

Editorial

Youth Politicization Viewed From the Perspectives of Social Psychology and Developmental Psychology

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In recent years, there have been antithetical patterns of youth political and civic engagement. Many young people are uninterested in politics and political participation, whereas others are highly engaged political actors, some of whom participate in acts of political violence. What are the factors that lead some to be politically active and others not? Moreover, in times of crisis when the social fabric is endangered, it is important to understand the position that young people might take toward politics. In this issue of *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, social psychology partners with developmental psychology in order to focus on young people's political and civic engagement.

Social psychological research has proposed factors that influence participation in collective action, such as group identification, dual identities, perceived discrimination, political attitudes and ideologies, motivations, and emotions. Do these factors explain youth political participation? Developmental psychology has explored the role played by the family, the peer group, youth organizations, and school in fostering young people's civic and political engagement. However, nowadays, patterns of youth engagement and actions of participation are changing and new forms of activism have appeared in relation to new technologies and social media. How has this affected the role of political socialization agents such as the peer group and youth organizations? These are questions that are addressed by the papers in this topical issue.

There are two main questions that transcend this topical issue: How do young people politicize? And what are the factors that lead to their political actions? The papers presented use different concepts emerging from research with adults such as identities, emotions, motivations, political efficacy, and ideological beliefs to understand the patterns of youth politicization. We present research conducted in different parts of the European continent (Albania,

Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) and the USA. Moreover, the studies use different methodologies and analyses (surveys and experimental studies, person-centered approaches, longitudinal studies, and social network analysis). Our endeavor was to present the different questions that can be asked and the plurality of ways that these questions can be treated in order to expose the complexity of the issue of political and civic engagement in youth and to stimulate further research. In addition, the papers deal with different types of political involvement and participation of young people: conventional or nonconventional, self-organized or organization-centered, or even spontaneous such as revolts. The different types of participation, on the one hand, testify to the plurality of actions that young people use to impact on their social environment. On the other hand, they raise the question of the plurality of forms of political engagement and question whether a unifying model of youth civic and political participation is possible and even desirable.

The issue opens with our own review of recent work on young people's civic and political engagement (Chrysoschoou & Barrett, 2017). This paper does not constitute a comprehensive review of all research in the area. Instead, prompted by research on youth political engagement, it aims to constitute a point of reflection for further investigations.

The question of politicization is crucial and raises the issue of socialization of youth in their sociopolitical environment. Which actors influence young peoples' beliefs and choices? Using social network analysis, Dahl (2017) examines how peers impact on the attitudes and values of young people in Sweden, and whether these attitudes and norms influence their choice of friends. He shows that peers influence attitudes toward immigrants but the same effect

is not true for universalistic values. Thus, the immediate social context can influence concrete attitudes but does not impact on the more general political value orientation.

The issue of socialization is also present in the paper by Strohmeier et al. (2017) that presents research in several countries regarding young people's visions and worries about Europe and their impact on behavioral political intentions. Among others, this research shows gender and age differences in political beliefs and intentions of action. These differences are also evidenced in the levels of disengagement from the European Union, a phenomenon that has appeared recently. Thus, a homogeneity of the young population should not be taken for granted.

Diversity among young people is also evidenced in the research by Barkas and Chryssochoou (2017). In a person-centered study of youth revolting in Greece, they show different profiles of politicization. This indicates that even people taking part in the same events might have a different understanding of the situation, different levels of identification, different emotions, give different meanings to the sociopolitical environment, and ultimately have different levels of involvement. What produces these different profiles? It is proposed that neighborhoods, as a proxy of socioeconomic status, can provide contexts in which diverse sociopolitical socialization occurs.

The different profiles of young people acting politically can also be seen in the research conducted by van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2017) in the Netherlands. Their study compares the profiles of people who take part in self-organized (via social media) and organization-centered events to protest against educational changes. They raise the important issue of forms of organization chosen by youngsters. In an era of increasing distrust in institutionalized political organizations, it is important to look closely at the profile of those who choose to enter politics through self-organized channels and investigate what shapes these choices.

Šerek, Machackova, and Macek (2017) take a different approach and ask whether beliefs shape participation or whether different forms of participation shape young people's political beliefs and attitudes. With a longitudinal study in the Czech Republic, they conclude that political participation shapes beliefs and interest in politics and not the other way round. Besides contributing to the perennial question of the relationship between attitudes and behavior, their study indicates that the involvement of young people in political actions impacts on the way they see and give meaning to the world. This finding is of interest in a world in which youth are often at the margins and where their future perspectives appear worse than those of their parents when they were the same age.

This topical issue also includes a short report from the USA. van der Toorn, Jost, and Loffredo (2017) show

experimentally that young people become more conservative under system threat than under personal threats. This finding should be taken seriously in an era of sociopolitical and economic crisis when conservative shifts are indicated in electoral results and where young people defending conservative values are committing acts of violence. More than personal threats, it is threats to peoples' ways of seeing the world that seem to matter.

To conclude, this issue comprises research emphasizing the contexts of political socialization of youngsters, their profiles of politicization, the importance of ideological beliefs and values, the diversity of their actions, and their engagement as well as disengagement with politics. It certainly does not close the question of youth political engagement but hopefully constitutes food for further research.

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