

# Civic and political socialization

Jan Šerek

Youth Development

17. 4. 2019

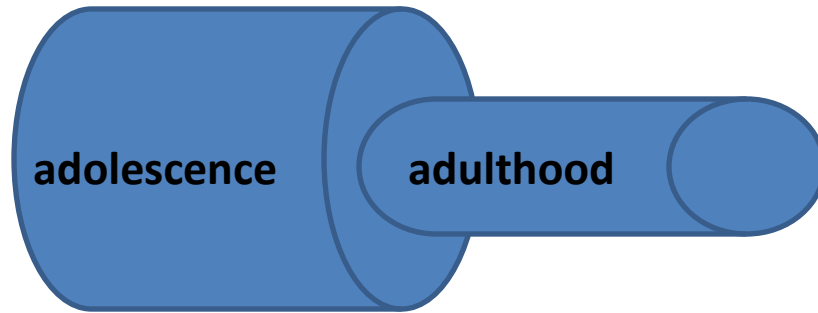
Why this issue and adolescence?

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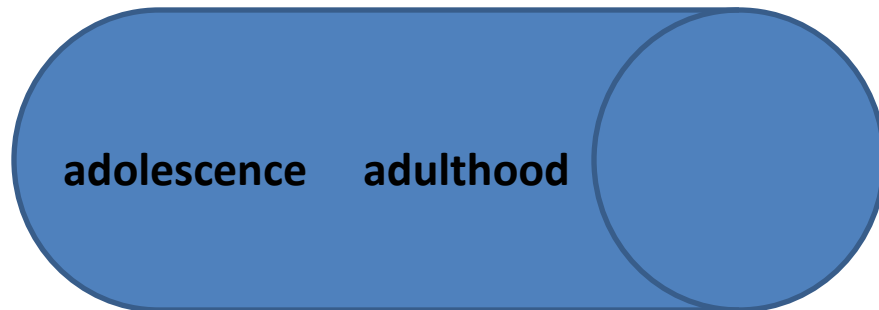
- development of a social aspect of person's identity (Erikson, 1968)
- social and institutional incentives
  - educational system (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995)
  - political rights

# Why this issue and adolescence?

Impressionable years hypothesis

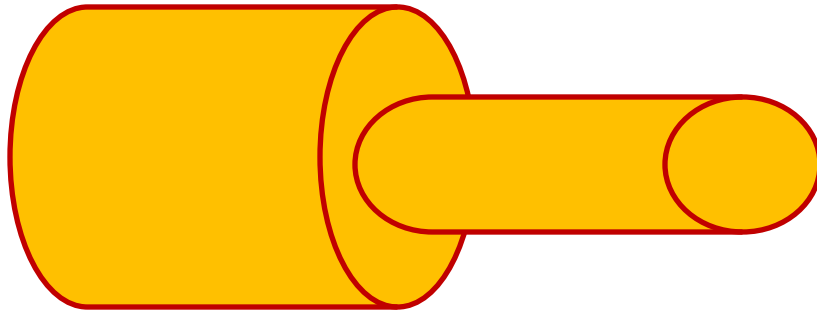


Life-long openness



# Why this issue and adolescence?

Impressionable years hypothesis



Life-long openness



# Why this issue and adolescence?

Three sources of support for impressionable years hypothesis:

1. longitudinal research has found that political orientations have the lowest stability in adolescence and young adulthood, while remaining relatively stable later in the life (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989; Prior, 2010; Sears & Levy, 2003)

Eckstein, Noack, & Gniewosz (2012) have found that political orientations become increasingly stable during adolescence

# Why this issue and adolescence?

Three sources of support for impressionable years hypothesis:

2. the same pattern was revealed for other sociopolitical attitudes related to civic/political behavior, such as authoritarianism, dogmatism, tolerance, ethnocentrism, adherence to social equality etc. (Duckitt, 2009; Vollebergh, Iedema & Raaijmakers, 2001)

# Why this issue and adolescence?

Three sources of support for impressionable years hypothesis:

3. studies on the collective memory show that people tend to recall from their memory those political events (e.g., democratic transition) that happened in their adolescence or young adulthood rather than the events that happened earlier or later in their lives (Valencia & Páez, 1999)

historical events have the largest impact on political development of the person if these events occur between adolescence and adulthood (Sears, 2002; Sears & Levy, 2003)



And what about children?

# And what about children?

*“by the time the child enters high school at the age of 14, his basic political orientations to regime and community have become quite firmly entrenched so that at least during the four years of high school little substantive change is visible”*

(Easton & Hess, 1962, 236)

# And what about children?

Criticism: Cook, 1985; Merelman, 1972;  
Niemi, & Hepburn, 1995; Renshon, 1992

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Children have different cognitive functioning  
compared to adults

# And what about children?

**Joseph Adelson** and his colleagues:

## Children

may differentiate between local and national government and know something about political parties but they do not understand why political parties compete with each other and what is the difference between democracy and dictatorship

## Adolescents

differentiate between abstract public offices (e.g., president) and concrete persons holding these offices

consider long-term consequences of law and other social norms, their consistency with general moral principles, and their consequences for various social groups

understand that political parties represent interests of different social groups

# And what about children?

More general theories of cognitive development:

## **Jean Piaget**

we become able to use abstract reasoning from age **11-12**

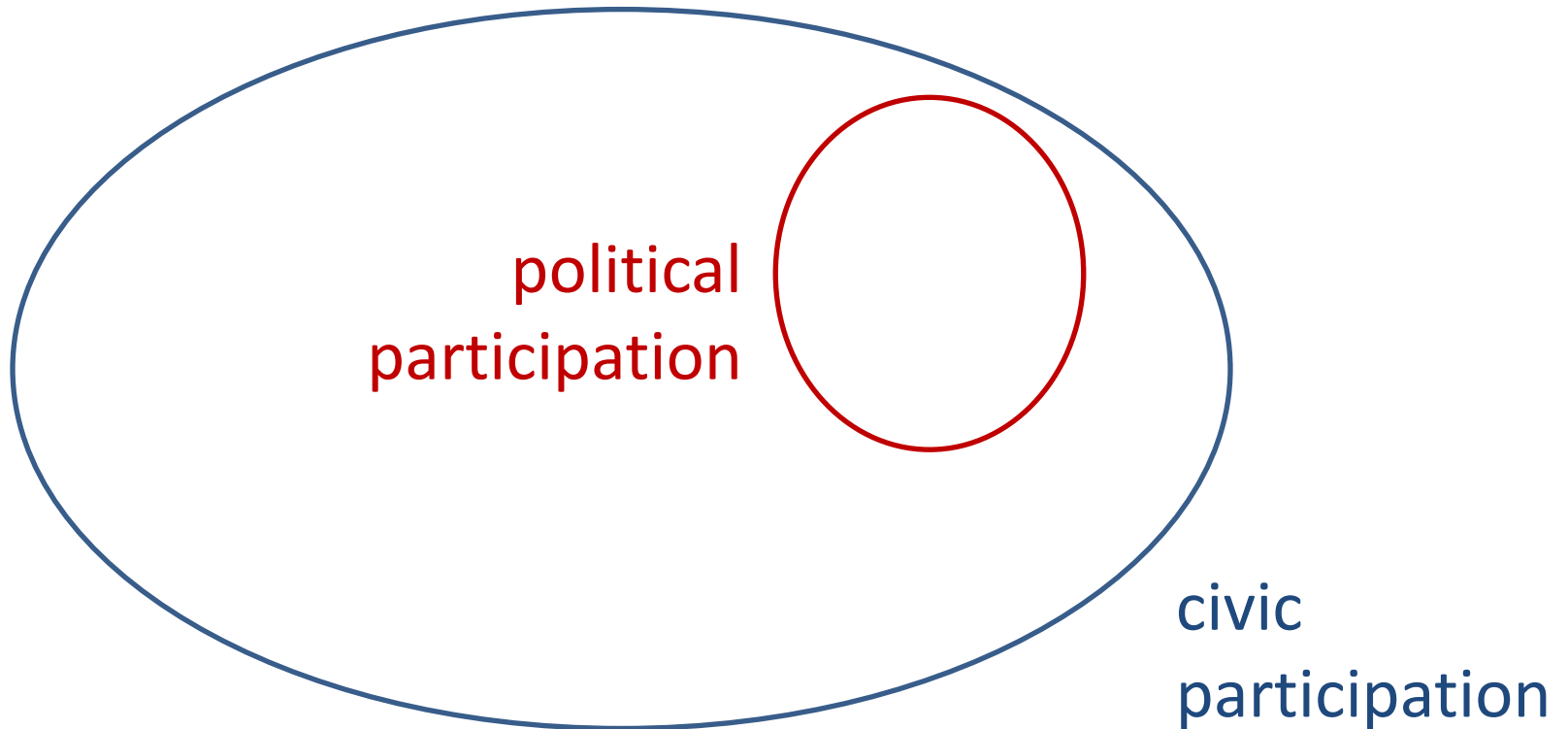
## **Robert Selman**

from age **12-14** we become able to take a perspective of a „third“ person

from age **15** we become able to take perspectives of „third“ non-aligned persons who come from different sociocultural backgrounds

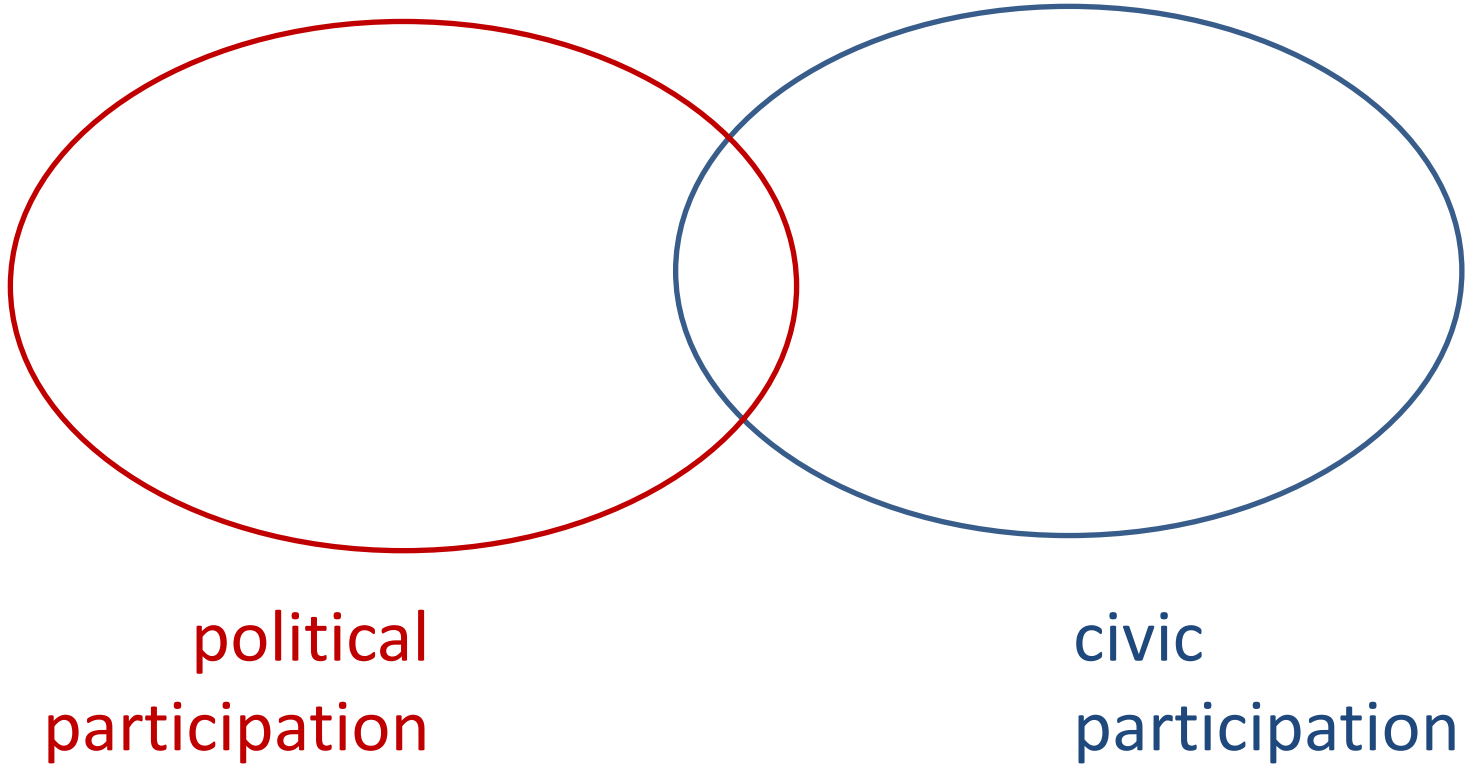
How do they participate?

