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Published in: Journal of Youth Studies

DOI: 10.1080/13676261.2019.1645311

Link to publication

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Citation for published version (APA):
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To cite this article: Jakob Ohme, Franziska Marquart & Lisa Merete Kristensen (2019): School lessons, social media and political events in a get-out-the-vote campaign: successful drivers of political engagement among youth?, Journal of Youth Studies, DOI: 10.1080/13676261.2019.1645311

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1645311

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Published online: 24 Jul 2019.

Article views: 98

View Crossmark data
School lessons, social media and political events in a get-out-the-vote campaign: successful drivers of political engagement among youth?

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ABSTRACT
During election times, societal actors frequently employ specific get-out-the-vote campaigns to mobilize young voters’ turnout and engagement with the election. Although such campaigns receive praise in society, little is known about how effective they are and if they shape longer lasting types of political engagement. This study presents novel evidence about the differential effects of a multi-platform get-out-the-vote campaign in Denmark, and investigates how such campaigns can help to address the important democratic problem of youth disengagement. Based on a two-wave panel study among high school- and university students in Denmark (n = 275), the effects of classroom interventions, political event participation, and social media use on political interest, knowledge, and political efficacy are explored. The results suggests that get-out-the-vote campaigns are able to strengthen youths’ political engagement, but that civic education and political events may be more important than communication via social media.

Dwindling political engagement among young voters across the world makes it necessary that political and societal actors find ways to sustainably (re)connect young generations with the political system they live in (e.g. Ahmad and Sheikh 2013; Dostie-Goulet 2009; Fieldhouse, Tranmer, and Russell 2007). Such political socialization includes the engagement of the youth with an upcoming election, especially if it is their first one. High thresholds, such as feeling less knowledgeable about political issues and candidates and not having established stable voting patterns yet, present challenges to young voters (e.g. Aalberg and Jenssen 2007; Colwell Quarles 1979; O’Keefe and Liu 1980). To help them overcome these barriers, societal actors (such as media, NGOs, and educational organizations) employ get-out-the-vote campaigns to mobilize the youth (Green and Gerber 2015).
Most campaigns that aim at increasing turnout among younger generations take an informational approach. In line with relevant political socialization mechanisms, campaigns aim at increasing knowledge about political topics among young citizens, getting them in touch with political actors, or fostering political discussion and a sense of belonging (Howard and Posler 2012; McKinney and Banwart 2005). The sources of information employed can vary from campaign to campaign, but are mostly oriented towards political education in school, information received via media, and political events (De Vreese and Moeller 2014; McLeod 2000; Neundorf and Smets 2017). Correspondingly, get-out-the-vote campaigns make use of a variety of means to reach young citizens, for example through the organization of events, classroom interventions, or the use of specific media platforms. However, these activities differ significantly in their scope, content, and way of addressing the youth. Although some research investigates the success of get-out-the-vote campaigns in general (e.g. Howard and Posler 2012; Nickerson 2006), it is less clear which types of intervention are effective here. Therefore, differential effects of campaign interventions need to be explored in order to plan future campaigns.

In addition, little is known about how such campaign interventions can affect one-time behavior and whether they succeed in making citizens more knowledgeable about and interested in politics and upcoming elections. While a primary goal of get-out-the-vote campaigns is to increase turnout, secondary goals may be equally relevant from a democratic point of view. Only if such campaigns ‘engage young adults and encourage them to participate in the political process while also directing potential voters to sources for increased information’ (Tedesco 2007, 1193), citizens will be able to find ways of developing informed vote decisions. Previous research evaluating the success of get-out-the-vote campaigns, however, has largely overlooked these intermediated goals. Our study therefore investigates get-out-the-vote campaigns’ relevance for different political outcomes.

We study the effects of the specific get-out-the-vote campaign STEM’RNE, run before the Danish local election in 2017 in one county in Denmark. The findings contribute to our understanding of how such campaigns shape young citizens’ political engagement in several ways. First, we investigate the effects of three distinct campaign components: youth participation in campaign events, attendance at specific classroom interventions, and the use of the campaign’s social media channels. Secondly, for the latter, we distinguish between the effects of campaign information on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Thirdly, we assess STEM’RNE’s effects on three types of political engagement: political interest, knowledge, and young voters’ political efficacy. Relying on a two-wave panel survey, we study young citizens’ (n = 275) involvement with politics and the election at the beginning of the informational campaign and after Election Day. Hereby, our panel design allows us to test whether changes in democratic key variables can be attributed to media use, school lessons, or event participation.

Youth engagement and political socialization

Youth disengagement is a challenge for democracies, since citizens who lack political engagement in their young years are likely to keep these low levels of political activity throughout their life cycle (Gerber, Green, and Shachar 2003). Furthermore, the democratic disadvantage of young citizens in most Western democracies – with older voters outnumbering the youth – becomes more severe if only few of a new generation engage in politics
and turn out in elections. In both cases, countries with a high youth disengagement do not only lack input from younger cohorts in political decision-making processes, but also risk delegitimizing the democratic principle in the long term. Young voters’ disengagement is in part attributable to the feeling that political candidates do not take them or their issues seriously, but also to a discouraging political discourse (Cammaerts et al. 2014). Iyengar and Jackman (2003) further point to the busy life of the young, who focus on getting their first job, the college experience, and moving to new cities, among other things.

At the same time, young people’s mid and late adolescence is considered a critical period in the encouragement and shaping of political engagement (Feldman et al. 2007; Hoskins, Janmaat, and Melis 2017). During these formative years, they establish crucial bases of political interest, efficacy, and deliberation that can help them in becoming active, democratic citizens (Dinas 2012; Eagles and Davidson 2001). Young citizens’ first election can be described as their official entrance point into politics, and research found that political events are most formative at the age of 18–19 (Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002). Therefore, socializing young adults with politics plays an important role in the development of their future political engagement. Political socialization is the process through which citizens ‘crystallize political identities, values and behavior that remain relatively persistent throughout later life’ (Neundorf and Smets 2017, 1). Although there is an ongoing debate about how stable patterns of political orientations and behavior actually are throughout the life cycle (e.g. Bhatti and Hansen 2012), it is generally believed that early-life experiences form the basis for political attitudes, engagement, and participation patterns in later adulthood (Alwin and Krosnick 1991; Easton and Dennis 1969). Successful ways to mobilize young voters are achieved through peers and parents (Bhatti and Hansen 2012), while get-out-the-vote-campaigns often focus on civic education, political events, and media exposure (De Vreese and Moeller 2014; McLeod 2000; Neundorf and Smets 2017).

