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Psychosocial antecedents of political beliefs in adolescence

Doctoral Thesis

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This dissertation is based on the following papers:

1. Šerek, J., & Macek, P. (2010). Proč se politicky (ne)angažovat: Obsah a struktura přesvědčení u adolescentů [Why (not) to become politically engaged: Content and structure of beliefs in adolescents]. *Československá psychologie*, *54*, 160-174. (Chapter 2.5).

2. Šerek, J., Lacinová, L., & Macek, P. (in press). Does family experience influence political beliefs? Relation between interparental conflict perceptions and political efficacy in late adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence.* (Chapter 4 – Study I).

3. Šerek, J., Petrovičová, Z., & Macek, P. (in press). Adolescents' perspectives on traditional, non-traditional, and direct political activities: The role of identity-processing styles and political beliefs. *Revista de Psicología Social.* (Chapter 5 – Study II).

4. Šerek, J., & Macek, P. (submitted). Antecedents of political trust in adolescence: Cognitive abilities, perceptions of parents, and relationships with social authorities. (Chapter 6 – Study III).

I declare that I have written this thesis independently and that all cited resources have been listed in the references.

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1 Introduction

Many people tend to consider politics as something very distant from their everyday lives. This perception is being reinforced by the media that often depict politics as a burlesque theater, occupied by freaky individuals, unaware of the lives of ordinary citizens. Still, there are some people who believe that it is possible to influence the public matters, that various forms of political activity can be effective, and even that politicians can be trusted. Where do these beliefs come from? This dissertation aims to look for the answers.

The goal of this dissertation is to show that the way young people perceive politics can stem from their personal characteristics and everyday experiences, which do not need to have an explicitly political content. Thematically this work belongs to the interdisciplinary field of political socialization, and it takes the psychological perspective in order to explore the processes of political development in adolescence.

The core of the dissertation is a collection of three empirical studies examining the antecedents of political beliefs among late adolescents (chapters 4, 5, and 6). The studies have in common their inspiration by the social cognitive approach that puts the emphasis on political cognition and its formation in diverse social contexts. The studies are preceded by two introductory chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the most important theoretical and methodological debates in the field of political socialization, draws the implications for the current research, and narrows the focus on political beliefs. Chapter 3 describes briefly the theories, data, and methods employed in the studies. Finally, chapter 7 offers an integrative discussion of the main findings.

2 Research in political socialization

2.1 A rationale for studying political socialization

Political socialization does not belong to mainstream research topics in psychology. For example, PsychINFO database, which is supposed to be *"the largest resource devoted to peer-reviewed literature in behavioral science and mental health"*, was able to find 460 items when the term "political socialization" was searched (April 11, 2012)[1]. It markedly contrasts with traditional socialization-related topics, such as "moral development" (6,055 items), "gender identity" (6,735 items), or "antisocial behavior" (62,141 items). Moreover, political socialization or any similar topic do not appear among the tasks that have been assigned by the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations to its current boards, standing committees, and task forces (the topic closest to political socialization is community psychology)[2]. Similarly, the American Psychological Association's list of the most popular topics in psychology does not include any topic related to political socialization or development[3].

On the other hand, research in political socialization is not a dead field. Recently, two edited monographies, written by leading scholars in this area, has been published (Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010; Youniss & Levine, 2009). Besides, research articles related to political socialization are being regularly published in developmental and social psychology journals, including the special issue on civic development in New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, and the forthcoming special issue in Journal of Adolescence. The importance of political socialization has been acknowledged also by policymakers. European commission, for instance, funded an extensive international research project Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation (2009 – 2012), which

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1   „Political development" – 163 items; "civic development" – 41 items.

2   http://www.efpa.eu/working-groups

3   http://www.apa.org/topics/index.aspx

aimed to discover macro-level, social and psychological factors shaping political behavior of adolescents and young adults[4].

Still, one may wonder why it is worthwhile to study political socialization. According to the author of this dissertation, there are at least three reasons. First, from a long term perspective, democratic political systems have to accommodate to behavioral patterns and orientations of their citizens. At the same time, the field of political socialization studies the processes by which young citizens develop their relations to the world of politics. Therefore, if we get an insight into political orientations of today's young people, we can better understand the current developments in democratic political regimes, and we can also get the idea about the future shape of the democracy (Hooghe, 2004).

Second, in contrast to the popular view, often presented by the media, many young people are interested in political issues. If we adopt a broader definition of politics that includes not only traditional activities (e.g., voting), but also non-traditional or on-line political activities, young people appear as relatively engaged in politics (Dahlgren, 2009; Youniss et al., 2002; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). This topic will be elaborated more in more detail in chapters 2.2.2 and 2.3.1. Moreover, even the traditional political participation, such as voting for political parties, is not completely refused by the young people. For example, 29 % young Europeans, aged 18-24, participated in the European election in 2009, ranging from 12 % in Poland to 77 % in Malta[5]. Similarly, 38 % young Europeans participated in the preceding national elections, ranging from 23 % in Germany to 67 % in Cyprus (European Parliament, 2009)[6]. Thus, it seems that an indispensable number of today's young people are willing to participate in the politics. Political socialization can help us to understand this particular part of their psychosocial development.

Third, the study of the processes that take place in political socialization contributes to our understanding of psychosocial development in other related areas. For example, political development of young people is closely related to their moral development. The topics such as moral dilemmas, perspective taking, or moral autonomy (versus obeying social

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4   http://www.fahs.surrey.ac.uk/pidop/index.htm

5   Belgium and Luxemburg where voting is compulsory are excluded. 23 % young people participated in the Czech Republic.

6   Belgium and Luxemburg where voting is compulsory are excluded. 37 % young people participated in the Czech Republic.

norms and authorities) are salient in close personal relationships as well as on the political level (Metzger & Smetana, 2010; Wilkenfeld, Lauckhardt, & Torney-Purta, 2010). Consequently, findings from political socialization can enhance our understanding of the problems in moral development by testing the validity of relevant theories in another context.

A vast majority of research on political socialization rests on the outspoken assumption that political participation or beliefs favorable to political participation are always beneficial. Therefore, the rationale behind many political socialization studies lies in an alleged decline of young people's political participation in the last decades (Bennett, 2007; Jennings, 2007). Put simply, if political participation in youth is beneficial, then its alleged decline must be of a concern. Accordingly, the mechanisms of political socialization are studied in order to understand why young people do not participate, and, eventually, to find the ways how to boost their participation. The problem with this assumption, however, is that all cases of political socialization and engagement are not necessarily beneficial (McIntosh & Youniss, 2010). For example, public activities of young people who push through ideas of racism can also be considered as political participation. Moreover, as Fiorina (1999) shows, a relative small proportion of people with extreme political attitudes can exploit the opportunities for political participation much more effectively than a not-so-extreme majority, which questions the simple linear relation between growing political participation of citizens and greater benefits for the society. Thus, it can be somewhat problematic to approach political socialization research solely as a search for factors promoting young people's political participation. As such, political beliefs, investigated in this dissertation, should not be understood in terms of their desirability. In other words, the search for the antecedents of political beliefs does not imply that a high (or a low) level of any belief is considered as positive (or negative) *per se*.

2.2 General overview of the field

The interdisciplinary field of political socialization has already existed for fifty plus years. Although some works from the first half of the 20th century, for example by Freud (1946) or Dewey (1923), can be considered as the essays on political socialization; political socialization as a "self-conscious" scientific field, based on empirical research, was not established until the 1950s. Historical overviews generally agree that the first well-known and influential work in political socialization was a review book Political socialization by Herbert

H. Hyman, published in 1959 (Niemi & Sobieszek, 1977; Renshon, 1992; Sapiro, 2004; Sears, 1975). Subsequent development of the field is sometimes characterized as a dramatic history of the rise and fall and rise again. While the reviews from the 1970s provide standard summaries of the findings, achieved by the political socialization research, some papers from the 1980s and early 1990s are written in a notably skeptical tone. For instance, Niemi and Hepburn in the mid-90s postulated that *"research on political socialization began in the late 1950s and died a premature death in the 1970s. The field atrophied because it was based on exaggerated premises and because of misinterpreted and misunderstood research findings (and lack of findings)"* (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995). In the same vein, Cook (1985) provided empirical indicators suggesting a declining number of published books and articles in political socialization[7]. Nevertheless, current reviews are written in a more positive manner again. For example, Amnå, Ekström, Kerr and Stattin maintain cautious optimism by saying that *"after decades of a silence, the research on political socialization now is undergoing revitalization,"* (Amnå, Ekström, Kerr, & Stattin, 2009, 27) and acclaiming the number of recently published studies and the intensifying theoretical debate in political socialization.

The aim of this chapter is to give an account of the previous tensions and limitations that have led many scholars to skepticism regarding the research on political socialization. Seven topics will be discussed: (1) the distinction between macro- and microlevel perspective, (2) the definition of the "political", (3) the role of socialization agents, (4) the difference between outcomes and mechanisms, (5) the orientation on the American culture, (6) developmental adequacy of the theories, and (7) theoretical integration of the findings. Based on this review, some implications for the current research will be drawn and presented in the next chapter (2.3). Thus, the overview will focus only on the issues that have been perceived as the most problematic in the political socialization history. For exhausting compendiums of the theories and findings in political socialization, see Gallatin, 1980; Jennings, 2007; Renshon, 2003; Sears & Levy, 2003.

2.2.1 Macro- and microlevel perspective

Although political socialization was established as an integral interdisciplinary field, drawing from psychology, political science, media studies, and sociology, the approaches of

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7   On the other hand, Renshon (1992) argued that the declining number of published articles does not have to signify the decay of the field, but rather its maturation.

mentioned disciplines have never been fully integrated (Renshon, 1992, Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Andolina, 2010). Particularly the tension between political scientists' and psychological approach marked significantly both theoretical debates and research practices in political socialization. That is why Sapiro (2004), when defining the aims of political socialization research, suggested a useful distinction between the macro- and microlevel perspective. Although these two perspectives are not necessarily irreconcilable, they might produce divergent research questions and types of inquiry (Renshon, 1992).

A macrolevel perspective studies how societies and political systems maintain their stability by instilling certain values, beliefs, and behavioral norms in their citizens. From this perspective, whole social groups, countries, or historical periods serve as the basic units of analysis. Macrolevel determinants of citizens' political thinking and behavior, such as political institutions or civic cultures, are expected to exert their influence on whole populations, abstracting from the individual-level responses. An extensive analysis by Inglehart and Welzel (2005) can be considered as a recent example of this approach.

On the other hand, a microlevel perspective takes into account individual psychological differences among people. From this perspective, political socialization aims to conduct the *"research on the patterns and processes by which individuals engage in political development and learning, constructing their particular relationships to the political contexts in which they live"* (Sapiro, 2004, 3). A diversity of individual dispositions and developmental histories is considered when explaining citizens' political thinking and behavior. Therefore, individuals are the primary analytical units in this type of analysis.

The perspectives are complementary as each of them provides a part of a broader picture. This can be shown on the example of the ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979). According to this theory, a life span of the person is formed by various contexts, ranging from the most proximal to the very distal systems. Among contexts that are proximal to the person (microsystems), family or school are the most important. These contexts, however, are not isolated and can influence each other (mesosystem). Moreover, distal contexts that are not directly related to the person, such as parental workplace, can also affect the development (exosystem). Finally, the development is formed by the attitudes and ideologies present in the broader society (macrosystem). As shown by Wilkenfeld et al. (2010), this general model can be applied to political development of youth. For example, political beliefs of young people are formed by discussions with their parents

and teachers (microsystem); parents try to affect the content of school civic education (mesosytem); parents learn some political information from their work colleagues, and bring these information to the family political discussions (exosystem); and finally, young people react on political ideologies that are dominant in the society or opportunities for political participation that are open to them (macrosystem). These considerations show that political socialization proceeds on many levels (micro and macro) and only a limited picture is obtained by focusing solely on one of them. On the other hand, it is almost impossible to grasp all levels by a single empirical research since extremely large and complex data would be required. Therefore, there are not many studies that embrace successfully multiple perspectives (the Michigan political socialization study can be mentioned as an extraordinary example since it captured political development in several subsequent generations; Jennings, 2004).

2.2.2   Concept of the political

Another important issue, present in the field of political socialization, pertains to the definition of the "political". Early research on political socialization often assumed that the formal aspects of politics should be the subject of interest. Therefore election- and party-related aspects of politics, such as predictors of voting, development of party identification, or trust to politicians, were addressed (Gallatin, 1980; Sears, 1975). This approach, however, seems too narrow, considering the patterns of political participation of current youth. Today's young people are considerably interested in non-traditional activities that go beyond traditional political institutions (e.g., formally elected bodies or political parties). These non-traditional activities include petitions, demonstrations, buy- or boycotting products for political reasons, a wide range of online activities, working for non-governmental and non-profit organizations, donating money, or illegal political actions. Therefore, by focusing solely on the conventional dimension of political participation, an inaccurate picture is obtained regarding political participation among young people (Youniss et al., 2002; Zukin et al., 2006).