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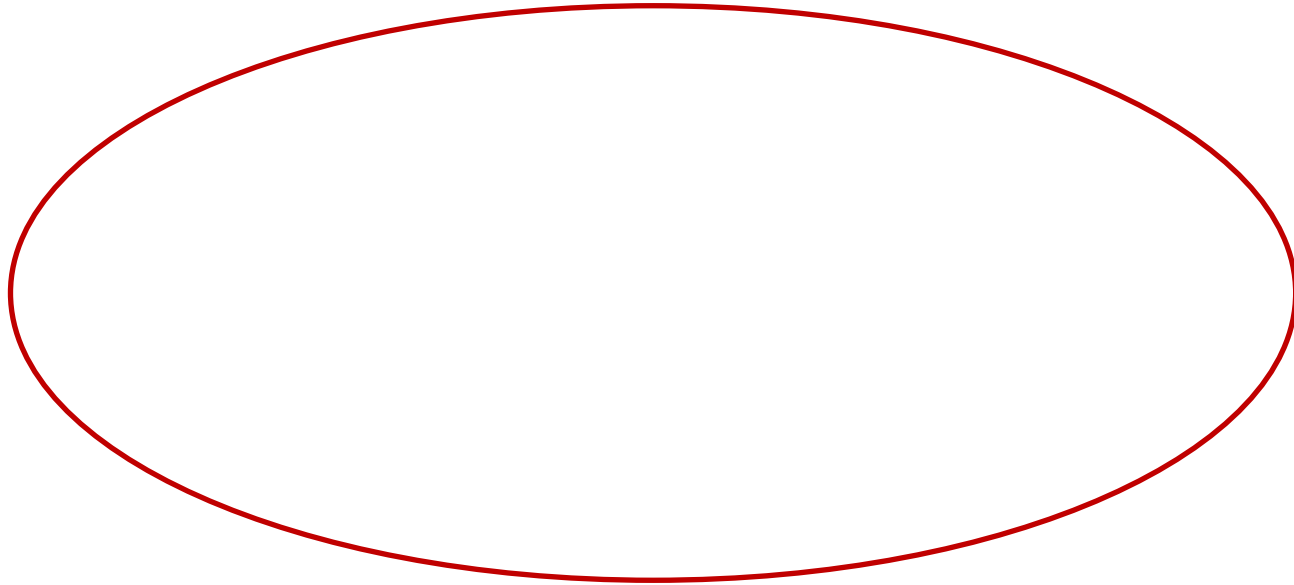




# How do they participate?



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political  
participation

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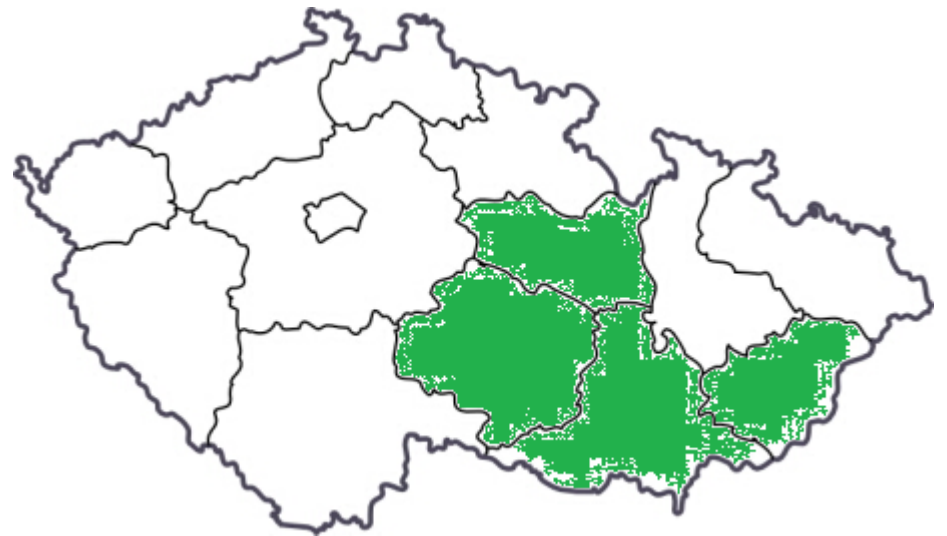
different definition → different picture of current youth

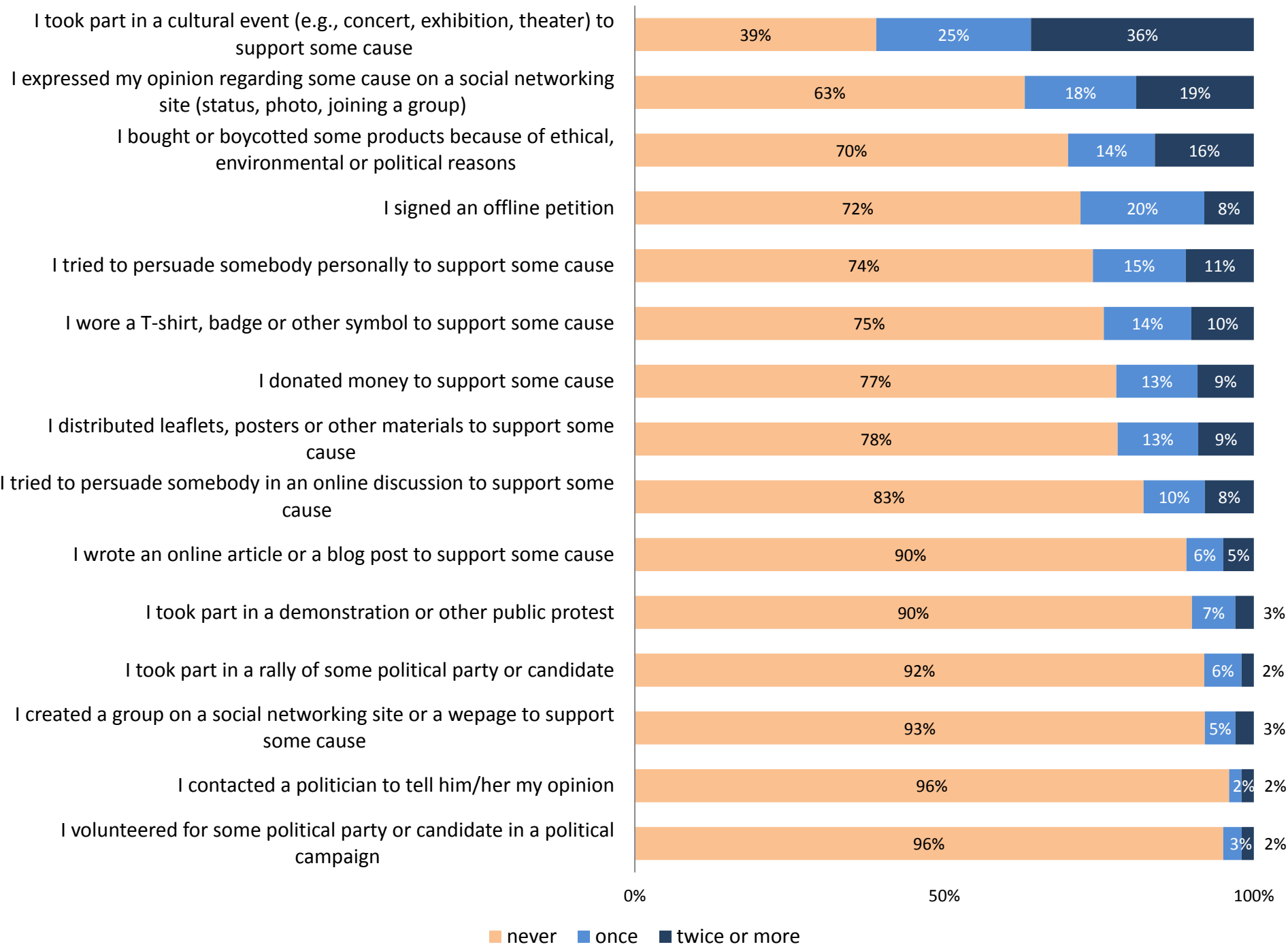
# Our data

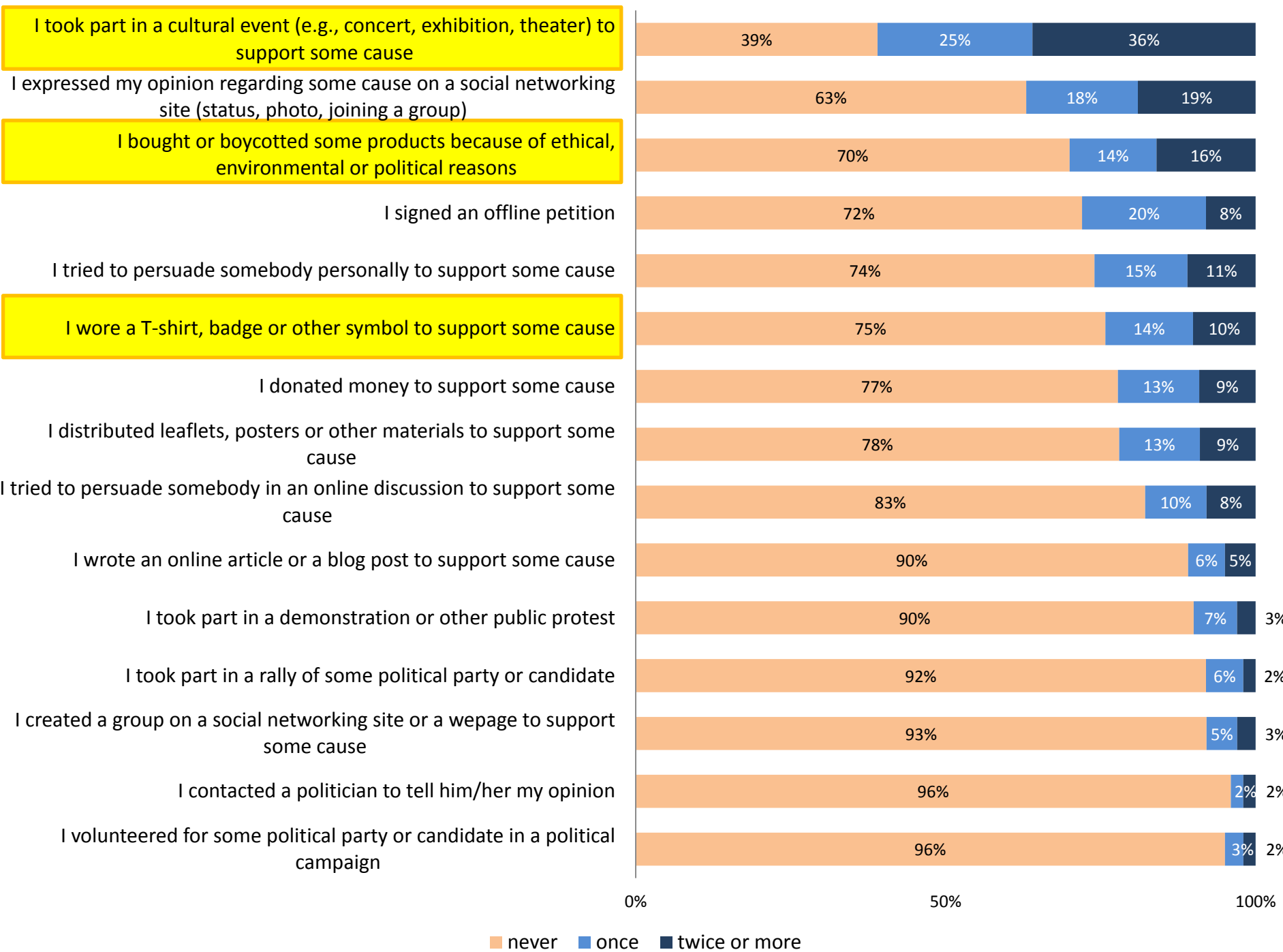
June 2014

about 2,000 9th and 10th graders ( $M_{\text{age}} = 15.7$ )

