

Civic and political socialization

Jan Šerek

Youth Development

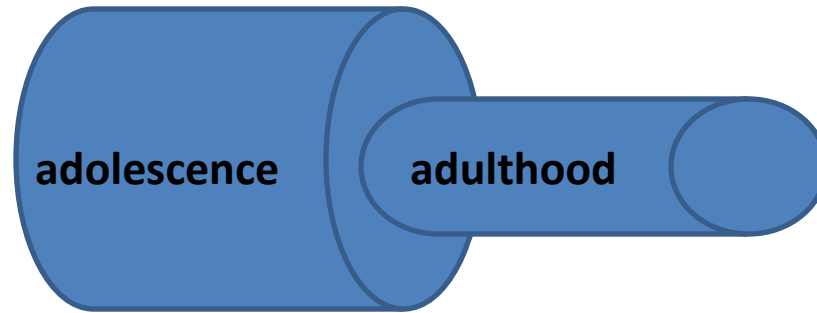
20. 3. 2024

Why adolescence?

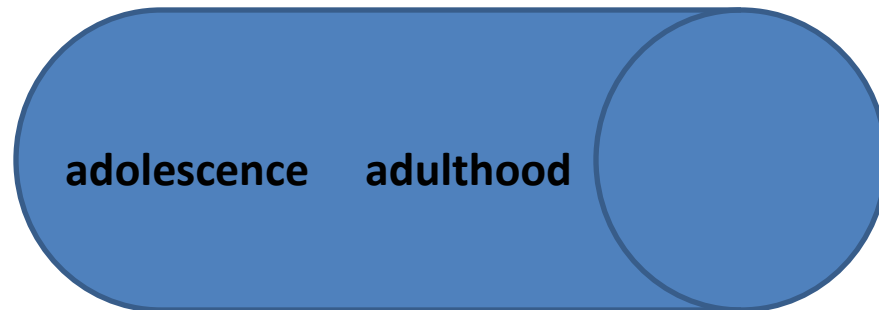
- development of a social aspect of person's identity (Erikson, 1968)
- social and institutional incentives
 - educational system (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995)
 - political rights

Why adolescence?

Impressionable years hypothesis

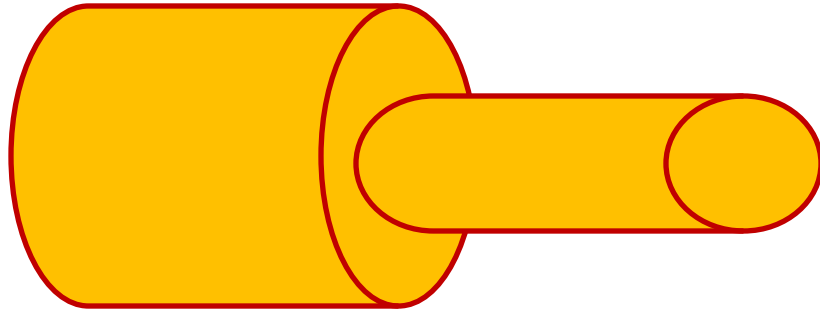


Life-long openness



Why adolescence?

Impressionable years hypothesis



Life-long openness



Why adolescence?

Three sources of support for the 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 adolescence?

Three sources of support for the 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 adolescence?

Three sources of support for the 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**

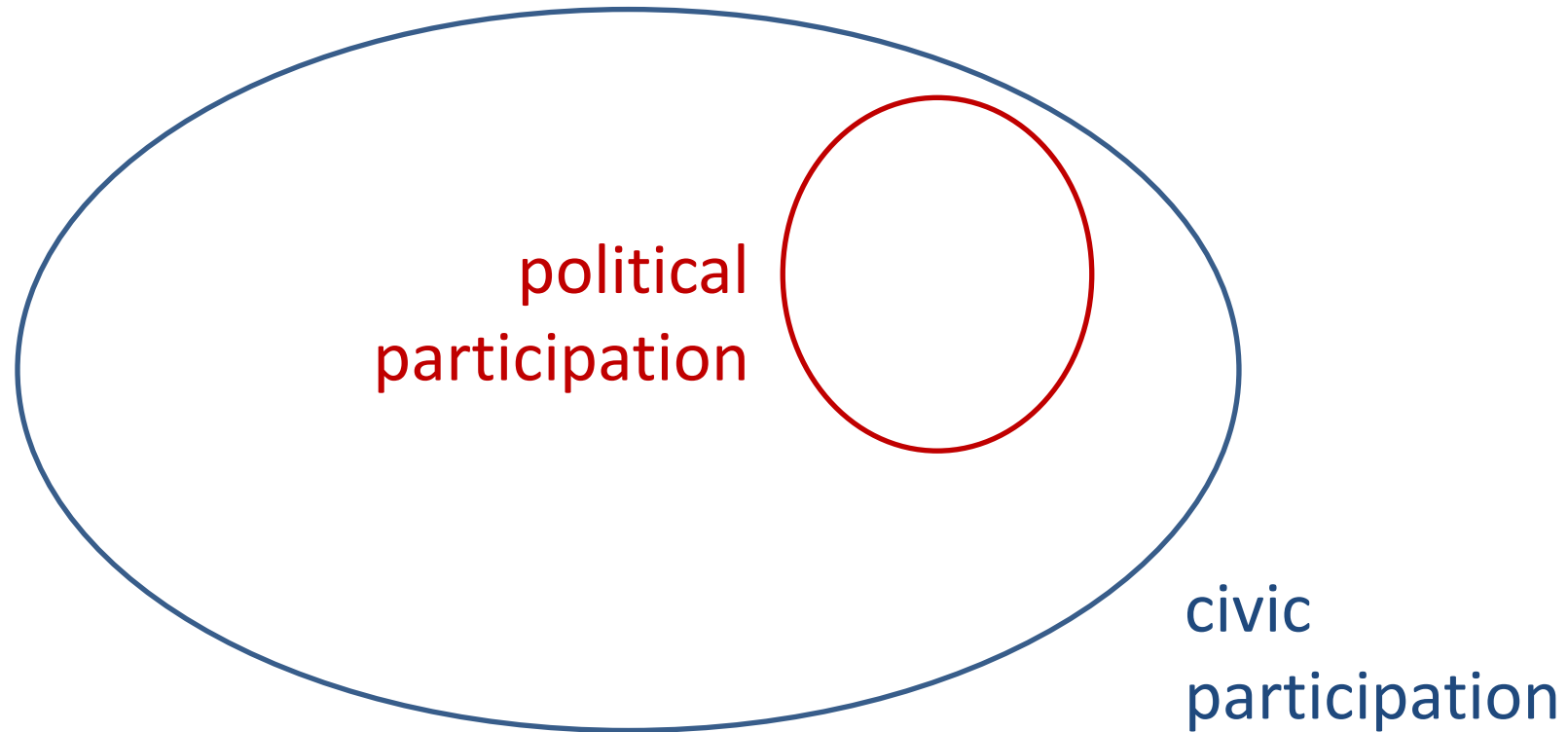
Robert Selman

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

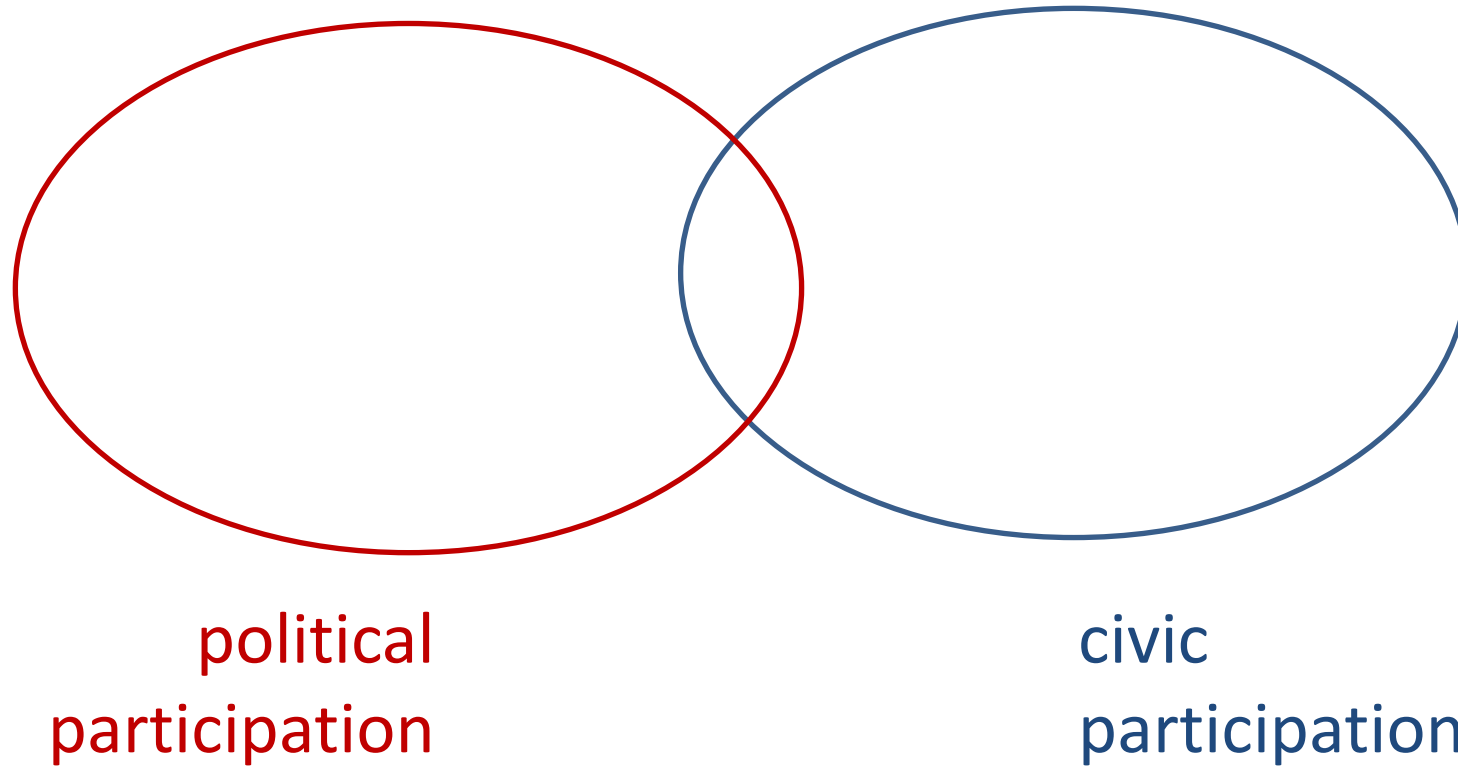
from age **15** we become able to take perspectives of „third“ non-aligned persons who come from different sociocultural backgrounds

How do they participate?

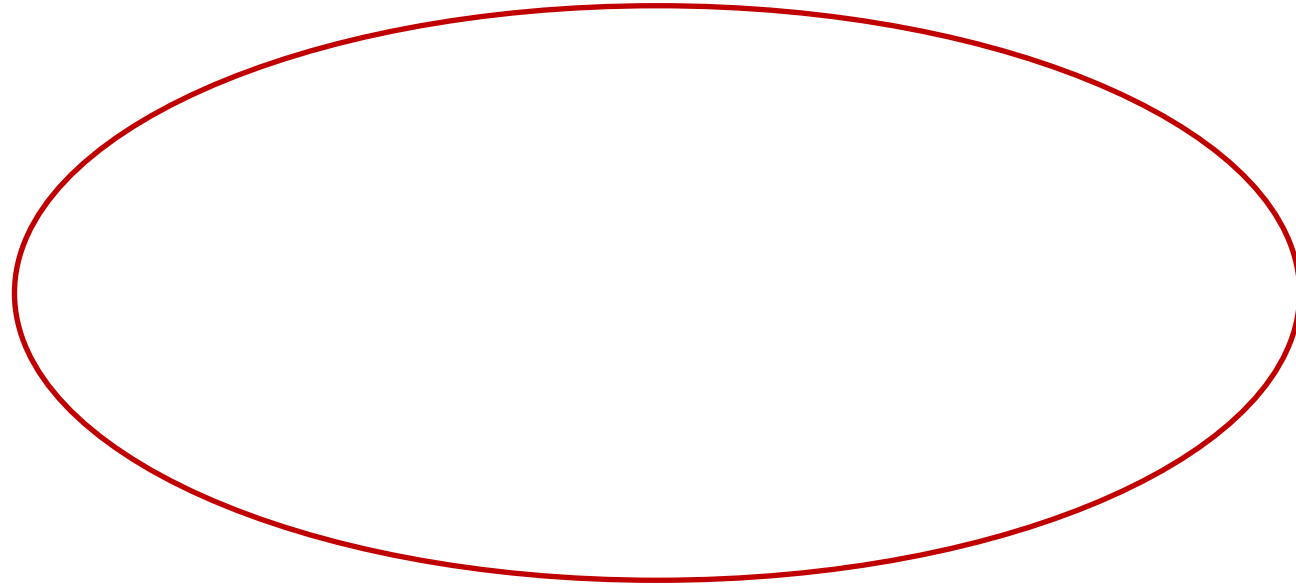
How do they participate?



How do they participate?



How do they participate?



political
participation

How do they participate?