Moreover, current youth becomes increasingly oriented on the local level and their participation involves activities such as work in school parliaments and student councils, or voluntary work for their communities (Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Osgood, & Briddell, 2011; Youniss et al., 2002). These activities are often called as civic engagement. Although some scholars prefer to limit the term "political" to the activities that aim to influence

governmental actions, either directly or indirectly (e.g., Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001), in reality it is difficult to make a clear distinction between political participation and civic engagement. For instance, adolescents' participation in student councils does not target the government; hence it is not political activity in the limited sense. On the other hand, student councils often aim to influence the decisions taken by the local level counterparts of the government, such as school headquarters or city councils. Additionally, by their local level engagement, adolescents learn whether they are able to have an influence on social authorities, which may be decisive for their future political engagement on other levels (see Beaumont, 2010). Thus, civic experiences are closely related to adolescents' political development, and, as summarized by Youniss and his colleagues, *"perhaps the fairest conclusion is that there is not a definite demarcation between the political and civil realms. Rather there is a continuum between formal political acts such as voting, political actions such as protesting for a moral cause, and performing a service such as working in a rural literacy campaign"* (Youniss et al., 2002, 126).

2.2.3 Socialization agents and their roles

The political socialization research has identified several sources of influence that play an important role in individual political development. A list of so called socialization agents traditionally includes family and school. In addition, the roles of media, peers, organizations, or neighborhoods are considered too. The effect of parents on political development of their children have been shown on different levels, involving the effect of parental socioeconomic and educational background (Zukin et al., 2006; Bynner & Ashford, 1994; McFarland & Thomas, 2006), the effect of parental beliefs (Beck & Jennings, 1991; Jennings, 2004), the effect of family political discussions (Zukin et al., 2006), or the effects of parenting practices (Duke, Skay, Pettingell, & Borowsky, 2005; Smith, 1999). Similarly, the effects of school were described on the levels of curricula, classroom discussions, or school democracy (Amnå & Zetterberg, 2009; Torney-Purta, Barber, & Richardson, 2004; Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003), and also on the level school-based community service (Metz & Youniss, 2005; Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007).

Although the research has brought many fascinating findings regarding the role of socialization agents, two lines of criticism can be found in the literature. These two critiques are often interconnected; however it is useful to distinguish between them.

First, an implicit assumption that young people passively accept political beliefs of socialization agents (parents, teachers, media personalities etc.) and merely imitate their political behavior has been identified in many studies. This issue pertains not only to the area of political socialization but to the socialization process in general. Current theories in developmental psychology stress that the process of socialization cannot be understood as a mere transmission of the environmental influences on a child. In her review, Maccoby (2007) demonstrated that the approaches conceptualizing children only as learners, formed by their environment, have proven to be unsatisfactory. Instead, it is necessary to understand socialization as comprising child's self-regulation and active forms of learning. Similarly, the model of socialization developed by Nurmi (2004) comprises not only channeling of the norms, expectations and opportunities from the society to the child, but also child's active selection among the influences and the reflection of one's choices. The crucial role of person's agency has been documented also in political socialization. For instance, the process of transmission of parental political beliefs on young people is sometimes studied as a mere correlation between the beliefs reported by parents and adolescents. A study by Westholm (1999) showed, however, that political beliefs held by adolescents reflect rather adolescents' hypotheses about parental beliefs than parental beliefs as such, which can be considerably different from adolescents' hypotheses. Thus, political socialization cannot be understood as a simple transmission of beliefs or behavioral patterns from parents and other socialization agents to children. Rather, it is more adequate to understand it as 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).

Second, the unrealistic assumption that the relationships between young people and socialization agents are unidirectional has been pinpointed and criticized (Amnå et al., 2009). More precisely, many political socialization studies assume that the influence proceeds only in a "top-down" direction, i.e. from socialization agents to young people. Although the existing models that test multidirectional relationships in political socialization are either incomplete, or have not been empirically verified (Amnå et al., 2009), political practices of current youth demonstrate clearly the insufficiency of traditional approaches. The most striking example is related to political activities facilitated by the new media. While the traditional media, such as newspaper, radio and television, can be seen as having unidirectional effect on young people, who have only slight influence on the media content; the new media, such as internet, bring dissimilar opportunities for political development (Dahlgren, 2009). Young people do not only

receive political messages from the internet, but also co-crate them by writing political blogs and active participation in political discussion forums or social networks. Similarly, the processes of political socialization may involve child-to-parents and child-to-teachers effects, particularly in later stages of adolescence.

2.2.4   Outcomes vs. mechanisms

The issue of socialization agents and their relation to young people can also be understood as a part of a more general problem. Although relatively enough is known about the outcomes of political socialization (e.g., what factors predict political participation of youth), there is considerably lower understanding of the mechanisms that lead to these outcomes (e.g., by what ways do these factors shape political behavior of young people) (Amnå et al., 2009). If we focus on the mechanisms, it can bring two crucial insights into the socialization processes: the interplay among the socialization influences is described, and the time frames of socialization are specified (i.e. what gets acquired when by young people) (Renshon, 1992). Three examples can be provided, illustrating that the focus on the mechanisms brings better understanding of socialization processes than the focus on the outcomes.

The interplay among socialization influences can be understood in terms of moderation and mediation effects (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The moderation effect means that the impact of socialization influences varies depending on some other condition. Jennings, Stoker and Bowers (2009), for example, showed that the effect of parental political beliefs on political beliefs of their children was considerably stronger in the families where parents were highly politically engaged and provided consistent cues regarding their political attitudes to their children. This finding provided an important insight into the processes of family transmission of political orientations, which would not have been achieved if the authors had focused only on the simple parent-child predictions.

Further, the mediation effect means that the impact of socialization influences occurs because they induce some other (mediating) effect. In the study of Schoon and Cheng (2011), for example, socioeconomic status of the family positively predicted descendant's political trust in adulthood. In itself, this finding would not have provided much insight into the processes of political socialization. However, one possible explanation, tested in the

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mentioned study, was that the children from high-status families did better in school and got higher status in the society, which, in turn, enhanced their trust in social institutions.

Finally, the emphasis on mechanisms enables the researchers to study time frames of political socialization. For example, Vollebergh, Iedema & Raaijmakers (2001) studied how parents pass on cultural orientations to their children. If they had focused on the outcomes, they could have assessed only the strength of the effect of parental orientations on children's orientations. By focusing on mechanisms, they were able to identify how the parental influence changes with child's maturation, and also how child's orientations become more crystallized over time.

2.2.5   Cultural determinants of political socialization

A vast majority of the political socialization research have been done in the United States or other industrialized democracies, such as Canada and Western European countries (Sapiro, 2004). The findings, however, are usually interpreted in a universalistic manner. Sapiro (2004) has formulated an argument, suggesting why this practice might be problematic. She implicitly distinguishes two aspects of political socialization: the socialization process (how important are the different socialization agents, and how do they exert their influence), and the messages passed on by socialization agents. If the only difference among cultures was that socialization agents pass on different messages to the young people (e.g., about government, politics, citizenship), then the lack of cross-cultural research would not mean any serious challenge. The socialization process would be identical in all cultures and the different outcomes would reflect only the differences in transmitted messages. However, all the major socialization agents (e.g., families, schools, media) have different structures, ways of functioning, and relationships to young people's everyday experiences in different countries. Thus, we cannot be sure whether the socialization process itself operates in the same way. Specifically, we do not know if the level and the form of involvement of different socialization agents, found in North American and Western European countries, are identical across all cultures.

2.2.6   Developmental adequacy

Another serious gap is the lack of theoretical soundness of some studies in political socialization, particularly of those done in the 1950s and 60s. Many scholars in this period assumed that the main phase of political socialization takes place in childhood or early

adolescence, while subsequent life periods are not of such importance (e.g., Easton, & Dennis, 1967). For example, Easton and Hess (1962) maintained that *"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). The assumption of early political socialization, however, has been subjected to a strong criticism, based on two implausible implications of this assumption. First, the assumption implies that the cognitive functioning in childhood is comparable with the cognitive functioning in adulthood, which is inconsistent with the theories of cognitive development. According to the piagetian perspective, children are not capable of abstract reasoning, which is necessary for political thinking, until the age of 11-12. Therefore, children's political orientations are qualitatively different from the orientations of adults (Cook, 1985; Merelman, 1972; Niemi, & Hepburn, 1995; Renshon, 1992). This assumption of early political socialization also implies that political orientations of children and adults can be assessed by the same measures. Political orientations of adults, however, are most often measured by questionnaire-based surveys, of which the validity and reliability in childhood are questionable (Cook, 1985; Merelman, 1972). These critiques have emphasized that political socialization research must be interconnected with some theory of cognitive development; otherwise it might build on inadequate assumptions regarding children's cognition.

2.2.7 Theoretical integration

All the points that have been mentioned are associated with one common issue that appears repeatedly in the critical reviews of the field. As put by Torney-Purta et al., although there is a large body of studies in political socialization, *"the body of work is fragmented. There has been little cumulation of findings because the research questions and measures used in many studies have not been related to clear conceptual frameworks"* (Torney-Purta et al., 2010, 497). Hence, political socialization research is scattered, having no integrative theoretical background. This stems not only from the interdisciplinary nature of the field, but also from a considerable theoretical diversity within the disciplines. Moreover, many studies are driven by the available data rather than by prior theoretical considerations, and no theoretical implications are drawn from the findings, which makes the generalization even more difficult (Renshon 1992; Torney-Purta et al., 2010).

In reaction to the lack of integration, several theoretical frameworks have been recently proposed. Using the theories of social learning, Torney-Purta et al. (2010) constructed a conceptual model of political socialization, involving person-related variables (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, social status, education), context-related variables (e.g., neighborhood, family, school curriculum, out-of-school groups), process-related variables (observational learning, apprenticeship, scaffolding by adults), and four types of outcomes: meaning (e.g., political knowledge, political cognitive skills), identity (e.g., party, ethnic), sense of agency (e.g., political efficacy), and actual political action. Additionally, Wilkenfeld et al. (2010) reviewed several developmental theories that can be applied to political socialization. Potential contributions of the social cognitive theory, theories of moral development (e.g., Kohlberg's theory of stages), Selman's role-taking theory, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, or Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory were emphasized. Finally, the framework for understanding political socialization in youth suggested by McIntosh and Youniss (2010) emphasized the aspects similar to the previous two frameworks, such as social learning by doing, scaffolding by adults, and perspective taking. Proposed models and frameworks seem to provide promising guidelines for future research in political socialization. None of them, however, has already been systematically applied and elaborated.

2.3   Implications for the current research

The review of the tensions and limitations, present in the field of political socialization, provides suggestions for the current inquiry. Based on the literature, it is possible to formulate five implications that enhance our understanding of political socialization. Specifically, it can be argued that (1) a broad understanding of political socialization, (2) research focus on multiple cultural contexts (e.g. Central Europe), (3) longitudinal approach, (4) research focus on adolescence and young adulthood, and (5) social cognitive approach are beneficial to the research in political socialization.

2.3.1   A broad understanding of political socialization

Although there is no common agreement in the political socialization research on what aspects of young people's lives should be referred to as political, there are intense tendencies to comprehend various forms of experience that are not limited to traditional politics (Torney-Purta et al., 2010). Recently, new typologies of political participation have

been developed in political science in order to include both traditional and non-traditional types of participation (Ekman & Amnå, 2009; Norris, 2003; Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007). By employing these typologies, political socialization can be captured in its complexity, adequately to the actual patterns of political participation among youth (Youniss et al., 2002). Moreover, the inclusion of non-conventional activities can help to better understand political development of young adolescents, whose participation in traditional activities is limited by the law, but are already involved in the public life (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995). Further, it has been shown that engagement in civic activities, such as community service, plays a role in political socialization and is associated with traditional political participation (Hart et al., 2007; Metz & Youniss, 2005). Accordingly, not only traditional political activities, but also non-traditional activities and civic engagement seem to be relevant parts of political socialization.

In addition, political socialization cannot be understood as separate from other areas of person's development. Flanagan and Gallay (1995) have argued that even the private experiences have their political meanings. For example, the processes of cooperation and negotiation in the family serve the child as the first models of power relationships and democratic competition. Through family discussions, children learn that the differences of opinions might be resolved by negotiation and compromise, which is important for their future understanding of politics. In addition, the experiences of authoritative parenting (e.g., being respected by parents), can make children feel more efficacious, as well as attentive to the rights and perspectives of others. Similarly, the experiences with open discussions in schools can serve as the additional models that form young people's views and expectations regarding politics (Claes, Hooghe, & Marien, 2011). Besides, Mondak and Halperin (2008) have shown that many political beliefs and behaviors are correlated with personality characteristics (e.g., Big Five personality traits). For these reasons, it seems appropriate to understand political socialization broadly, as being shaped by multiple nonpolitical contextual and personality factors and their interactions.