survey research  
in schools



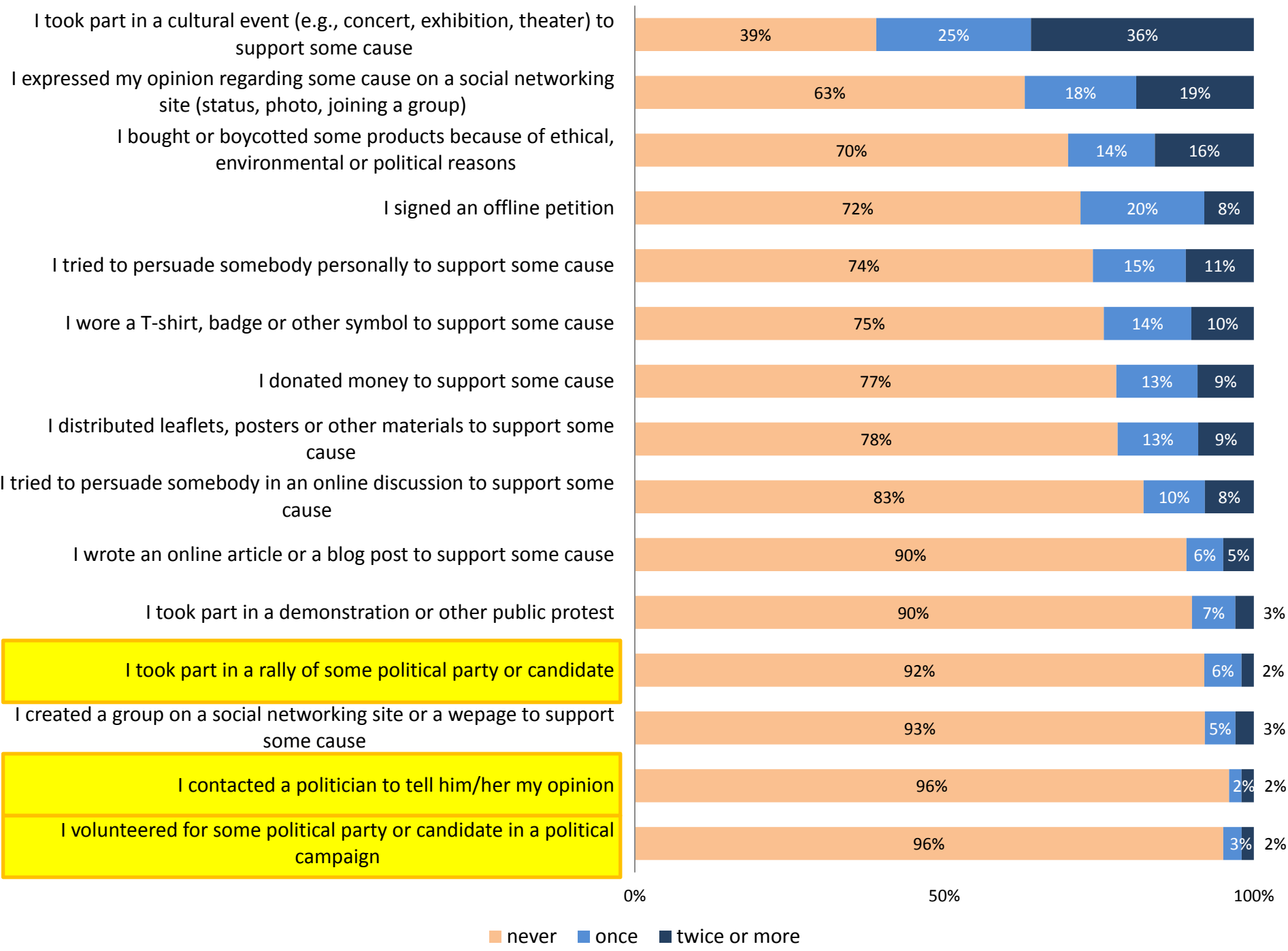




# How do they participate?

civic engagement is issue-oriented and associated with one's lifestyle



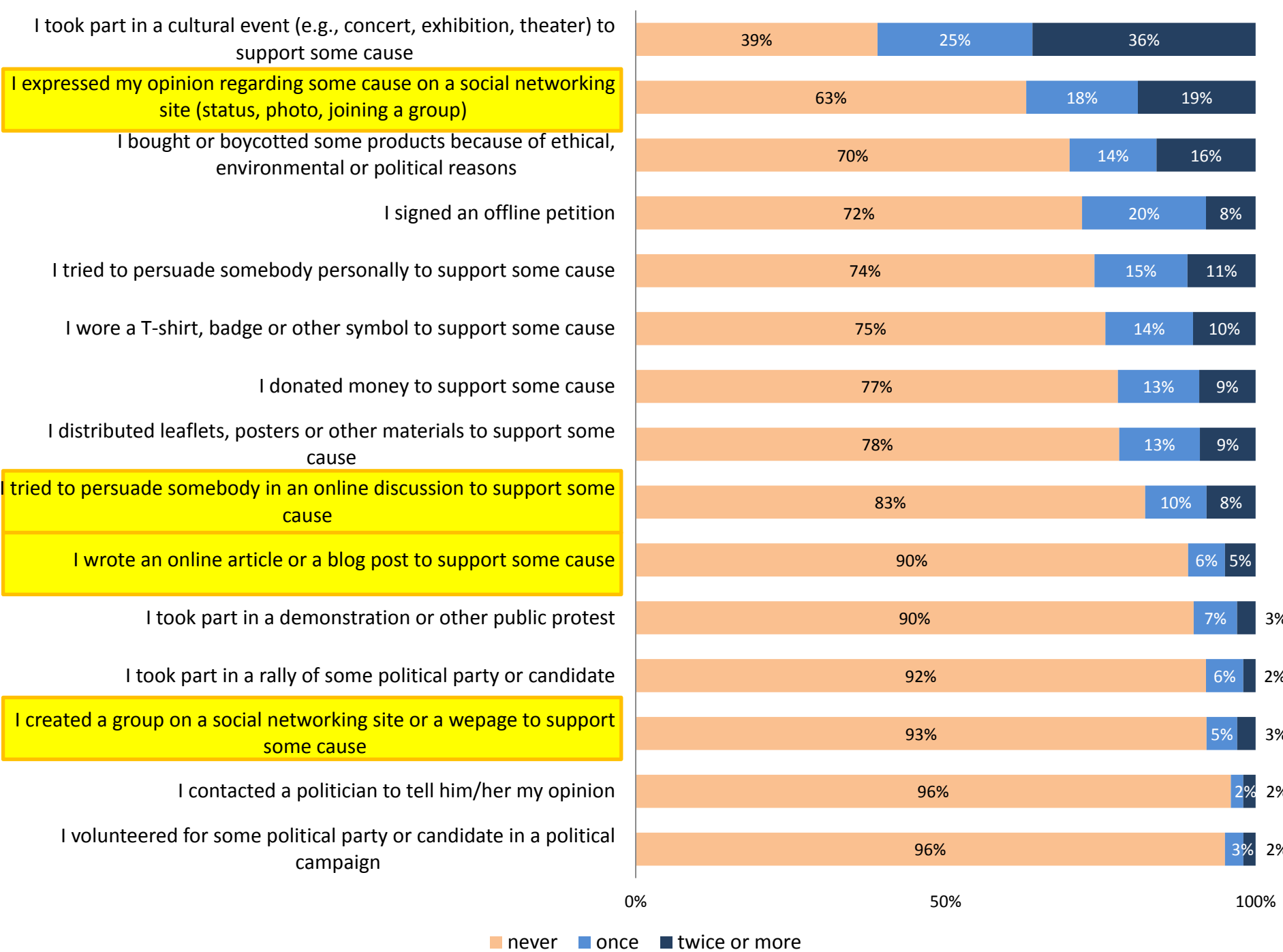




# How do they participate?

most young people are upset with everything related to „politics“

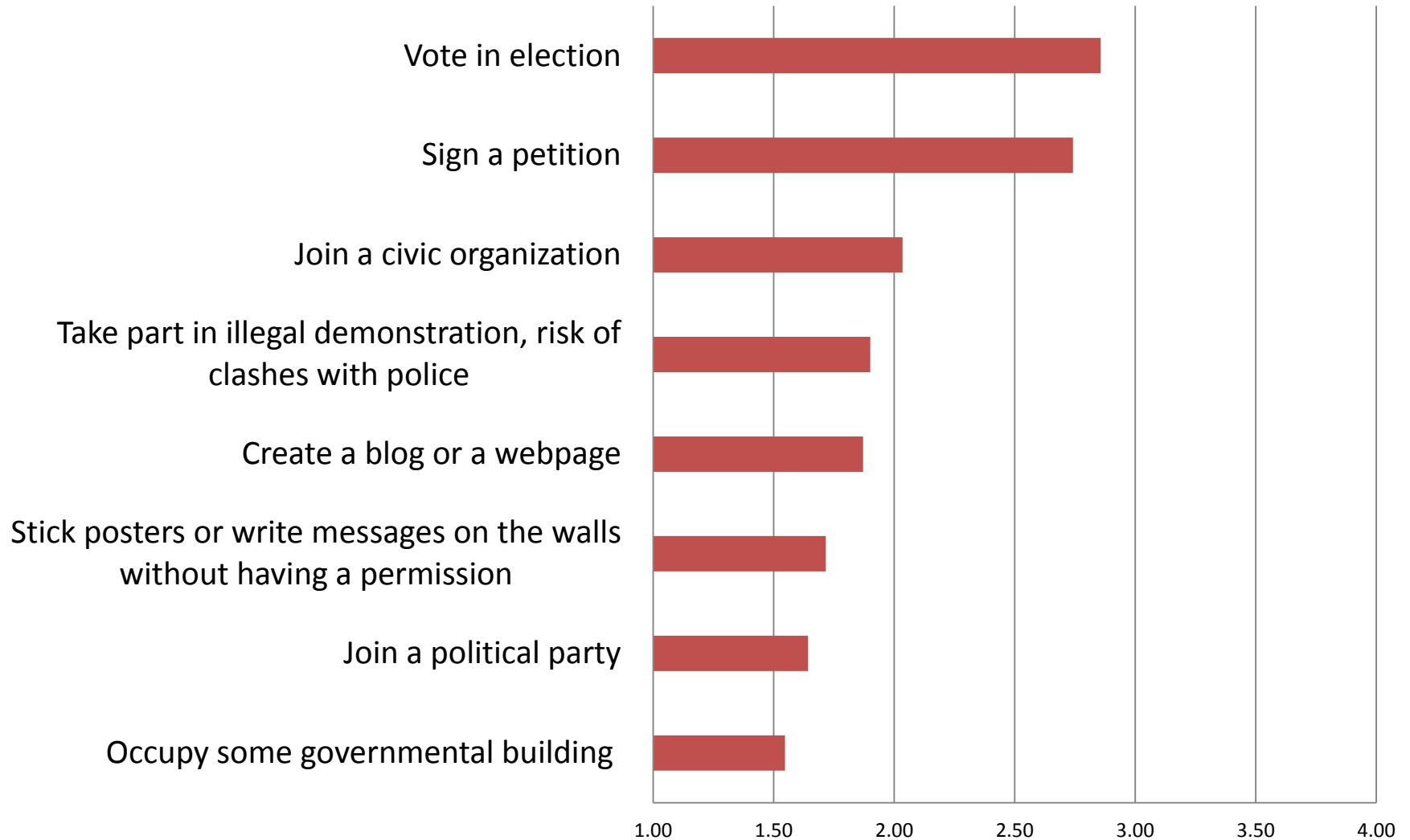




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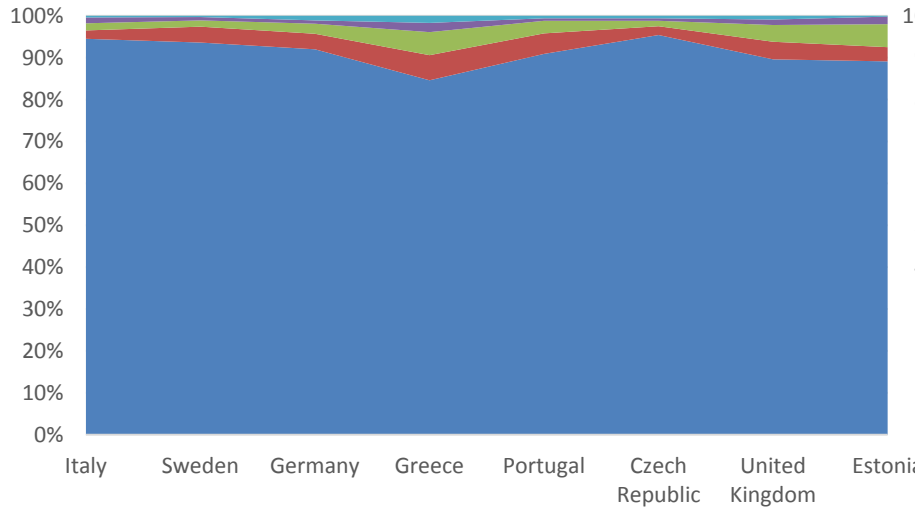
it's not about **online** vs offline,  
it's about „easy“ vs „difficult“

Please think about your adulthood now. If I thought that there was something wrong in the society, I would ...

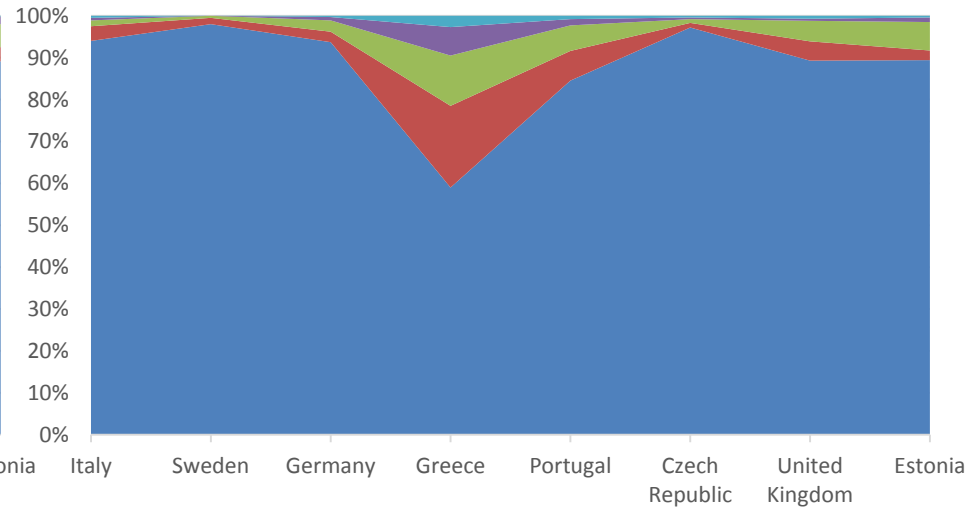


# The CATCH-EyoU study (2017)

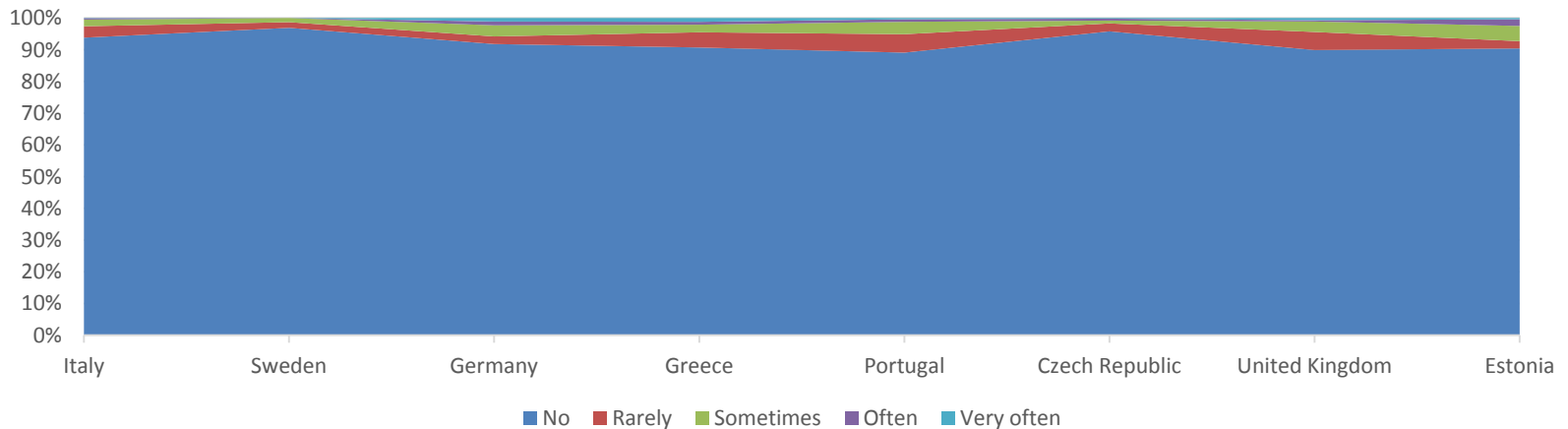
Painted or stuck political messages or graffiti on walls