A large body of research has demonstrated that civic education and political activities in schools are important predictors of adolescents’ later political engagement (Dassonneville et al. 2012; Eichhorn 2018; Feldman et al. 2007; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Pasek et al. 2008). Studies suggest that, in contrast to adults, adolescents may be more susceptible to educational initiatives targeting political interest and behavior (Keating and Janmaat 2016). Hence, classroom discussion may positively affect interest, increase knowledge about political matters, and foster efficacy and political confidence (e.g. Feldman et al. 2007; Galston 2007; Levy, Solomon, and Collet-Gillard 2016; Meirick and Wackman 2004; but see Stadelmann-Steffen and Sulzer 2018). We thus acknowledge that ‘education through citizenship has lasting and positive effects on both expressive and electoral political engagement’ (Keating and Janmaat 2016, 425).

The direct effect of attending political events on adolescents’ interest and engagement in politics received little scholarly attention so far (but see Addonizio, Green, and Glaser 2007; Howard and Posler 2012; McKinney and Banwart 2005), but experimental data by Green and McClellan (2017, 3) shows that election day festivals are ‘among the most cost-effective get-out-the-vote techniques’ and can increase turnout by about 4% among the general population. Such events can encompass a variety of activities, including political rallies, conventions, or candidate debates, and they are often part of larger campaign efforts that also encompass direct political advertising. Increasingly, political campaigners from different parties are investing in young voters as a specific target
group and aim at making political content and issues attractive to this group (e.g. Leppäniemi et al. 2010; Sweetser Trammell 2007).

Since event participation and classroom activities require a physical contact point, they are less effective in reaching a wide population of young citizens. In contrast, information communicated through mass media can reach a larger audience and contribute to citizens’ political socialization through a number of political learning mechanisms, such as cultivation (Lee, Shah, and McLeod 2012; Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Gerbner et al. 1986), social cognition (Bandura 1976), and political knowledge gains (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). While we know that the use of media in general can positively affect political engagement and participation (McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy 1999; Prior 2007), young citizens increasingly receive political information through social media (Levy et al. 2018; Schröder, Blach-Ørsten, and Eberholst 2018); accordingly, political campaigns turned to online platforms to reach this part of the population (Miller 2013). Most research in this field has shown that receiving political information via social media mobilizes political engagement of young citizens in various ways (Ekström and Shehata 2018; Kahne, Lee, and Feezell 2013; Tang and Lee 2013; Xenos, Vromen, and Loader 2014).

Get-out-the-vote – the role of informational campaigns for youth engagement

In addition, public- or privately funded initiatives targeting youth political engagement (such as, e.g. Kids Voting or Student Voices in the United States) may also raise participation and interest levels (e.g. Eagles and Davidson 2001; Feldman et al. 2007; McDevitt and Chaffee 2000; Syvertsen et al. 2009). Informational campaigns targeting young voters through social events and digital media can be a positive way forward. Established examples include MTV’s Choose or Lose (1992–2012), Power of 12 (2012), Elect This of 2016, and MTV’s Rock the Vote. In Europe, campaigns like 80 Prozent für Deutschland (80 percent for Germany) in 2017, De Stembus (The votebus, The Netherlands, 2016), or the UK’s RizeUp in 2016 are recent examples for get-out-the-vote campaigns targeting young voters. To understand which role such campaigns play in the engagement of young voters, a proper investigation of their effects is necessary.

While the main goal of general political campaigns is to mobilize voters to turn out (Miller 2013), informational campaigns for young citizens also target learning and habit formation (Neundorf and Smets 2017). Extant research suggests that political campaigns can directly motivate turnout (e.g. Aldrich et al. 2016; Hargittai and Shaw 2013; Kahne, Lee, and Feezell 2013), but it is less clear if they indeed reach this goal through informing and engaging citizens. Hence, we investigate whether get-out-the-vote campaigns influence what young citizens know about politics and how they feel about it. We therefore focus on young citizens’ political interest, knowledge, and efficacy as the three main dependent variables of this study. An increase in political engagement may be a secondary campaign goal, but from a democratic perspective, it is equally important: First, higher political engagement during campaign time helps citizens to develop an informed vote decision (Colwell Quarles 1979). Secondly, only if young citizens become more interested in politics and feel more capable of acting politically in the beginning of their political life, longer lasting effects on their development as citizens can be established (Gerber, Green, and Shachar 2003). Lastly, as described in the Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba, Schlozman, J. OHME ET AL.
and Brady 1995), political participation is – among other things – dependent on citizens’ political engagement. Hence, being politically knowledgeable, interested, and feeling politically efficacious can be important preconditions for a political action such as voting. Our study builds on a theoretical framework that connects the role of socialization agents with political engagement as important predictors of young citizens’ political participation.