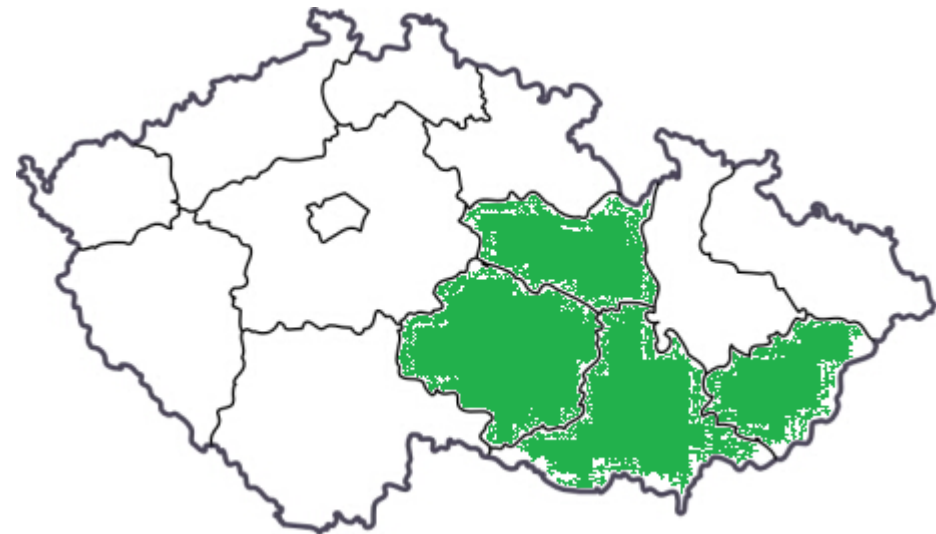
different definition → different picture of current youth

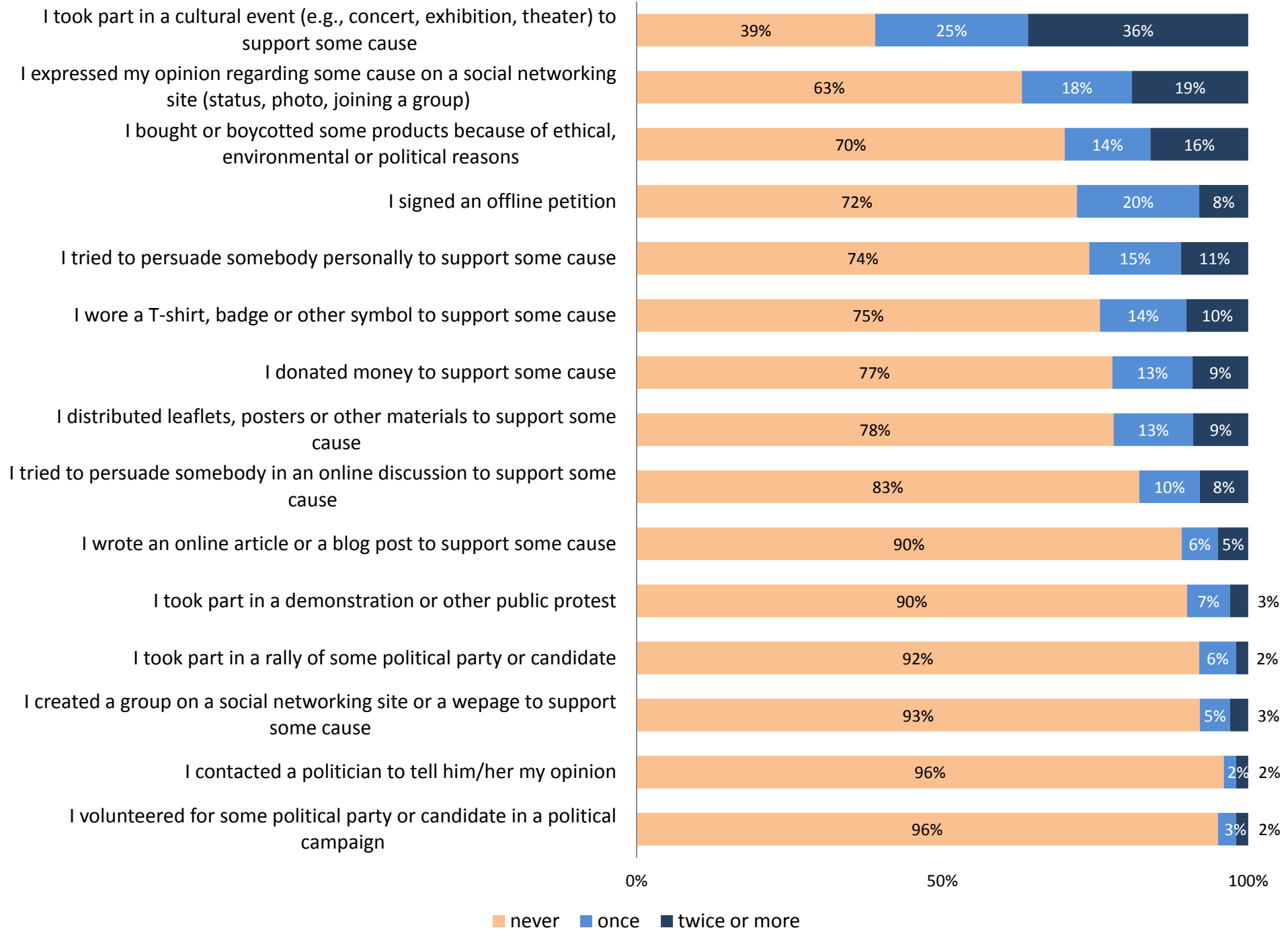
Our data

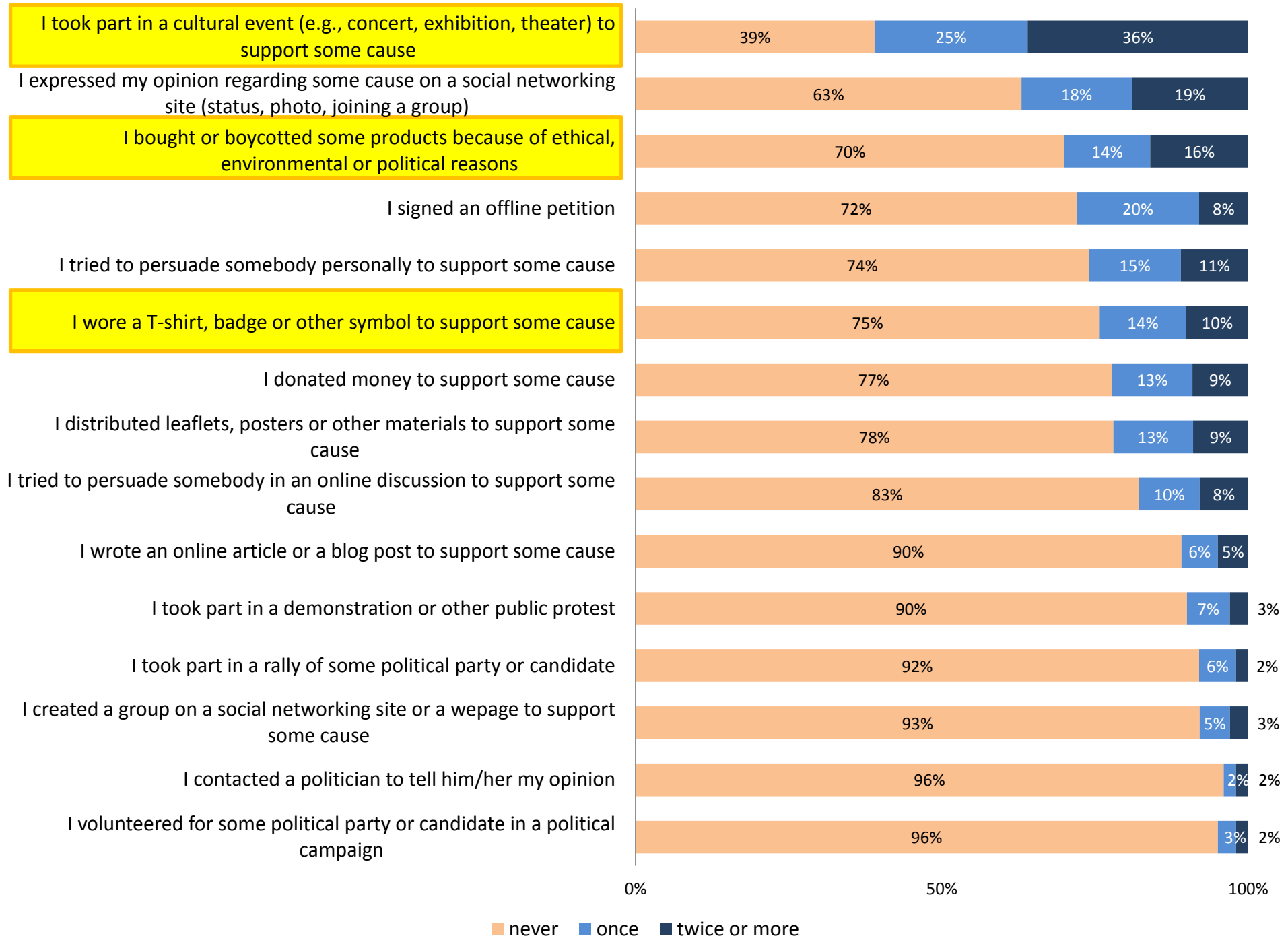
June 2014

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

survey research
in schools



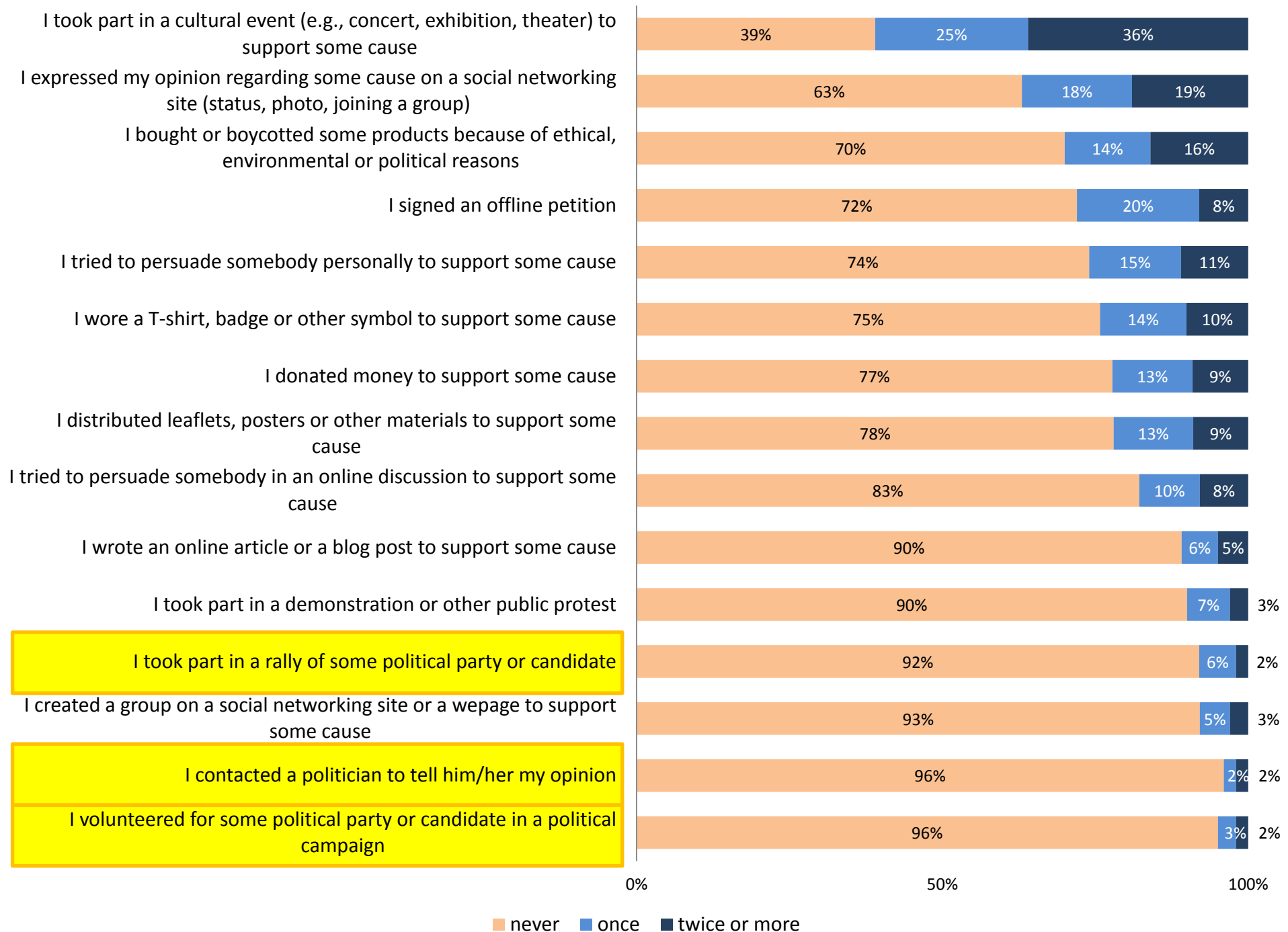




How do they participate?

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



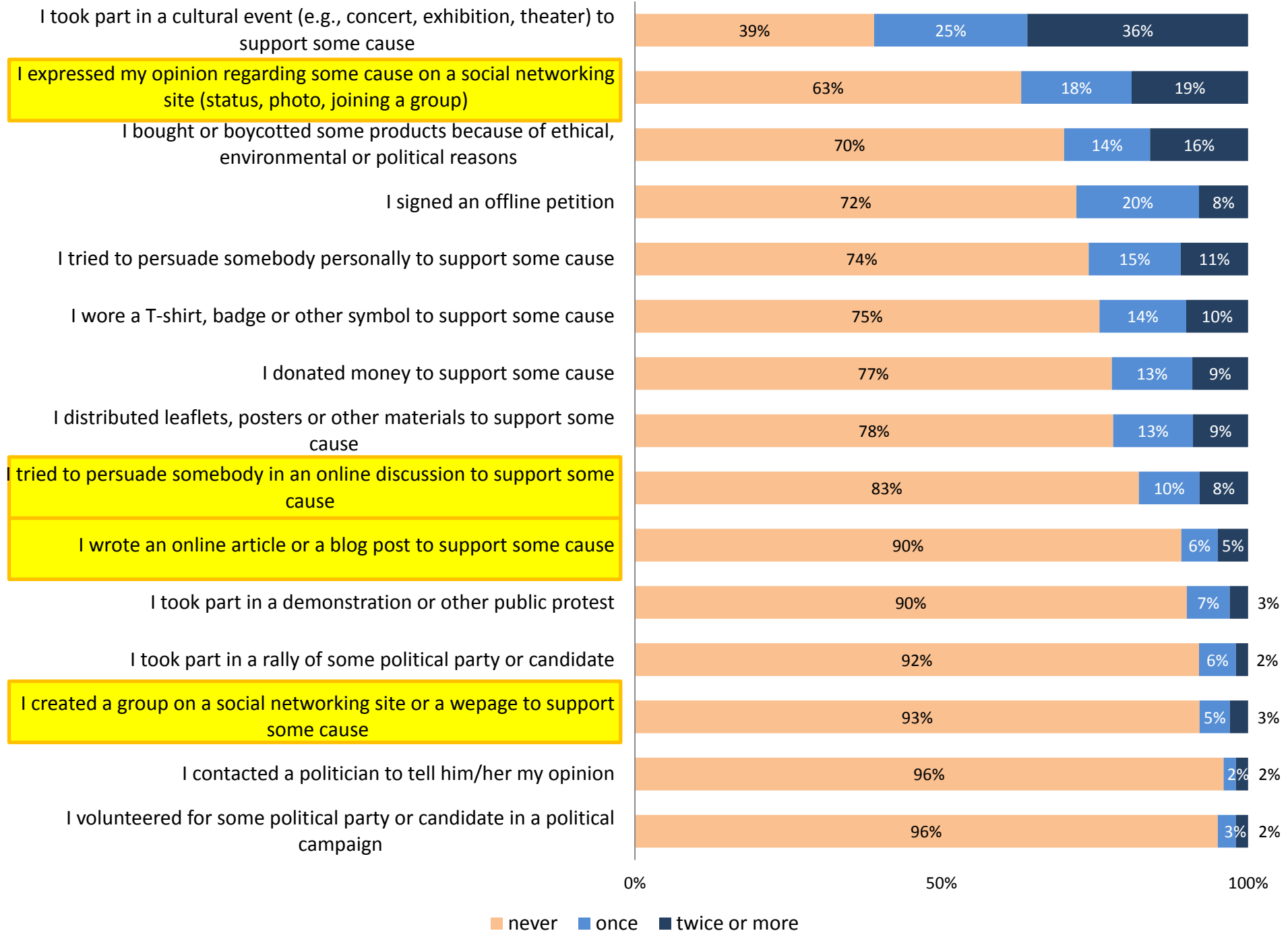


0% 50% 100%
 never once twice or more

How do they participate?