Taken part in an occupation of a building or a public space



Taken part in a political event where there was a physical confrontation with political opponents or with the police

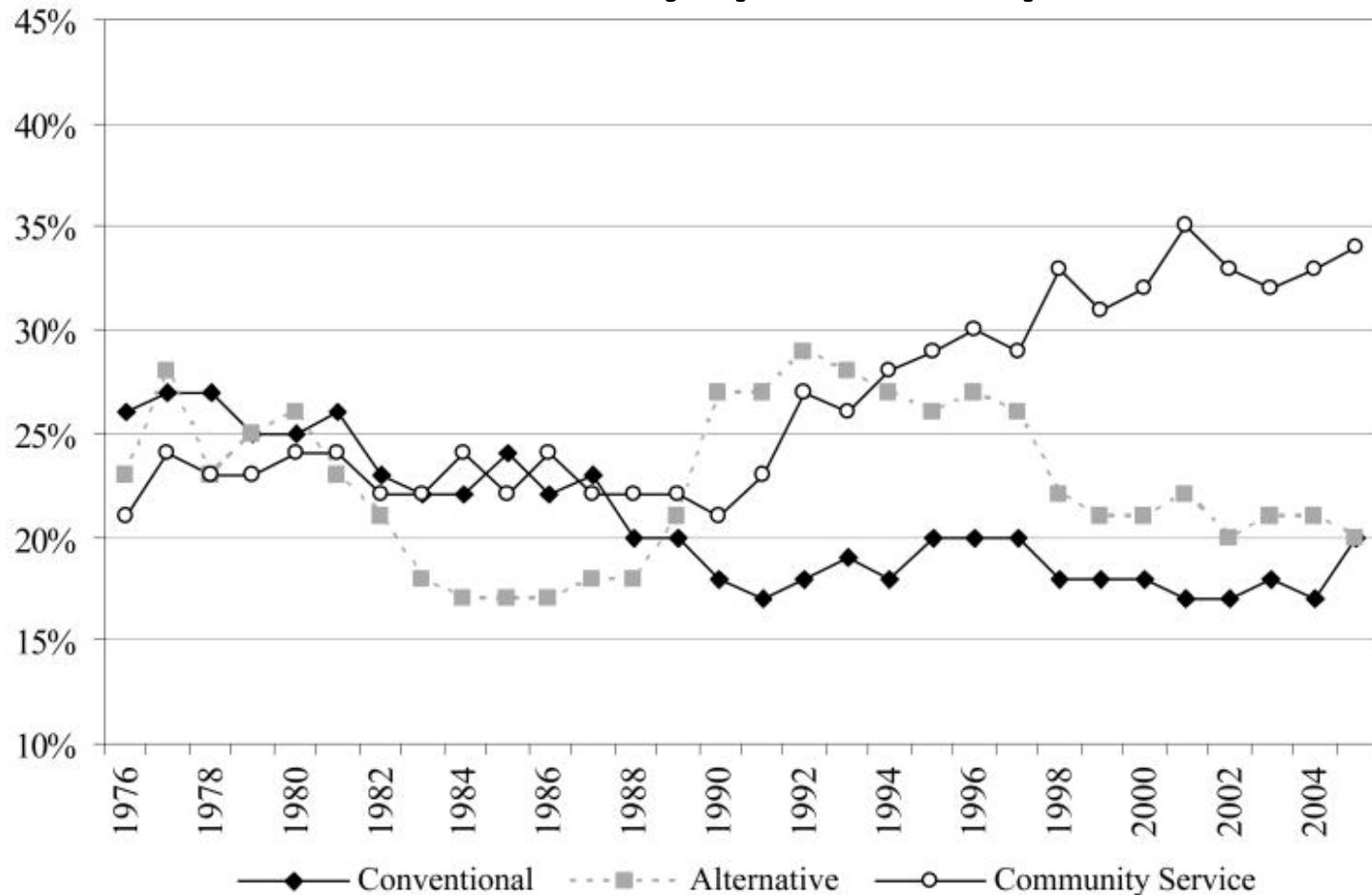


■ No ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Very often

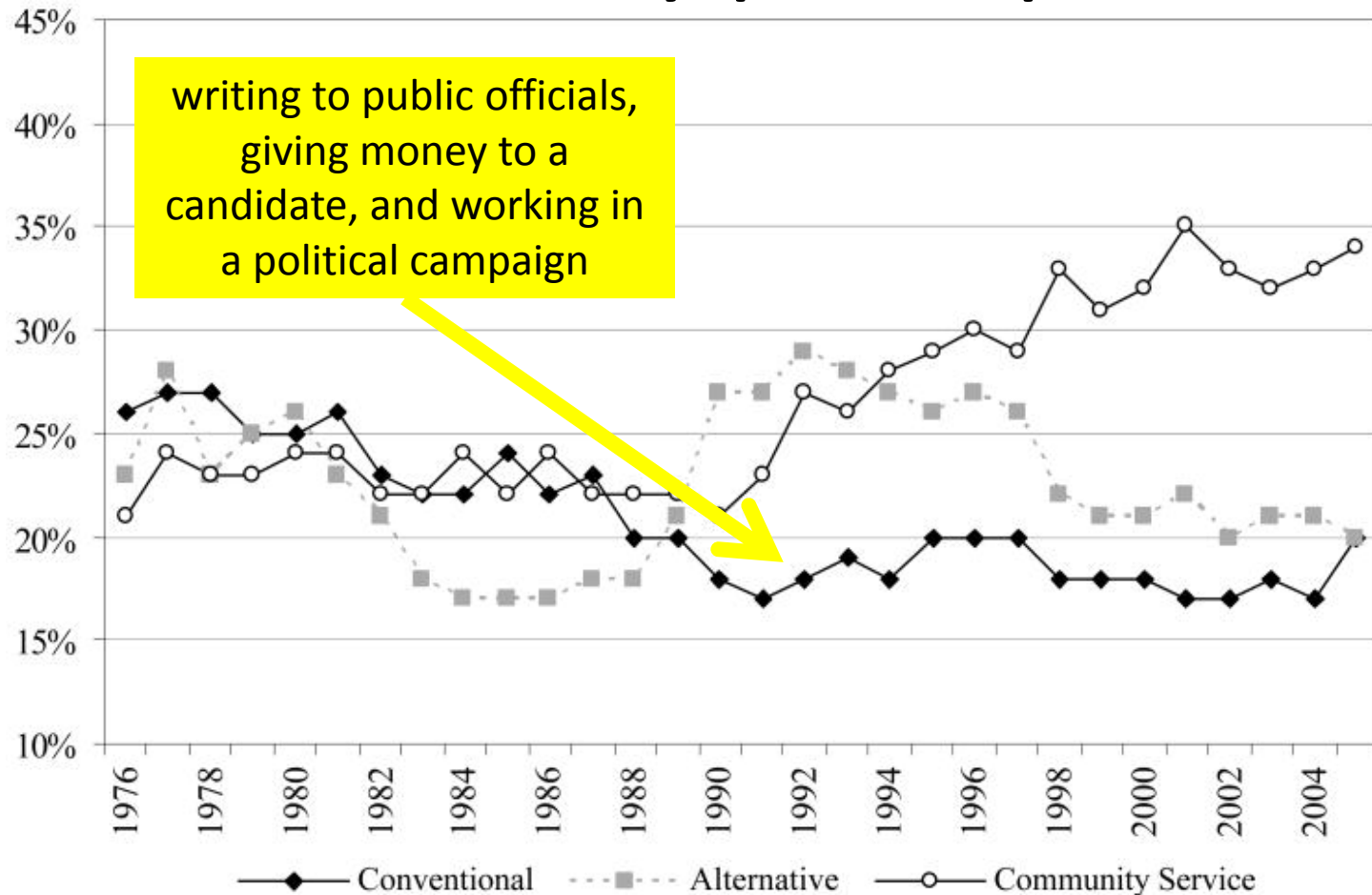
# How do they participate?