Previous research evaluated get-out-the-vote campaigns with a strong focus on the behavioral part, asking if they increase youth turnout. As one example, findings by Nickerson (2006, 62) indicate that ‘political campaigns […] are poorly suited for mobilizing young voters’ when canvassing from door to door. Few studies, however, looked beyond the immediate effects and investigated the outcomes for political learning and attitudes (but see Howard and Posler 2012; McKinney and Banwart 2005; Nickerson 2006), and most research has been conducted in the U.S. American context. It is therefore an open question if results are transferable to other national backgrounds, such as the Danish one. Even though turnout among citizens in Denmark is quite high in general, Danish youth are increasingly likely to abstain from voting in local elections (Almlund 2018; see also Hogh and Larsen 2016). Like in other countries, local elections are perceived as of ‘second order’, which may be one potential reason for low youth turnout (Marsh 1998). Notably, extant research has established the important role of socialization agents for young citizens’ political engagement in different Western contexts (e.g. Lee, Shah, and McLeod 2012; Mesch and Coleman, 2007; Moeller et al. 2014), and given that young people become similarly politically socialized in these countries (Grasso 2016), there is reason to believe that education, event participation and media use play an important role in the Danish context as well. However, it is an open question if they function as similar drivers in a specific get-out-the-vote campaign, like the one under investigation here.

**Hypotheses and research questions**

Having the opportunity to assess the impact of the get-out-the-vote campaign STEM’RNE in the context of the 2017 Danish Municipality elections, we ask whether the campaign was successful in affecting relevant democratic outcome variables beyond turnout for young Danish citizens and assess possible effects for political interest, knowledge, and efficacy. Following the literature discussed above, we acknowledge that providing students with political knowledge is often a first important step for the development of political interest (Dassonneville et al. 2012; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Feldman et al. 2007). However, not all school activities are successful across the board: For example, Eagles and Davidson (2001) show that for mock elections held in schools, student age and grade level are crucial, since older students find such elections less interesting. Furthermore, scholars need to consider students’ life outside the classroom as well, since this directly or indirectly affects educational efforts. These factors have become increasingly relevant in our modern media environment: Findings by Lee and colleagues (2012) indicate that the effects of classroom deliberation, while directly increasing political discussion and participation (Neundorf, Niemi, and Smets 2016), are also partially mediated – and enhanced – by news media use (see also Andersen and Hopmann 2018). Based on the evidence presented in the extant literature, we thus assume, in a first step, that:

H1: The more school lessons dedicated to the election young voters participate in, the higher is their political engagement after the election.
The success of specific campaign events for engaging young citizens with an upcoming election remains under-investigated. Howard and Posler (2012), however, provide a notable exception: The authors studied the effects of Debate-A-Palooza, a student-organized festival that, during the 2008 U.S. presidential elections, aimed at bringing together citizens to watch a televised candidate debate and discuss it afterwards. Debate-A-Palooza was targeted at a youth audience, and interviews with attendees showed that a ‘number of students had never watched a debate and claimed they would not have watched debates this year without the festival’ (Howard and Posler 2012, 401). While not shifting political opinions in favor of one candidate, participation in the event raised students’ self-reported voter registration, their intentions to go to the polls, and their vote certainty. In addition, the festival left students feeling better informed about issues and candidates and raised their community-related political involvement. Similarly, investigations into the effects of the youth-targeting Rock the Vote/CNN televised U.S. presidential candidate debate of 2003 report positive effects on young people’s political engagement, trust, and efficacy, while lowering their political cynicism (McKinney and Banwart 2005). However, event participation does not always affect politically relevant outcomes in a significant way: Feldman and colleagues (2007) showed that students participating in the Student Voices program in the U.S. increased in their political interest after interacting with a political candidate, but only marginally and inconsistently across semesters. These results stress that while the lasting impact of singular events may be limited, they may still foster short-term engagement such as going to the polls (see also Nickerson 2006). We therefore ask:

**RQ1:** Does event participation increase the level of political engagement among young voters throughout the get-out-the-vote campaign?

Social media play an increasingly important role in political campaigns, but few studies could confirm a positive influence on engaging young voters with an upcoming election (Aldrich et al. 2016; Bond et al. 2012). The use of specifically created social media channels in a locally restricted campaign, however, has not been investigated so far. By using social media, get-out-the-vote campaigns can provide a large amount of information, spread over the whole campaign period and edited in a way that is appealing to the target group, for example via videos, live casts, or other visuals. Furthermore, users can engage with social media content by sharing or commenting on it, and social endorsements can function as interpretation aids for users and increase the effectiveness of a political message on social media (Messing and Westwood 2014). Hence, we expect:

**H2:** The more campaign information young voters encounter via social media platforms, the higher is their political engagement.

Although social media platforms share common characteristics (such as user profiles and network character), the differing architecture of digital platforms results in diverse user behavior in political campaigns (Bossetta 2018). While campaign research mainly focuses on the effects of general social media use (e.g. Ekström and Shehata 2018; Ohme, de Vreese, and Albaek 2018) or Facebook or Twitter specifically (e.g. Enli and Skogerbø 2013), new, visual platforms increase in popularity among younger citizens. Social media networks like Instagram or Snapchat rather revolve ‘around uploading pictures than disseminating text-based messages’ (Filimonov, Russmann, and Svensson 2016, 1). Importantly, image-based information is both more attention-grabbing and
processed differently compared to text-based messages: Visual are accessed faster by audiences (Barry 1997), information conveyed via images is better recalled than word-based information (Nelson, Reed, and Walling 1976), and images can evoke more emotional reactions (Iyer and Oldmeadow 2006; see also Powell et al. 2015). Disseminating campaign information via visual social media platforms may hence yield differential effects on political engagement.

The use of visuals exemplifies that by employing different platforms in campaign communication, messages need to be adjusted to the design of the digital platform. In get-out-the-vote campaigns, it may be possible that text-based messages are able to convey information that is more detailed and that mostly affects young citizens’ political knowledge. In contrast, Towner (2017) found that infographics uploaded on Instagram increased political knowledge among social media users during the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign. However, research investigating the use of different platforms and their effects on desired outcomes in political campaigns is still sparse (Bossetta 2018). We therefore ask whether utilizing distinct communication concepts on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat results in different outcomes for young citizens’ political engagement:

RQ2: Does young citizens’ engagement with different social media platforms during campaign time have differential effects on their political engagement?