2.3.2 Political socialization in the Central-European context

The critiques of the predominant orientation on the American context imply the need to conduct the political socialization research in different political and cultural settings. From this perspective, the context of Central Europe provides a unique opportunity. Two Central European countries – the Czech Republic and Slovakia – share several common features with

the United States, Canada and the Western Europe, such as a high-income economy and democratic political regime. Therefore, their economic and political situation is not radically different from the situation in the North American and Western European countries. On the other hand, both countries spent five decades under the non-democratic regimes, and their democracies were reestablished only 23 years ago. Consequently, the patterns of political socialization might be slightly different than in the countries with longer democratic tradition (see Niemi & Hepburn, 1995).

Although there are not many studies on political socialization carried out in the Czech and Slovak context, the situation is slowly changing. Up to the knowledge of the author, three areas of research, more or less related to political socialization, can be identified. First, there is a series of studies examining how late adolescents and young adults conceptualize and construct political concepts such as civic responsibility (Plichtová & Keresztesová, 2004), nationality (Bačová, 1999; Borecká & Plichtová, 1998), democracy (Moodie, Marková, & Plichtová, 1995; Tyrlík, Plichtová, & Macek, 1998), political and economic change (Plichtová, & Erös, 1997), individual rights (Plichtová & Štulrajter, 2001), or community (Moodie, Marková, Farr, & Plichtová, 1997). These studies can be considered as related to the field of political socialization because they usually compare political concepts of young Slovaks and Czechs with the concepts of other age and national groups. Therefore, the authors are able to reveal broader generational and cultural influences that shape political thinking of youth. Moreover, Trézová and Plichtová (2010) have extended this type of analysis towards the critical assessment of political competencies of young Slovaks (e.g., competency for democratic discussion), which is another important topic in political socialization. Second, Klicperová-Baker and her colleagues have employed the concept of civic cultures, created by Almond and Verba (1963), in order to study "civic ethos" and the types of civic culture among Czech, Slovak, Belarusian, and Bulgarian youth (Klicperová-Baker, 2003; Klicperová-Baker et al., 2007). The concept of civic cultures is well-established in the macrolevel political socialization studies (Sapiro, 2004); thus, the work of Klicperová-Baker and others brings important inputs into the theoretical discussions on political socialization (e.g., their description of the so-called post-totalitarian syndrome). Third, Zápotočná and Lukšík have studied the effect of school on Slovak children and adolescents' future political participation. Their research involves the retrospective assessments of the role of school environment (Zápotočná & Lukšík, 2010a; Zápotočná & Lukšík, 2010b), as well as the detailed analyses of school cultures and practices, and their relations to students' political

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outcomes (Lukšík & Zápotočná, 2010). With regard to the employed theories and concepts, the work of these two scholars is fully integrated into the field of political socialization and provides valuable insight into previously unstudied Slovak context.

Despite the undeniable contributions of the reviewed studies, more research should be done in the Central-European context. Most of the mentioned scholars focus on the cultural level of political socialization, while the individual-level political socialization remains understudied. The only exceptions are Zápotočná and Lukšík who focus on the socialization effects of school. However, the roles of other socialization agents or personality characteristics have not been studied yet.

2.3.3 Longitudinal approach

In order to assess the directionality of the relationships between young people and socialization agents, as well as to understand the mechanisms of political socialization, studies with longitudinal designs are preferable in the political socialization research. Compared to the cross-sectional approach, the longitudinal approach provides stronger conclusions regarding the directions of the effects and reveals their temporal succession (Amnå et al., 2009).

Selig and Preacher (2009) summarized the additional reasons why longitudinal designs should be preferred over cross-sectional designs for the testing of mediation hypotheses. These reasons are valid not only for the mediation hypotheses, but also for the socialization research in general. First, some effects take time to unfold; therefore they can be noted only after a certain period of time (e.g., the effect of civic education on political participation). Cross-sectional designs, however, inherently assume that the effects manifest themselves instantly, which in many cases is an unrealistic assumption. Second, when previous levels of the studied variables are not controlled for, the effect sizes may be inadequately over- or underestimated. Third, the effect sizes may vary with the growing time distance between the measurements of the variables (e.g., the effect of parental political orientations on adolescent's political orientations may grow in time, as adolescent becomes more interested in politics). This effect, however, cannot be tested if the variables are measured simultaneously. Finally, developmental hypotheses often refer to the changes within individuals; therefore repeated measurements of the same persons are needed in order to test these hypotheses (see also Cole & Maxwell, 2003).

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2.3.4 Adolescence and young adulthood as sensitive periods

Results of the studies from different theoretical backgrounds generally agree that adolescents and young adults are the most sensitive age groups with respect to political socialization. Particularly late adolescence and early adulthood seem to be the periods when the most important political orientations are being formed. The evidence from three areas can be mentioned: the studies on the stability of political orientations, the studies on the collective memory, and the studies on the sociopolitical attitudes, such as right-wing authoritarianism.

First, 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; Sears & Levy, 2003). Also the attitude toward political engagement and the willingness to participate become increasingly stable over the course of adolescence (Eckstein, Noack, & Gniewosz, 2011). On the other hand, there are no considerable individual-level changes in political interest during adulthood (Prior, 2010). Taken together, these findings support an impressionable years hypothesis, postulating that adolescence is a teachable moment for political learning. Consequently, political orientations learned in adolescence play an important role in adulthood (Sears & Levy, 2003).

Second, 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; for further discussion see also Bellelli, Leone, & Curci, 1999). Additionally, 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). Thus, is seems that adolescents and early adults are particularly vulnerable to the large-scale political influences, and these effect lasts in the life periods that follow.

Finally, studies on the development of sociopolitical attitudes pinpoint the importance of adolescence and young adulthood. In his review of literature on authoritarianism and dogmatism, Duckitt (2009) has come to the conclusion that adolescence and young adulthood are particularly important periods when right-wing authoritarianism is being formed. Similarly, Vollebergh et al. (2001) have shown that cultural orientations such as tolerance for alternative lifestyles, ethnocentrism, or adherence to social equality become increasingly stable between 12 and 24 years of age.

There are several complementary explanations why adolescents and young adults are sensitive to political socialization. Two explanations were drawn by Niemi and Hepburn: "*The period from about age fourteen through the mid-twenties should receive much more attention from political scientists interested in the process of political socialization. The reason is twofold. First there is little dispute that youth is a time of extraordinary psychological and social change. Second, these are the years during which our society traditionally attempts to educate youth for citizen participation.*" (Niemi & Hepbur, 1995). The vague notion of "extraordinary psychological and social change in youth" can be explained by Erikson's (1968) concept of identity development. According to this theory, adolescence is a period when person's identity is being formed; hence adolescents seek to define themselves and their roles in the society. The sense of personal identity comprises various domains such as occupational, religious, but also political identity. By seeking their political identities, adolescents learn to understand themselves as political beings and search for their roles in the political world. In this vein, political socialization can be understood as a synonym for the political identity development. Furthermore, as suggested by Niemi and Hepburn (1995), since civic education usually appears in the curricula of secondary schools, adolescents are confronted with political issues and prompted to form their political orientations. Finally, adolescents' interest in political issues might be enhanced by institutional incentives that give them more opportunities to participate in politics, such as voting right.

Still, these considerations do not mean that the issue of political socialization in childhood has been completely dismissed in recent research. Some scholars suggest keeping the focus on children, while not denying the importance of adolescence (Sapiro, 2004; Sears & Levy, 2003; van Deth, Abendschön, & Vollmar, 2011). In contrast to the previous research, they admit that it is necessary to abandon explicitly "political" constructs, such as political trust or political ideology, that are too complicated to understand for children. Instead, the research concentrates on moral development, national and ethnic identities, or the development of stereotypes and prejudice. Although these areas of early socialization do not have any political content, social and moral orientations formed in childhood can have implications for political thinking and behavior in later periods of life (Renshon, 1992). Moreover, the studies on early political socialization try to develop measures that are adequate to children's cognitive abilities (van Deth et al., 2011).

2.3.5 Social cognitive perspective

Finally, a general theoretical framework is needed that would integrate scattered findings in political socialization, be adequate with respect to individual psychological development, and give satisfactory answers to the concerns that have been listed in the previous chapter (2.2). According to the author of this dissertation, social cognitive approach to political socialization, as recently described by Metzger and Smetana (2010) or Wilkenfeld et al. (2010), can provide such theoretical framework. Basic assumption of the social cognitive approach is that *"cognitions and beliefs are central to how individuals view themselves in relation to civic and community institutions. They affect whether individuals become civically involved, as well as the form that such involvement will take"* (Metzger & Smetana, 2010, 222). Thus, the attention is drawn to how adolescents construct the meanings related to the world of politics (e.g., political institutions, politicians, or political systems), and how they perceive their roles as citizens. The organized knowledge, abstracted form the previous experiences, and leading person's constructions of political meanings, can be referred to as cognitive schema (Conover & Feldman, 1984). The social cognitive perspective has several advantages that can serve as arguments in favor of its adoption.

First, despite being oriented on the individual human beings and their personal cognitive schemata, social cognitive approach to political socialization assumes that the meanings of political world are embedded and reinforced by a broader culture (Cook, 1985). Consequently, it can be a plausible tool for both macro- and microlevel perspectives.

Second, social cognitive approach to political socialization conceptualizes people as active agents of their political development. Generally, social cognitive theory ascribes to a model of emergent interactive agency where any accounts of the determinants of human behavior include self-generated influences (Bandura, 1989; Wilkenfeld et al., 2010). People are understood as proactive agents who are capable of self-reflection and self-regulation. Thus, social cognitive approach is in an opposition to the approaches that conceptualize people as reactive organisms, shaped by their environment, or as blindly driven by their inner impulses. The core concept of triadic reciprocal determinism assumes that human development is an outcome of a dynamic interaction among (1) personal factors, such as cognitions and personality characteristics, (2) one's behavior, and (3) environment, such as family or school (Bandura, 1986; 1989; Pajares, 2002; Zimmerman, 2000). Applied to political socialization, the process of political development must be understood not as a mere

transmission of political messages from socialization agents to young people, but rather as a process by which young people make sense of their environment (including socialization agents) and, at same time, actively change their environment by their political actions.

Third, the social cognitive approach, based on the triadic reciprocal determinism, offers a more realistic theory of learning than the traditional approach. Early political socialization research has been criticized for relying on naively conceptualized imprinting of parental attitudes and behavioral patterns (Gallatin, 1980; Niemi & Hepburn, 1995; Renshon, 1992). In contrast, the social cognitive approach understands young people as active learners who learn by adding meanings to their own or vicarious experiences. From the perspective of social cognition, political participation of young people is not only an "outcome" or a "product" of political socialization, but also a process by which young people form their political cognitive schemata that, in turn, may affect their future political behavior (Beaumont, 2010). Additionally, since the cognitive schemata are not necessarily domain specific and they can generalize across different life domains; political learning can take place in various contexts, both formal and informal. Therefore, political socialization, viewed from the social cognitive perspective, involves a considerably broader scope of adolescents' experiences than the explicitly political influences of socialization agents (Beaumont, 2010; McIntosh & Youniss, 2010; Wilkenfeld et al., 2010; Torney-Purta et al., 2010).

Fourth, the social cognitive theory is closely related to the theories of cognitive development. The primary focus on cognition yields the acknowledgment of the stages of individual cognitive development, regarding both abstract thinking and moral reasoning. Since the developmental theories imply qualitative differences between children's and adolescents' cognitive processes, it enables researchers to deduce developmentally adequate hypotheses regarding political socialization in different periods of life (Cook, 1985; Gallatin, 1980; Metzger & Smetana, 2009).

Fifth, the social cognitive approach does not exclude from political development those adolescents who are politically passive. Although the actual political behavior represents the most visible aspect of youth political life, there are many young people who are not politically active although they possess elaborated political belief systems and can be considered as potential political activists (Ekman & Amnå, 2009). Moreover, even strong political alienation and disinterest in adolescence deserve the attention since adolescent political orientations tend to persist to adulthood (see chapter 2.3.4). By focusing on political

cognition, a wider range of young people's approaches to the world of politics is embraced, and, consequently, a more accurate picture of political socialization is obtained.

Finally, the social cognitive approach to political socialization fits well within the more general trends in political psychology. Research on political cognition represents an important subfield in political psychology (McGraw, 2003). The studies have targeted various topics in political cognition, such as the organization of political beliefs (Conover & Feldman, 1984), the formation of political impressions in the course of time (Lodge, McGraw, & Stroh, 1989), or the social cognitive determinants of political participation (Krampen, 1991). Thus, the social cognition approach to political socialization allows easier integration with the findings done on adult populations.

The social cognitive approach, however, should not be perceived as a miraculous, universal remedy that can sweep away all the problems present in the political socialization research. As pointed out by Renshon (1992), political socialization is not interchangeable with political cognition and not all socialization processes take place on the cognitive level. In other words, to understand how young people construct the political meanings does not automatically mean to understand their political development as a whole. For instance, Sears and Levy (2003) describe the role of emotions in political socialization, which cannot be fully grasped by the social cognitive approach. Therefore, despite its contributions and advantages, this approach does not provide an exhaustive account of political socialization in youth.

