

Hooked

Political Interest is the strongest predictor of “good citizenship,” and yet we hardly know anything about it. For the first time in over three decades, here we have a study explaining what political interest is, where it comes from, and why it matters. Providing the most thorough description available of political interest in four Western democracies over many decades, the book analyzes large household panel data sets, rarely used in political science, to explain how interest develops in people’s lives. The book’s analytical approach pushes applied social scientists to consider how we can use panel data to better understand political behavior. It does so in a way that doesn’t gloss over complexities, but explains them in accessible language. Advanced statistical methods are presented informally, accompanied by graphical illustrations that require no prior knowledge to understand the methods used.

MARKUS PRIOR is Professor of Politics and Public Affairs at Princeton University. He is the author of *Post-Broadcast Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), which won the 2009 Goldsmith Book Prize and the 2010 Doris Graber Award for the “best book on political communication in the last 10 years.” Prior’s work has appeared in numerous journals including *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, and the *Journal of Politics*.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42067-9 — Hooked
Markus Prior
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Hooked

How Politics Captures People's Interest

MARKUS PRIOR

Princeton University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-42067-9 — Hooked
 Markus Prior
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108420679

DOI: 10.1017/9781108355001

© Markus Prior 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Prior, Markus, 1974– author.

TITLE: Hooked : how politics captures people's interest / Markus Prior.

DESCRIPTION: New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2019. |

Includes bibliographical references.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2018010105 | ISBN 9781108420679 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781108430746 (pbk.)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Political psychology. | Political participation—Psychological aspects. | Democracy—Psychological aspects.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC JA74.5 .P694 2018 | DDC 324.01/9—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018010105>

ISBN 978-1-108-42067-9 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-43074-6 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42067-9 — Hooked
Markus Prior
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

For Purcell

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42067-9 — Hooked
Markus Prior
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>List of Tables</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xv
I Why Political Interest Matters and How to Understand Its Origins	I
PART I DESCRIBING POLITICAL INTEREST	
2 The Psychology of Political Interest	19
3 Measuring Political Interest	40
4 The Impact of Elections	57
5 Sixty Years of Political Interest	79
PART II THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL INTEREST	
6 Political Interest over the Life Course: The Population Average	103
7 Stability and Variation in Political Interest	133
8 Differences in Age Trajectories	156
PART III EXPLAINING CHANGE IN POLITICAL INTEREST	
9 The Big Benefits of Panel Data Analysis	177
10 Education	211
11 Parents	241
12 Money, Health, and Happiness	263
13 Encounters with Politics	291
	vii

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42067-9 — Hooked
Markus Prior
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

viii	<i>Contents</i>
14	The Impact of Political Attitudes and Identities 333
15	Conclusion 352
	<i>Book Appendices</i> 369
	<i>References</i> 375
	<i>Index</i> 393

Figures

2.1	Political interest and feelings about the 2008 U.S. presidential election	<i>page 21</i>
2.2	Affective and cognitive elements of political interest in the United States	24
2.3	Campaign interest and personal importance of election in Germany	28
3.1	Distributions of general political interest responses, 2008	46
3.2	Correlations between survey questions on general political interest	48
3.3	Political interest and preference for news formats (KN 2002–3)	54
3.4	“News” versus “Politics” (KN 2008)	55
4.1	Political interest distribution in the 2008–9 ANES panel including 2010 recontact	59
4.2	Trends in general political interest during election years, United States, NAES 2000 and 2004	60
4.3	General political interest in Germany before the elections of 2009 and 2013, GLES	62
4.4	Campaign interest in 2008 over three periods, NAES and AP-Yahoo	64
4.5	Campaign interest in 2000, NAES	65
4.6	Campaign interest in 2004 and 2008, NAES	66
4.7	Campaign interest in 2008, AP-Yahoo panel	67
4.8	Campaign interest in Germany before the elections of 2009 and 2013, GLES	68
4.9	Correlations of follow public affairs with campaign interest questions, NAES	69
		ix

4.10	Correlations of general and campaign-specific interest, observed and disattenuated, NAES	70
4.11	Comparing general political interest and campaign interest, NAES 2000 and 2004	71
4.12	Comparing general political interest and campaign interest, Germany 2009 and 2013	72
A4.1	Correlations between survey questions on campaign interest, ANES and NAES	77
5.1	Trends in general political interest, United States (top: Gallup, bottom: ANES)	82
5.2	Trends in general political interest, United States (Roper)	83
5.3	Trends in general political interest, United States (<i>Newsweek</i> , <i>Times Mirror</i> /Pew)	85
5.4	Trends in general political interest, United States (All Series)	86
5.5	Political interest over time in unified Germany (top) and East/West samples (bottom)	88
5.6	Political interest over time in England (top), Scotland (middle), and Wales (bottom)	92
5.7	Political interest over time in Switzerland	94
6.1	Political interest in different age groups	109
6.2	Distribution of political interest by age	110
6.3	Political interest by age	116
6.4	Aging effects on political interest by birth decade	118
7.1	Political interest person means	135
7.2	Political interest by year and panelist, SHP and SOEP	137
7.3	Mean R^2 across panelists accounted for by time polynomials	139
7.4	Predicted quartic age trajectories and smoothed raw data	142
7.5	Variation in age trajectories (predicted trajectory for 30 randomly chosen individuals)	144
7.6	Two-year stability of political interest	148
A7.1	Variation in predicted quartic age trajectories	154
8.1	Predicted quartic age trajectories by parental education	159
8.2	Predicted quartic age trajectories by parental citizenship and residence in 1989	162
8.3	Predicted quartic age trajectories by openness	164
8.4	Predicted quartic age trajectories by conscientiousness	165
8.5	Predicted quartic age trajectories by gender	167
8.6	Predicted quartic age trajectories by cognitive ability	169
9.1	Predicted political interest trajectories, by highest level of education	180
9.2	Within-subject change in political interest, by upper secondary schooling degree	183