**STEM’RNE – a local get-out-the-vote campaign**

STEM’RNE (Danish: The Voices), the campaign under investigation in this study, was an informational non-partisan get-out-the-vote campaign in a specific region in Denmark situated in the context of the 2017 local elections. The campaign was initiated by six established Danish media outlets in collaboration with the local university and its library. The goal of STEM’RNE was to target, engage, and communicate directly with 18–25-year-olds through events and informational efforts in the classroom, combined with journalistic coverage of the election on social media. The campaign was kicked off on October 13 and ended on Election Day, November 21st 2017 (Schultz Jørgensen 2018, 15).

Sixteen general and vocational upper secondary educational institutions were involved in the campaigns’ educational efforts – generally, these institutions represent the 10th, 11th, and 12th year in school (approximately age 17–19). School teachers were obliged to spend 10–12 school lessons with a duration of 90 minutes on the election, and each school held a mock election. Teachers combined traditional social studies components with a number of out-of-the-box elements. The regular curriculum usually consists of lessons on, e.g. the division of power between state, region and municipality in Denmark, the election process, the importance of democracy, and voter behavior. Less traditional approaches were used as well: One teacher, for example, took students on a bike trip on roads with high levels of traffic to illustrate a political issue in the municipality (investment in bike lanes).

STEM’RNE held two categories of events to meet young voters face to face: First, two big festival-events were held, one to kick off the campaign and one to conclude it. These events featured concerts, confession videos, visits by influencers, DJ’s, and live debates – among other things. Second, 25 live debates between young local candidates running for the election were organized. Each time, a different school hosted the campaign, and
students were invited to participate as a live audience. The debates took up questions from the audience and the agenda of the young candidates, and were broadcasted live on the campaign’s Facebook site and the regional TV station, TV2 Fyn.

The journalistic coverage of STEM’RNE’s was almost entirely disseminated through social media, specifically Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram, and featured text, picture, and video uploads. Affordances and expectations of each communication channel were considered as well: The Instagram account featured pictures and testimonials of young voters, while Snapchat included small broadcasts from the tour bus along with quizzes and facts. Facebook was the primary publication platform featuring both live broadcasts of debates, journalistic videos, memes, a music video, pictures with text, and event invitations (see Appendix A for examples). The posts aimed to be humorous and encouraging of participation in debate. Examples of Facebook content include celebrities telling off non-voters, the video ‘Grandpa decides’ on what the world would look like if only old people voted, and short debates with young candidates from opposing parties. A typical example of Instagram content includes a voxpop with 20-year-old Sophia Møller who expressed concern regarding which politician or party to vote for: ‘I hoped some politicians would have reached out, but I hear or see nothing’.

**Method**

Using two-wave panel data surveying young Danish citizens who participated in the STEM’RNE campaign via their schools, we aimed at assessing the impact of the project on a number of relevant democratic outcomes. Students were recruited with the help of teachers participating in the project or via lecturers at the local university. Teachers and lecturers were provided with links to the online survey (administered via Kantar-Gallup), and they distributed the link to their students. Participation in the survey was optional, but teachers encouraged their pupils to fill out the survey in class or after school. As a result, students in classes with a highly motivated and interested teacher were more likely to be part of our study, and indirectly self-selected into the sample. While this affects the setup of our sample and may result in ceiling effects (e.g. with regard to political interest or efficacy), we can speculate that any effects of campaign participation found in this population can be estimated to be even larger among a more general youth sample.

Data for the first wave were collected from October 9–24 of 2017, about one month prior to the Danish municipality elections in November and ahead of the start of the STEM’RNE campaign. A total of 807 students completed wave 1 (Mage = 18.88, SD = 4.21; 50.2% female); they were either in the process of completing their education at a gymnasium (75.8%) or the university (24%), and the majority of respondents (57.9%) reported being located in the county’s main city and location of the municipal council. Wave 2 was run between November 22 and December 1 of 2017, immediately after the elections, and the second questionnaire was completed by 580 respondents (48.6% female, Mage = 18.64, SD = 3.62). Out of the initial 580 respondents in wave 2, 279 could be matched to the wave 1 questionnaire by means of personal but anonymized identification codes. This results in a large dropout rate between the two waves, but we find no large differences between the individual samples of wave 1 and 2 and those respondents who participated in both waves (see Table 1). We only included respondents who were 25 years or younger,
since this was the age group the campaign was aiming for. All analyses reported below refer to the final sample of $n = 275$ students who could be positively identified in both waves (56.4% female, $M_{age} = 18.05$, $SD = 1.65$, range 15–25; 87.3% completing gymnasium, 12.7% university students; 40.7% living in the county’s main city) (Tables 2–5).

