship with your parents. During the interview, I will ask you questions about your experiences with politics in the home when you were younger, how you came to form your own opinions about different political issues, whether and how often you discuss political topics among your family and friends, and some of your experiences when it comes to conversations about politics.

I would like to record the interview to ensure that everything is captured accurately, but you may still participate in the research if you would prefer not to be taped. If it is acceptable for the conversation to be recorded, I will do so and transcribe it at a later date. I will delete the recording when I finish the transcription. In the time between our conversation and the deletion of the recording, no one else will listen to the interview or be able to identify you in any way.

Benefits

You may not directly benefit from participating in this study, but some people find that sharing and reflecting on past experiences is beneficial. I hope this study will make it so people who have political differences from their parents are better able to think about the conversations they've been having and how their differences affect how they discuss political issues.

Risks and Discomforts

Answering questions about the experience of political disagreement can be uncomfortable, as it may require recalling unpleasant times. You may decline to answer any interview question and you can end your participation in the study at any time.

Confidentiality

I plan to use the responses from the interviews in my Sociology Honors Thesis, but I will not include any identifying information that could potentially connect you to my project. I will not use your real name in the transcribed copy of the interview or in the final Thesis Project. To safeguard your information, the recording of our conversation will be deleted once it has been transcribed. All data will be kept on a password-protected computer in a password-protected document. All email correspondence will be deleted once the interview process has been completed. My faculty advisor might request access to the data that I am collecting, but this will be the transcribed version and you will be unidentifiable. Other than that, I will be the only person who has access to your responses.

Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and withdraw from the study at any point. If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, your information will be deleted.

Contact Information

If you have questions about this research, including questions about the scheduling of your interview or any other concerns, you may contact the researcher, Noah Betman at njbetman@umich.edu and Elizabeth Armstrong at elarmstr@umich.edu.

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the:

University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board
2800 Plymouth Road
Building 520, Room 1169
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2800
Phone: (734) 936-0933 or toll free, (866) 936-0933
Email: irbhsbs@umich.edu

Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. I will give you a copy of this document for your records. I will keep one copy with the study records. Be sure that I have answered any questions you have about the study and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

I agree to participate in the study.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Consent to be Audio/video Recorded

I agree to be audio/video recorded.

YES _____ **NO** _____

Signature

Appendix E – Participant Recruitment Email

Hi,

My name is Noah Betman and I am a senior at the University of Michigan majoring in Sociology. I am conducting research for my Honors Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Armstrong and Dr. Sandra Levitsky in the Department of Sociology. I am interested in learning how young adults avoid or engage in political conversation.

I would like to have you complete a short questionnaire and then conduct an interview. The questionnaire will ask you about your age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, some questions about your parents, your political affiliation, and your relationship with your parents. The interview will last about forty-five minutes to an hour. I will ask you questions about your experiences with politics in the home when you were younger, how you came to form your own opinions about different political issues, whether and how often you discuss political topics among your family and friends, and some of your experiences when it comes to conversations about politics.

I would like to record the interview to ensure that everything is captured accurately, but you may still participate in the research if you would prefer not to be taped. I will delete the recording when I finish transcribing the interview. Interviews will be conducted at a time and place that is convenient for you.

Please contact me at 248-917-2874 or njbetman@umich.edu with a date, time, and location that works best for you, and we can finalize the logistics to set up the interview. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Noah Betman