<i>List of Figures</i>	xi
9.3 Year-to-year impact of upper secondary degrees on political interest	190
10.1 Within-subject change in political interest in Britain, by lower secondary degree	217
10.2 Within-subject change in political interest, by university degree	219
10.3 The impact of a lower secondary degree before and after reform curriculum in Britain	229
10.4 The conditioning effect of field of study on university degree impact	233
A10.1 Within-subject change in political interest, by vocational qualification	239
11.1 Correspondence of child's political interest with early and contemporaneous parental interest	244
11.2 Contemporaneous relationship by consistency of parental political interest	248
11.3 Contemporaneous child-parent relationship, by child's move-out age	250
11.4 Political interest after large change in parental political interest	252
12.1 The effect of full-time employment on political interest	272
12.2 The effect of unemployment on political interest	274
12.3 The effect of widowhood on political interest in Germany	278
12.4 The effect of financial satisfaction on political interest	283
12.5 The effect of objective and subjective health on political interest	286
12.6 The effect of life satisfaction on political interest	288
12.7 The effect of satisfaction with leisure time on political interest	289
13.1 Change in political interest by politically impinged employment and union membership	297
13.2 Change in political interest by political activity	303
13.3 Change in political interest by membership in environmental organizations	307
13.4 Change in political interest by membership/activity in volunteer organizations	309
13.5 Change in political interest by membership/activity in cultural organizations, social clubs	311
13.6 Change in political interest by church attendance and religious activity	312
13.7 Association between spouses' political interest	314
13.8 Change in political interest after change in spouse's political interest	317
14.1 Political interest after change in importance of politics	335

xii		<i>List of Figures</i>
14.2	Political interest after change in public concerns	337
14.3	Political interest after change in strength of partisan or ideological identity	340
14.4	Political interest after change in efficacy	343
A14.1	Political interest after change in strength of partisanship, ideology (young people only)	348

Tables

2.1	Testing the psychological model of political interest: hypotheses and research questions	<i>page 38</i>
3.1	General political interest questions referenced in this chapter	45
4.1	Campaign-specific interest questions referenced in this chapter	63
4.2	The relationship between general political interest and campaign interest on political outcomes	73
6.1	The impact of interestingness	122
6.2	The impact of interestingness, by age	126
7.1	Quartic age trajectories of political interest	141
10.1	The impact of obtaining educational qualifications on political interest	221
10.2	The impact of educational attendance on political interest	225
11.1	Effect of parental political interest on child's political interest	256
12.1	Long-run multiplier effects of socioeconomic status (age under 40)	267
12.2	Long-run multiplier effects of socioeconomic status, health and well-being	281
13.1	Political interest, by employment sector	296
A13.1	The impact of political encounters on political interest	324
A13.2	The impact of spousal political interest	330
A14.1	The impact of political attitudes and identities on political interest	350

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42067-9 — Hooked
Markus Prior
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Acknowledgments

One of the hardest things for me is knowing when to stop. When Kinder tells you to “finish the damn thing!” and your editor’s reaction to the possibly last remaining chapters is, “mercy, it’s comprehensive,” it might be time. When colleagues ask you about progress with that tender air of not wanting to push you further into psychological distress, it might be time. When friends stop asking altogether – out of empathy or because they don’t think they could possibly be correct that you’re still working on *that* thing – it might be time.

But Kinder also urged Zaller to take a bottle of vodka into the woods to do more work on the last chapter of *Nature and Origins*. Maybe Kinder just went easy on me because he felt guilty about possibly having made Zaller the author of the greatest unpublished book in social science. (Yes, different book. Same Zaller, though.) And often, there is good reason to keep at it, to march (crawl) toward learning more, to not give up when there’s still a chance of getting it right, just a little more right.

Also, so much stuff out there would have benefited from a little more time and another bottle of vodka.

I did learn from the masters. In those professional-impressionable years after I was hired at Princeton, Larry Bartels, Tali Mendelberg, and Marty Gilens all took many years to finish their respective book projects. But who’s counting now, after three magisterial volumes that changed how we think about inequality, representation, and, oh wait, men being unable to shut up. If the outcome is only half as good in my case as in theirs, I’ll be fortunate to have followed their lead.