**Measurement**

Our questionnaires included a number of variables to assess the performance of the STEM’RNE campaign. Here, we focus on the three most relevant parts of the project, students’ (1) exposure to the campaign content on social media, their (2) attendance of STEM’RNE events across the respective county, and (3) the number of classroom lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Sample statistics of individual and merged waves.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wave 1</strong> $(n = 807)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(currently completing) Gymnasium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(W1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Top 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3% Nyborg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in brackets present standard deviations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. OLS regression predicting political interest.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Interest at W2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in School Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of election-related school lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of events participated in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign on social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following on Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active on Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following on Snapchat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active on Snapchat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following on Instagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active on Instagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to political information (EPI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI Offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI Social Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged dependent variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest W1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adj. $R^2$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Standardized beta coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$, ****$p < 0.001$. 
<table>
  <caption>Table 3. OLS regression predicting internal political efficacy.</caption>
  <thead>
    <tr>
      <th>Internal Efficacy at W2</th>
      <th>(5)</th>
      <th>(6)</th>
      <th>(7)</th>
      <th>(8)</th>
    </tr>
  </thead>
  <tbody>
    <tr>
      <th>Controls</th>
      <td>Age</td>
      <td>.154* (.023)</td>
      <td>.159* (.023)</td>
      <td>.066 (.020)</td>
      <td>.068 (.020)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Gender (Female)</td>
      <td>−.128* (.065)</td>
      <td>−.135* (.066)</td>
      <td>−.002 (0.058)</td>
      <td>−.008 (0.058)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Political Interest</td>
      <td>.480*** (.014)</td>
      <td>.472*** (.015)</td>
      <td>.233*** (.014)</td>
      <td>.224*** (.014)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Kick-Off Meeting</td>
      <td>Participation in School Election</td>
      <td>.078 (.074)</td>
      <td>.072 (.075)</td>
      <td>.064 (.063)</td>
      <td>.060 (.064)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Civic Education</td>
      <td>Number of election-related school lessons</td>
      <td>.019 (.034)</td>
      <td>.018 (.034)</td>
      <td>−.018 (.029)</td>
      <td>−.023 (.029)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Political Events</td>
      <td>Number of events participated in</td>
      <td>.085 (.047)</td>
      <td>.087 (.048)</td>
      <td>.068 (.040)</td>
      <td>.065 (.041)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Campaign on social media</td>
      <td>Following on Facebook</td>
      <td>−.047 (.093)</td>
      <td>−.041 (.093)</td>
      <td>−.026 (.079)</td>
      <td>−.023 (.079)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Active on Facebook</td>
      <td>.045 (.110)</td>
      <td>.044 (.112)</td>
      <td>−.002 (0.094)</td>
      <td>−.005 (0.095)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Following on Snapchat</td>
      <td>−.020 (.221)</td>
      <td>−.022 (.222)</td>
      <td>−.017 (.187)</td>
      <td>−.020 (.189)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Active on Snapchat</td>
      <td>−.021 (.301)</td>
      <td>−.022 (.302)</td>
      <td>.040 (.257)</td>
      <td>.040 (.258)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Following on Instagram</td>
      <td>−.051 (.158)</td>
      <td>−.051 (.158)</td>
      <td>−.052 (.134)</td>
      <td>−.053 (.134)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Active on Instagram</td>
      <td>−.095 (.216)</td>
      <td>−.099 (.218)</td>
      <td>.068 (.183)</td>
      <td>−.070 (.185)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Exposure to political information (EPI)</td>
      <td>EPI Offline</td>
      <td>−.019 (.026)</td>
      <td>−.022 (.028)</td>
      <td>−.030 (.015)</td>
      <td>.011 (.013)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>EPI Online</td>
      <td>−.110 (.032)</td>
      <td>.090 (.017)</td>
      <td>.033 (.015)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>EPI Social Media</td>
      <td>.090 (.017)</td>
      <td>.033 (.015)</td>
      <td>.093 (.028)</td>
      <td>.093 (.028)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>Lagged dependent variable</td>
      <td>Internal Efficacy at W1</td>
      <td>.539*** (.052)</td>
      <td>.540*** (.052)</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>N</td>
      <td>275</td>
      <td>275</td>
      <td>275</td>
      <td>275</td>
    </tr>
    <tr>
      <td>adj. R²</td>
      <td>.311</td>
      <td>.306</td>
      <td>.505</td>
      <td>.501</td>
    </tr>
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</table>

Note: Standardized beta coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses.
*p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

---

Table 4. OLS regression predicting external political efficacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>(9)</th>
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<td>.058</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender (Female)</td>
<td>−.074</td>
<td>−.076</td>
<td>−.075</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in School Election</td>
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<td>.083</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Education</td>
<td>Number of election-related school lessons</td>
<td>.140*</td>
<td>.132*</td>
<td>.118*</td>
<td>.117*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political Events</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.089</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campaign on social media</td>
<td>Following on Facebook</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.017</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active on Facebook</td>
<td>−.098</td>
<td>−.089</td>
<td>−.049</td>
<td>−.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Following on Snapchat</td>
<td>.170*</td>
<td>.173*</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active on Snapchat</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.008</td>
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<td>−.107</td>
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<td>Active on Instagram</td>
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<td>−.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EPI Online</td>
<td>−.110</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EPI Social Media</td>
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<td>.017</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged dependent variable</td>
<td>External Efficacy at W1</td>
<td>.464***</td>
<td>.461***</td>
<td>.461***</td>
<td>.461***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adj. R²</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.242</td>
<td>.240</td>
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Note: Standardized beta coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses.
*p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.
covering the elections and related content that they participated in at their school or university. We tested the impact of these three components on (1) students’ political interest, (2) their internal and external political efficacy, and (3) their political knowledge. In addition to controlling for some of the autoregressive effects of wave 1, our panel design allows us to test for changes in these variables over the course of the campaign. We further include a number of relevant control measures that may account for differences in these outcomes as well. An overview of the variables and their operationalization can be found in Appendix B.

### Table 5. OLS regression predicting political knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
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<td><strong>Controls</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Gender (Female)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in School Election</td>
<td>.065 (.143)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Civic Education</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of election-related school lessons</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Events</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of events participated in</td>
<td>.004 (.091)</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Campaign on social media</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Following on Facebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active on Facebook</td>
<td>.075 (.212)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Following on Snapchat</td>
<td>.160* (.425)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active on Snapchat</td>
<td>−.071 (.578)</td>
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<td>Following on Instagram</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active on Instagram</td>
<td>−.060 (.415)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exposure to political information (EPI)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI Offline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI Online</td>
<td>−.109 (.053)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI Social Media</td>
<td>.138* (.029)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
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<tr>
<td>adj. (R^2)</td>
<td>.111</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Standardized beta coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses. 
*\(p < 0.10\), *\(p < 0.05\), **\(p < 0.01\), ***\(p < 0.001\).

### Results

To test whether civic education, political events, and campaign-related social media use affect democratic key variables, we computed a number of ordinary least square regression models. Where data existed, a lagged dependent variable from wave 1 was added to the models, which allows us to explain the effect independent variables had on change in the dependent variable over the course of the campaign. To be sure to disentangle the role of encounters with specific campaign content from general media use, we include exposure to general political information in separate models.