they are far from favoring non-normative activities over normative activities

# How do they participate?

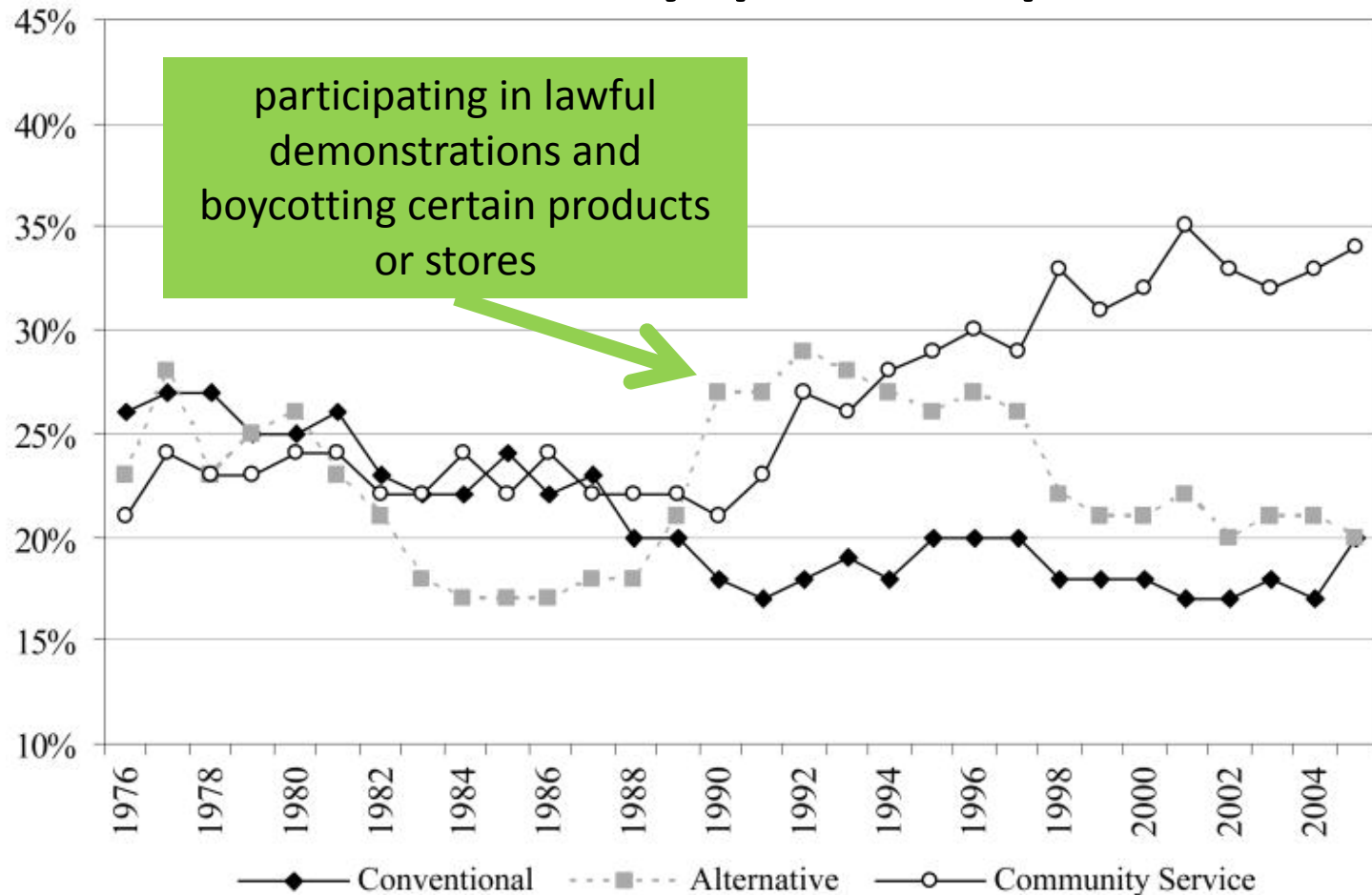


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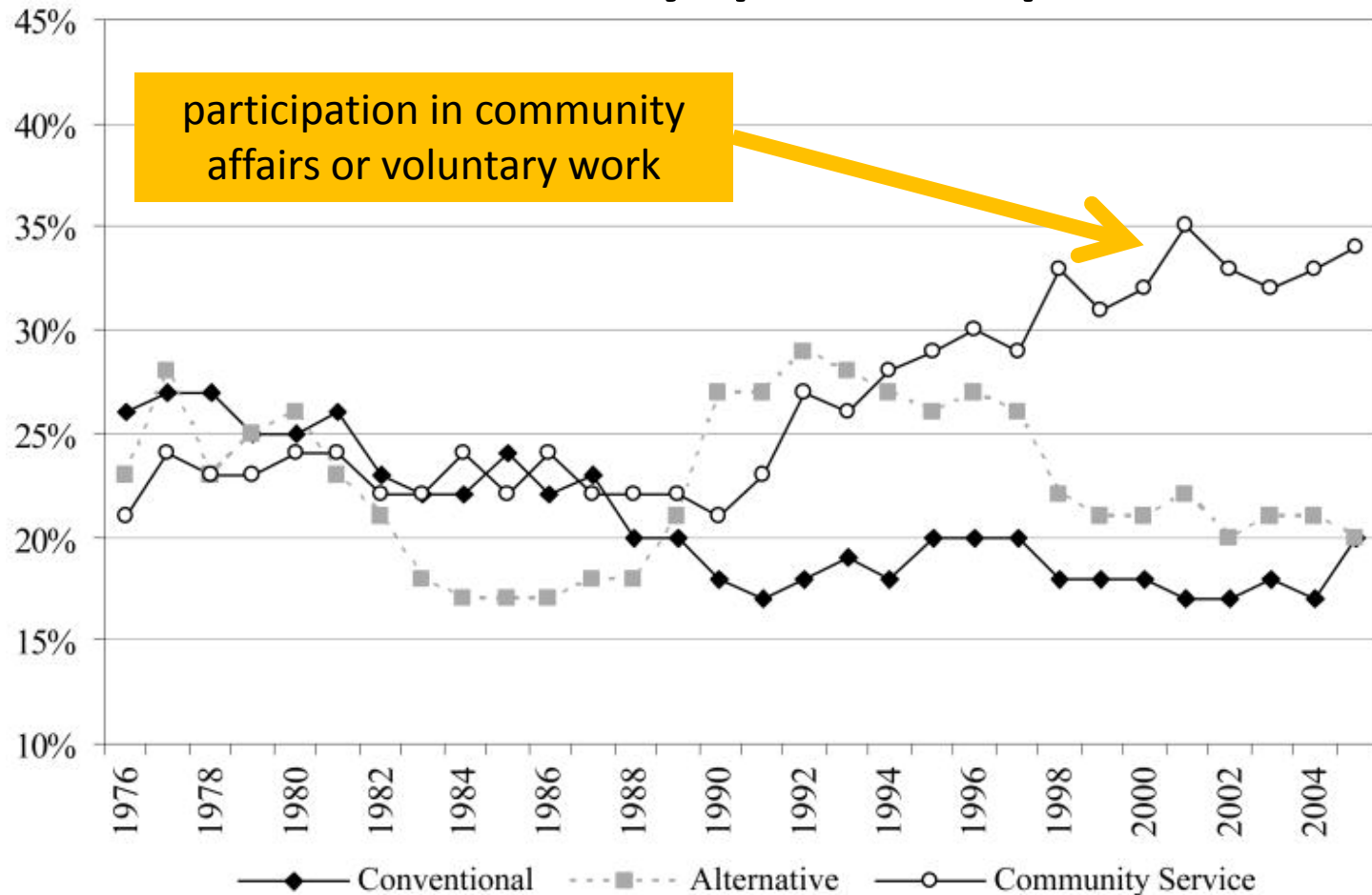




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they tend to focus on local and community issues

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37% environment and animal rights

28% local issue

20% human rights in the Czech Republic

17% human rights abroad

11% politics

What is political/civic socialization?

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## **Macro-level perspective**

how societies and political systems maintain their stability by instilling certain values, beliefs, and behavioral norms in their citizens?

## **Micro-level perspective**

by which patterns and processes individuals engage in political/civic development , learning and constructing their particular relationships to the political/civic contexts in which they live?

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# What is political/civic socialization?

## Ecological approach

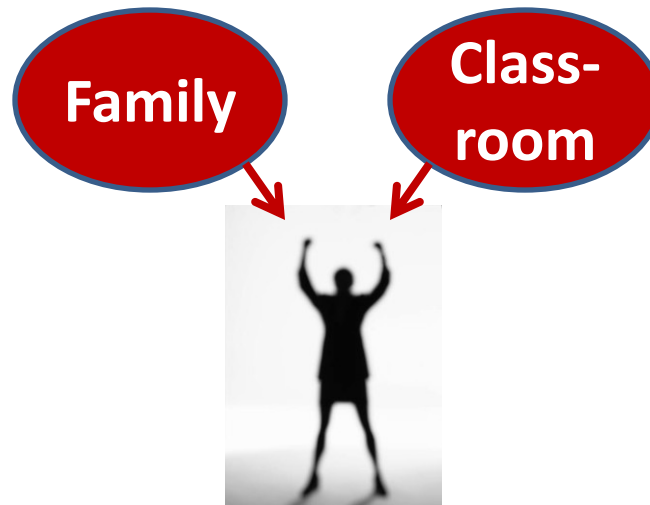
*“[...] development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active [...] organism and the persons, objects, and symbol in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 797).*

*“the form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of [1] the characteristics of the developing person, [2] the environment [...], [3] the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration, and [4] the social continuities and changes occurring over time through the life course and the historical period” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 798).*



# What is political/civic socialization?

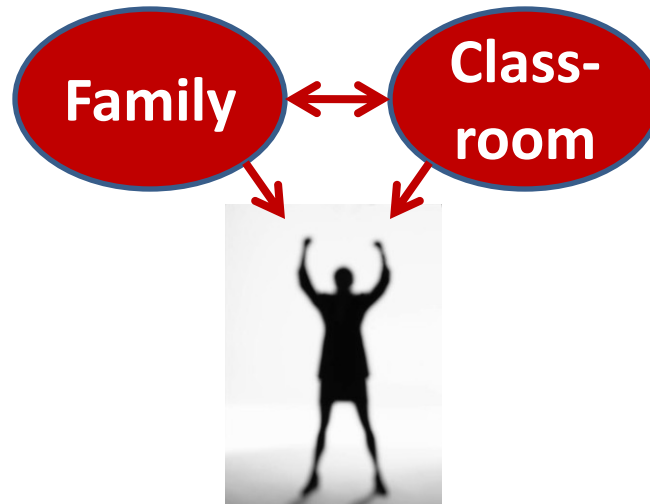
**microsystem**



**Bronfenbrenner, 1979**  
Wilkenfeld et al., 2010

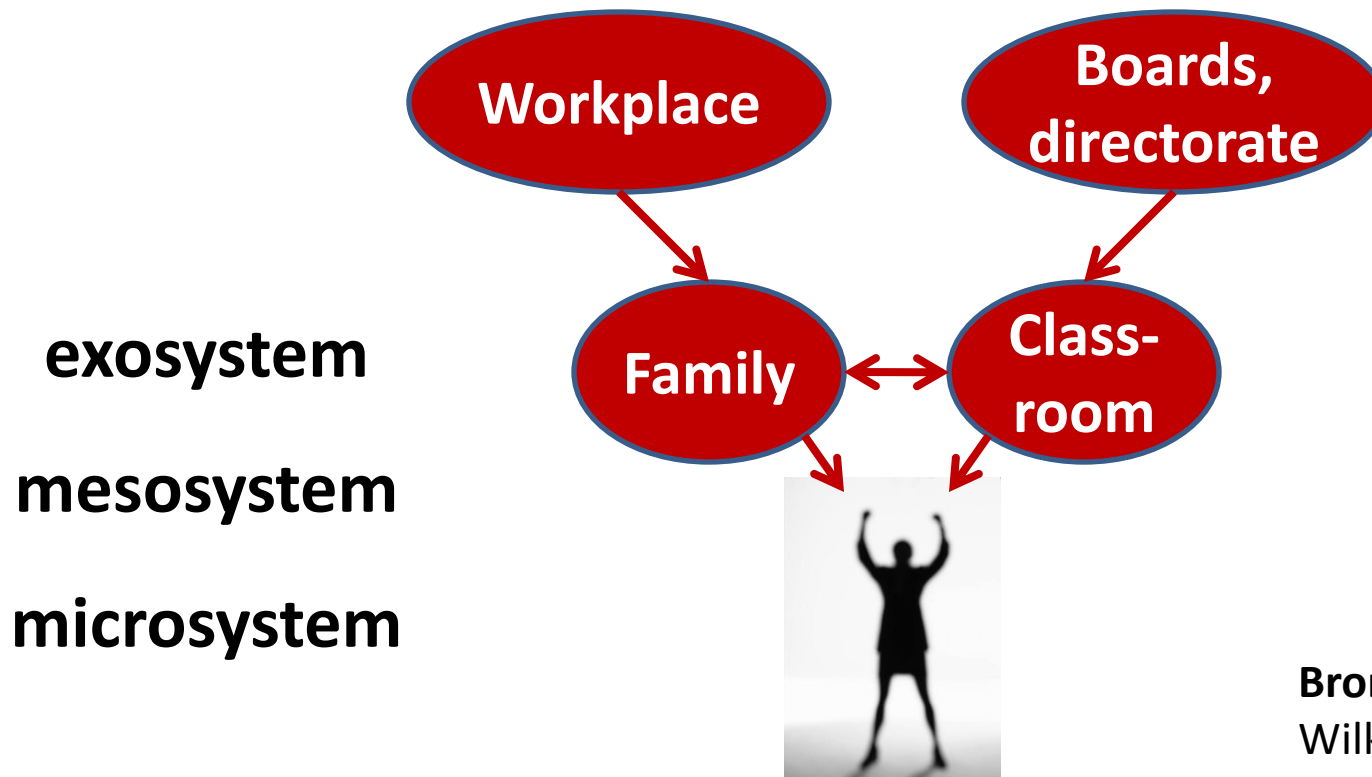
# What is political/civic socialization?

**mesosystem**  
**microsystem**



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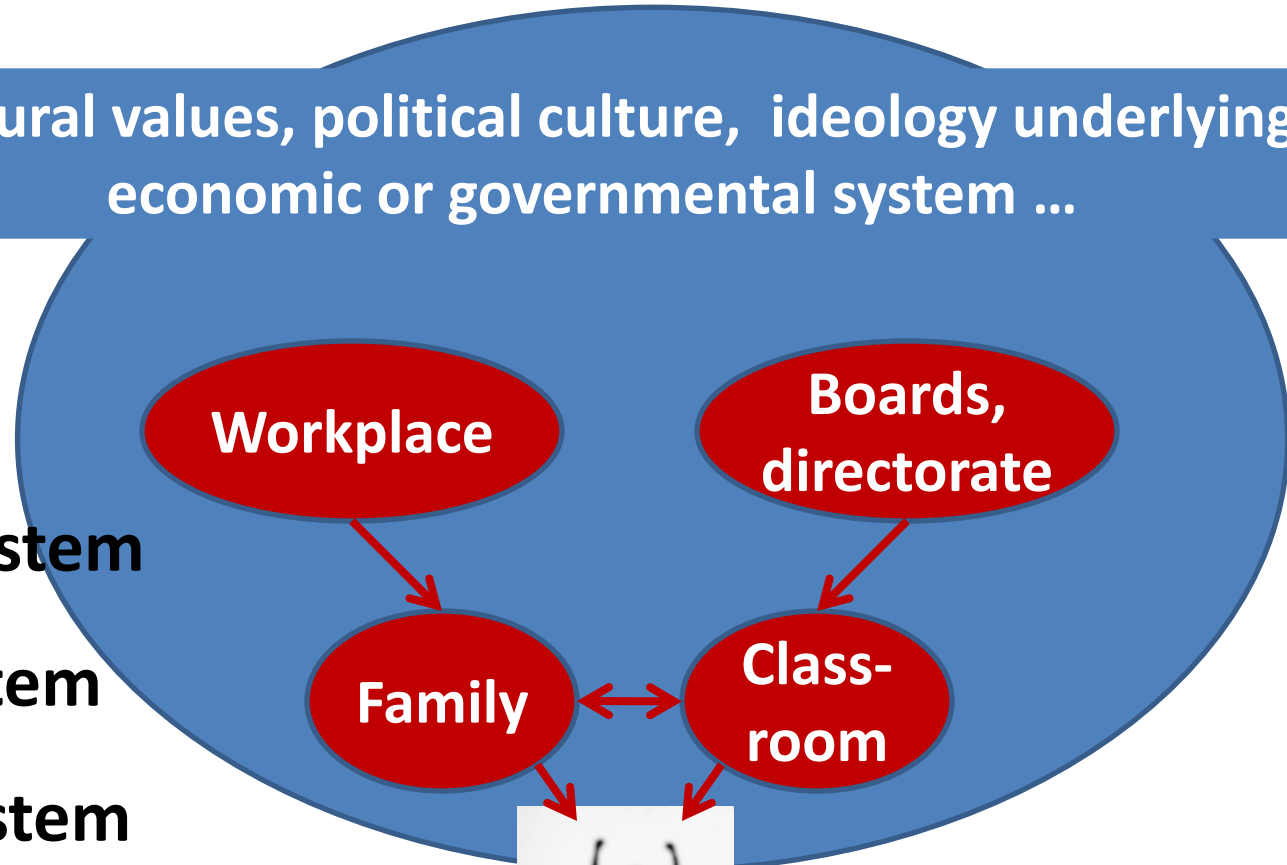
Cultural values, political culture, ideology underlying economic or governmental system ...