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



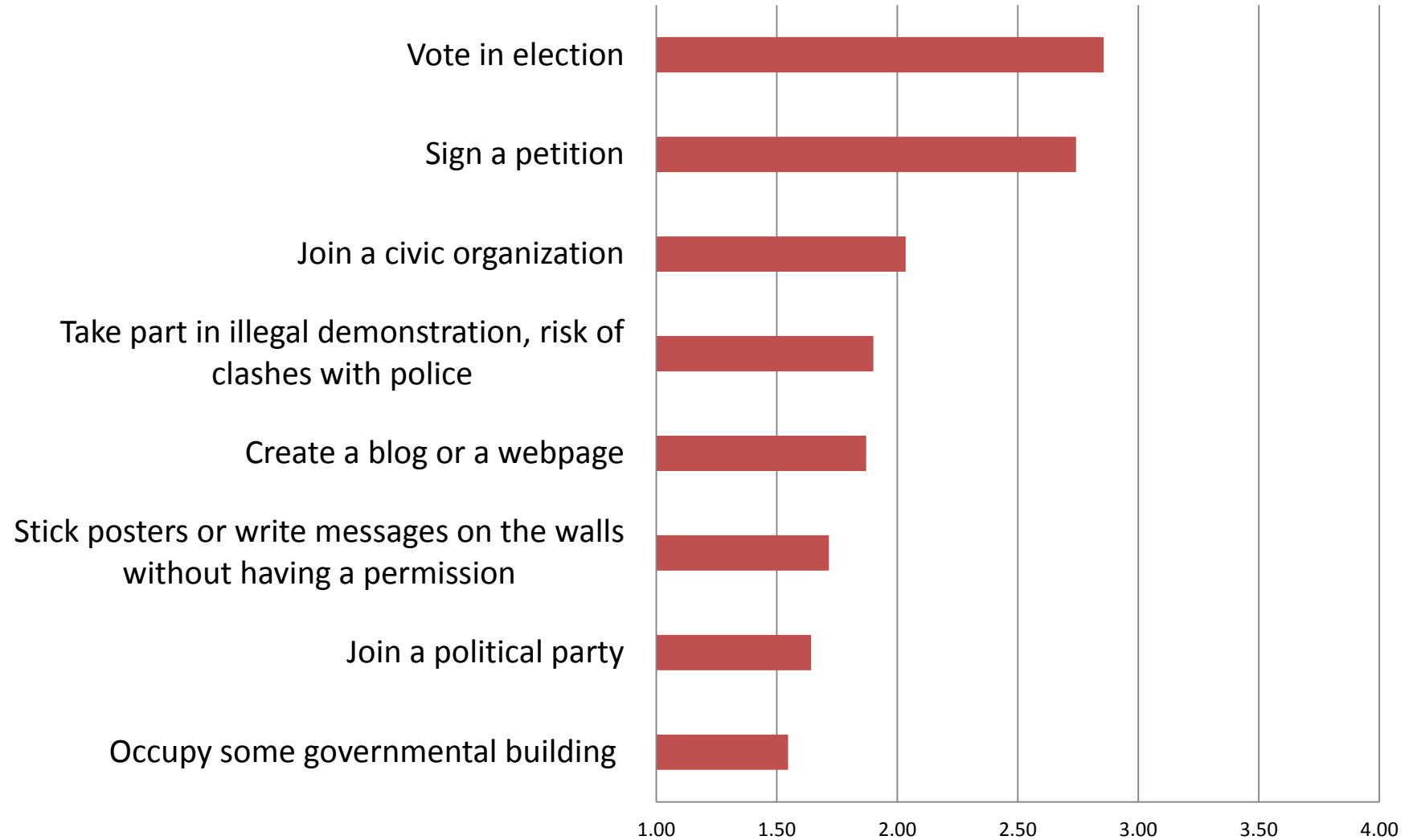


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How do they participate?

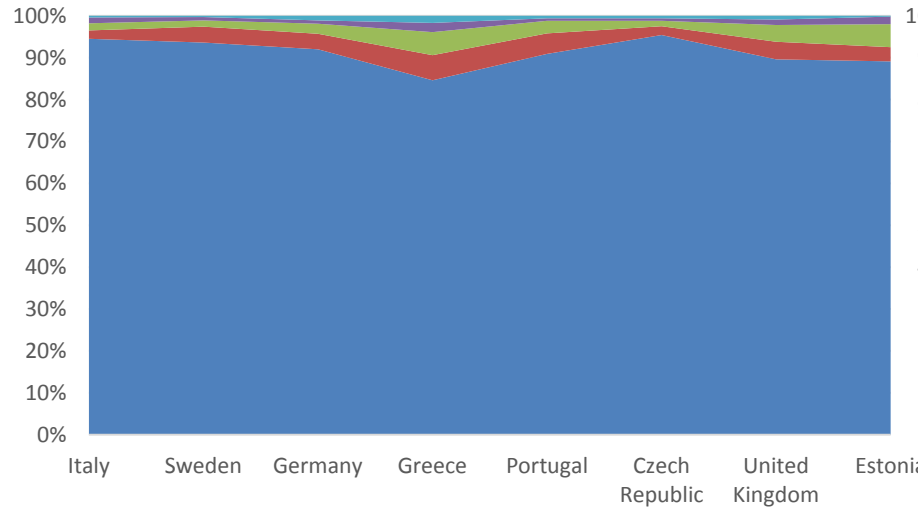
it's not about **online** vs offline,
it's about „easy“ vs „difficult“

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

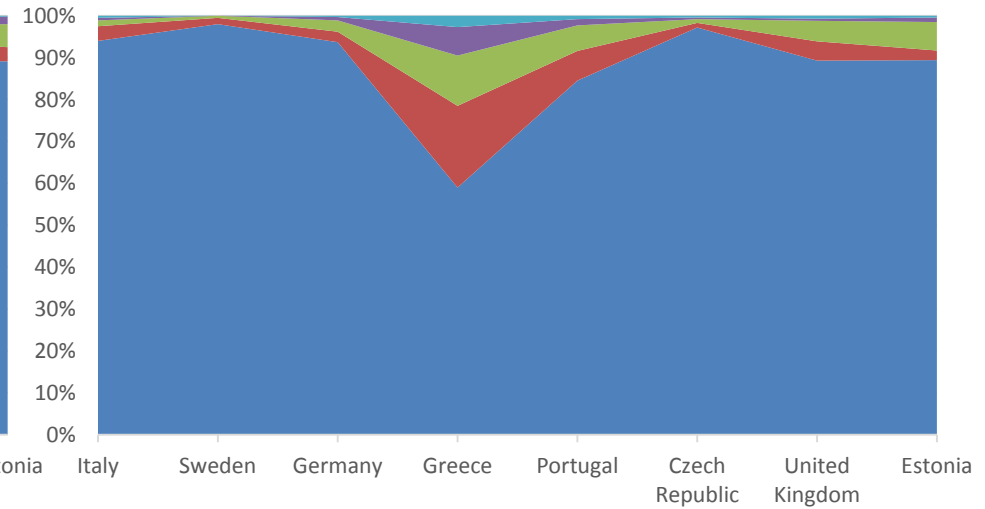


The CATCH-EyoU study (2017)

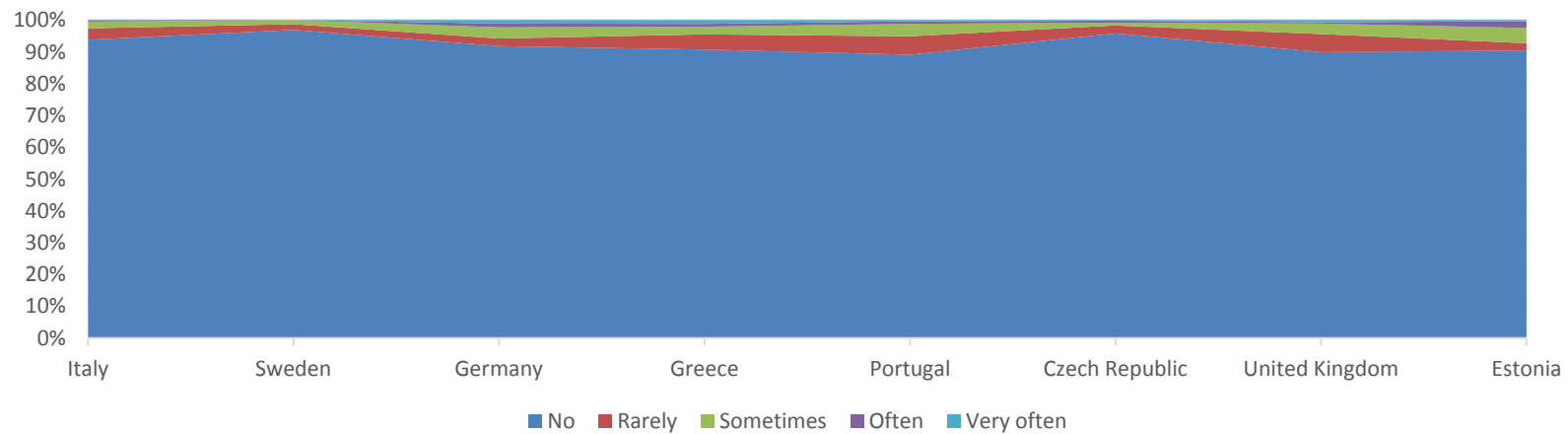
Painted or stuck political messages or graffiti on walls