Hypotheses 1 predicted a higher political engagement for young voters who participated more often in classroom activities dedicated to the election. The number of school lessons dedicated to election is positively related to political interest and external political efficacy, but not to internal efficacy and knowledge (Tables 2–5, Models 1, 5, 9, and 13). This finding remains stable when general media is added to the models (Tables 2–5, Models 2, 6, 10, 14), which speaks for a unique relationship between classroom
activities and political interest as well as external efficacy. The autoregressive models show that this finding is robust, even when a lagged dependent variable is added. Hence, participating in school lessons about the election is partly responsible for an increase in political interest and external efficacy throughout campaign time. H1 therefore receives partly support.

RQ1 asked if participating in get-out-the-vote campaign events is positively related to political engagement. The results indicate such a positive and significant relation only for political interest, but not for efficacy and knowledge. The positive relationship between event participation and political interest we see in Model 1 becomes weaker but remains significant, if we add general media as a variable (Table 2, Model 2). Hence, for young voters who get exposed to political information through different media channels, event participation seems to be less relevant for their political engagement. When adding previous political interest in the more demanding Model 4 (Table 2), we still see a positive effect of event participation on political interest. Joining specific get-out-the-vote events during campaign time, hence, can increase young citizens’ political interest, while they do not become more efficacious or knowledgeable.

The STEM'RNE campaign employed a number of specific social media channels to get their message out to young voters. H2 predicts that the more information from the campaign young voters receive via social media, the higher their political engagement will be. RQ2 further asked for differential effects of using Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, given the different communication strategies employed on these platforms. Overall, we find no clear positive relationship between higher exposure to social media campaign content and political engagement. Following the campaign on social media does not show any significantly positive relationship to political engagement variables, whereas following the campaign on Instagram seems even to be negatively related to political interest in the autoregressive model. However, we find a distinct correlation between following STEM'RNE on Snapchat and the likelihood of answering political knowledge questions correctly. Since our first survey wave did not include knowledge questions, this result is based on cross-sectional data only, and we cannot take prior levels of knowledge into consideration. Furthermore, young voters who followed campaign updates on Snapchat show higher levels of external efficacy, but this relationship disappears in the autoregressive models. In sum, receiving information from a campaign’s social media presence does not automatically translate into higher levels of political engagement.

Furthermore, active engagement with campaign content on social media platforms does not increase young citizens’ political engagement. On the contrary: A strong negative relationship between active engagement with content on Snapchat (i.e. sharing or reacting to it) and political interest is found. Since we also find this effect in the autoregressive models, our results suggest that active Snapchat engagement with campaign content results in a decrease of political interest over time. Here, we have to keep in mind that a relatively low number of young voters actually engaged with campaign content on Snapchat actively (see Appendix B).

The additional use of political information via media, other than conveyed through the STEM'RNE campaign, can have positive implications for political engagement as well. Online and social media use are positive predictors of political interest, although the latter result faces statistical uncertainty. No significant relationship was found for general media use and the two types of political efficacy across the different channels. Hence,
young voters with higher levels of political information exposure did not feel more efficacious. Lastly, exposure to offline or online sources does not predict higher levels of knowledge. Yet, the more often citizens follow the news on social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter, the more likely they were to answer the knowledge questions correctly.

In sum, we find political interest and political knowledge to be most affected by STEM’RNE interventions, while changes in political efficacy are only loosely connected to any campaign effort. In general, civic education seems to be more effective than attending political events, but event participation also fostered certain types of political engagement. With regards to the social media efforts of STEM’RNE, our results indicate that, over the course of the campaign, students may have decreased in their political interest when engaging with some of the campaign’s social media activities. However, we also find that youth can learn about politics, especially via Snapchat. In the context of differential effects of social media, we see that effects are not uniform across platforms. It is interesting that following and engaging with campaign content on Facebook does not exert any notable effects on the democratic key variables investigated here. In contrast, the use of Snapchat, which was mostly used for quizzes and facts in the campaign’s communication strategy, seems to make young citizens more knowledgeable about the upcoming election. The rather personalized way of communicating by the use of images about the election on Instagram, in turn, seemed to decrease the political interest among users.

Discussion

Get-out-the-vote campaigns initiated by societal actors are a prominent way of promoting electoral turnout among citizens (e.g. Addonizio, Green, and Glaser 2007; Green and Gerber 2015; Green and McClellan 2017). So far, little was known about whether these campaigns have an effect on young citizens’ political engagement, and if they go beyond mobilizing a one-time change in voting behavior. We investigated how agents of political socialization employed by the campaign STEM’RNE around the 2017 Danish municipality election affect young voters’ political interest, knowledge, and feelings of political efficacy. Our study finds that get-out-the-vote campaigns can have beneficial outcomes for the political engagement of young voters, but few of the changes originate from the campaign’s communication efforts on social media. Instead, the collaboration with schools as well as the efforts invested in organizing events made the campaign successful.

We found that civic education in schools and universities plays a particular important role in fostering political engagement of young voters over time. Discussing the election in a classroom setting or employing practical ways of demonstrating the importance of politics to students are promising ways for increasing young citizens’ political interest: Students that reported a higher level of political interest after Election Day were also the ones who participated in more school lessons dedicated to the election. While this result is in line with a large body of research highlighting the importance of civic education (e.g. Dassonneville et al. 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016), it should be noted that high levels of confrontation with political topics in school may also bore students and thereby have a reversed effect (e.g. Eagles and Davidson 2001). However, in our case, we see that civic education can increase political interest and – to a certain extent – external political efficacy among students.
Political events are a rather new phenomenon in the canon of factors affecting political socialization (Neundorf and Smets 2017). We find that participation in political events held in the context of the STEM’RNE campaign had a positive effect on youths’ political interest. Therefore, organizing a number of events where young voters can meet and debate with their political representatives seems to be an effective way to foster political engagement over time. As such, political events for young citizens leave them better informed and may increase vote choice certainty (Howard and Posler 2012).