macrosystem

exosystem

mesosystem

microsystem



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- development can occur only if the person engages in an activity that takes place on a regular basis and becomes increasingly complex

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- adolescents' individual characteristics (dispositions and abilities) influence how much and how they are civically engaged

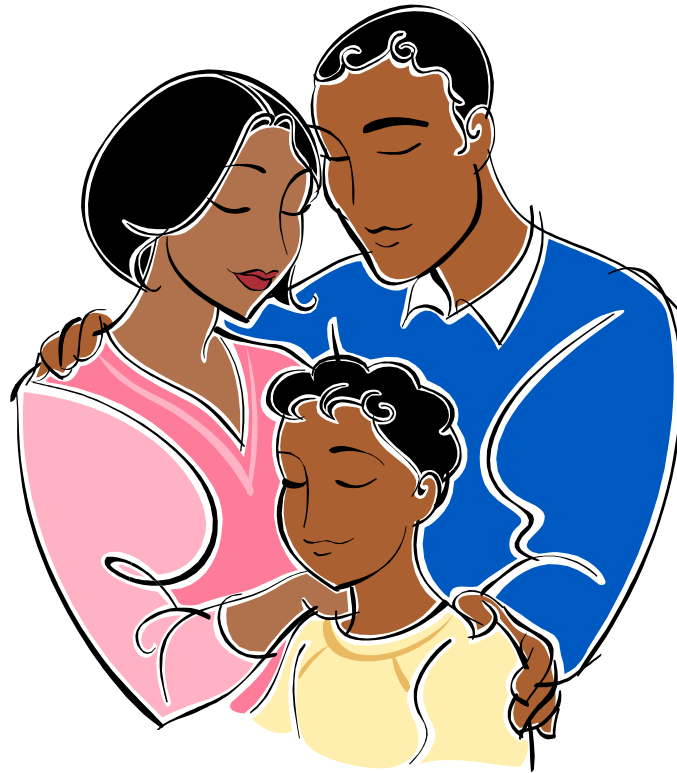
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- specific interactions between microsystems and adolescents might considerably differ across different regions, countries, social classes or generations

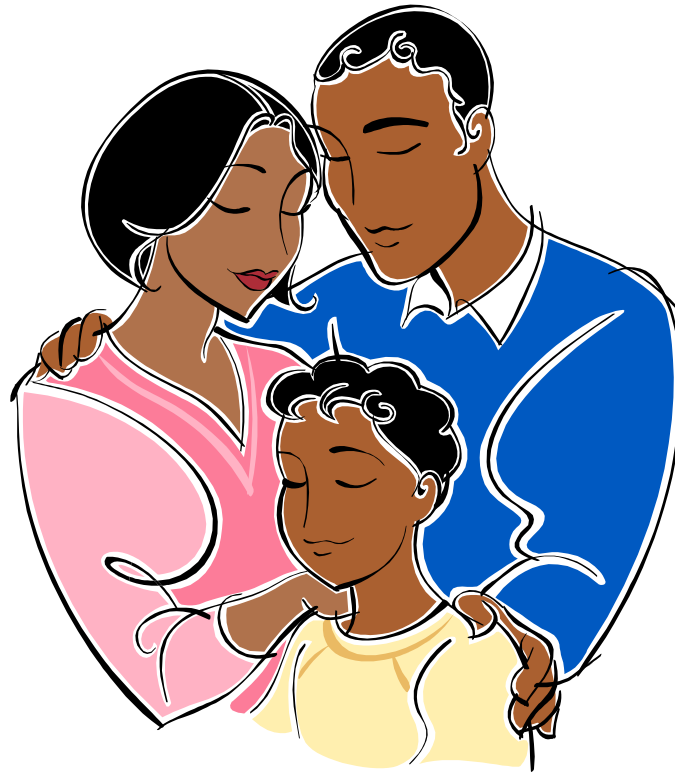


# Socialization agents



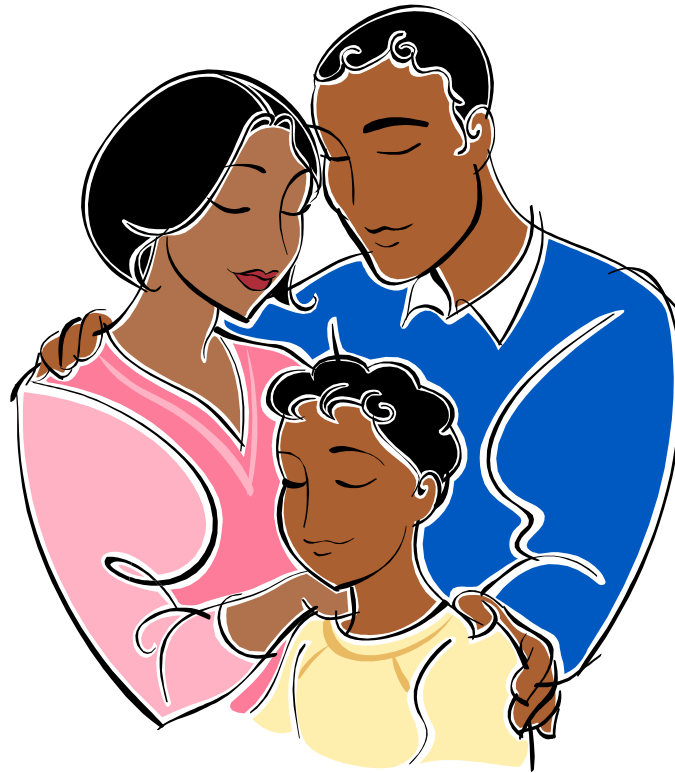
# Socialization agents

parents are role  
models



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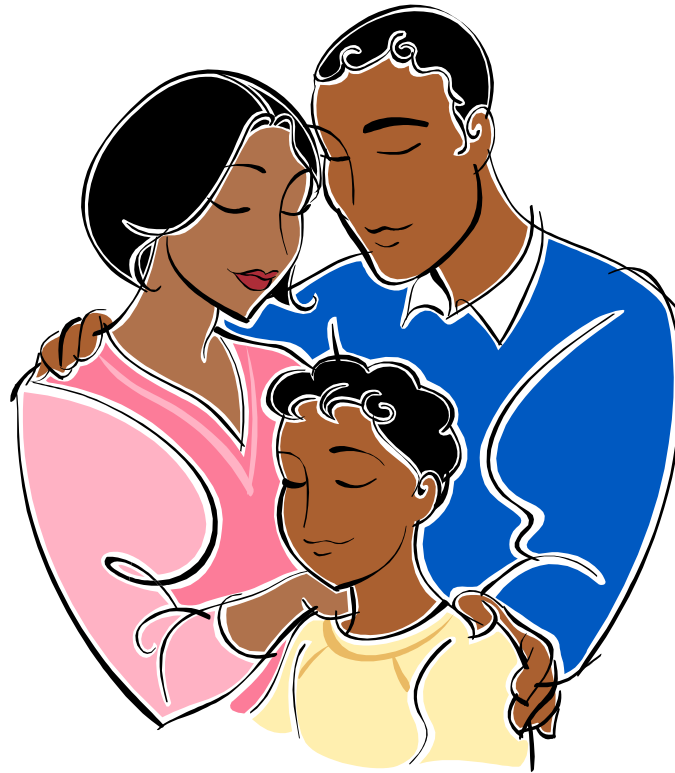
parents are role models



parents can persuade the child

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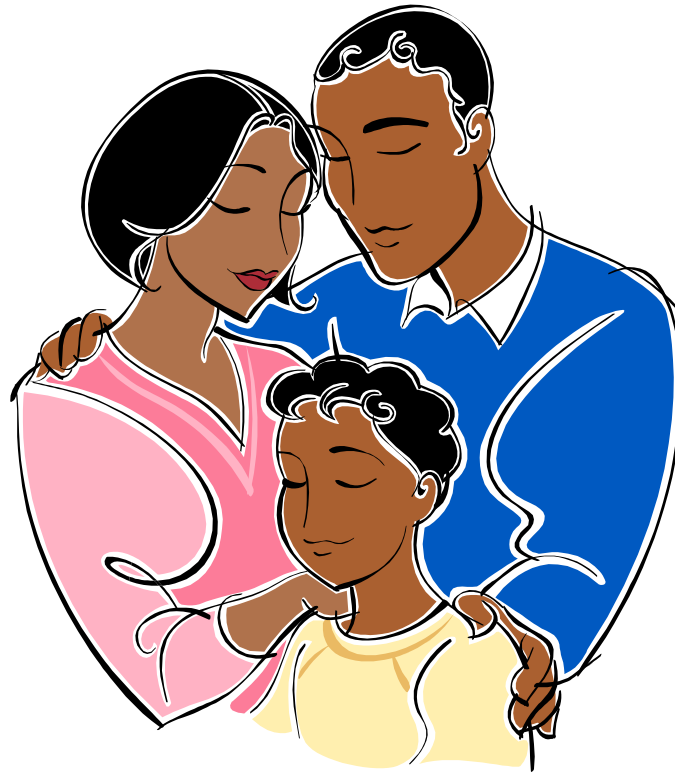


parents control where the child spends her or his time

parents can persuade the child

# Socialization agents

parents are role models



parents control where the child spends her or his time

parents use democratic, authoritarian etc. practices towards the child

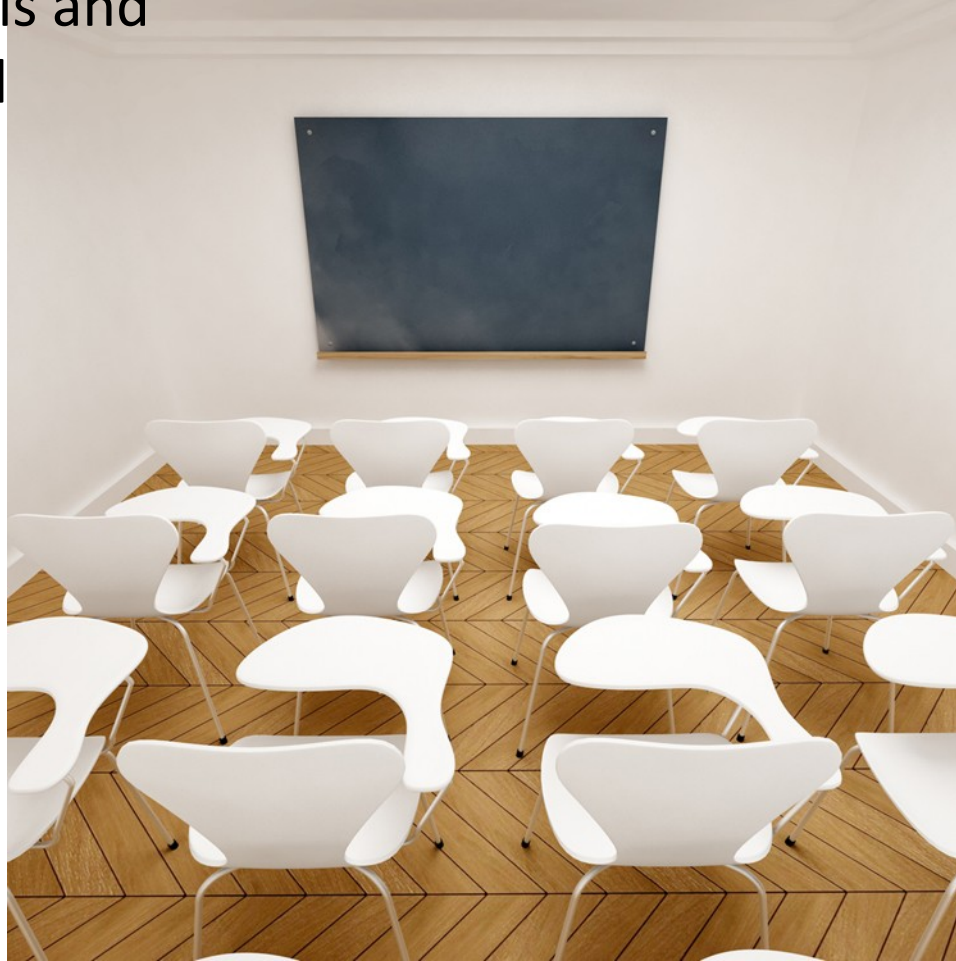
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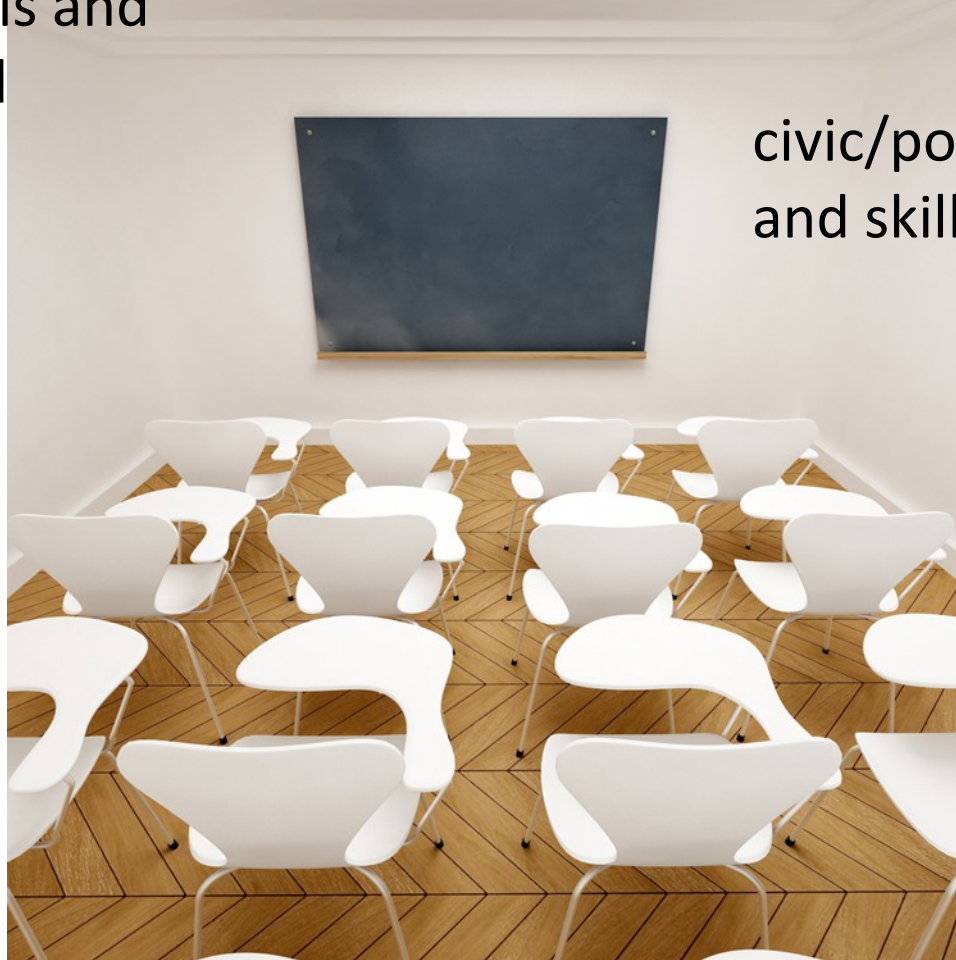
# Socialization agents