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

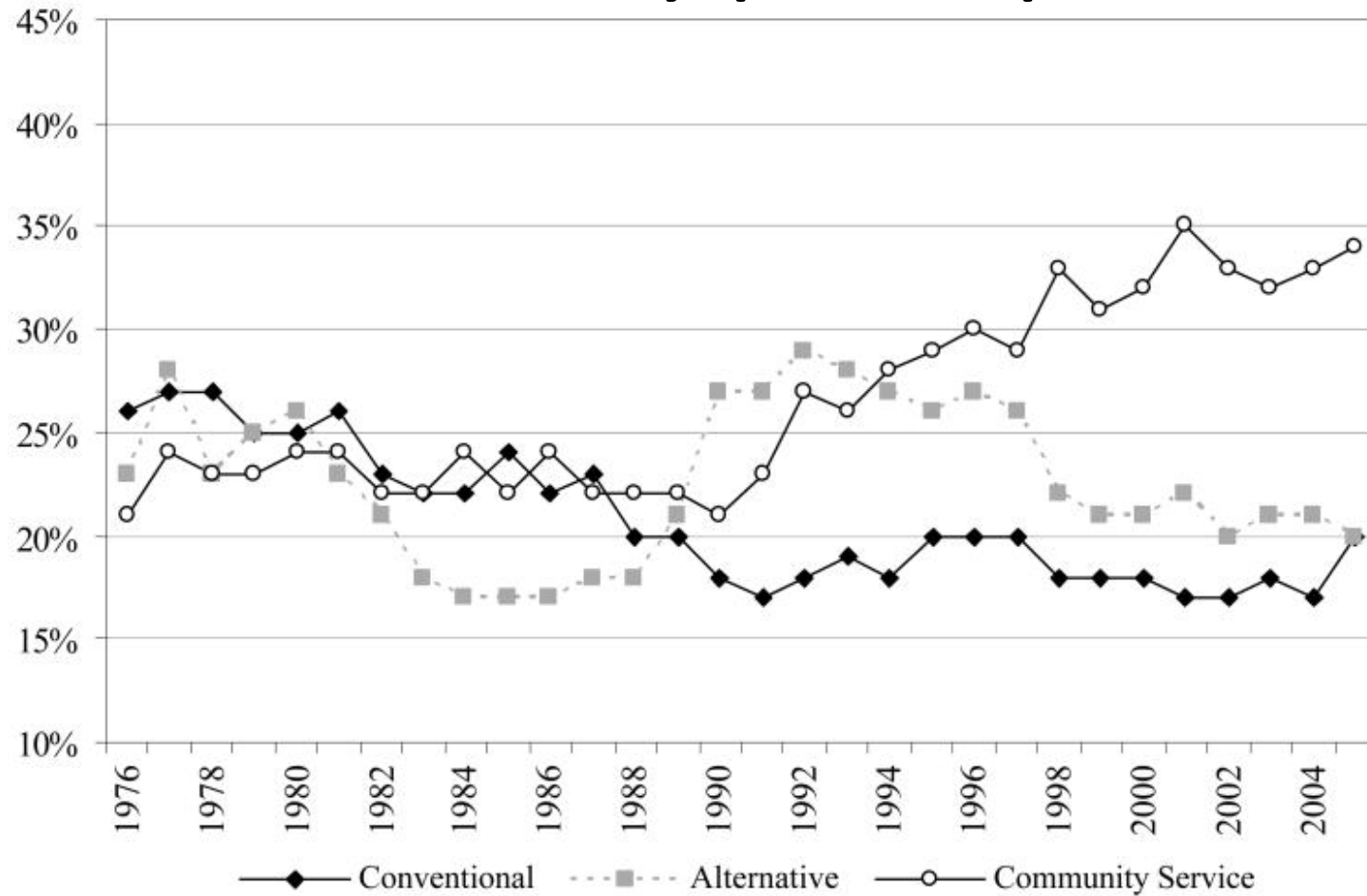


■ No ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Very often

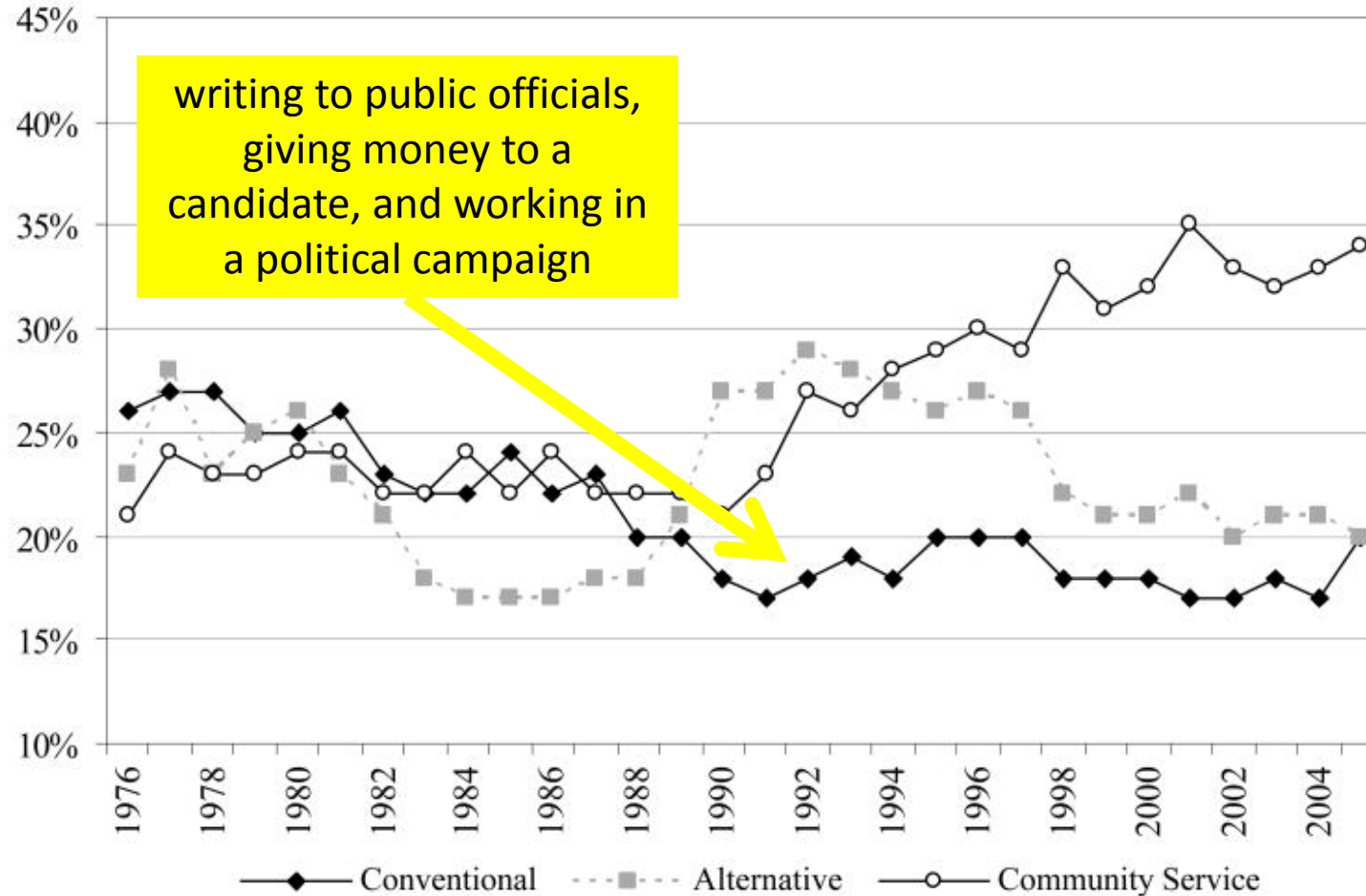
How do they participate?

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

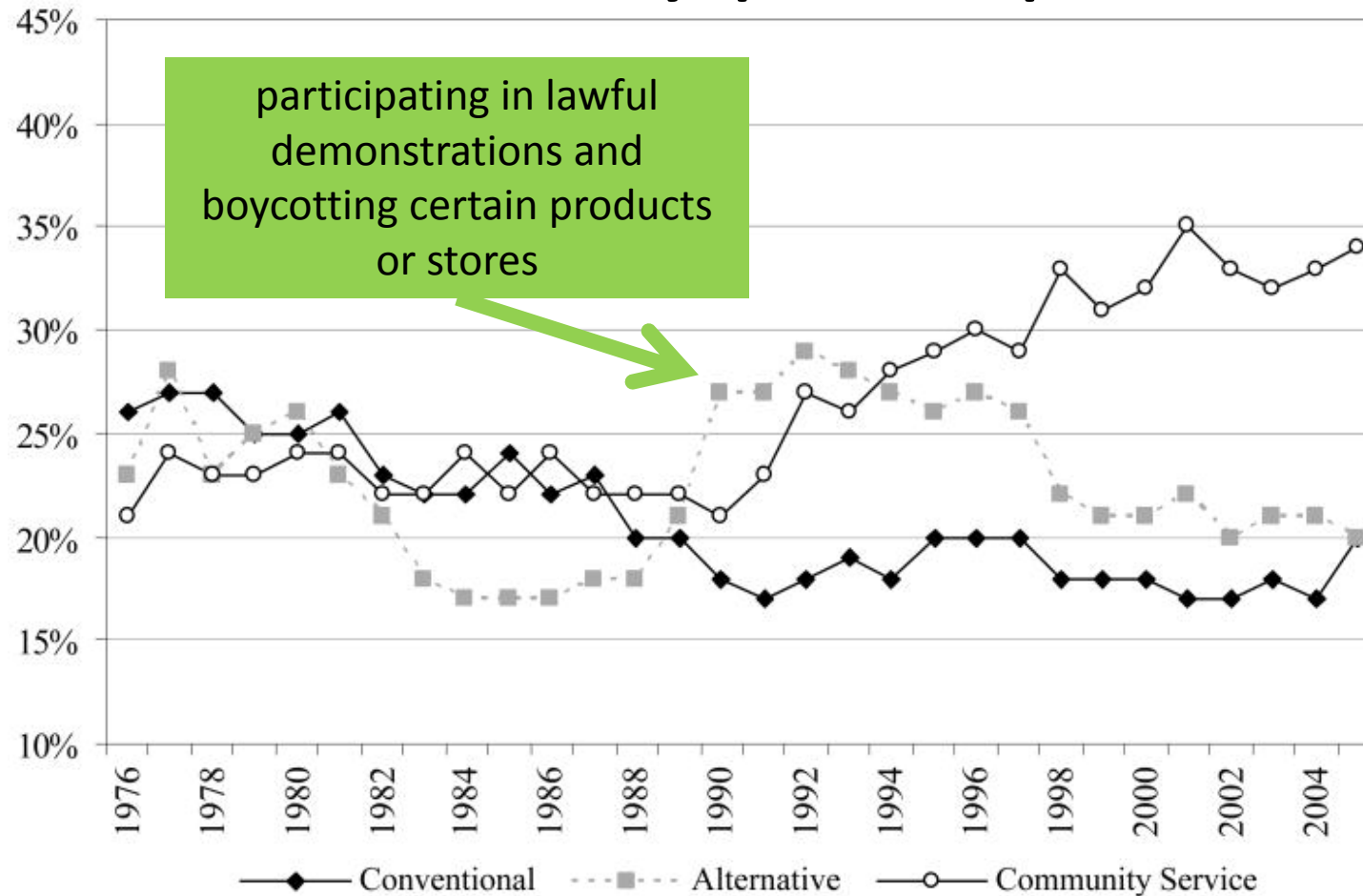
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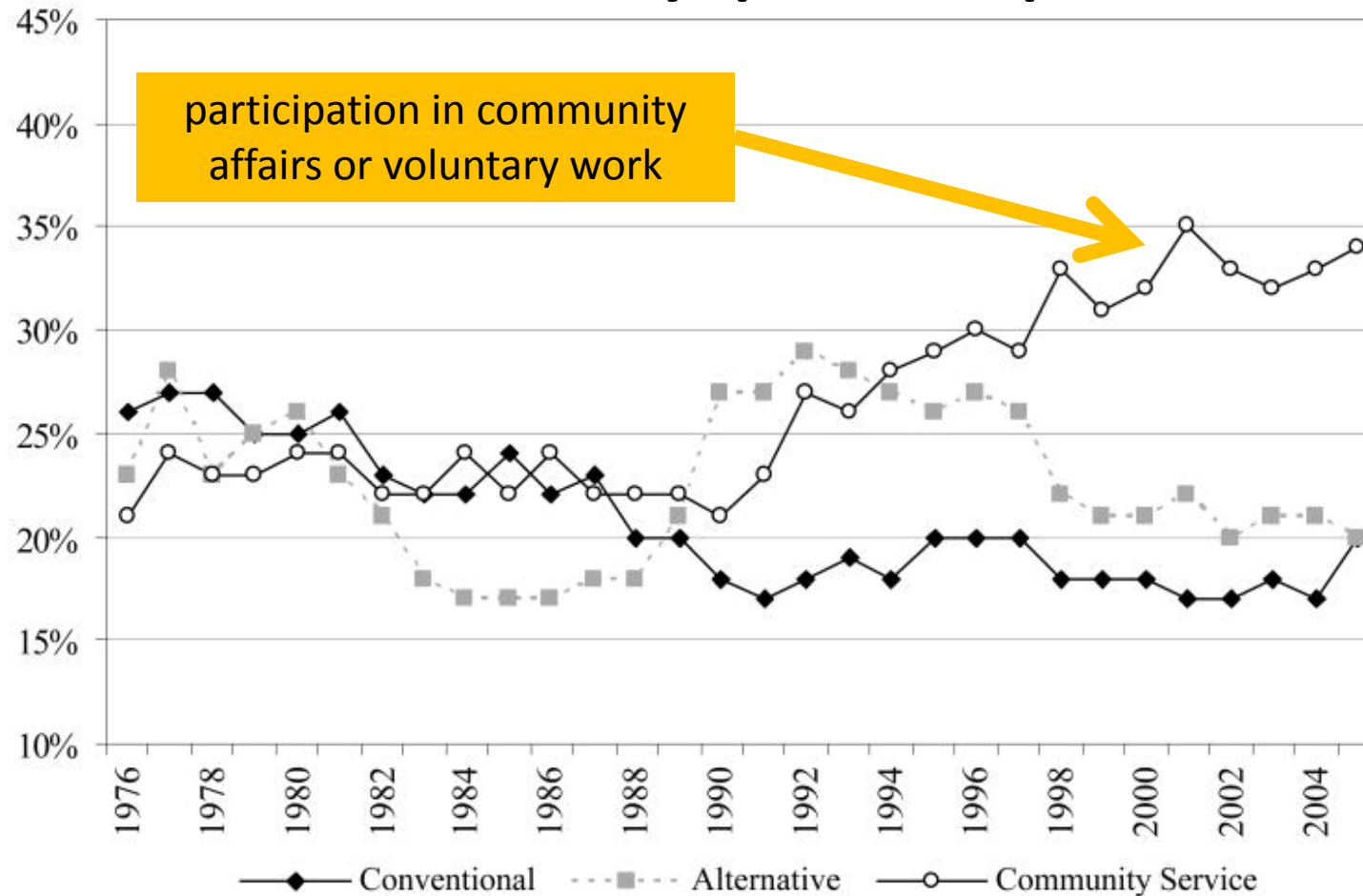
How do they participate?



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How do they participate?

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?

(Sapiro, 2004)

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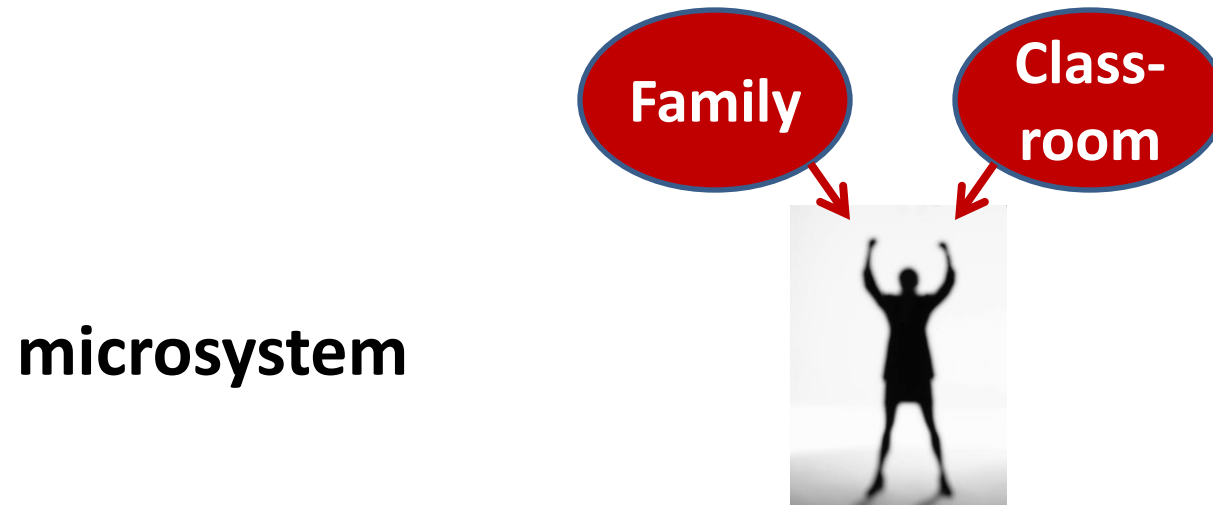
What is political/civic socialization?

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).

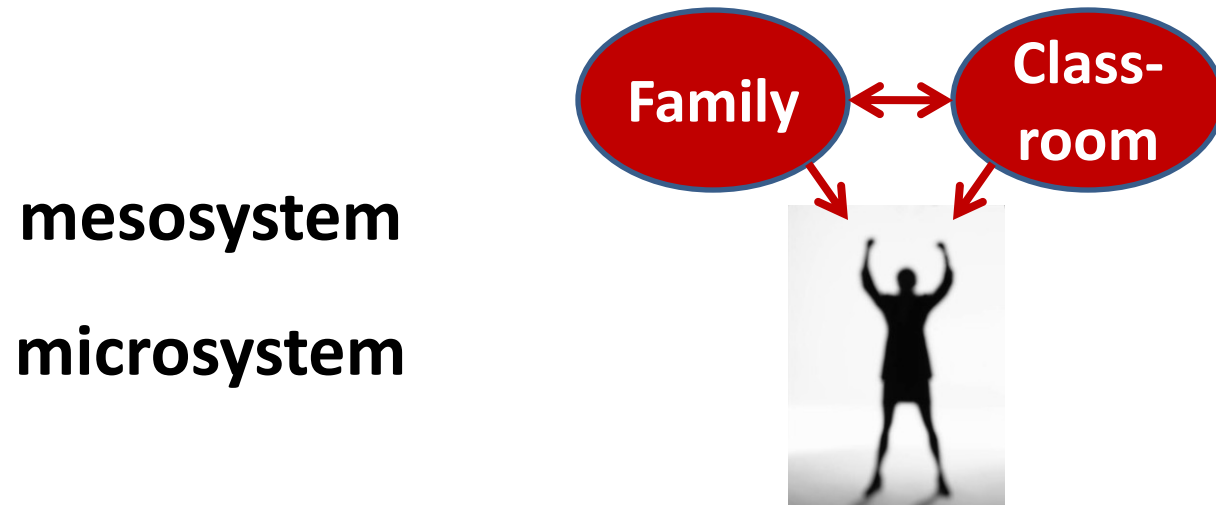
“the form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of [1] the characteristics of the developing person, [2] the environment [...], [3] the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration, and [4] the social continuities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

What is political/civic socialization?