In contrast to that, the campaign’s social media channels had only little impact on students’ political engagement. So far, few studies looked into social media’s effects in the context of a get-out-the vote campaign. We find that positively influencing young citizens by utilizing specifically produced messages distributed via social media platforms can be a challenge. This finding stands in contrast to results suggesting a positive impact of social media use on democratic key variables in campaign settings (e.g. Enli and Skogerbø 2013; Towner 2017). However, these studies were looking at rather general aspects of social media use, while our study focused on exposure to unique messages that were developed by a specific youth-targeting campaign. These messages can be described as an ‘extra dose’ of campaign information available to young people, and our results question whether such a type of pop-up medium, like STEM’RNE also describe themselves, may actually benefit the target group in the desired way. While we do find indication that the use of visual-based social media platforms may result in less political interest over time, we also see that people who used Snapchat were more knowledgeable about election topics. A potential explanation lies in the different content strategies employed by the campaign on these two platforms: Snapchat was mostly used for quizzes and the posting of quick facts about the election, and people may thus actually have learned about politics via this platform. Indeed, research suggests that information conveyed via images is better recalled than text-based messages (Nelson, Reed, and Walling 1976). Hence, it is possible that although messages were only assessed quickly, including facts in pictures with a style that was appealing to the age group of 18–25 year old, such an information strategy can positively affect learning. In contrast, content on Instagram presented personal stories about young voters’ attitudes towards the upcoming election in a rather honest way; it included interviews with a number of youths expressing insecurity about the election and their intention of not turning out. A potential explanation for Instagram’s negative effects may lie in the ability of pictures to evoke stronger emotions (Iyer and Oldmeadow 2006), which, based on the content strategy employed by the campaign, potentially were more negative than positive. Although our data do not provide us with sufficient information on respondents’ immediate perceptions of STEM’RNE’s social media posts, the findings suggest that the latter did not necessarily lead to the intended effects. Thus, a strong personalization of campaign information on Instagram may also hinder positive outcomes for democratic key variables. At the same time, we find that using general news media is still one of the main influencing factors for shaping political engagement, a result that is in line with previous research that describes news media use as one of the main pillars of young citizens’ political socialization de (e.g. De Vreese and Moeller 2014; McLeod 2000; Neundorf and Smets 2017). News use via online or social media has a particular positive impact on young voters’ engagement with politics (e.g. Baumgartner and Morris 2010; Kruikemeier and Shehata 2017), yet our results also support Bossetta’s
(2018) claim to more strongly focus on platform-specific effects when evaluating political campaign communication.

In sum, using a panel-design with a unique sample of young citizens, our study contributes to the field of political campaign and socialization research in three ways: (1) We show that get-out-the-vote campaigns can have an impact on democratic key variables, and that they are successful in increasing political engagement as an intermediate step on the way to higher turnout rates. (2) We find that, in a campaign context, civic education and event participation are more important impact factors of political socialization than the use of specific social media platforms. However, general news use via online and social media is an important driver of political engagement as well. (3) Our results suggest that adjusting campaign content to the digital architecture of social media platforms (e.g., focus on visuals, quick information distribution) can have differential effects. Although a campaign may have a clear overall goal, it is necessary to pay close attention to specific social media platforms and voters’ engagement with their content.

Limitations

These contributions notwithstanding, our study faces a number of limitations. First, the participation of students in the sample was dependent on their teachers and encouraged by the headmasters of each school. However, not all teachers followed the invitation, and we cannot rule out the possibility that this biased our results and weakens their generalizability. Secondly, using a longitudinal design comes at the expense of panel attrition and problems with matching respondents, which further challenges the explanatory power of our sample. Thirdly, STEM’RNE reached a comparably low number of followers on the different social media platforms: 1.705 followed the campaign on the primary publishing channel, Facebook, and even less did so on Instagram and Snapchat. In part, this low dissemination may be attributable to the fact that STEM’RNE did not have any additional financial means to boost exposure. The weak results we find for the effect of social media content on political engagement may thus be interpreted in light of the rather low reach these platforms had, and it is possible that social media would be more successful in affecting political engagement in other campaign settings. Fourthly, STEM’RNE provided us with the opportunity to assess the influence of a youth-targeted intervention during an actual election campaign, and the latter are particularly well suited for increasing political interest in young citizens (Levy, Solomon, and Collet-Gildard 2016; Syvertsen et al. 2009). At the same time, this advantage limits our case study to Denmark, and we are careful in drawing inferences to other countries. Yet it should be noted that first-time voters in Denmark are similar to young voters in other Western democracies (Andersen and Hopmann 2018; see also Hogh and Larsen 2016).

Lastly, our study did not specifically look at young citizens’ turnout. Since only 5.1% of our sample did not vote in the election, and a number of students had not yet reached the legal voting age of 18 years, the variance in the dependent variable is too low to conduct valid statistical analysis. In an additional effort, we compared turnout across all counties in Denmark among the respective age group based on vote registry data. Compared to the last local election, turnout on average increased twice as much among young voters in the county of STEM’RNE (3.0%) compared to all other counties, where increase in turnout was 1.6% (range 0.8–2.2%). Even though this cannot be interpreted as a causal connection, to
our knowledge, the county under investigation was the only one with a dedicated get-out-the-vote campaign for young voters. Yet we rely on survey data alone and strongly encourage future experimental investigations into the effects of get-out-the-vote campaigns, including a control group.

Get-out-the-vote campaigns can affect the political engagement of young citizens beyond the mere act of voting. Employing different communication means bundled as part of a specific campaign seems to meet young voters on a level where different campaign interventions help them to become more engaged with politics in general. Tedesco (2007, 1191) notes that especially ‘exposure to media that educate young adults about candidates and issues will increase their perceptions of value in the political process’. Our study adds to this perspective by finding that a collaboration with educational institutions and the inclusion of political events can be important means for a successful campaign, maybe even more important than distributing get-out-the-vote content via social media channels. Although informational campaigns are not the only way of increasing political engagement during citizens’ formative years (Bhatti and Hansen 2012), they can still be an integral part of young people’s political socialization. Hence our study further contributes to public policy planning in relation to programs that aim to reach out to youth and engage them in politics. Developing specific campaigns seems to be worth the effort, since they affect the kind of democratic key variables that voters can utilize in times where no specific campaign is targeting them. Hence, we find that STEM’RNE was able to engage people with politics. If such effects last longer than just until after Election Day, get-out-the-vote-campaigns may be more than just political one-day wonders.