2.4   Political beliefs

An essential assumption of the social cognitive approach is that young people construct belief systems regarding the world of politics and their own roles in this world (Bandura, 1986; 1989; 1997; Metzger & Smetana, 2009; 2011). These belief systems can provide young people with the answers on two particularly important questions (Beaumont, 2010; Gamson, 1968): "Am I able to achieve any change in the society?" and "Are politicians and political processes trustworthy enough that I should get involved with them?" The former question refers to the belief called political efficacy, while the latter question refers to the belief called political trust. Both beliefs (more precisely their lower ends) are sometimes

understood as the components of political alienation, which refers to the sense of psychological disintegration from the political world (Finifter, 1970; Levi & Stoker, 2000)[8].

2.4.1 Political efficacy and effectiveness

Political efficacy can be roughly defined in short as a person's belief that he or she can influence the social system (Bandura, 1997). The role of this belief was explicitly acknowledged by social scientists in the 1950s. Originally, political efficacy was defined broadly as *"the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change"* (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954, 187). Political efficacy was understood as a one-dimensional political belief that could be measured by a short Likert-type scale. A dimensionality and a psychological basis of the construct were not studied in this period (Beaumont, 2010). With growing empirical evidence, however, the assumption of one-dimensionality became questioned. Particularly the distinction between so-called internal and external aspect of political efficacy became crucial. Moreover, the association with the psychological concept of self-efficacy was proposed (Bandura, 1997). From the perspective of current psychology, the concept of political efficacy is integrated into the social cognitive theory of self efficacy, which is defined as a belief *"in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments"* (Bandura, 1997, 3). In line with this definition, political efficacy is viewed as a self-efficacy belief regarding the world of politics.

According to the current state of art, several dimensions of political efficacy are distinguished. Specifically, political efficacy beliefs can refer to (1) the self as a political actor, (2) the political system, and (3) the particular political activity.

First, young people can be described as having beliefs regarding the degree of their *"ability to achieve desired results in the political domain through personal engagement and an efficient use of one's own capacities and resources"* (Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna, & Mebane, 2009, 1002). Put in other words, the belief refers to the self-assessment of the personal ability to use one's capacities to produce political or social change. This dimension

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8   According to Finifter (1970), there are four dimensions of political alienation: political powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness (perception of political decisions as being unpredictable), and isolation (rejection of widely shared political norms and goals). Levi and Stoker (2000) point out that the first dimension refers to political efficacy and the second dimension to political trust.

of political efficacy is traditionally referred to as an internal political efficacy because it assesses primarily the self. However, not even internal political efficacy can be described as a one-dimensional belief (Bandura, 1997). Perceived personal ability to achieve desired political results can differ with respect to the level of political activity, the type of activity, and the individual or collective status of the actor. For example, people may feel very efficacious on the level of local politics (community, municipality, town), but completely inefficacious on the level of state or international politics. Similarly, people may be positive regarding their ability to achieve desired political results through the traditional means of political participation, such as writing letters to politicians, but they may be skeptical regarding their ability to pursue political change through the online political activities (e.g., because of their unfamiliarity with the online environment). Finally, some people may doubt their individual efficacy, but they can have completely different belief regarding the efficacy of the group where they belong (Bandura, 1997).

Second, besides assessing the self, young people also assess the external environment in terms of its openness to change. A respective belief is usually called external political efficacy and is defined as a belief that "*the political system is amenable to change through individual and collective influence*" (Caprara et al., 2009, 1002). Compared to internal political efficacy, external political efficacy is independent from self-perceptions and self-evaluations. The difference between the two beliefs is apparent in the case of people who doubt their personal ability to achieve desired political results (low internal political efficacy), but they believe that, for some other people, it is easy to achieve these results (high external political efficacy). Since external political efficacy is an evaluation of the political system (in terms of its openness) it is relatively close to political trust (Niemi, Craing, Mattei, 1991).

Third, the beliefs about effectiveness of particular political activities can be considered. These beliefs are not usually considered as "true" efficacy beliefs; therefore they will be referred to as perceived effectiveness of political activities. Since there are many forms of political activity – conventional and nonconventional activities, activities oriented to institutions or specifics causes, offline and online activities, local and country-level activities, legal and ilegal activities, individual and collective activities etc. (Norris, 2003; Teorell et al., 2007; Youniss et al., 2002), young people can have different perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these activities in terms of their influence on social change. Out of the efficacy-related beliefs, the least studied ones are the perceptions of effectiveness of political activities.

Political efficacy beliefs are known to be important predictors of political participation of young people (Zukin et al., 2006) because people do not participate if they perceive themselves or their participation as ineffective (see Klandermans, 1997). On the other hand, all efficacy/effectiveness beliefs must be understood as specific to various contexts and forms of activity. Therefore, highly generalized efficacy/effectiveness beliefs might not be very predictive of political participation, compared to the more specific beliefs. For example, persons' political participation in the local-level politics usually reflects their sense of efficacy regarding this particular political context, rather than their general beliefs about the perceived influence on the social system (Bandura, 1997).

2.4.2   Predictors of political efficacy

Although there is a considerable knowledge about the effects of political efficacy on young people's political behavior, less is known about the antecedents of political efficacy. Based on the previous studies, Beaumont (2011) suggested that three sources of political efficacy can be distinguished. First, political efficacy varies with one's position in the social hierarchy, as people who are higher possess more material resources, encounter stronger social norms of participation, and are more likely to be invited into politically active groups. Second, civic resources such as knowledge, skills, motivations, and social networks are important for the enhancement of the sense of political efficacy. Finally, socialization experiences, operating through social learning, play a role.

In her another work, Beaumont (2010) specified four socialization pathways fostering young people's political efficacy. These pathways are based on the general theory of self-efficacy learning (Bandura 1986; 1989; 1997). The first pathway to one's greater sense of political efficacy is the involvement in skill-building political mastery experiences. Thus, political efficacy is learned when young people go through real political experiences that provide them with the sense of successful agency. The second pathway concerns the vicarious learning: young persons' political efficacy is enhanced by observing the examples of successful political efforts of other people or groups. Third, social encouragement, supportive relationships and networks, and also the inclusion in political community are important. Finally, empowering resilient political outlooks foster persons' political efficacy. More specifically, political efficacy is positively boosted by the balanced optimism that involves realistic views on the opportunities as well as barriers present in the political system.

Presented considerations suggest that both political and nonpolitical mechanisms matter in the development of political efficacy. Beaumont (2011) empirically confirmed the importance of the first and the second pathway by showing that learning of political skills through political activity, as well as growing up in a politically active home, enhance one's political efficacy. Regarding the third pathway, it was found that young people who feel connected with others in multiple contexts have a stronger sense of internal and external political efficacy (Anderson, 2010). Further, personality factors that are associated with an optimistic view on the society (such as extraversion and agreeableness) were found to positively predict political efficacy (Mondak, & Halperin, 2008; Vecchione, & Caprara, 2009), which implies the relevance of the fourth pathway. Similarly, young people's political efficacy can be weakened by nonoptimistic or depressive worldviews as young people with depression feel helpless and incompetent in social situations (Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1992; Whitton, Larson, & Hauser, 2008) and have lower social self-efficacy (Muris, 2002), which can, in turn, generalize to the broader social contexts, such as politics.

2.4.3 Political trust

The concept of political trust can have several meanings, depending on the trusted object. Political trust can be understood as a belief regarding perceived trustworthiness of particular politicians or political institutions (e.g., government, parliament, city council). Also, it can be understood as a belief regarding the world of politics as a whole. Finally, political trust can refer to perceived trustworthiness of the whole political regime, such as democracy (Citrin & Muste, 1999). The last form of political trust is sometimes referred to as diffuse support for the political system (Easton, 1965) or simply trust in democracy. This form of trust will not be pursued in detail because it is qualitatively different from the trust in politicians (Norris, 2011). Further, the first form of political trust (in particular politicians or institutions) is very closely related to the personal support for a particular politician or a party (Anderson & LoTempio, 2002). Consequently, such a particularized belief have no substantial impact on person's political thinking and behavior, except for the beliefs and behaviors related to the particular politician. Therefore, only the second from of political trust will be targeted in the following text.

Trust regarding the world of politics refers to the general belief about the extent of politicians' service to the public, observance of the rules, and moral qualities. Moreover, this form of political trust can be conceived as an opposite of political cynicism (Citrin & Muste,

1999) that is defined as a *"mistrust generalized from particular leaders or political groups to the political process as a whole – a process perceived to corrupt the persons who participate in it and that draws corrupt persons as participants"* (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, 166). Political cynicism (i.e. the lack of politics trust) differs from the critical evaluation of the politicians' performance since it is more general, more absolute, and more stable. It has been found to correlate with nonpolitical characteristics of the person, such as low education, low socioeconomic status, or low interpersonal trust. Therefore, political cynicism can be understood as a psychological orientation of the person rather than a reaction to the actual political events (Agger, Goldstein, & Pearl, 1961; Baloyra, 1979; Citrin & Muste, 1999).

The relation between political trust and political participation is not as straightforward as in the case of political efficacy. Levi and Stoker (2000) pointed out two opposite claims, regarding the influence of political trust on civic engagement, that are present in the literature. According to one claim, people with high political trust participate more than people with low political trust, especially in formal political activities such as voting. Greater political participation of the people with high political trust is explained by their lower political dissatisfaction and lower alienation from the political system. Consistently with this expectation, adolescents' political trust was found to predict the intention to vote (Bynner & Ashford, 1994; Torney-Purta et al., 2004). On the other hand, the second claim is that low political trust can stimulate political participation by motivating citizens to take the action and get rid of untrustworthy politicians. This claim was elaborated particularly by Gamson (1968) who postulated the hypothesis that the combination of low political trust and high political efficacy is the most predictive of political mobilization. An alternative hypothesis was proposed by Bandura (1997) who claimed that political trust does not predict political participation itself, but rather the specific form the political participation takes. Thus, people with greater political trust tend to choose the traditional forms of political participation, while people with lower political trust tend to prefer non-traditional political activities. Nevertheless, no hypothesis regarding the association between political trust and participation has gained a consistent empirical support (Levi & Stoker, 2000), which can be attributed partly to the different definitions of political trust, employed by the researchers, and partly to the different measures used to capture this belief (Citrin & Muste, 1999).

2.4.4   Predictors of political trust

The origins of general interpersonal trust can be explained from thee perspectives (Newton, 2007) that apply also when explaining the origins of political trust. First, according to the rational-choice explanation, political trust can be understood as a product of the rational assessment of the politician's behavior. Thus, people have high political trust if they perceive politicians and political processes as serving citizens' interests (Mischler & Rose, 2001; Linek, 2010). A hardly verifiable assumption, lying behind this perspective, is that people can and do assess politician's actual behavior rationally (Newton, 2007). Second, based on the societal explanation, political trust is an attribute of the whole culture. Consequently, people acquire their individual political trust by learning from the norms and practices present in the culture. This perspective assumes that political trust, present in the culture, is closely related to the culture's participatory norms and social trust (Almond & Verba, 1963; Inglehart, 1997; Putnam, 2000). Third, the social-psychological explanation of political trust emphasizes the psychological and proximal social influences, shaping the individual-level development of political trust.

The research taking the social-psychological perspective has found several predictors of political trust. In accordance with the theoretical expectations, young people with the lower socioeconomic and educational background tended to have lower political trust (Bynner & Ashford, 1994; Schoon & Cheng, 2011). Next, although there is no strong evidence for the relation between individual-level social and political trust (Newton, 2007), political trust was found to be associated with the sense of connection and closeness in proximal contexts, such as school, neighborhood, parents, and peers (Duke et al., 2009). Particularly person's relation to school and some perceived school characteristics, such as openness, were found to be associated with greater political trust (Claes et al., 2011; Schoon & Cheng, 2011; Torney-Putra et al., 2004). Moreover, school curricula focused on politics were positively related to students' political trust, although the effect seemed to be smaller than the effect of perceived school characteristics (Claes et la., 2011; Torney-Putra et al., 2004). Finally, political trust was predicted by some personality characteristics such as agreeableness, openness to experience (Mondak, & Halperin, 2008), and cognitive abilities (Deary, Batty, & Gale, 2008; Schoon, Cheng, Gale, Batty & Deary, 2010; Schoon & Cheng, 2011).

2.5   Adolescents' belief systems regarding political engagement

Based on the previous considerations, political efficacy and political trust seem to play prominent roles in young people's political belief systems and to affect their political behavior. Less is known, however, about whether young people themselves would raise the issues of political efficacy and trust, if asked about political engagement. Therefore, a preliminary study was conducted in order to understand how young people in late adolescence conceptualize political engagement and what role do political efficacy and political trust play in these conceptualizations. A full version of this study has been already published in Czech language (Šerek & Macek, 2010). Here, a brief summary of the main findings is presented.