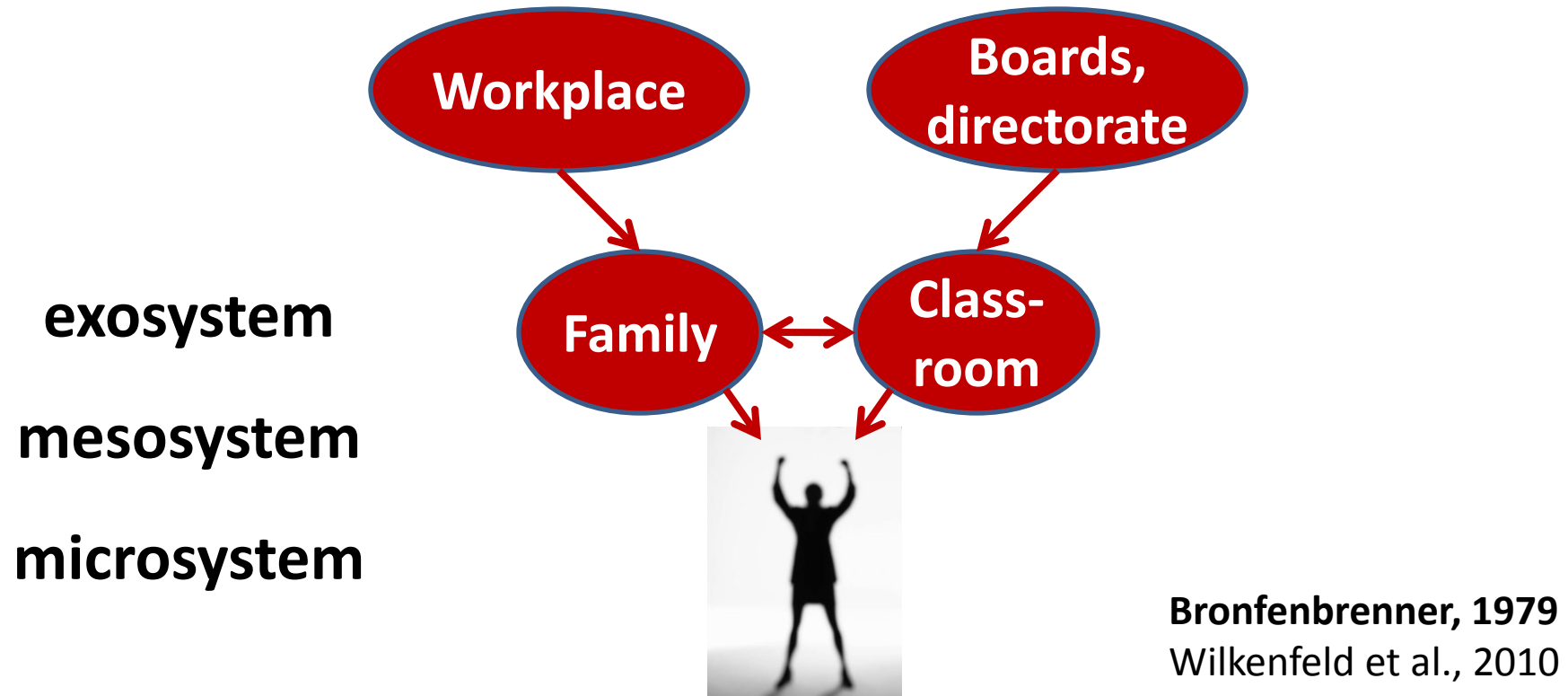
Bronfenbrenner, 1979
Wilkenfeld et al., 2010

What is political/civic socialization?

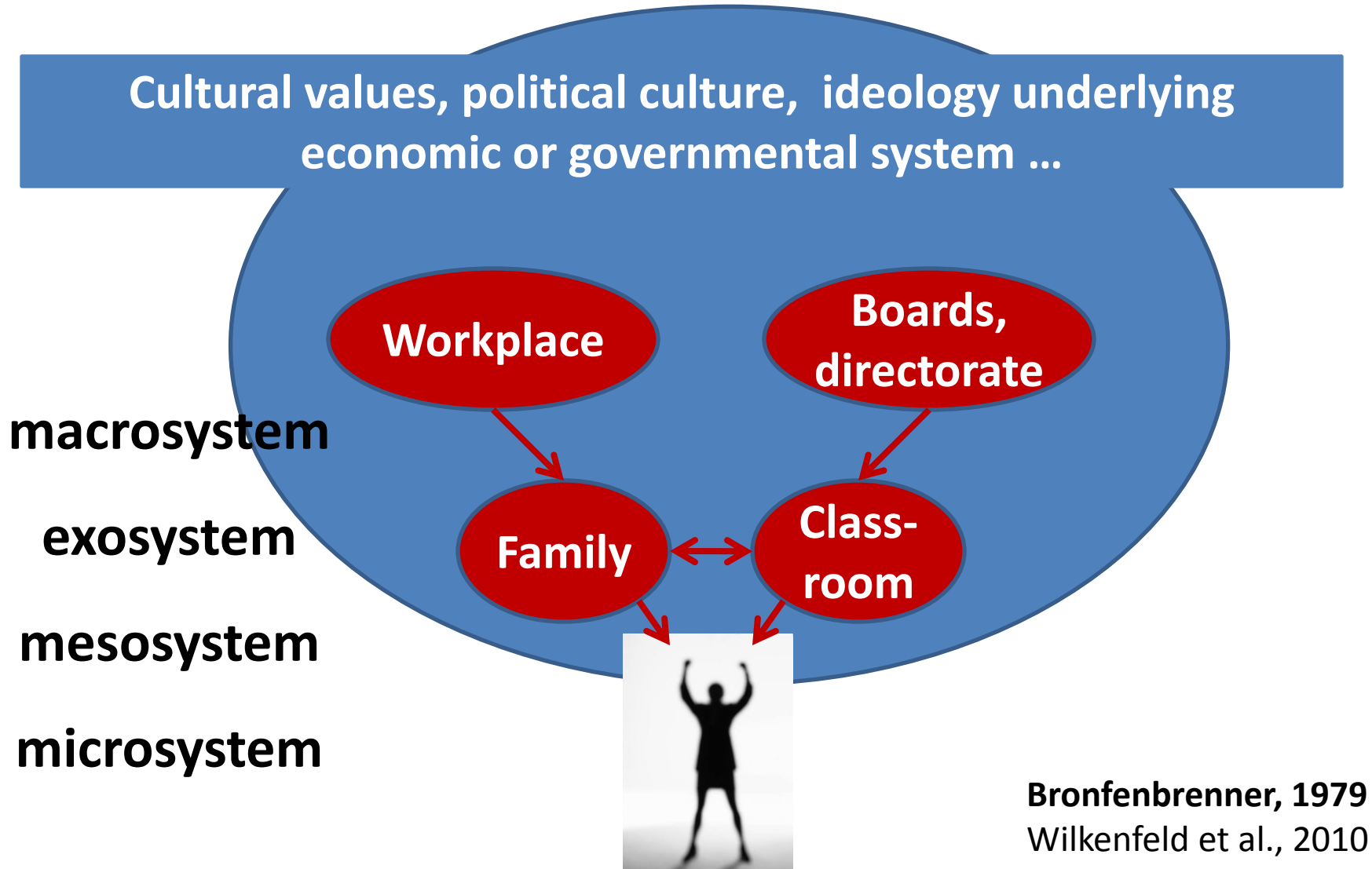


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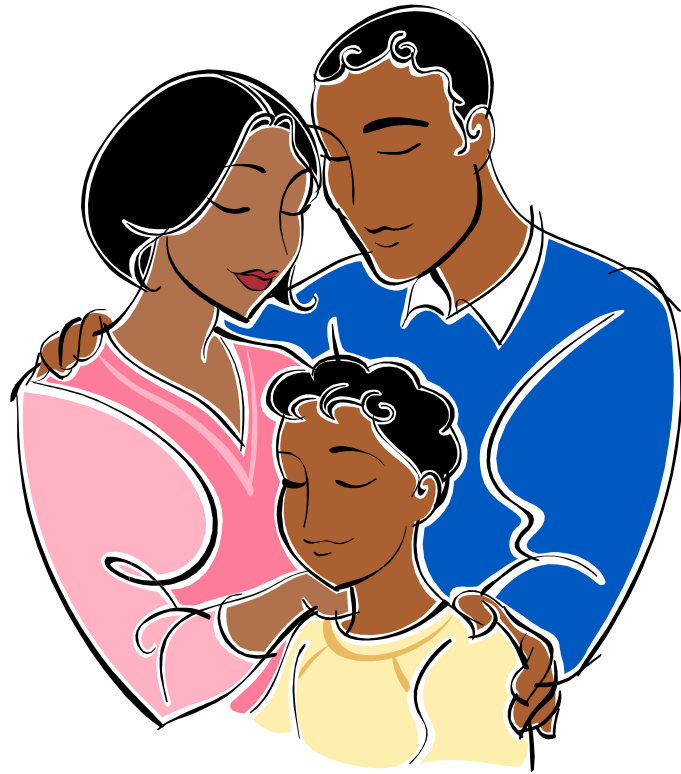
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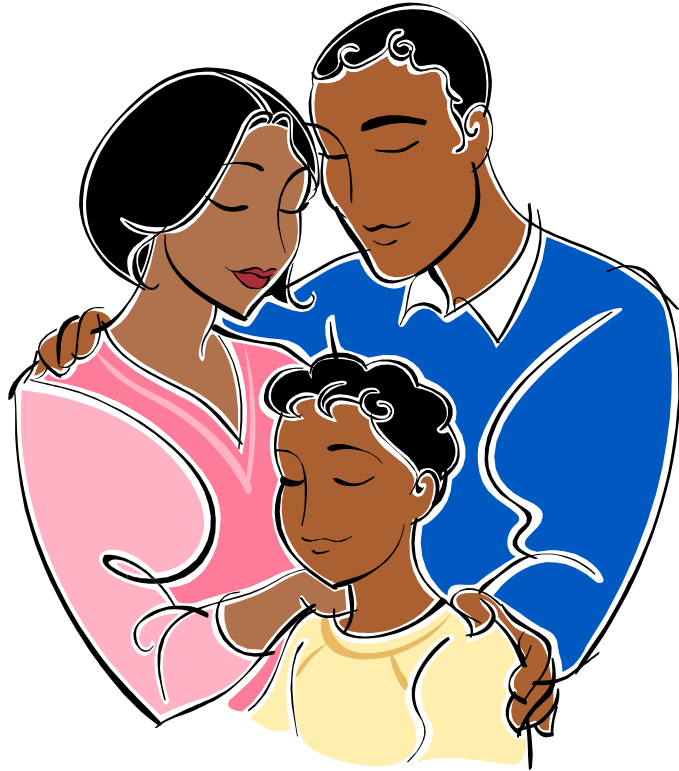
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- development consists in person's reciprocal interactions with a growing array of microsystems, starting with families and extending to peer groups, schools, mentors or associations
- adolescents' individual characteristics (dispositions and abilities) influence how much and how they are civically engaged
- specific interactions between microsystems and adolescents might considerably differ across different regions, countries, social classes or generations

Socialization agents



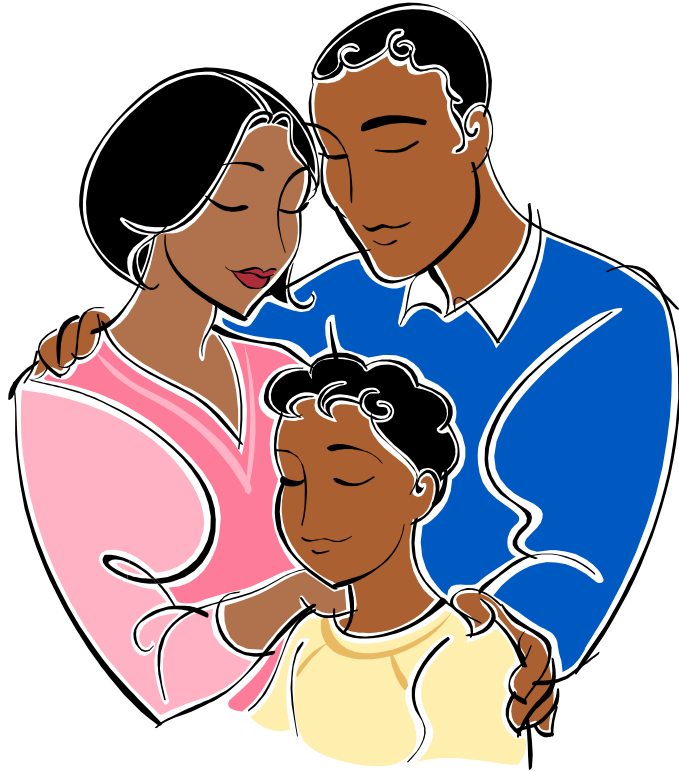
Socialization agents

parents are role
models



Socialization agents

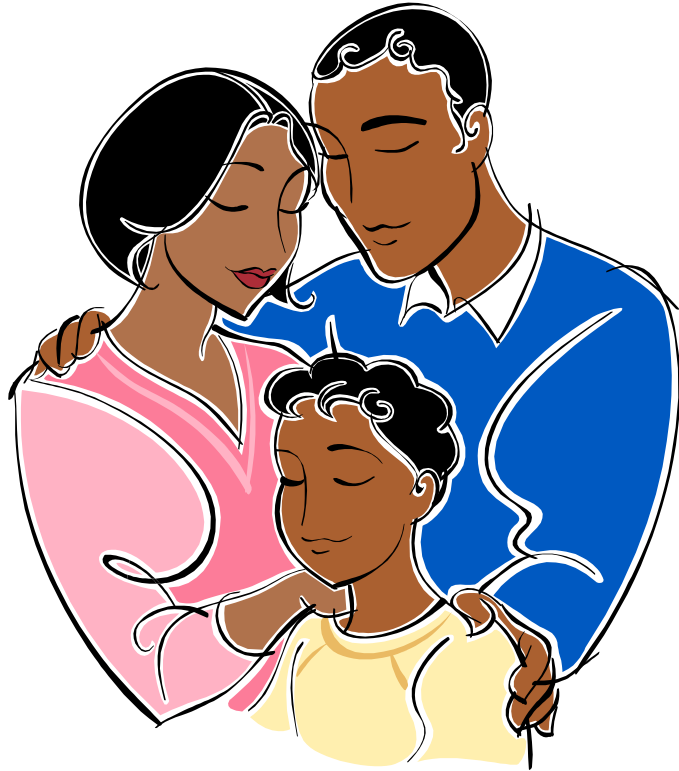
parents are role
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parents can
persuade the child