Notes
1. DR Danmark, TV 2 Nyhederne, Fyens Stiftstidende, Fyns Amts Avis, TV 2/Fyn, and P4 Fyn.
3. The majority of our sample (56.7%) reported that they did participate in the elections, whereas 37.8% indicated that they were either too young or not eligible to vote (i.e. non-EU citizens). Only 5.1% of our sample said that they did not turn out, or intended to but did not vote in the elections.
4. The authors wish to thank Kasper Møller Hansen for his valuable feedback and comments on early stages of this research project and for providing STEM’RNE with the necessary vote registry data.

Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding
Part of the research time in this project was supported by a research grant from the European Research Council (ERC) [grant number 647316].

References


## Appendices

### Appendix A. Examples of social media messages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Snapchat</th>
<th>Instagram</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Facebook Post" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Snapchat Post" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Instagram Post" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Facebook**

Video. ‘Service message for everyone, who has not voted yet. Turn audio on’.

**Snapchat**

Snapchat message. ‘Did you know that municipality and police determine, which pubs and clubs are allowed to sell alcohol and until what time’.

**Instagram**

Instagram post. Picture: ‘One of Stem’røne’. Caption: ‘I’m not interested in politics. If I should be convinced to turn out, this is only possible online – or has something to do with beer. Anders Henriksen, bricklayer apprentice. #southerndenmarkvocationalschool, #novotenohustle #vote #useyourvote’
Appendix B. Operationalization of central variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure to and engagement with STEM’RNE campaign posts on social media (W2)</th>
<th>Followed/added on (no – yes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|  | • Facebook (24%)  
  • Snapchat (3.6%)  
  • Instagram (6.9%) |
| Actively engaged with the content (i.e. liked or commented on information, shared information with friends/followers) on (no – yes) |  
  • Facebook (13%)  
  • Snapchat (1.4%)  
  • Instagram (4.0%) |

STEM’RNE event participation (W2)  
‘Have you heard of or participated in one or more of the following events organized in connection with STEM’RNE?  
(no – heard about it – participated)  

* STEM’RNE hosted 27 events in different locations across Funen. The survey was programed to present respondents with a list of events that was filtered based on their school’s location and proximity to the events. The official kickoff event as well as the final debate in the capital were included for all participants.  
Recoded to participation only  

Max = 9–12; $M = .074$, $SD = .75$, range 0–6

Civic education (W2)  
‘What would you say, how many single lessons in class did you talk about the local election and politics in the weeks before the election at you school or university?’  

• None (13.1%)  
• 1–2 (19.3%)  
• 3–5 (34.9%)  
• 6–10 (21.5%)  
• More than 10 (11.3%)

Political interest (W1 & W2)  
‘Generally speaking, how interested are you in politics?’  
(0 – Not interested at all; 10 – Very interested)  

$M_{W1} = 6.64$, $SD_{W1} = 2.33$; $M_{W2} = 7.27$, $SD_{W2} = 2.13$

Internal political efficacy (W1 & W2)  
(1 – Totally agree: 5 – Totally disagree)  
Items were recoded where necessary so that higher numbers reflect higher internal efficacy; Cronbach’s $\alpha_{W1} = .64$  

1. Sometimes politics is so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on.  
2. Generally speaking, I do not find it difficult to take a stand on political issues.  
3. When politicians debate economic policy, I only understand a small part of what they are talking about.  
4. Citizens like me do not have any influence on the decisions of the Parliament and Government.  
5. Citizens like me are qualified to participate in political discussions.  
6. Citizens like me have opinions on politics that are worth listening to.  

$M_{W1} = 3.24$, $SD_{W1} = .64$; $M_{W2} = 3.30$, $SD_{W2} = .62$

External political efficacy (W1 & W2)  
(1 – Totally agree: 5 – Totally disagree)  
Items were recoded where necessary so that higher numbers reflect higher external efficacy; Cronbach’s $\alpha_{W1} = .46$  

1. Politicians do not really care what the voters think.  
2. Usually you can trust the political leaders to do what is best for the country.  
3. In fact, there is almost no difference between what the major parties say.  
4. The politicians waste a lot of the taxpayer’s money  

$M_{W1} = 2.91$, $SD_{W1} = .58$; $M_{W2} = 2.95$, $SD_{W2} = .59$
Political Knowledge (W2)

'Here are a few questions about the municipal elections. Many do not know the answers to these; nevertheless, we ask you to respond to the best of your ability'.
(all recoded for 1 – correct answer; 0 – incorrect/don’t know)

1. Do you know the name of the person who has been mayor of your municipality during the last term? (open)
2. Who is in charge of the operation of hospitals? (municipalities – regional governments – the state – don’t know)
3. What does a constituency do? (count votes after the election – run a campaign for the candidates – inform the mayor about the outcome of the election – take the election posters down after the election – don’t know)
4. Who above the age of 18 is eligible to vote in the municipality elections? (only Danish citizens living in the municipality – citizens of all nationalities living in the municipality – Danish citizens and other EU citizens, Norwegians and Icelanders living in the municipality – don’t know)

\[ M = 2.01, SD = 1.05 \]

Control variables

- Age \( (M_{W1} = 18.05, SD_{W1} = 1.65, \text{range 15–25}) \)
- Gender (56.4% female)
- Participation in their school elections (53.8% yes)

Exposure to political information (W2)

'If you think about the last seven days: On how many days have you heard, read or seen something about politics on these different sources?' (0–7 days)

(a) online \( (M = 2.47, SD = 1.72) \)
(b) offline \( (M = 1.78, SD = 1.42) \)
(c) social media \( (M = 4.72, SD = 2.36) \)