Some previous studies have directly asked participants about the reasons that would lead them to or discourage them from political engagement. Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) found that the main reasons for political non-engagement, mentioned by the general population in the United States, were the lack of time, preference to take care of one's family first, unrelatedness of politics to one's personal life, persons' previous disinterest in politics, boringness and complicatedness of politics, incapacity to change something in politics, or dirtiness of political environment. According to Zukin et al. (2006), when young Americans aged 15-28 were asked why they did not vote in the election, they mentioned that they were not interested in politics, it was difficult for them to get needed information, they felt that their voice did not matter, they were generally disgusted by politics and government, or they did not perceive any differences between political parties. Finally, Ogris and Westphal (2005) focused on people between 15 and 25 years of age in eight European countries. They revealed that young people's conceptions of political engagement could be described by three dimensions – reasons for political inactivity (e.g., lack of time), political benefits (e.g., learning new and useful things by political engagement, meeting influential people, enhancing one's career growth), and political idealism (e.g., making the world a better place, changing things). In sum, these studies pointed out some common aspects in citizens' beliefs regarding political engagement. Namely, disinterest in politics, lack of resources, lack of perceived efficacy, and low trust in political process were perceived as crucial barriers.

A study was conducted in order to identify what beliefs about political engagement were shared by Czech adolescents, and how these beliefs were organized. First, nine in-depth interviews were conducted by the author of this dissertation with young people aged 17-21. They were sampled purposefully so that their level of political engagement varied from

disinterest to high participation. Next, the transcripts of the interviews were analyzed in order to obtain a set of statements regarding political engagement. Based on the analysis, 14 statements favoring political engagement were formulated, all of them beginning with: *"It makes sense to engage politically because ..."*, and 12 statements rejecting political engagement, all of them beginning: *"It makes no sense to engage politically because ..."*. In the second step, 358 students (66 % women; mean age 17.7, SD = 0.6), coming from several secondary schools in the South Moravian region (66 % grammar schools, 15 % business schools, 12 % pedagogical schools, 6 % technical schools) expressed their agreement or disagreement with these 26 statements via paper-based questionnaires. Moreover, students' political efficacy and political trust were measured by two scales (for detailed description of these scales, see chapter 3.2.2).

Issues related to both political efficacy and political trust were present in participants' conceptions of political engagement. Statistical analyses showed that participants agreed the most with the reasons for political engagement that emphasized expressing one's opinion, material and social benefits (to earn money, to get high social status), the influence on public matters, and helping other people. Further, the participants agreed the most with the arguments against political engagement that pointed out the necessity to support political party's position, even if one does not internally agree, disconnection of politics from one's life goals, boringness of politics, and corrupted political environment. Thus political efficacy beliefs were mirrored particularly in the statements favoring political engagement (expressing one's opinion, influence, helping others), while the issue of political trust was implicitly present in the statements rejecting political engagement (hypocrisy, corrupted political environment).

In addition, a principal component analysis with orthogonal rotation was used to understand the dimensionality of adolescents' conceptualizations of political engagement. The analysis revealed six general dimensions, behind the 26 statements regarding political engagement, some of them correlated with political efficacy and political trust:

A first set of statements (named "negative environment") was characterized by a view that engagement in politics can negatively affect person's character and induce contempt in other people (e.g., *"It makes no sense to engage politically because it would take away my ideals."*). These statements stemmed from the assumption that political environment is essentially corrupted and people can get corrupted by their engagement in such an

environment. The content of this assumption is close to political mistrust and cynicism (see Citrin & Muste, 1999). Therefore, it was not surprising that this factor moderately correlated with political trust in our study. Moreover, the factor correlated moderately with political efficacy, as people with negative perceptions of politics felt less efficacious regarding the social change.

A second set of statements ("personal benefits") referred to the possibility that one can learn new interesting things and meet like-minded people in politics (e.g., *"It makes sense to engage politically because you will find a groups of people that share the same opinions."*). Unifying assumption, behind these statements, was that political engagement provides a person with certain non-material benefits. Similar dimension was found also by Ogris and Westphal (2005) and Verba et al. (1995). The dimension was moderately correlated with political trust, but uncorrelated with political efficacy. These results were meaningful since only young people who perceived politics as the trustworthy environment could hope to obtain personal benefits there, which was independent from their perceived influence on the social change.

A third set of statements ("importance/competency") included two types of beliefs: those referring to perceived (un)importance of politics for one's life, and those related to the lack of personal competency to function in politics (e.g., *"It makes no sense to engage politically because it does not match with my life goals."*). In general, these statements expressed the sense of personal disconnectedness from politics, which was present also in the studies of Zukin et al. (2006) and Verba et al. (1995). This dimension was uncorrelated with both political efficacy and political trust. The independence from political efficacy could be attributed the fact that our scale did not distinguish between internal and external political efficacy, while the sense of competency relates solely to internal political efficacy.

A fourth set of statements ("political influence") was related to perceived influence in terms of helping others and changing things in the society (e.g., *"It makes sense to engage politically because you can help other people."*). A question, underlying all statements grouped in the fourth dimension, asked whether political engagement can be understood as an effective instrument of social change, or whether it is merely a way to earn money and social status. This dimension concerned collective efficacy as well as perceived effectiveness of traditional politics (Bandura, 1997); therefore its moderate correlations with political efficacy and political trust were well explainable.

A fifth set of statements ("civic responsibility") referred to the duty to participate, expressed either as an explicit proclamation, or as a warning before political passivity (e.g., *"It makes sense to engage politically because if people do not participate, it is an opportunity for various extremists."*). These statements reflected person's perception of political participation as a moral obligation that is associated with being a citizen. Normative beliefs regarding political engagement are traditionally acknowledged as a part of young people's political beliefs systems (Amadeo, Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Husfeldt, & Nikolova, 2002). Not surprisingly, the dimension was independent from both political efficacy and political trust that have no normative components.

A final set of statements ("reactance") was characterized by an emphasis on expressing one's own opinion as opposed to being controlled by other people (e.g., *"It makes sense to engage politically because it is good not to be passively pushed by others."*). A crucial assumption behind these statements was that political engagement helps people to take control over their lives. The content of the dimension is close to the concept of reactance, which refers to a motivational state created by perceived threat to personal freedom (Brehm, 1989). No correlations between the sixth dimension and political efficacy or political trust were found as they represented considerably different aspects of adolescents' belief systems.

Overall, the preliminary study revealed that political efficacy and political trust play important roles in late adolescents' conceptualizations of political engagement. The contents of the dimensions, which emerged from the analysis, were related to political efficacy and trust. This applied particularly to the issues of negative political environment and political influence. On the other hand, also the dimensions that were unrelated to these two political beliefs emerged, such as importance/competency, civic responsibility, and reactance. Described findings complement the studies that understand political efficacy and trust as predictors of political engagement. It seems that issues related to political efficacy and trust constitute relevant parts of adolescents' political belief systems, as adolescents themselves consider these issues when thinking about political engagement.

2.6   The aim of the dissertation

It has been shown that the research on political socialization suffered by some tensions and limitations in the past years. Also, several implications for the current research have been described. One implication is the need to understand political socialization as an

everyday process that is not separate from other areas of personal development. Next, adolescence and young adulthood appear to be the most sensitive periods of political development. Further, it has been argued that, from the theoretical perspective, social cognitive approach seems to be a promising integrative framework, and, from the methodological perspective, longitudinal approach is needed in order to understand mechanisms of political socialization. Finally, it has been emphasized that it is beneficial to study political socialization in the Central European cultural context.

Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to study the mechanisms by which nonpolitical antecedents can be associated with late adolescents' political beliefs. By nonpolitical antecedents we can understand adolescents' previous experiences in proximal social contexts (e.g., family) that have no explicit political content, and also adolescents' stable and more general characteristics (e.g., personality, cognitive styles, cognitive abilities, depressive mood). This dissertation supposes that adolescents ascribe various meaning to their experiences in proximal contexts. Moreover, adolescents with different initial characteristics can have different developmental experiences and ascribe to these experiences different meanings. Based on the social cognitive background, it is expected that certain nonpolitical experiences and adolescents' characteristics (or their mutual interplay) reinforce personal cognitive schemata that, in turn, influence adolescents' political beliefs. By political beliefs we can understand political efficacy and political trust, and also adolescents' perceived effectiveness of various political activities. The choice of these particular political beliefs stems from the theoretical considerations (chapter 2.4), and the preliminary study (chapter 2.5), both showing that political efficacy and political trust play important roles in adolescents' political thinking and behavior. Furthermore, the focus on perceived effectiveness of political activities reflects the multifaceted nature of the young people's political participation, which includes both traditional and non-traditional political activities.

In short, this dissertation asks whether adolescents' conceptions of politics can be understood as (partial) products of their personal characteristics and perceptions of the everyday nonpolitical contexts.

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3 Overview of the Studies

3.1 Theoretical background and hypotheses

Drawing on the social cognitive framework, three approaches were employed in the Studies I-III. Study I was based on the theory of cognitive appraisals of interparental conflicts, which was applied to political socialization. In Study II, the theory of cognitive identity-processing styles was utilized. Finally, Study III employed the attachment theory.

3.1.1 Study I

The study was based on a cognitive-contextual framework, delineating the processes that associate marital conflict with offspring's development (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Grych & Fincham, 1993). According to this approach, the meaning of interparental conflict for young people is a key mechanism. Adolescents are expected to form cognitive schemata that represent the typical course of interparental conflicts and also their personal role in such conflicts. These schemata (appraisals) involve perceived frequency and intensity of the conflicts, perceived personal efficacy to interfere in the conflicts, perceived threat, perceived way parents usually solve the conflicts, or various types of perceived personal involvement in the conflict (Lacinová, Michalčáková, & Ježek, 2008). These schemata not only affect adolescents' expectations concerning future parental disagreements, but may also affect their perceptions and expectations regarding broader social relationships and contexts (Grych & Cardoza-Fernandes, 2001).

A general question, tested in Study I, was whether the way in which adolescents perceived interparental conflicts predicted how they perceived political efficacy in their communities. It was hypothesized that adolescents' efficacy belief, regarding interparental conflict, positively predicted their political efficacy. Next, it was hypothesized that greater perceived conflict frequency yielded greater depressive mood, more avoidant coping style, and lower interparental conflict efficacy, which were associated with lower political efficacy.

3.1.2 Study II

The second study was based on the social-cognitive theory of identity development by Berzonsky (1989). According to this approach, adolescents use three cognitive strategies in order to seek, process, and use identity-relevant information. First, the information-oriented style is characterized by the search for, and evaluation of information before committing to certain decisions. Adolescents who prefer this style are able to critically asses their own views, have high need for cognition, have complex and autonomous thinking, are able to cope with conflicting information, and are open to new experiences, ideas or actions (Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996; Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992; Dunkel, Papini, & Berzonsky, 2008; Duriez et al., 2004). Second, the normative style is characterized by a predominant focus on the norms and expectations of significant others. Adolescents preferring the normative style tend to internalize the values and goals of others, protect themselves from information that might interfere with their perceptions, are defensive and intolerant of ambiguity, and approve right-wing authoritarian political ideology and conservative attitudes (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992; Duriez & Soenens, 2006; Soenens, Duriez, & Goossens, 2005), Third, the diffuse-avoidant style is characterized by the tendency to procrastinate when making decisions and the reluctance to confront and deal with personal conflicts. Consequently, behavior of young people using this cognitive style is dictated and controlled by situational demands and incentives (Berzonsky, 1989).

A general question of Study II was whether the tendency to employ some of the two active identity-processing styles (informational and normative) related to how a person perceived the effectiveness of traditional, non-traditional, and direct political activity. Specifically, it was hypothesized that adolescents employing the informational style perceived non-traditional activity as effective, while adolescents employing the normative style perceived traditional activity as effective and direct activity as ineffective. Moreover, it was hypothesized, that informational style boosted the development of political efficacy, and normative style boosted the development of political trust, which, in turn, was associated with the perceptions of political activities.

3.1.3 Study III

The final study employed the attachment theory, suggesting that adolescents' expectations regarding broader social relationships (internal working models) are formed in

childhood, based on the mental representations provided by caregivers – usually parents (Bowlby, 1973; Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). The internal working models of parental authority might be activated when adolescents form their views on other types of social authority. Although the attachment theory is not wholly cognitive, as the affective ties to caregivers play a crucial role, internal working models can be understood as cognitive schemata. These schemata, at different levels of generality, represent the relationships between the self and the attachment figures. Based on these schemata, young people understand the social world (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999).

A general question, tested in Study III, was whether two characteristics of early adolescents (cognitive ability and perceived parental warmth) predicted greater political trust in late adolescence. It was hypothesized that adolescents with greater cognitive ability had more positive relations to social authorities (school and parents), which, in turn, predicted greater political trust. Next, it was hypothesized that greater perceived parental warmth predicted greater political trust.

3.2 Data

All studies employed data from the psychological branch of the European Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood (ELSPAC), conducted by the Institute for Research on Children, Youth and Family at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University. The research focused

influence of school and peer groups on children and other developmental characteristics. Original sample comprised almost all families (5,549) with a child born between March 1, 1991, and June 30, 1992 in medical institutions in the second largest Czech city Brno (400,000 inhabitants), situated in the South Moravian region. The psychological examinations started at the child's age of eight on a subsample of 883 families, randomly drawn from the original sample. Moreover, additional participants were being randomly recruited from the original sample during the course of the project in order to compensate for the attrition (Ježek, Lacinová, Širůček, & Michalčáková, 2008). Generally, the dataset was characterized by relatively high attrition rates and a large proportion of missing data. Therefore, covariance coverage was reported in each analysis.