Socialization agents

parents are role models



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

parents can persuade the child

Socialization agents



Socialization agents

teachers and classmates
are role models and
produce social
influences



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civic/political knowledge
and skills can be learned

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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

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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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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)

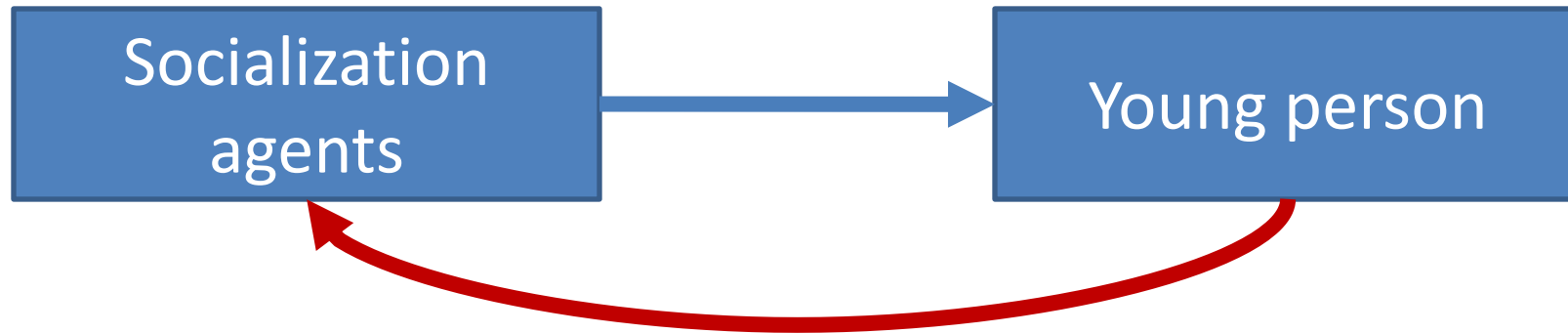
Main issues & controversies

Directions of influence



Main issues & controversies

Directions of influence



Main issues & controversies

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

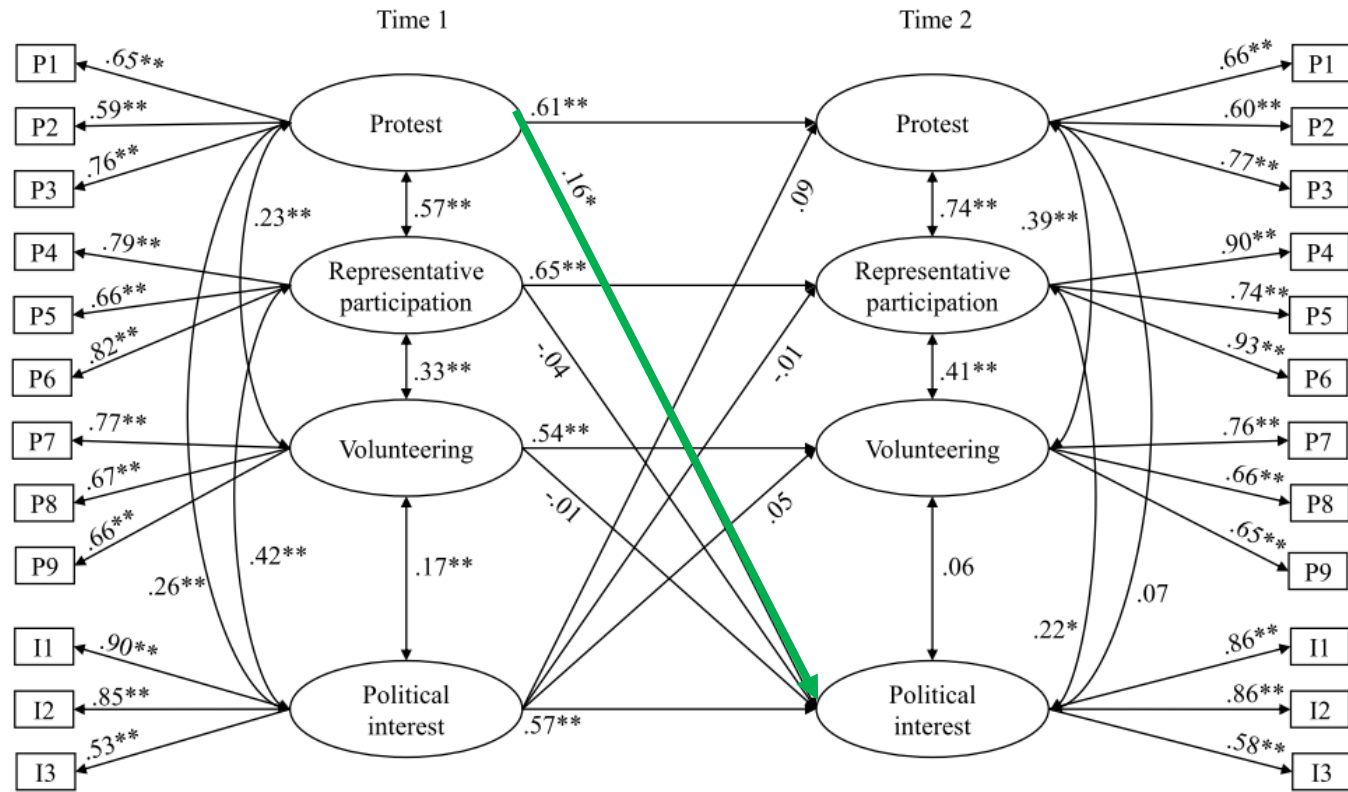
what is the directionality between political attitudes and participation?

Our research

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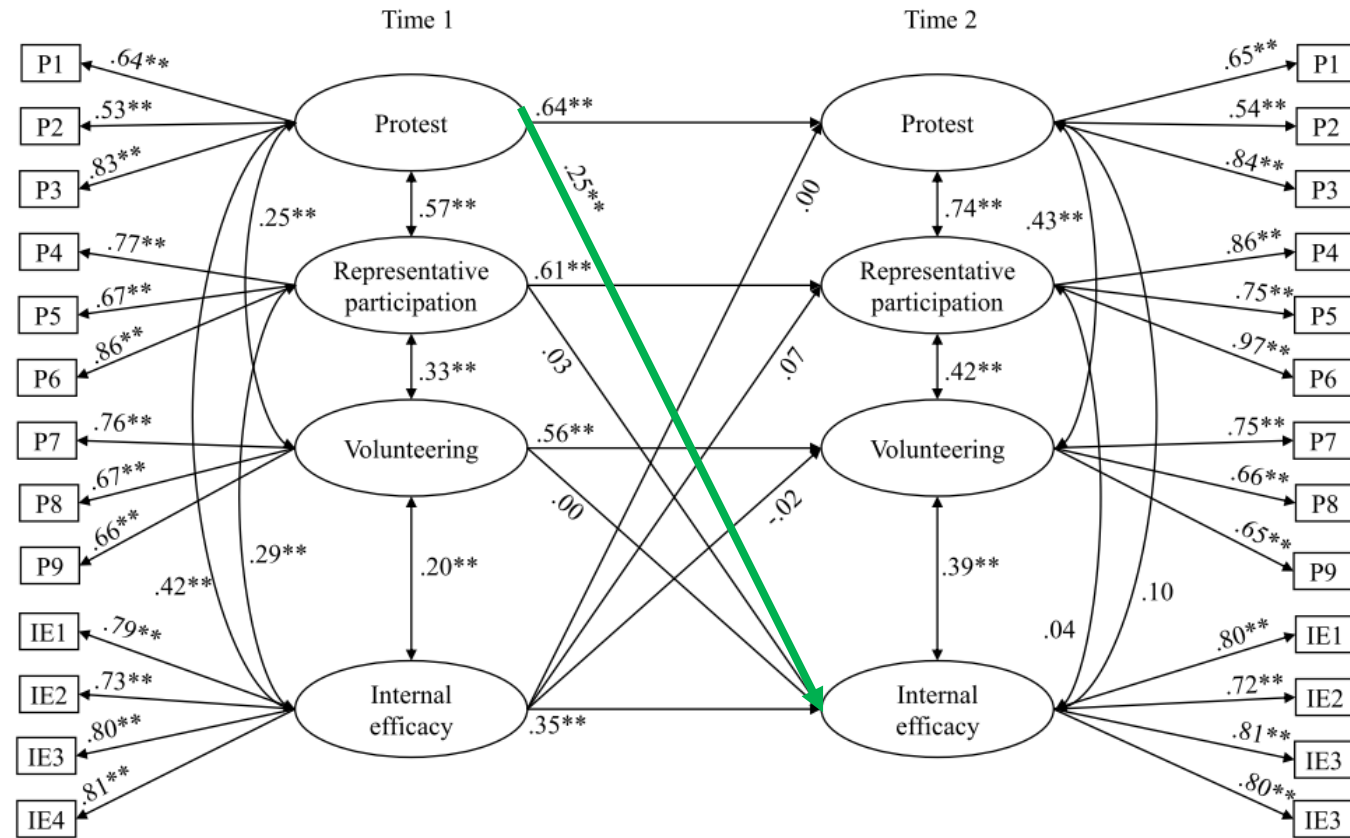
data from 768 high school students (aged 14 to 17)

Our research



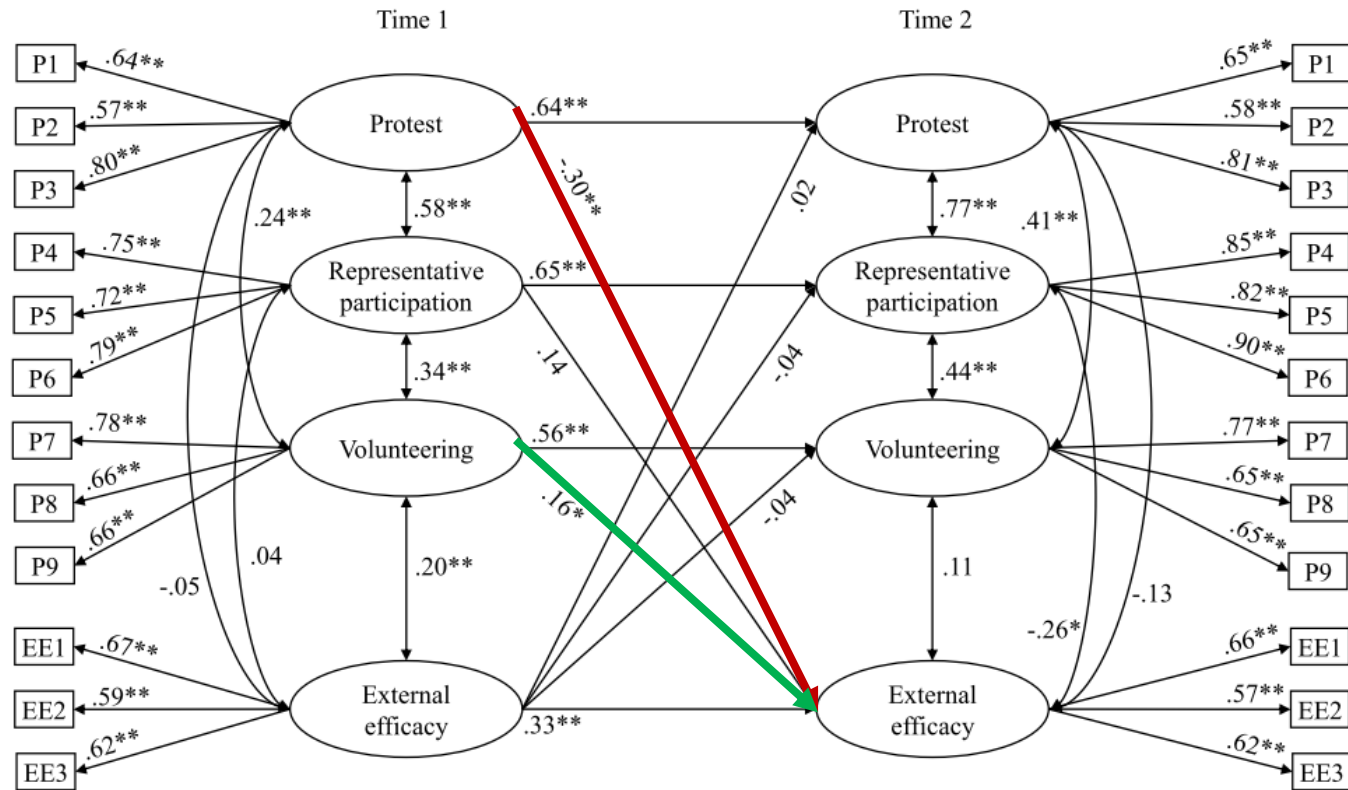
Šerek, Macháčková & Macek (2017)

Our research



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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

similar results found in a recent study conducted in Hong Kong (2021)