teachers and classmates  
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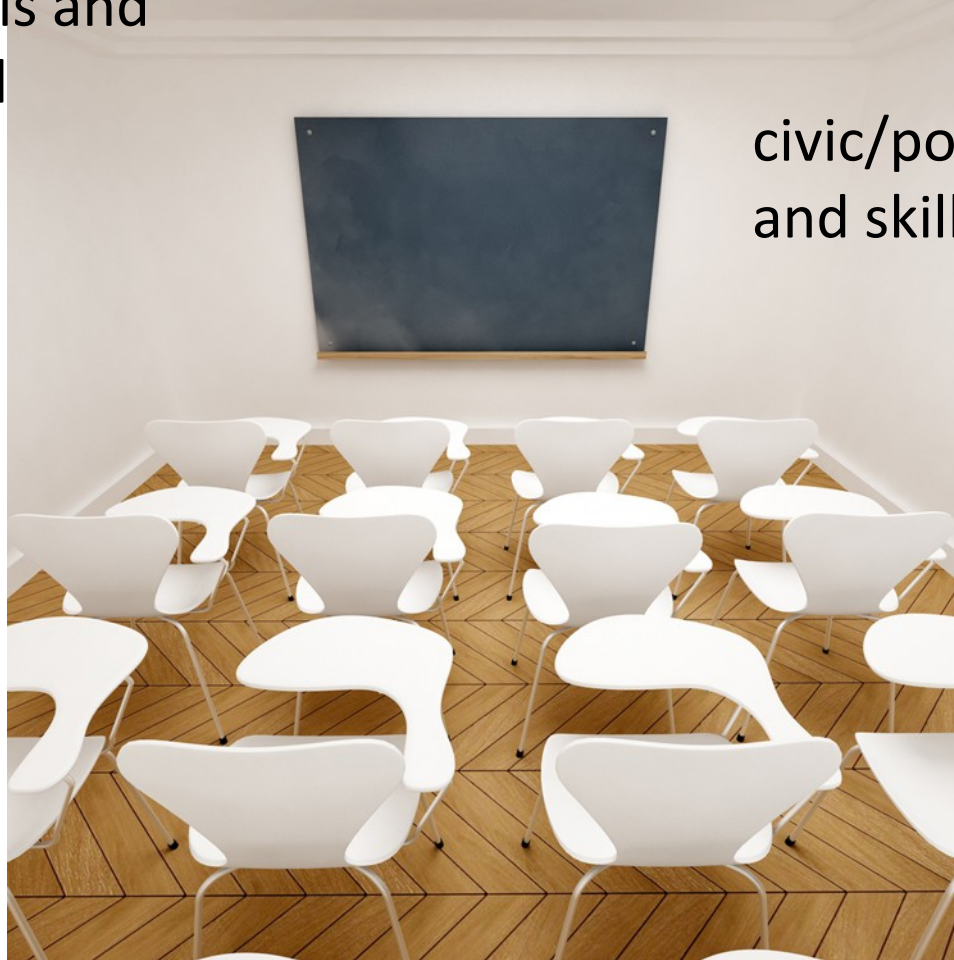


civic/political knowledge  
and skills can be learned



# Socialization agents

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produce social  
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civic/political knowledge  
and skills can be learned

democratic,  
authoritarian etc.  
practices  
are used in the  
classrooms

# Socialization agents

- media
- clubs, groups, organizations
- friends
- neighborhoods

# Main issues & controversies

- Agency
- Directions of influence
- Interventions
- Multiple contexts and dispositions-environment interactions

# Main issues & controversies

## **Agency**

child/adolescent as **passive recipient** vs. **active agent**

# Main issues & controversies

## Agency

child/adolescent as **passive recipient** vs. **active agent**

current developmental theories stress that the process of socialization cannot be understood as a mere transmission of the environmental influences on a child (Maccoby, 2007; Nurmi, 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)

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political beliefs held by adolescents reflect rather adolescents' hypotheses about parental beliefs than parental beliefs as such (Westholm, 1999)

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political beliefs held by adolescents reflect rather adolescents' hypotheses about parental beliefs than parental beliefs as such (Westholm, 1999)

civic/political socialization is a process by which young people actively ascribe meanings to the world of politics, based on the information and experiences provided by socialization agents (Metzger & Smetana, 2010)

# Main issues & controversies

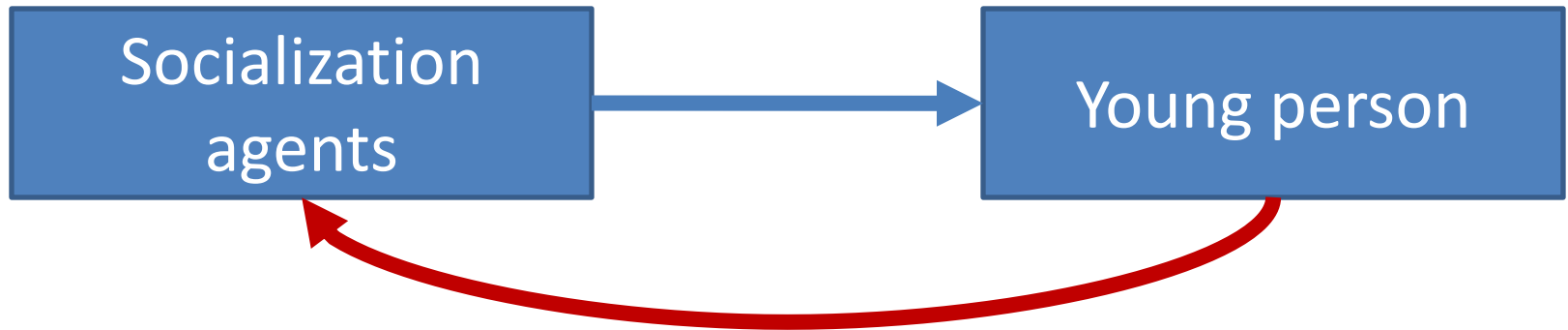
## Directions of influence





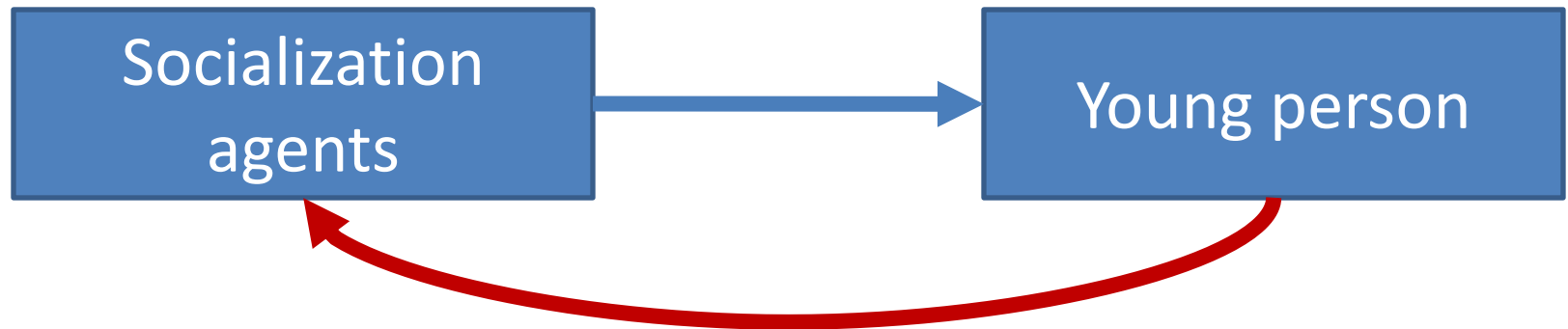
# Main issues & controversies

## Directions of influence



# Main issues & controversies

## Directions of influence



## Main concerns:

new research (McDevitt, 2005)

internet (Dahlgren, 2009)

immigrant families (Wong & Tseng, 2008)

# Main issues & controversies

## **Interventions**

school-based programs

teaching

practicing skills

organization-based programs

mandatory community service

# Main issues & controversies

## **Multiple contexts and disposition-environment interactions**

cummulative effects of multiple contexts

it's not only about environment but also about one's own preferences, beliefs, values, personality traits, cognitive dispositions etc.

young people with different dispositions react differently on the same environment

# Our research

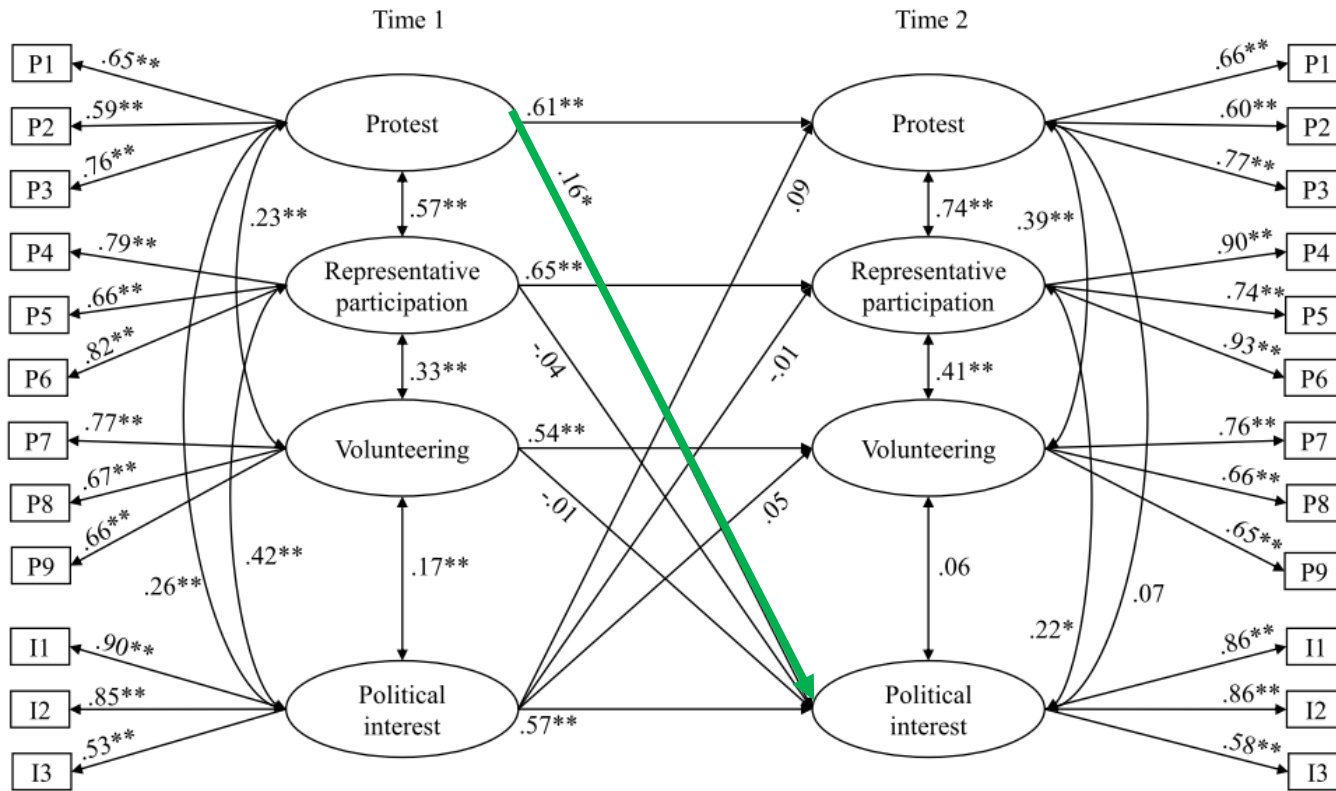
what is the directionality between political attitudes and participation?