The examinations were done biennially: at the child's age of eight (1999/2000; N = 883), 11 (2002/03; N = 876), 13 (2004/05; N = 617), 15 (2006/07; N = 554), 17 (2008/09; N = 480), and 19 (2010/11; N = 249). Measures of political beliefs were included in the 17- and 19-year examinations.

Studies in this dissertation used the data from different sets of examinations, depending upon tested hypotheses. Study I analyzed the data from the 15- and 17-year examinations, Study II analyzed the data from the 17- and 19-year examinations, and Study III analyzed the data from 11-, 13-, 15- and 17-year examinations.

3.3   Measures

A vast majority of variables were measured by the Czech adaptations of well-established widely used measures, such as Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale (Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992; Lacinová, Michalčáková, & Ježek, 2008), Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (Masopustová, Michalčáková, Lacinová, & Ježek, 2008; Sund, Larsson, & Wichstrøm, 2001), Coping Style Inventory (Kohoutek, Mareš, & Ježek, 2008; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995), Big Five NEO-FFI (Hřebíčková & Urbánek, 2001), Identity Style Inventory (Berzonsky, Soenens, Smits, Luyckx, & Goossens, 2007), Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, third UK edition (Wechsler, 1996), Parenting Styles Questionnaire (Čáp & Boschek, 1994), and Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Širůček & Lacinová, 2008). A measure of attitude to school in Study III was constructed ad hoc, using items taken from two different scales (Kohoutek, Mareš, & Ježek, 2008; Širůček & Širůčková, 2008).

Political efficacy, political trust, and perceived effectiveness of political activities do not have any established Czech psychological measures. Therefore, these measures were based on the foreign scales. In the next two chapters, the construction of the scales is described in detail since the following studies present only brief descriptions of the scales.

3.3.1   Political efficacy and political trust

Political efficacy scale (used in Studies I and II) assessed adolescents' beliefs that they can achieve any change or stop the negative development in their communities (town districts, villages). Political efficacy was traditionally measured by the scale of Campbell,

Gurin and Miller (1954); however the scale's reliability and the content of some items have been repeatedly criticized (McPherson, Welch, & Clark, 1977; Bandura, 1997; Reef & Knoke, 1999). Next widely used scale, proposed by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) and recommended by Reef and Knoke (1999), merges two distinct levels of politics (local and national), which can be problematic since people may have different efficacy beliefs regarding national and local politics. Another scale by Niemi, Craig and Mattei (1991) focuses too much on the sense of being informed about politics, which is something different from political efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Finally, a scale created by Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna and Mebane (2009) was not published yet when the measures were constructed. Their approach, however, differs from the conception of political efficacy in Studies I and II since the scale of Caprara et al. captures purely internal aspect of political efficacy, operationalized by them as perceived self-competency to execute various political activities. Moreover, considering age specifics of late adolescents, it seemed adequate to avoid items referring to voting and national politics, which are present in the vast majority of political efficacy scales. Therefore, a scale focusing on the community-level politics was developed.

Political trust scale (used in Studies II and III) assessed adolescents' perceived trustworthiness of political environment, in terms of politicians' service to the public, observance of the rules, and moral qualities. Based on the scale of Agger, Goldstein & Pearl (1961) and other scales reviewed by Citrin & Muste (1999), a measure of political trust was developed. The measure was intended to avoid references to country-specific institutions, absent in the Czech context (e.g., bipartisan party system), and also too abstract terms (e.g., "political system").

A pool of items, partially taken from the aforementioned scales, partially developed by the author, was compiled. These items were piloted in a small preparatory study among 67 grammar school students (aged 17-18). Students assessed their agreement with the items on a four-point response scale ("completely disagree", "rather disagree", "rather agree", "completely agree"). Then they expressed their opinions regarding the comprehensibility of the items via an unstructured group discussion. Based on the students' feedback and exploratory factory analysis, nine items indicating political efficacy and eight items indicating political trust were selected. Both scales, together with their introductory instructions, can be found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Full wording of the items and their usage in Studies I-III.

Items	Study I	II	III
Political efficacy scale			
Following statements are related to whether ordinary citizens can have a say about what's happening at the place where they live (town, village, district etc.). For example, local politicians can decide to build a busy highway across the town, which, of course, makes citizen's lives more difficult. Some people may think that the citizens can hardly do anything. Others may think that the ordinary people can stop the construction. Please specify to what extent do you agree with the following opinions.			
1. If I don't like what's happening in my surroundings, it pays off to do something.	✓	✓	
2. The effort to change something in my surroundings is usually condemned to failure.	✓	✓	
3. Citizens themselves largely decide what is happening at the place where they live.	✗	✗	
4. People have no possibility to affect the decisions of local politicians.	✗	✓	
5. If something bad happened in my surroundings, I believe I could stop it, together with other people.	✓	✓	
6. The effort to change something at the place where I live is usually a waste of time and resources.	✓	✓	
7. People like me can influence what is happening at the place where they live.	✓	✓	
8. The situation at the place where I live is so conserved that it makes no sense to try to change something.	✗	✓	
9. People have many opportunities to successfully achieve change in their surroundings.	✓	✓	
Political trust scale			
To what extent do you agree with these statements about politics?			
10. People in high politics can maintain their ideals.		✗	✗
11. It is a typical feature of politics that it attracts individuals with bad character.		✓	✓
12. When deciding, politician consider their consciousness.		✗	✗
13. Those who want to advance in politics must learn to hide their true beliefs.		✓	✓
14. Although it may seem they do it differently, politicians pay respect to basic principles of decency and morality.		✓	✓
15. A decent person has no chance to succeed in politics.		✓	✓
16. Politicians more often fight for interests of the whole society than for their own interests.		✓	✓
17. In reality, politics is directed by a couple of manipulators in the background.		✓	✓

Note. Item 3 was not used in the ELSPAC study in order to keep identical length of the scales.

Both scales were one-dimensional and measured different constructs. This was revealed by confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) conducted on two independent samples of 17-year-olds. The first CFA was conducted on the data from 358 secondary school students (Šerek & Macek, 2010), which is described more in detail in chapter 2.5. The second CFA was conducted on adolescents who participated in the ELSPAC 17-year examination (N = 446). Table 3.2 shows that a one-factor solution, assuming that all 17 items represent the same latent factor, had a considerably worse fit to the data than a two-factor solution, assuming that political efficacy and political trust form two (correlated) distinct factors. Thus it was confirmed that political efficacy scale and political trust scale measured different aspects of adolescents' conceptualizations of politics.

A closer look on the two-factor solution (Table 3.3) suggests that the items had similar means, standard deviations and factor loading in both samples. Next, standardized factor loadings were markedly above the .40 level. The only exceptions were items 10 and 12 in the ELSPAC sample, as their standardized factor loadings were close or below the .30 level. These two items were also responsible for the worse fit of the two-factor model in the ELSPAC sample.

Summary scores (scale means) had approximately normal distributions with a sufficient variability of participants' answers. Both scales could theoretically range from 1 to 4 (higher scores representing more extreme answers in the direction of the construct). Thus, mean political efficacy was slightly shifted in the positive direction, while mean political trust was slightly shifted in the negative direction. For detailed descriptive statistics of the scales, see Table 3.4.

Table 3.2. Confirmatory factor analysis comparing one- and two-factor solutions.

	Dataset							
	Šerek & Macek (2010)				ELSPAC – 17-year examination			
Solution	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA
One-factor	471.29	119	.76	.09	597.89	104	.63	.10
Two-factor	190.32	118	.95	.04	276.86	103	.87	.06

Note. Error terms of the items were not allowed to correlate in either model. df = degrees of freedom. CFI = Comparative Fit Index. RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Table 3.3. Confirmatory factor analysis: a two-factor solution.

		Dataset					
		Šerek & Macek (2010)			ELSPAC – 17-year examination		
Factor	Item	β	M	SD	β	M	SD
1. Political efficacy	1	.49	3.28	0.76	.54	2.97	0.77
	2	-.63	2.50	0.73	-.64	2.53	0.70
	3	.42	2.53	0.72	item not used		
	4	-.45	2.50	0.85	-.37	2.65	.84
	5	.69	2.57	0.81	.60	2.57	0.71
	6	-.80	2.31	0.79	-.69	2.38	0.73
	7	.63	2.43	0.76	.54	2.36	0.77
	8	-.57	2.30	0.76	-.49	2.37	0.69
	9	.67	2.73	0.75	.58	2.78	0.72
2. Political trust	10	.44	2.29	0.73	.32	2.17	0.74
	11	-.58	2.79	0.84	-.60	2.81	0.78
	12	.42	2.20	0.84	.18	2.42	0.86
	13	-.48	2.81	0.89	-.39	2.85	0.74
	14	.58	2.03	0.77	.61	2.18	0.78
	15	-.70	2.56	1.02	-.68	2.70	0.94
	16	.50	1.88	0.80	.52	1.88	0.74
	17	-.62	2.83	0.83	-.51	2.79	0.76
Interfactor correlation		.52			.39		

Note. Item 3 was not used in the ELSPAC study in order to keep identical length of the scales. β= completely standardized factor loading. Full information maximum likelihood parameter estimates are reported.

Table 3.4. Descriptives of the summary scales and their internal consistency.

	Dataset			
	Šerek & Macek (2010)		ELSPAC – 17-year examination	
	Political efficacy	Political trust	Political efficacy	Political trust
Mean	2.66	2.18	2.59	2.19
Median	2.67	2.25	2.63	2.13
Standard deviation	0.50	0.52	0.46	0.45
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.25	1.00
Maximum	3.78	3.63	4.00	3.63
Skewness	-0.22	0.07	-0.05	0.16
Kurtosis	-0.09	-0.50	0.01	-0.18
Cronbach's alpha	.83	.77	.78	.71
N of items	9	8	8	8

Finally, a test of construct validity was conducted. In the ELSPAC 19-year examination, a measure of adolescents' perceived political self-competency was included, along with the measures of political efficacy and political trust (N = 199). The measure of political self-competency comprised four items (with four-point response scales): "I know about problems in the place where I live more than my peers", "I understand important problems in the place where I live", "I have always something to say to problems in the place where I live", and "I have sufficient abilities to contribute to the solution of problems in the place where I live." A summary score was computed from these items that represented perceived political self-competency (alpha = .83). Political efficacy was expected to be closer to political self-competency since both refer to perceived role of the person in the political system. On the other hand, political trust was expected to be independent from perceived self-competency since they represent different types of political beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Niemi et al., 1991). Correlation analyses confirmed these expectations as political self-competency moderately correlated political efficacy with (r = .29, p < .01), but not with political trust (r = .01, p = .88) (correlation between political efficacy and trust was r = .29, p < .01).

To sum up, both scales were acceptable from the psychometrical point of view. Hence, they were employed to measure adolescents' political beliefs in Studies I-III. In Study I, six items with the best psychometric properties (having high factor loadings and contributing to scale's internal consistency) were used to measure political efficacy. A shorter version of the scale was preferred since one-dimensional latent constructs are represented sufficiently by six indicators in the structural equation modeling paradigm. Moreover, the inclusion of too many unnecessary indicators can make the model exceedingly complex (Kline, 2005). On the other hand, all eight items, included in the ELSPAC study, were used to measure political efficacy in Study II. In this study, summary scores (not latent variables) were analyzed; therefore there was no need to limit the number of items as far as they were correlated with the total score. Finally, six items with the best psychometric properties were employed to measure political trust in Studies II and III. Items 10 and 12 were omitted because they had low factor loadings and they reduced internal consistency of the scale. A summary, indicating which items were used in Studies I-III, can be found in Table 3.1.

3.3.2 Perceived effectiveness of political activities

In Study II perceptions of various political activities in terms of their potential contributions to the social change were measured. The measure was inspired by the

approaches that ask participants to evaluate offered lists of political activities (e.g., Lyons, 2008; Menezes et al., 2012). Therefore, participants were asked: "If ordinary citizens want to influence decisions taken on social issues, they can choose from various activities. How meaningful do you think the following activities are in terms of influence on social issues?" Then they were provided with a list of seven political activities – (1) voting, (2) political party membership, (3) sending money to some organization dealing with the issue, (4) giving active help to some organization dealing with the issue, (5) petition signing, (6) taking part in demonstrations, and (7) illegal action. These activities were assessed on a four-point response scale ("is always meaningful", "is usually", "usually is not", "never is"). The activities were intended to form three distinct groups – traditional activity (1 + 2), non-traditional activity (3 + 4), and direct activity (5 + 6 +7). The assumption was confirmed by a confirmatory factor analysis (presented in Study II). Traditional activity was characterized by targeting established political agencies (political parties), while non-traditional activity was understood as targeting civic organizations. Finally, direct activity was defined as behaviors oriented towards specific political causes.