Our research

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

Our research

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

longitudinal data from cca 200 adolescents aged 18-19

Our research

February

Voting intention

Following news

Discussions Parents

Discussions Peers

Our research

February

Voting intention

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Discussions Parents

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May

Voting intention

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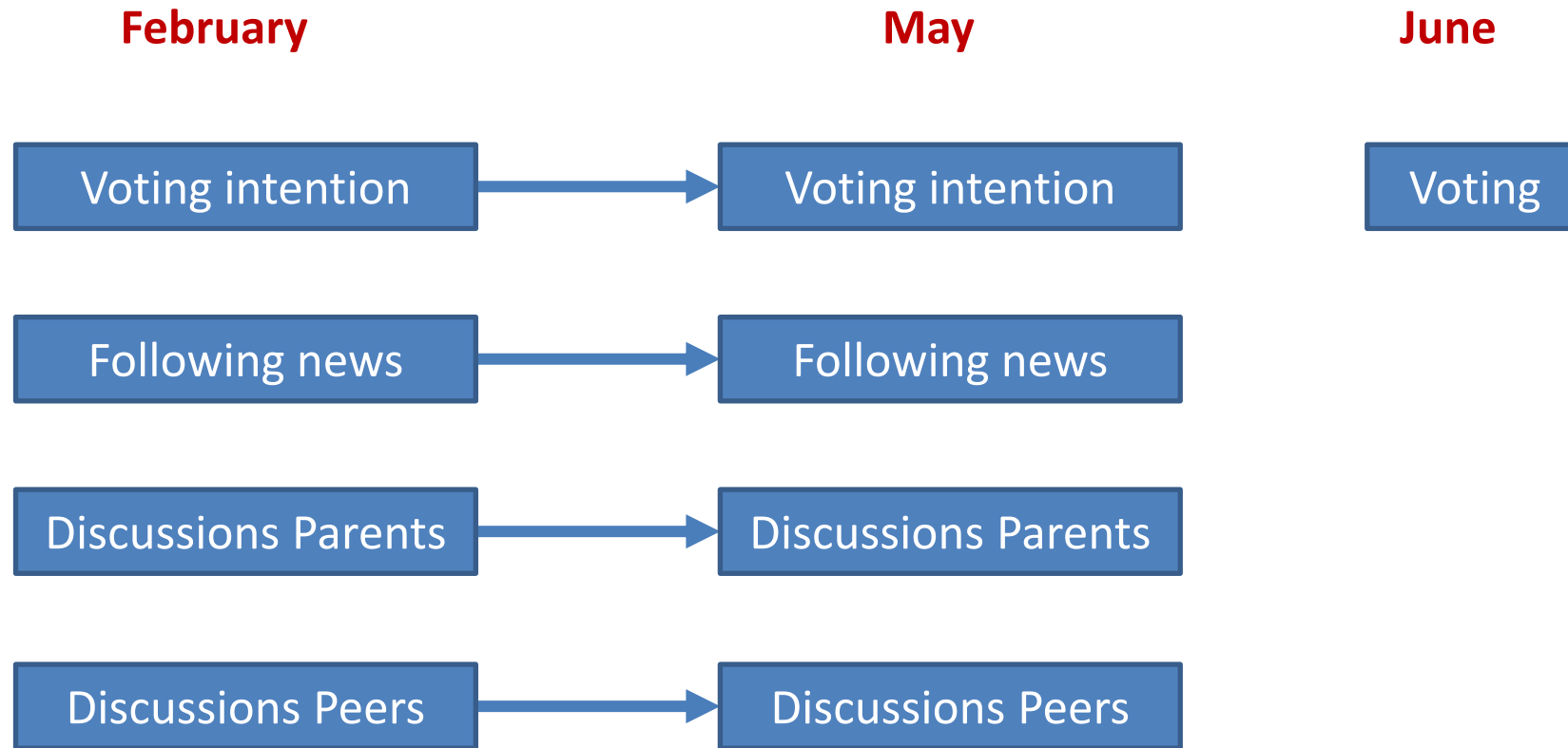
Discussions Parents

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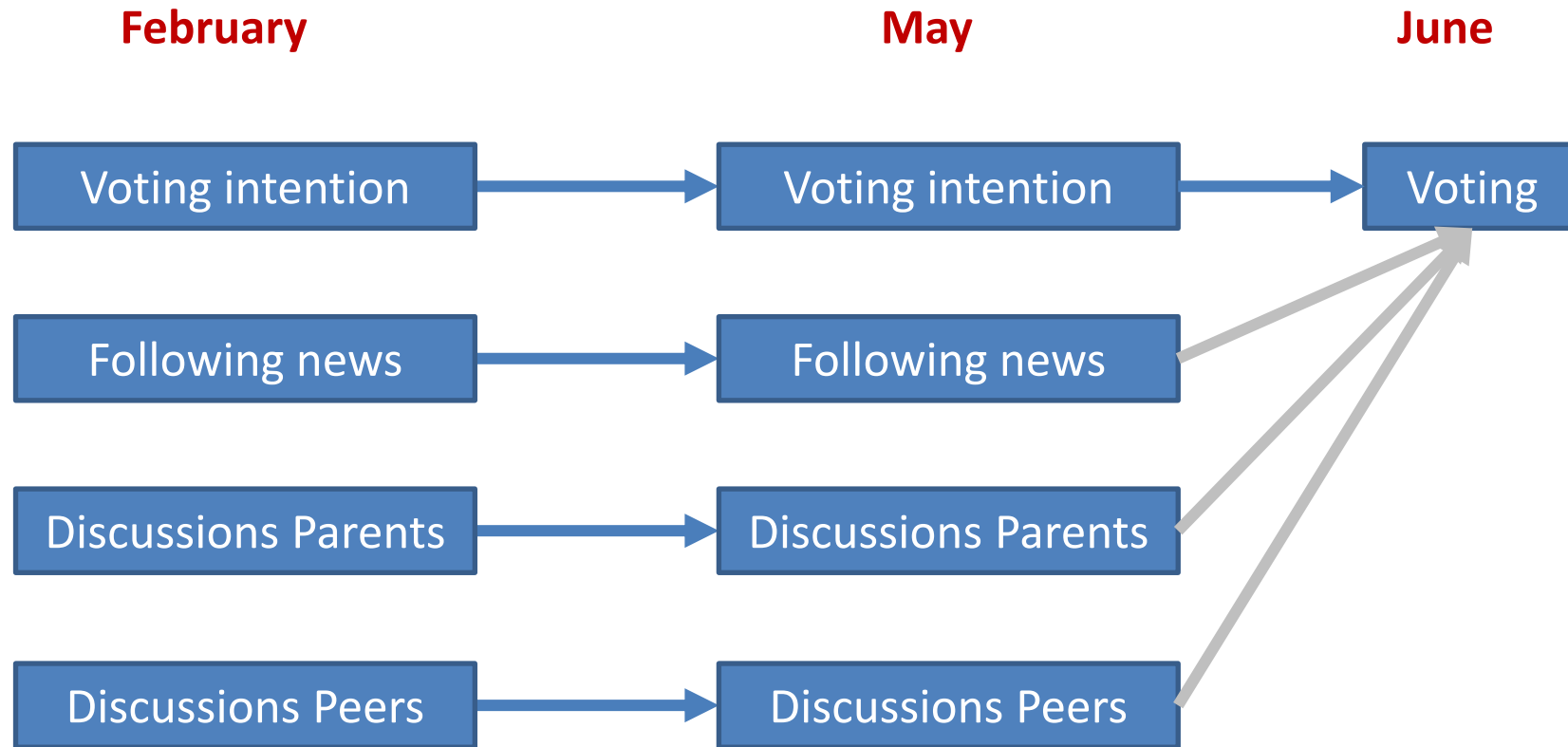
June