# Our research

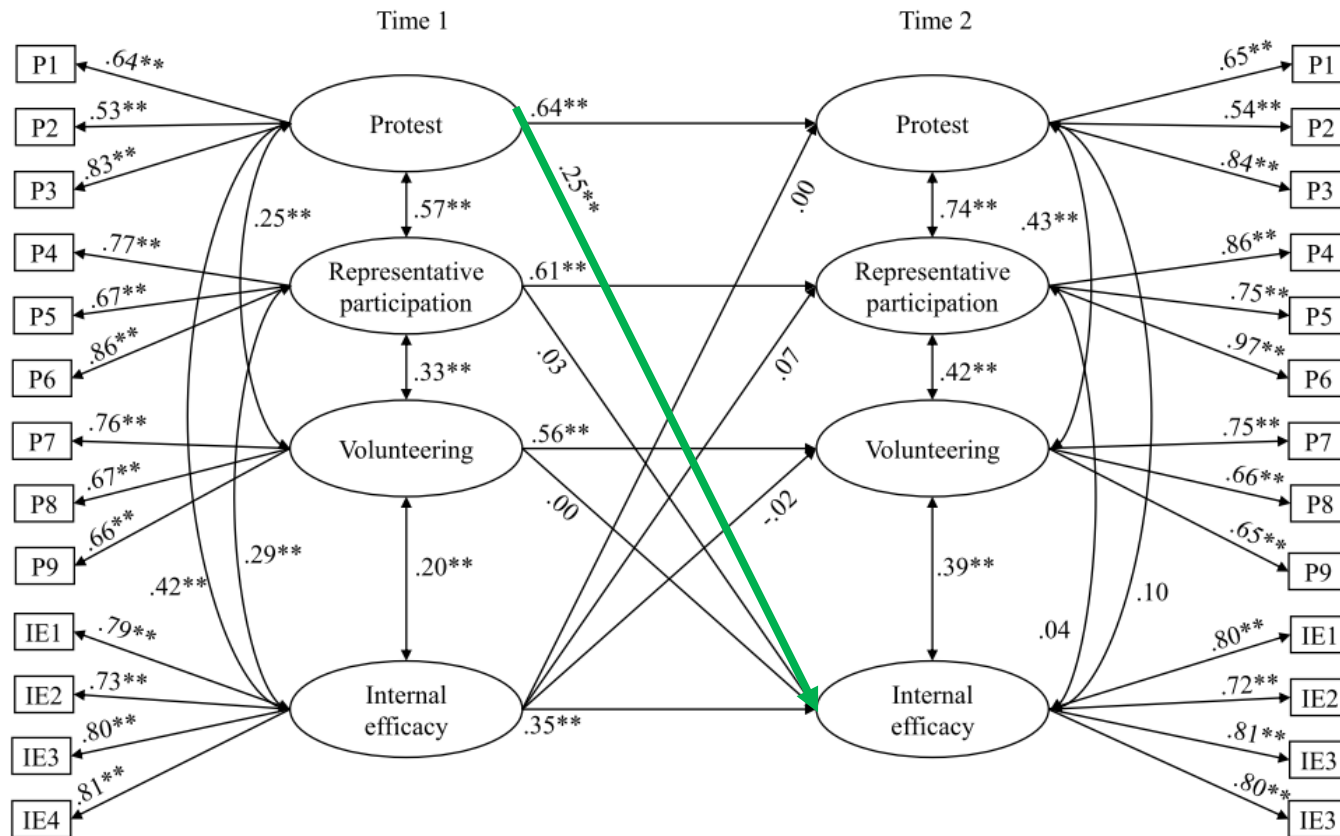
what is the directionality between political attitudes and participation?

data from 768 high school students (aged 14 to 17)

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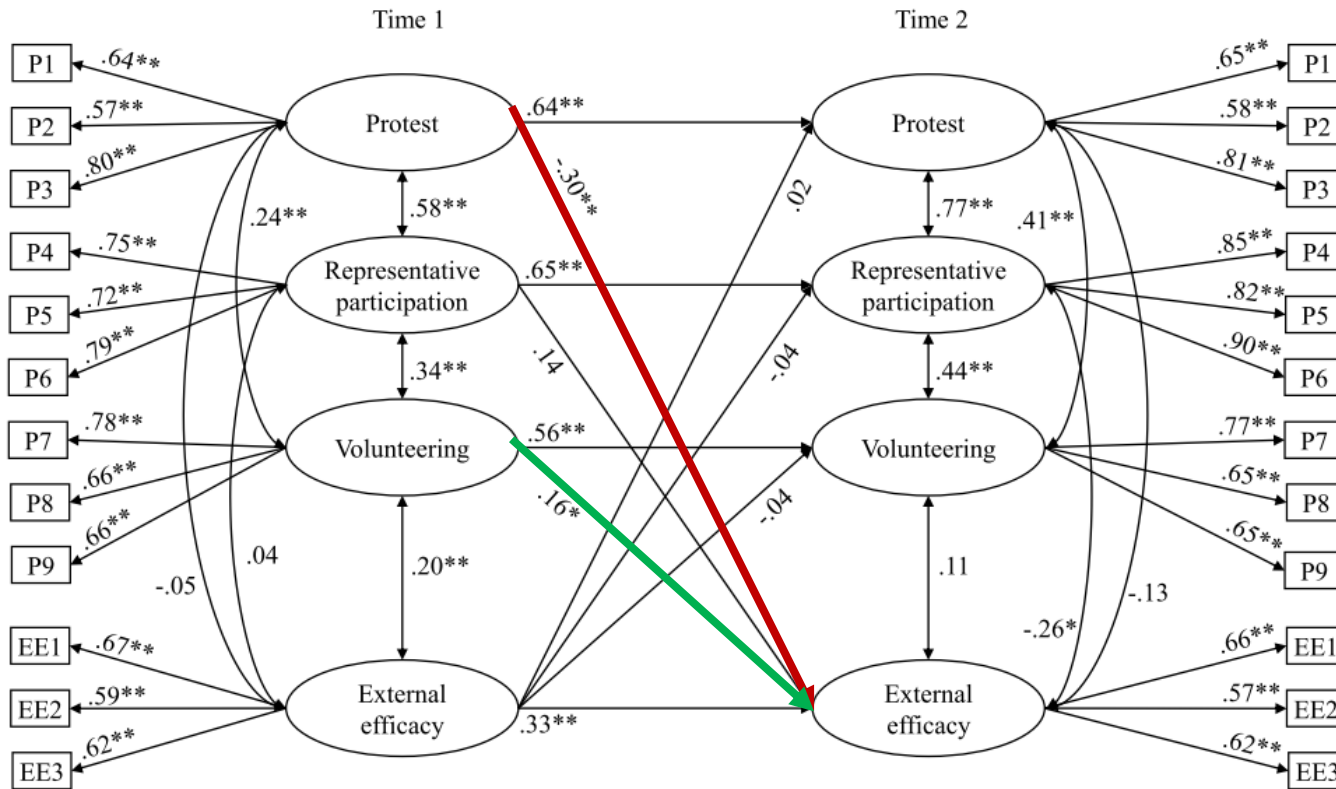


# Our research





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Šerek, Macháčková & Macek (2017)

# Our research

active participation has the effects on political attitudes but the opposite effects are less pronounced

through their own political participation, young people form and clarify their political attitudes

# Our research

what short-term factors contribute to voting turnout of first-time voters?

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longitudinal data from cca 200 adolescents aged 18-19

# Our research

**February**

Voting intention

Following news

Discussions Parents

Discussions Peers

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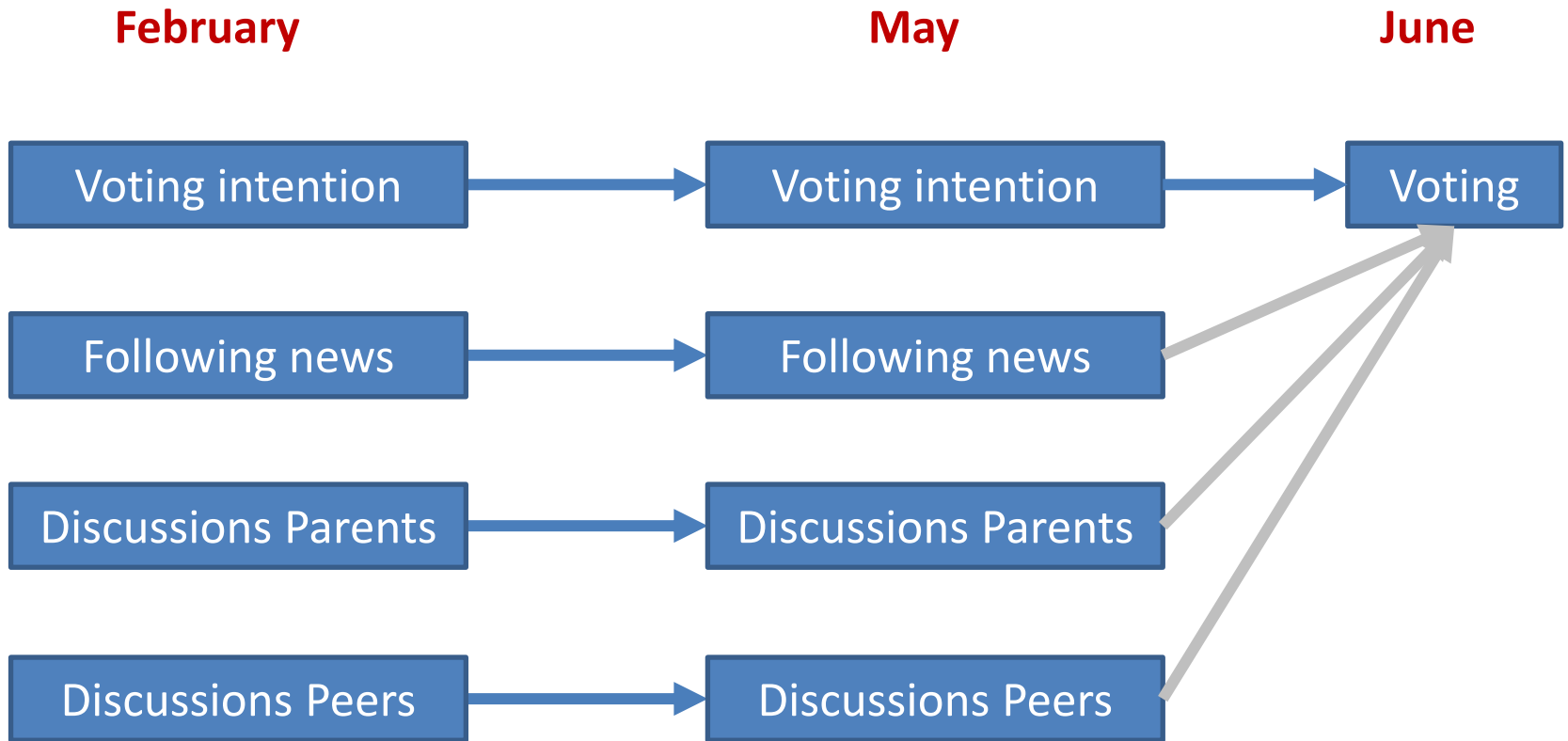
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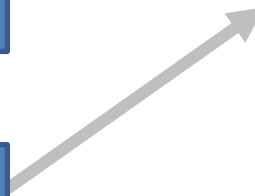
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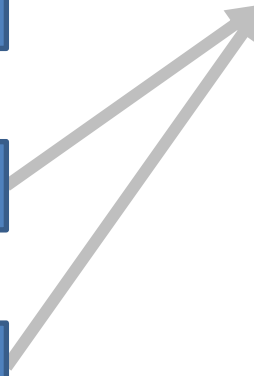
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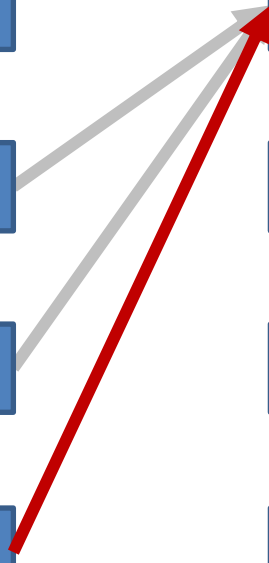
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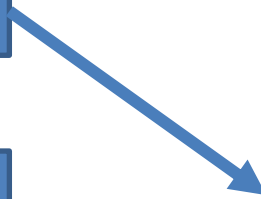
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**June**

Voting



# Our research

adolescents who discussed politics with their peers before the election became more willing to vote

no such effect was found regarding discussions with parents

however, discussions with parents can stimulate more discussions with peers



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both parents and peers are important but in different ways

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why peers?

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why peers?

stronger social influence

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why peers?

- stronger social influence

- peers can be selected by a person

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why peers?

- stronger social influence

- peers can be selected by a person

- more concept-oriented than socio-oriented communication

# Questions?

[serek@fss.muni.cz](mailto:serek@fss.muni.cz)