3.4   Statistical analysis

Structural equation modeling approach was employed in all three studies. The term does not refer to a single statistical technique but rather to a set of procedures, characterized by the empirical testing of the theory-based models and the explicit representation of the distinction between observed and manifest variables and measurement errors. Technically speaking, a matrix of covariances between observed variables is compared with a matrix reproduced based on the tested model. If the degree of the difference between these two matrices (observed and reproduced) is low, the model can be considered as an adequate representation of the data (Kline, 2005; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006).

There are several indices that assess the degree of model fit. In all studies, at least three indices were reported: χ^2 (with respective degrees of freedom), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1990); and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990). CFI greater than .95 and RMSEA lower than .06 are generally considered as criteria of an acceptable model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Regarding χ^2, a good model fit is indicated by its non-significant value. However, χ^2 can be sensitive to the sample size. If the sample is large, even the adequate models can be rejected based on χ^2. Therefore, it was

suggested to interpret the ratio of χ^2 to degrees of freedom, instead of the significance of χ^2. Recommended cut-off levels for this index vary – a value lower than 2 being the strictest criterion (Kline, 2005).

All parameters were estimated by the maximum likelihood (ML) estimator that maximizes the likelihood of the collected data, i.e. the same data were observed again if randomly drawn from the population (Kline, 2005; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006). More specifically, the full information ML was employed in order to use all available data, including cases with some missing data. This method estimates parameters on the basis of the available data and the implied values of the missing data. There are two advantages of the method: the imputation and the analysis are done in one step, and accurate standard errors are computed by retaining the sample size (Schlomer, Bauman, & Card, 2010). According to Raykov and Marcoulides (2006), ML is robust to minor deviations from normality. On the other hand, more serious deviations can be problematic. Therefore, bootstrapping procedure was used in Study I to reassess the model since it contained depressive mood, which is generally known to have markedly skewed distribution.

Latent variables were employed in Studies I and III, but not in Study II. A reasonable ratio of sample size to the number of free parameters is needed in order to produce reliable parameter estimates. Therefore, too complex models should not be estimated on too small samples. According to the rule of thumb proposed by Kenny (2011), it is not advisable to include latent variables in the models when the sample size is below 200. It is because the presence of latent variables makes the model too complex. Therefore, a model compound of the summary scales only was estimated in Study II because the sample was smaller than 200.

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4 Study I

Does family experience influence political beliefs? Relation between interparental conflict perceptions and political efficacy in late adolescence[9]

Jan Šerek, Lenka Lacinová & Petr Macek

Abstract

The study examined the relation between adolescents' interparental conflict perceptions and their political efficacy regarding local issues. Longitudinal data (age 15 and 17) from 444 adolescents were analyzed using structural equation modeling. Results showed that young people experiencing frequent interparental conflict reported an increase in depressive mood during late adolescence, which was associated with lower level of political efficacy. Moreover, adolescents who felt more efficacious when dealing with fighting parents felt more efficacious in local politics, even when controlling for personality traits and depressive mood. One possible explanation is that family perceptions generalize to politics because both contexts share certain similar features. Our results underscore that also seemingly nonpolitical experiences can matter in adolescents' civic and political development.

Keywords: Political efficacy; Civic development; Interparental conflict; Depressive mood.

4.1 Introduction

Common experience, as well as the results of many studies, show that people who feel able to influence their social environment also engage more in public issues (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). In other words, political efficacy, understood as a persons' belief that they can influence the social system (Bandura, 1997), predicts various forms of civic activity (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). Despite its importance, we know much less about how political efficacy originates, i.e. why some young people feel efficacious while others do not (Beaumont, 2010). If we take a closer look at political efficacy, we can see that it consists of two interrelated beliefs: an assessment of personal capabilities and resources, and an assessment of the openness of a social system to change (Bandura, 1997). Both beliefs are formed through personal experience with the social

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system, such as participation in civic organizations and other political actions (Bandura, 1997; Beaumont, 2010; Zimmerman, 1990). However, young people do not have as many opportunities as adults to engage politically. Therefore, we ask whether adolescents' political efficacy also develops in other contexts. Beaumont (2011) suggests that processes fostering political efficacy in youth may occur in informal setting, such as families, but she does not focus in depth on these processes. We suppose that some aspects of family life have features that are similar to politics, which causes that cognitive schemata, formed in the family, generalize and affect political efficacy. Since local politics is closer to adolescents' everyday lives than politics on a national or global level (Císař, 2008; McAdam, Sampson, Weffer , & MacIndoe, 2005; Youniss et al., 2002), we focus on that particular kind of political efficacy.

Adolescents' perceptions of their own competence and the controllability of the environment are influenced by how they perceive interparental relations, and how they interpret parental mutual communication and behavior (Grych & Fincham, 1993; Rudolph, Kurlakowsky, & Conley, 2001). Special importance is attached to appraisals of conflicts between parents. Grych and Fincham (1990) described a cognitive-contextual framework to delineate the processes that associate marital conflict with offsprings' development. This theoretical perspective accentuates the meaning of interparental conflict for young people as a key mechanism. Adolescents form cognitive schemata that represent the typical course of interparental conflict and their personal role in such conflicts. These schemata not only affect adolescents' expectations concerning future parental disagreements, but may also affect their perceptions and behavior in broader social relationships (Grych & Cardoza-Fernandes, 2001).

Adolescents experiencing higher levels of interparental conflict in their families might be less confident that they can influence political issues in their communities. First, adolescents' repeated exposure to negative stressful events, such as family conflict, can lead to chronic and generalized self-blame and deficits in perceived control of external events, which turn into depressive mood (Kerig, 1998; O'Donnell, Moreau, Cardemil, & Pollastri, 2010; Richmond & Stocker, 2003). Cognitive theories of depression imply that depressive thinking consists in the pervasive expectation that negative events will occur from uncontrollable forces and that a person cannot do anything to affect them (Abela & Hankin, 2008; Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989; Beck, 1983; Sweeney, Anderson, & Bailey, 1986). Consequently, young people with depression feel helpless and incompetent in social situations (Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1992; Whitton, Larson, & Hauser, 2008), and have lower social self-efficacy (Muris, 2002). Therefore, we expect that person's political efficacy

(i. e., belief in influence on one particular social context) will reflect these generalized schemata. Second, adolescents from families with high interparental conflict are more likely to acquire avoidant coping style, which means that their general reaction to problems or interpersonal conflicts is to avoid them (Davies & Forman, 2002; Michael, Torres, & Seemann, 2007; Nicolotti, El-Sheikh, & Whitson, 2003). These young people tend to avoid thinking about or doing something about community problems; thus, we can expect them to have a low political efficacy that is closely associated with awareness of public issues (Zimmerman, 1995). In short, young people from families with high interparental conflict can have low political efficacy because they have developed high depressive mood and/or avoidant coping style.

Furthermore, adolescents' belief that they can influence political issues in their communities can be directly linked to their perceived ability to influence negative events within the family. One of the basic experiences that adolescents make when facing interparental conflicts involves their ability to negotiate with fighting parents, and their ability to influence the course of those conflicts (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992). In related literature, this perception is sometimes called 'coping efficacy,' but we will refer to as interparental conflict efficacy, in order to avoid any confusion with the concept of coping styles. Research indicates that efficacy beliefs regarding particular contexts or activities can generalize to other contexts (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, Adams, & Beyer, 1977; Brody, Hatfield, & Spalding, 1988; Shell, Murphy, & Bruning, 1989; Weitlauf, Cervone, Smith, & Wright, 2001). Thus, people who learn that they are efficacious in one area can start to feel efficacious in other areas, as well. However, both contexts must demand the same or similar skills; otherwise the generalization will not occur. We argue that efficacy related schemata formed in the course of interparental conflict can affect adolescents' political efficacy since family and political environments share certain similar features. Foremost, both environments are characterized by hierarchy, occasional conflicts and a somewhat subordinate position for a young person. Gniewosz, Noack and Buhl (2009) found, in their research on political trust, that family experiences generalize to politics. According to them, rigorous authorities in close family relationships undermine the development of trust in the institutions of society and in the representatives of the political system. According to additional research that is not explicitly related to politics, adolescents with negative family perceptions develop general negative feelings about contexts controlled by the authority, which makes them less willing to spend time in authority-controlled places and organizations (Kerr, Stattin,

Biesecker, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2003; Persson, Kerr, & Stattin, 2007). Therefore, we expect that the development of interparental conflict efficacy will be shown to be associated with enhanced political efficacy.

In addition, interparental conflict efficacy can be undermined by extreme and permanent hostility between parents, as adolescents learn that they cannot do anything to positively influence parental conflicts (Buehler, Lange, & Franck, 2007). Thus, we expect that interparental conflict efficacy can be yet another link between perceived frequency of interparental conflicts and political efficacy.

When assessing the association between interparental conflict perceptions and political efficacy, personality traits need to be considered. Personality traits influence how adolescents perceive their parents; especially, higher levels of neuroticism can cause a negative distortion of adolescents' parental perceptions (Millikan, Wamboldt, & Bihun, 2002). Additionally, personality traits are known to influence various political perceptions (Mondak & Halperin 2008), whereas political efficacy is associated mainly with high extraversion and openness (Vecchione & Caprara, 2009). Therefore, it is possible that adolescents endowed with certain personality dispositions perceive themselves to be efficacious both in parental conflict and in politics, although there may be no real association between these two perceptions.

To sum up, we ask whether the way in which adolescents perceive interparental conflicts predicts how they perceive political efficacy in their communities. Specifically, we expect that perceived interparental conflict frequency and interparental conflict efficacy will matter. Concerning perceived conflict frequency, we hypothesize that its association with political efficacy is negative and indirect, due to: (1) more depressive mood; (2) more avoidant coping style; and (3) lower interparental conflict efficacy. Next, interparental conflict efficacy is hypothesized to have a direct positive association with political efficacy. In our analysis, we will control for the personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, and openness, since they are expected to determine both conflict perceptions and political efficacy.

4.2 Method

4.2.1 Participants and procedure

Our data came from the psychological branch of the broader European Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood (ELSPAC), examining the risks posed to healthy and optimum development. Initial sample consisted of almost all families (5,549) with a child born between March 1, 1991 and June 30, 1992 in medical institutions in the Czech city Brno (400,000 inhabitants). The psychological examinations started at the child's age of eight with a subsample of 883 families that were randomly drawn from the original sample (Ježek, Lacinová, Širůček, & Michalčáková, 2008). Data used in the present analysis were drawn from the biennial 2006/07 (age 15 = T1; N = 554) and 2008/09 (age 17 = T2; N = 480) examinations. Present analyses were conducted on 444 participants (52.5 % girls) who had valid values for dependent variable. Adolescents who remained in the sample did not differ from those who left in their adjustment (depressive mood and risk behavior), as measured in previous waves. Regarding family configuration at T1, 74.3 % participants reported that they were living with both parents, 15.4 % with one parent, and 10.3 % with one parent and a stepparent.

Participants came to the research institute to complete self-report questionnaires. All measures were computer-based, except for personality and interparental conflict measures at T1 that were paper-based. Informed consent was obtained from all adolescents and their parents; collected data were treated in accordance with the respective national law.

4.2.2 Measures

Political efficacy. Adolescents' beliefs that they can achieve any change or stop the negative development in their communities (town districts, villages) were assessed. We used the scale that was piloted and used among late adolescents in our previous studies (Šerek & Macek, 2010). Participants were instructed that people may disagree, if they are able to influence decisions taken in their municipalities (introductory example of such an issue was added – planned construction of a highway in a neighborhood). Then they expressed their agreement with six general statements, on a four-point response scale that ranged from "completely disagree" to "completely agree." Sample item: "The effort to change something

in my surroundings is usually condemned to failure." Alpha reliability in the present study was .77.

Perceived frequency of interparental conflicts. Perceived amount of interparental conflicts was measured. We used the combination of complete subscales "Frequency" and "Intensity" from the Czech adaptation of the Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale (Grych et al., 1992; Lacinová, Michalčáková, & Ježek, 2008). Adolescents were asked 10 items with three response alternatives: "true," "sort of true" and "false." Sample item: "I never see my parents arguing or disagreeing." Alpha reliabilities were .91 at both T1 and T2.

Perceived interparental conflict efficacy. We captured participants' perceived chance to interfere in the interparental conflict and affect it. All five questions from the "Coping Efficacy" subscale of the Czech adaptation of the Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale were used. A response scale was: "true," "sort of true" and "false." Sample item: "When my parents argue or disagree, I can usually help make things better." Alphas were .75 at T1 and .74 at T2.

Depressive mood. Adolescents' depressive feelings were assessed by the Czech adaptation of the Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (Masopustová, Michalčáková, Lacinová, & Ježek, 2008; Sund, Larsson, & Wichstrøm, 2001). Participants were instructed: "Following questions ask how did you feel in the last 14 days." They were offered 15 items with a response scale of "true," "sometimes true" and "false." Sample item: "I thought there was nothing good for me in the future." Alpha reliabilities were .88 at T1 and .92 at T2.