Voting

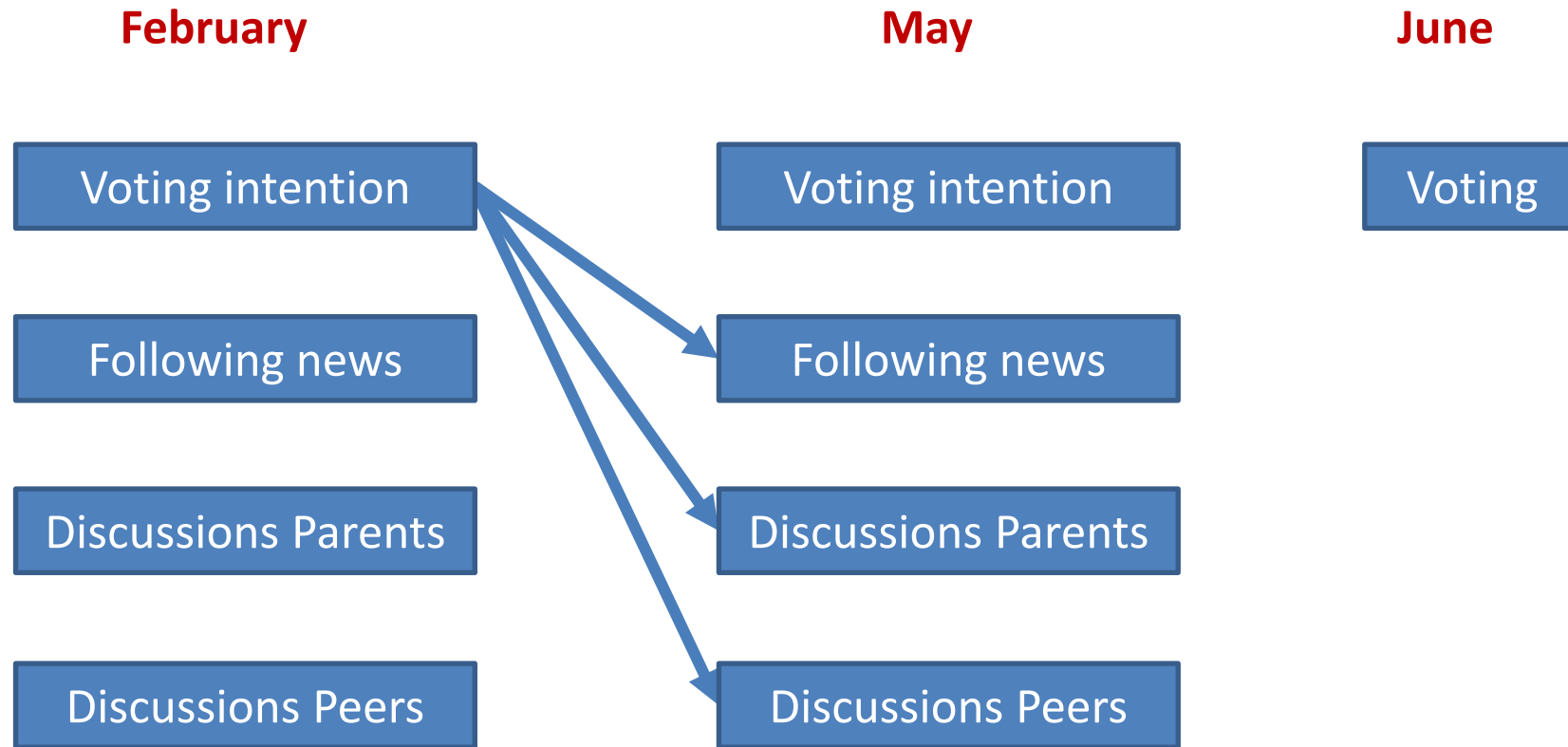
Our research



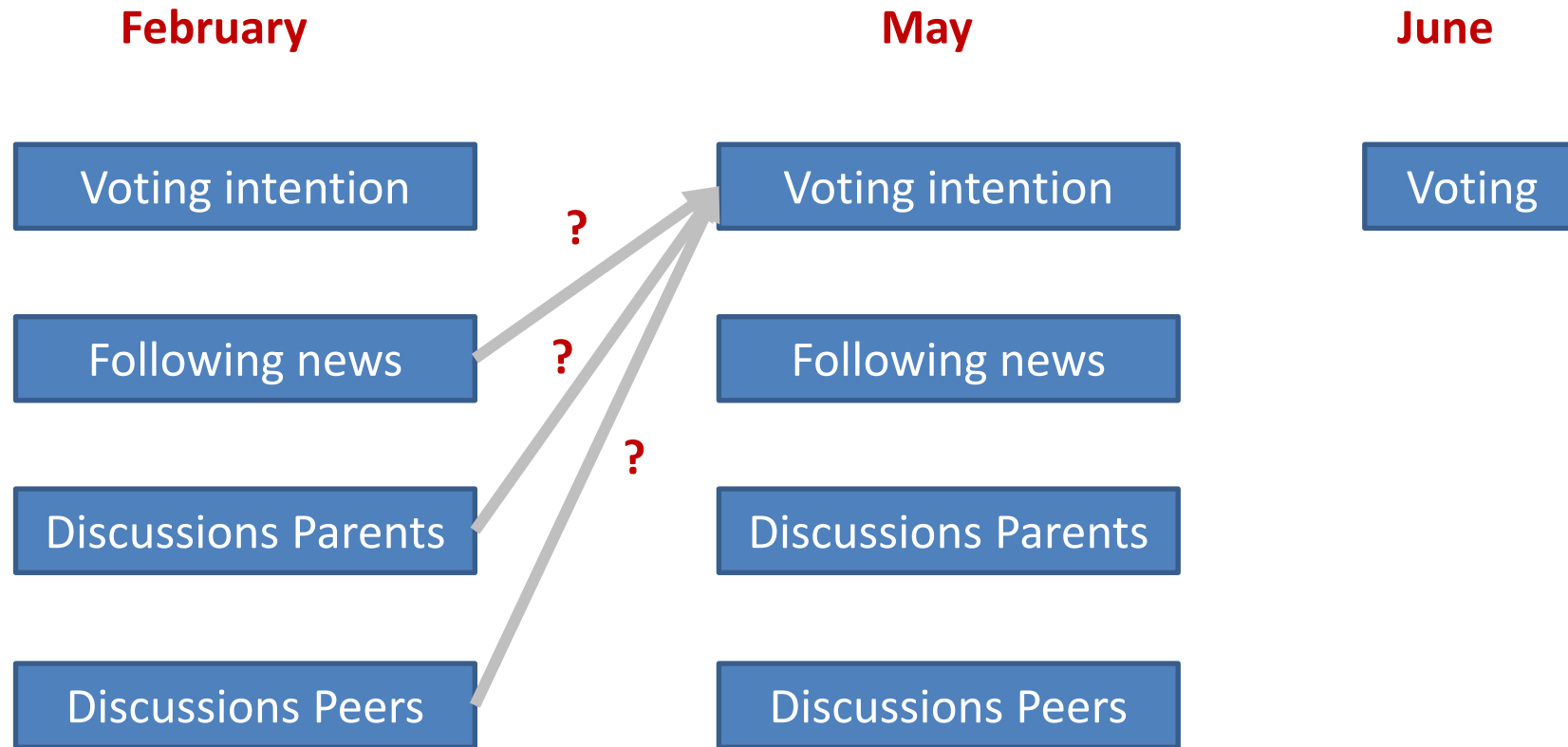
Our research



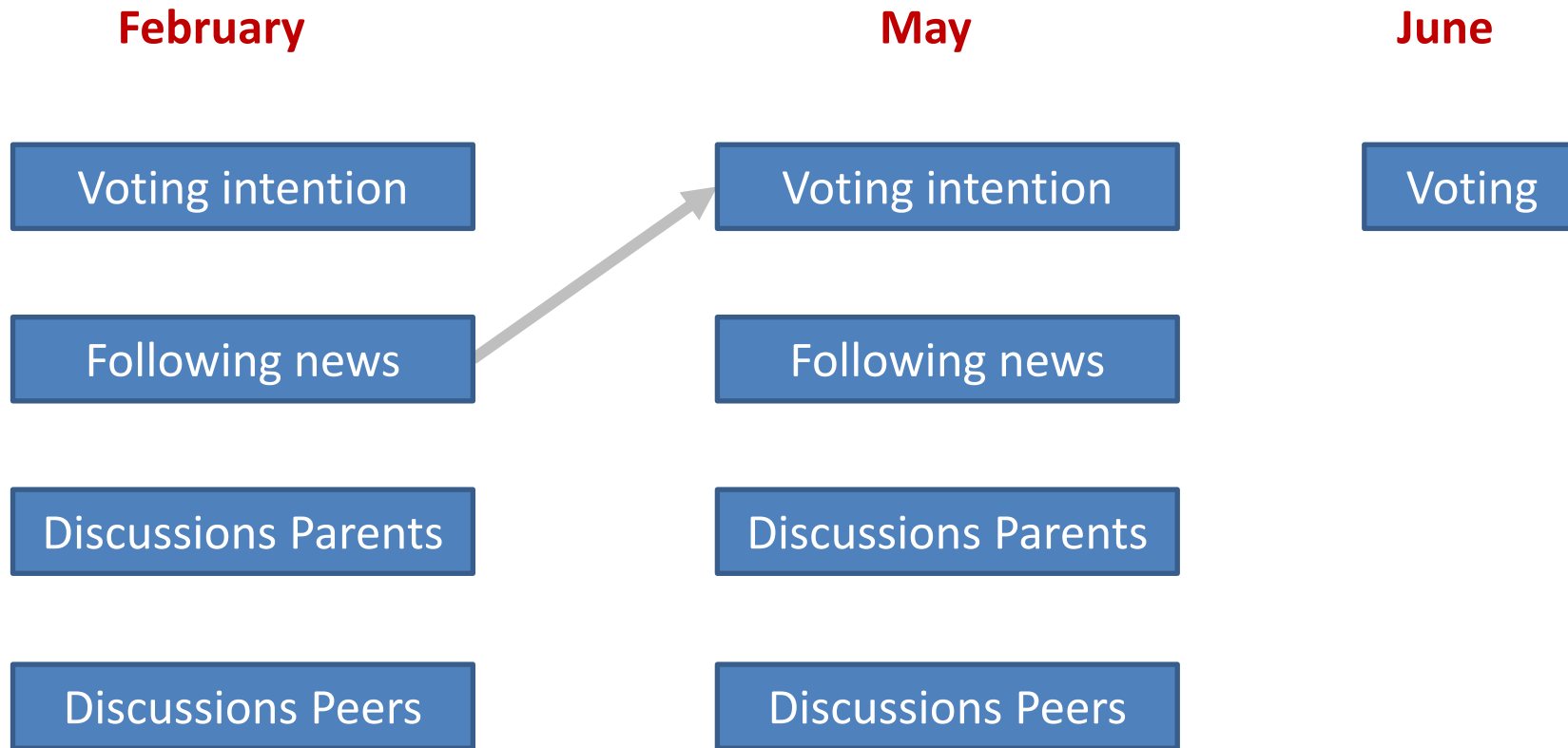
Our research



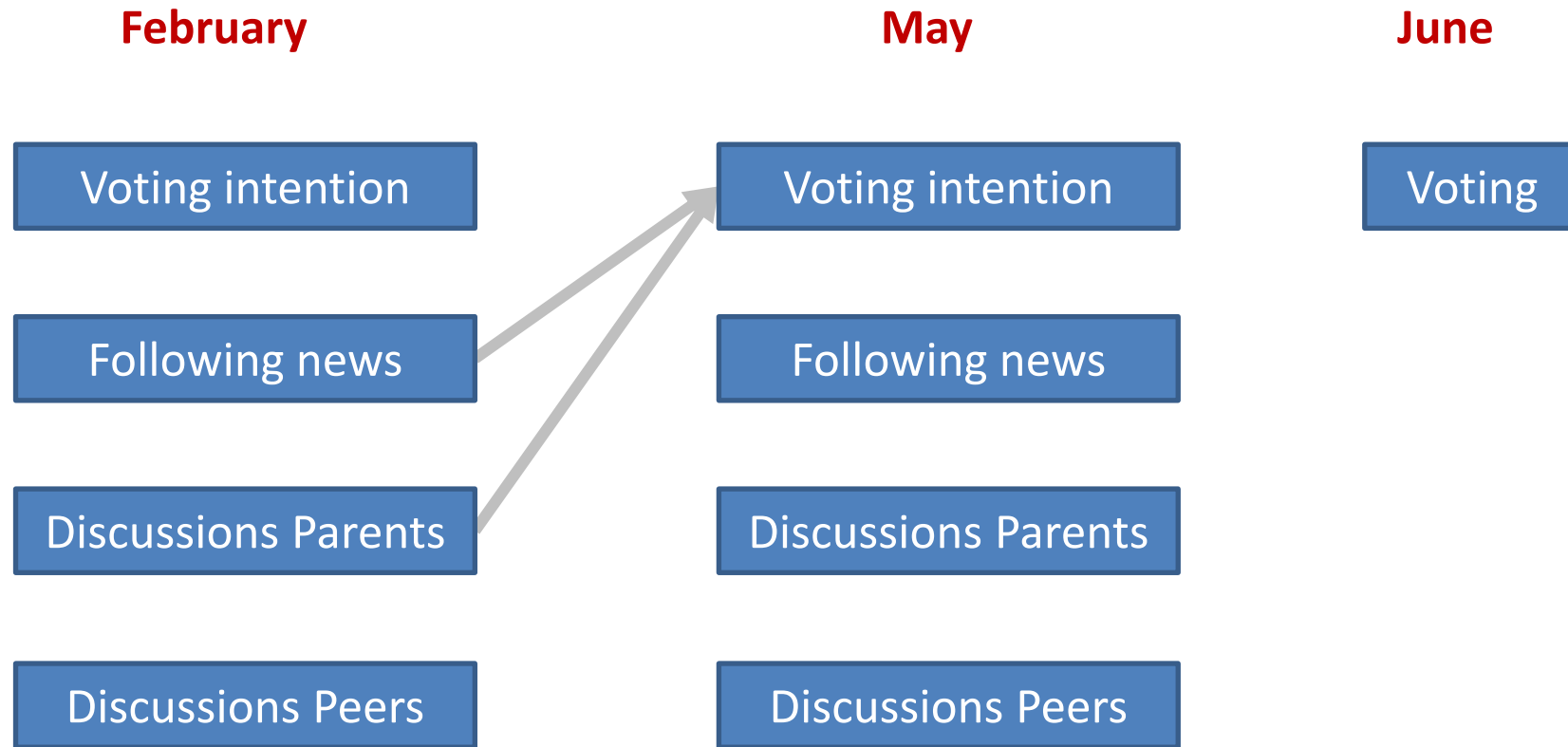
Our research



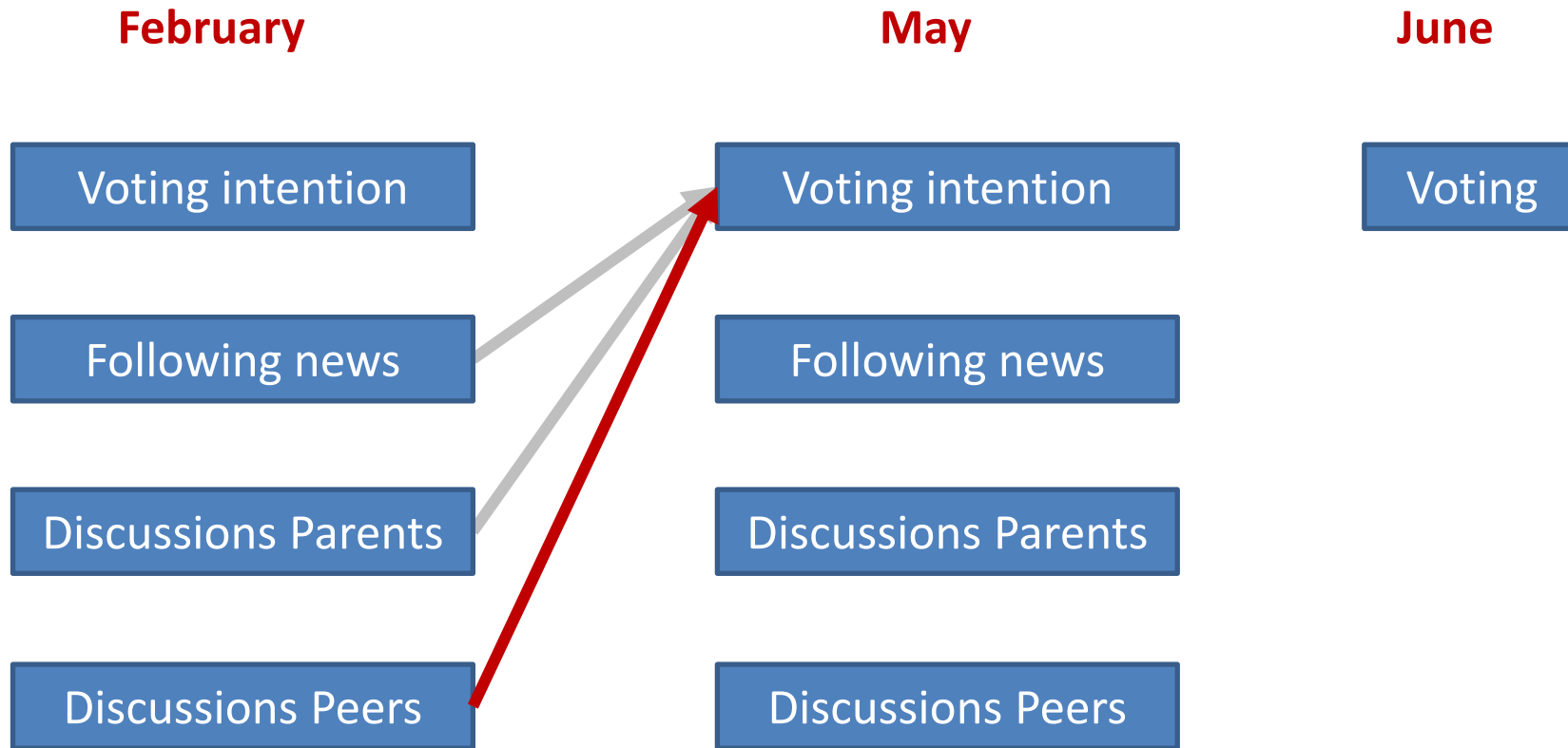
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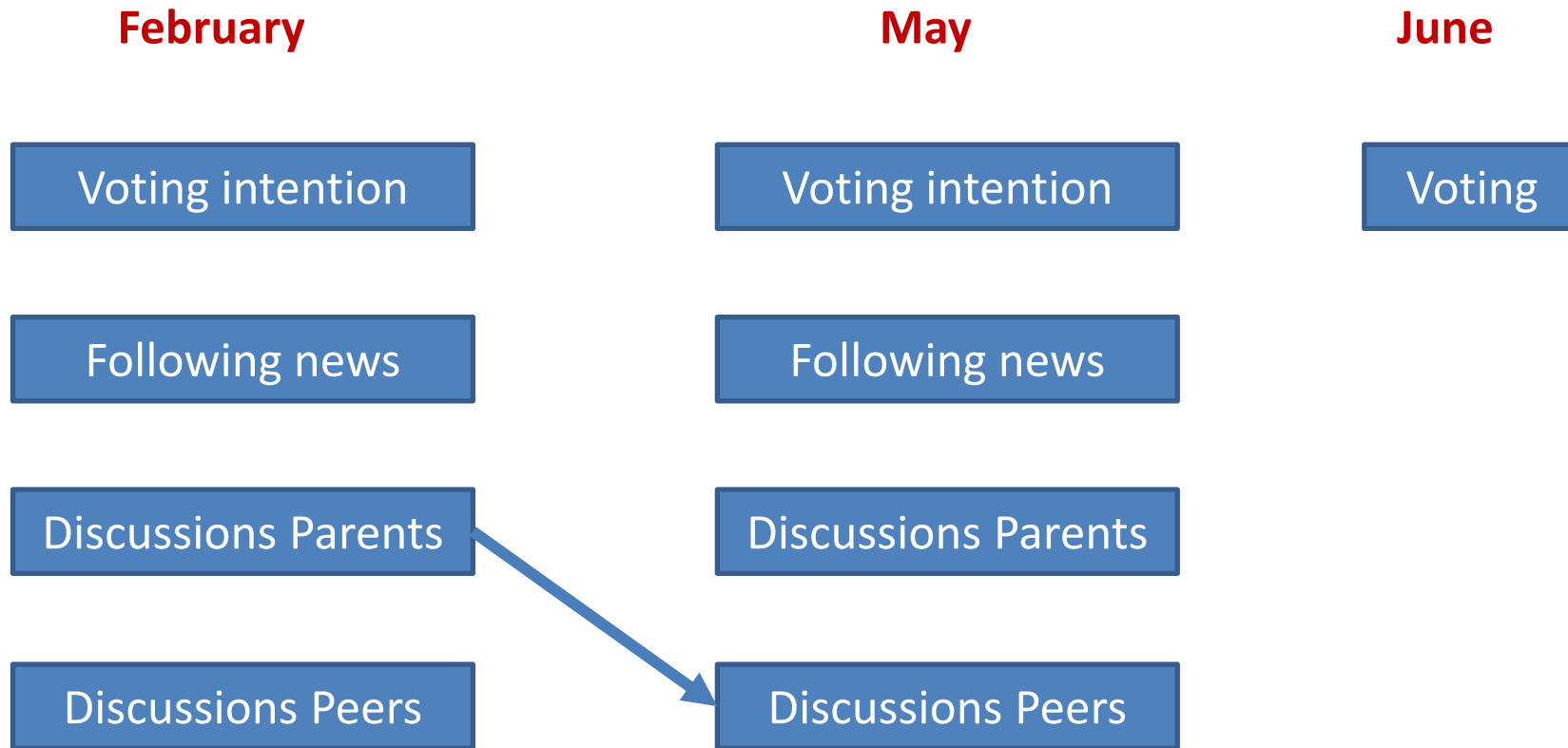
Our research



Our research



Our research



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

Our research

both parents and peers are important but in different ways

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why peers?

Our research

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why peers?

stronger social influence

Our research

both parents and peers are important but in different ways

why peers?

- stronger social influence

- peers can be selected by a person

Our research

both parents and peers are important but in different ways

why peers?

- stronger social influence

- peers can be selected by a person

- more concept-oriented than socio-oriented communication

Questions?

serek@fss.muni.cz