Over the years, I have benefited from the advice and support of many people. Larry has been an intellectual inspiration, a role model, and a quiet, patient mentor. He offered much advice early in the project; in recent years, I have often regretted that I couldn’t just walk down one flight of stairs to ask him more questions. Tali and Marty have provided many reactions and suggestions

on this project, but above and beyond, they are fantastic and generous colleagues. Doug Arnold read several versions of the manuscript and offered helpful feedback. I greatly value his professional support and friendship. And it's hard to have a conversation with Chuck Cameron that's not thought-provoking, or a meal not pleasantly excessive.

Lori Bougher worked with me on this project for almost four years. She knows many of the large, complex, and challenging datasets used in this book better than I do and made it possible to get so much out of them. I thank Princeton for supporting her position and Lori for her skillful, thorough work. Ask her about the measurement of education in European household panels sometime!

Gaurav Sood helped me with this project when he was postdoc at Princeton. I benefited from discussion of my work and theirs with my graduate students Katie McCabe and Kabir Khanna and with CSDP fellows Vin Arceneaux, Talia Stroud, and Sean Westwood as part of our occasional discussion group meetings.

Skip Lupia and Nick Valentino organized a book manuscript workshop for me in Ann Arbor. The two of them and Jamie Druckman read the entire manuscript and provided very detailed, tremendously helpful written comments. For discussion and suggestions at the workshop, I also thank Ted Brader, Vince Hutchings, Stuart Soroka, Rocio Titiunik, Hakeem Jefferson, Alison Beatty, Erin Cikanek, Chris Skovron, Fabian Neuner, and Dan Hiaeshutter-Rice.

Some of the analysis in this book relies on techniques developed in econometrics thirty years ago and thoroughly out of fashion in modern political science research, for justifiable reasons I only appreciated slowly. Many political methodologists took hours out of their days to help me understand the methods I was hoping to use and address my often somewhat confused questions: Chris Achen, Neal Beck, Matt Blackman, Josh Clinton, Simon Jackman, Shigeo Hirano, Kosuke Imai, Suzie Linn, Luke Keele, In Song Kim, Michal Kolesár, James Lo, Scott Lynch, Marc Meredith, Xun Pang, Kris Ramsey, Jas Sekhon, Rocio Titiunik, and Greg Wawro.

For feedback and comments on early versions of the book manuscript, conference papers that would become the manuscript, and research I presented at different venues, I am thankful to Erik Amnå, Eva Anduiza, Adam Berinsky, André Blais, John Bullock, David Campbell, Michael Delli Carpini, Claes deVreese, Eugénie Dostie-Goulet, Andy Guess, Jacque Eccles, Peter Enns, Ryan Enos, Connie Flanagan, Aina Gallego, Jane Green, Eitan Hersh, Sunshine Hillygus, John Holbein, Cindy Kam, Joe Kahne, Young Mie Kim, Casey Klofstad, Martin Kroh, Adam Levine, Brett Levy, Dave Lewis, Aaron Martin, Irene Martín, Sara McLanahan, Cecilia Mo, Russ Neuman, Maria Petrova, Silvia Russo, Dhavan Shah, Danielle Shani, Håkan Stattin, Laura Stoker, Dietlind Stolle, Jesper Strömbäck, Josh Tucker, Ariel White, Chris Wlezien, Alexander Wuttke, and John Zaller.

Acknowledgments

xvii

Audience reactions helped me when I presented this work at the Department of Political Science at the University of Southern California, the Working Group in Political Psychology and Behavior at Harvard University, the College of Communication at University of Texas, Austin, the conference for Panel Data Users in Lausanne, the Institute for Political Economy and Governance in Barcelona, the Amsterdam School of Communication Research, the Department of Political Science at Lavall University, the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship at McGill University, the Department of Political Science at Columbia, the Department of Government at Cornell, the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan, the School of Communication at Northwestern University, the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, Örebro University, the Juan March Institute, the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, and the MIT American Politics Speaker Series.

Princeton University has generously supported time for research on this book. So did the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School where I spent a semester as a Joan Shorenstein Fellow in 2016 and the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Vanderbilt University in 2014. I would like to thank Helene Wood at Princeton for her assistance over all the years I've been there.

This book draws on a lot of secondary data. Many principal investigators devoted their time and effort to collecting those data. Many funding agencies paid for the data collection. I am grateful to all of them, but this book would simply not exist without the household panel surveys conducted in Britain, Germany, and Switzerland. It is inspiring to see governments use considerable public funds to allow projects of this scope and quality.

Robert Dreesen, my editor at Cambridge, provided detailed advice on how to make the book more readable. I couldn't make it into a page-turner, but his interest and effort inspired me and significantly improved this book. For their work on the design and production of this book, I thank Josh Penney, Ishwarya Mathavan, Chris Bond, and Liz Connor.