Avoidant coping style. We measured participants' diversion from the problems, and purposeful evasion of the problems. Five items (out of 11) with the best psychometric properties were drawn from the "Deflection" subscale of the Coping Style Inventory (Kohoutek, Mareš, & Ježek, 2008; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995). Participants were instructed to assess how they usually responded to difficult situations, using a four-point response scale that ranged from "not true" to "completely true." Sample item: "I try to do something that helps me to forget the problem." Alphas were .66 at T1 and .70 at T2.

Personality traits. Three complete subscales from the Czech standardization of the Big Five NEO-FFI (Hřebíčková & Urbánek, 2001) were used to assess adolescents' neuroticism (12 items, alpha .85), extraversion (12 items, alpha .79), and openness (12 items, alpha .58).

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4.2.3 Data analysis

A structural equation modeling approach (Mplus 6.1 software) was used. All models were estimated by the full information maximum likelihood estimator in order to make use of all available information, including cases with some missing data (covariance coverage of the data ranged from 66 % to 100 %). Model fit was measured by the χ^2 statistic, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). To assure that non-normality did not affect our results, we reestimated standard errors of the coefficients also by bootstrapping (5,000 random samples with replacement). Likewise, indirect effects were assessed by bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

Measured constructs were treated as fully latent or single-indicator latent variables. First of all, we checked whether the scales were one-dimensional, whether the items had sufficient factor loadings (> .40), and whether these factor loadings remained stable over time (measurement invariance), using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Three constructs measured by scales that are not as widely used and which consist of lower numbers of items (political efficacy, interparental conflict efficacy, and avoidant coping style) were treated as fully latent, with respective items as their indicators. By contrast, five constructs measured by well-established scales with 10 or more items (perceived frequency of interparental conflicts, depressive mood, and three personality traits) were treated as single-indicator latent variables. The single indicators were computed by averaging the scale items, and their error terms were set to account for 1 minus alpha reliability of the variance (Kline, 2005). For depressive mood and perceived frequency of interparental conflicts, we set the alphas to be .90, which was in accordance with our results as well as with previous studies. Alphas for the Big Five personality traits were set according to the national standardization (Hřebíčková & Urbánek, 2001), hence .80 for neuroticism, .80 for extraversion, and .70 for openness.

To test our hypotheses, we estimated a structural model having political efficacy as the dependent variable. The model contained four predictors: perceived frequency of interparental conflicts, interparental conflict efficacy, avoidant coping style, and depressive mood. All predictors were measured at two time points – T1 (age 15) and T2 (age 17) – while political efficacy was measured only at T2. In the first step, we estimated a full model where every predictor at T1 predicted every predictor at T2, every predictor at T2 predicted political

efficacy, all predictors at T1 were allowed to intercorrelate, and all error terms of predictors at T2 were allowed to intercorrelate. Then we removed all irrelevant paths and compared the restricted model with the full one by a χ^2-difference test. By scrutinizing the restricted model, we found out whether paths representing our hypotheses were significant and relevant.

Finally, we tested whether the paths implied by our hypotheses remained significant and relevant after we controlled for personality traits. Since Big Five personality traits become relatively stable in late adolescence (Klimstra, Hale, Raaijmakers, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; De Fruyt et al., 2006), we used their measurement at T1 only. Variables representing personality traits were added to the restricted model and were set to predict all predictors at T1 and political efficacy. Then we checked whether adding personality traits changed investigated path coefficients.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Preliminary analysis

Factor analysis confirmed that all measures except for openness had good properties (see Table 4.1). Six items measuring political efficacy formed a one-dimensional scale. Only one factor with an eigenvalue higher than one was extracted by exploratory factor analysis. Moreover, a confirmatory model assuming one latent factor and uncorrelated residuals reached good fit and estimated high factor loadings. The scales measuring interparental conflict efficacy and avoidant coping style proved to be one-dimensional (having uncorrelated residuals), and they retained full measurement invariance over time. The perceived frequency of conflicts scale also appeared to be one-dimensional (some residuals at both times had to be allowed to correlate), and having full measurement invariance. Regarding depressive mood, the scale was one-dimensional (some residuals had to be allowed to correlate) with almost full measurement invariance because intercepts of three items (out of 15) could not be constrained to be the same over time. The neuroticism scale was one-dimensional, having some residuals correlated, and the same was true for extraversion. The latter scale had one item with relatively low factor loading. Openness appeared to be the most problematic scale, having only five items with factor loading above .40, which was reflected in its poor reliability (see the Measures section). Although we used the nationally standardized measure, all results concerning this scale must be taken very cautiously.

Table 4.1. Confirmatory factor analysis of the measures.

Measure	N of items	Fit indices			Std. factor loadings		
		χ^2 (df)	CFI	RMSEA	Min	Med	Max
Political efficacy	6	26.80 (9)	.97	.07	.54	.61	.65
Frequency of conflicts*	10 + 10	405.15 (172)	.95	.06	.61	.70	.81
Interpar. con. efficacy*	5 + 5	83.83 (39)	.95	.05	.51	.60	.75
Depressive mood*	15 + 15	832.19 (406)	.91	.05	.52	.63	.80
Avoidant coping style*	5 + 5	55.38 (39)	.97	.03	.44	.57	.63
Neuroticism	12	97.08 (49)	.95	.06	.43	.53	.71
Extraversion	12	92.79 (49)	.95	.05	.23	.49	.74
Openness	12	98.73 (50)	.85	.06	.05	.31	.62

Note. Min = the lowest standardized factor loading; Med = median standardized factor loading; Max = the highest standardized factor loading.
* Confirmatory models with two correlated latent factors (T1 and T2), and constraining every item to have the same factor loading and intercept at both times were estimated for these measures. Residuals of the same items at different times were allowed to correlate.

Table 4.2. Summary of intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations for summary scores of political efficacy, perceived interparental conflict frequency, interparental conflict efficacy, depressive mood, and avoidant coping style.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Political efficacy (T2)												
2. Frequency of conflicts (T1)	-.10											
3. Frequency of conflicts (T2)	-.12*	.72**										
4. Interpar. con. efficacy (T1)	.20**	-.29**	-.29**									
5. Interpar. con. efficacy (T2)	.16**	-.20**	-.33**	.53**								
6. Depressive mood (T1)	-.17**	.26**	.17**	-.23**	-.19**							
7. Depressive mood (T2)	-.22**	.26**	.23**	-.16**	-.22**	.56**						
8. Avoidant coping style (T1)	-.14*	.03	-.02	-.08	-.10	.18**	.00					
9. Avoidant coping style (T2)	-.15**	.08	.04	-.08	-.12*	.26**	.24**	.55**				
10. Neuroticism (T1)	-.14*	.25**	.20**	-.24**	-.27**	.65**	.48**	.21**	.26**			
11. Extraversion (T1)	.08	-.04	-.06	.22**	.21**	-.26**	-.26**	-.15*	-.15**	-.44**		
12. Openness (T1)	.21**	-.02	.02	.08	.04	.03	.04	-.19**	-.13*	.08	.05	
M	2.63	1.67	1.70	1.94	2.05	1.44	1.58	2.30	2.30	1.67	2.73	2.21
SD	.50	.51	.53	.50	.48	.37	.45	.61	.63	.68	.59	.47

Note. For all scales, higher scores mean more extreme answers in the direction of the construct.

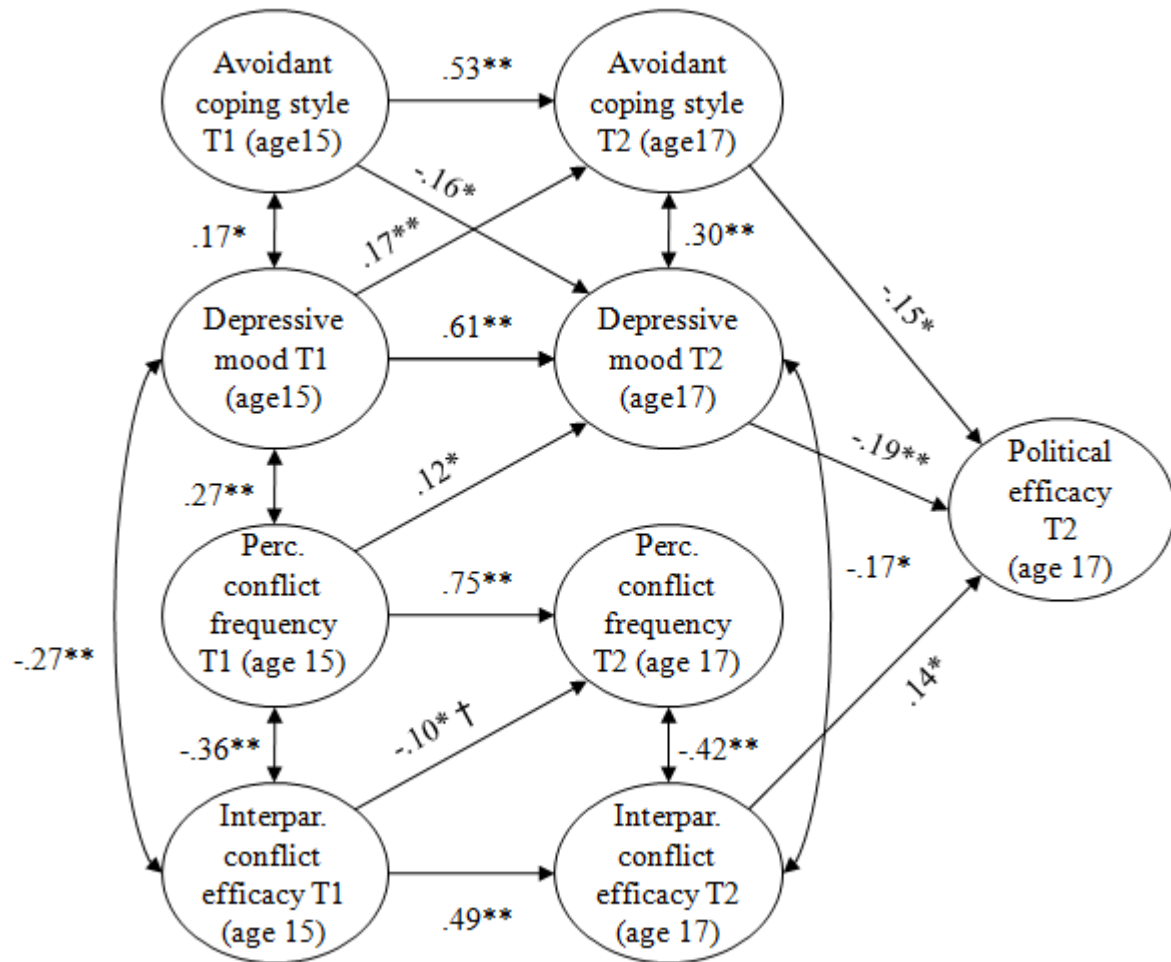* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

4.3.2 Descriptive statistics

Correlation analysis of summary scales showed that political efficacy was weakly but significantly associated with interparental conflict efficacy, while its association with the perceived frequency of conflicts was even weaker and barely significant. Depressive mood was significantly associated with both interparental conflict perceptions and political efficacy, suggesting that depressive mood is a possible mediator of their relation. This was not true for avoidant coping style, since it correlated with political efficacy but not with interparental conflict frequency or efficacy (see Table 4.2).

4.3.3 Interparental conflict efficacy and political efficacy

The relations between interparental conflict perceptions and political efficacy were tested as a structural model. The full model, containing paths from every T1 predictor to every T2 predictor, and from all T2 predictors to political efficacy, reached an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 387 = 626.915$; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .04). However, several paths appeared to be weak and non-significant; removal of these paths did not significantly worsen model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 14 = 10.22$; p = .75). Fig. 1 presents this final restricted model ($\chi^2 401 = 637.131$; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .04). Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples brought very similar results. With one exception (see Figure 4.1), all paths remained significant at the .05 level when bootstraped standard errors were employed.

Figure 4.1. Structural model predicting political efficacy at T2 from three predictors measured at two time points. Completely standardized full information maximum likelihood parameter estimates are reported. For the sake of clarity, only latent variables and their relations are shown.

* p < .05. ** p < .01.
† Path became significant only at the .06 level when bootstrapped standard errors were used.

Results suggested that there was significant direct association between interparental conflict efficacy and political efficacy (β = .14, p = .03), controlling for conflict frequency, avoidant coping style, and depressive mood. Moreover, this path could not be fixed to zero without a significant drop in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2_1$ = 4.91; p = .03). Political efficacy was also significantly predicted by depressive mood and avoidant coping style, but not by perceived frequency of interparental conflicts.

4.3.4   Indirect effects of perceived conflict frequency on political efficacy

Perceived conflict frequency at T1 predicted an increase in depressive mood at T2 (β = .12; p = .02), which was significantly associated with political efficacy (β = -.19; p < .01). In other words, people perceiving more interparental conflicts at the age of 15 came to feel more depressive two years later, which was associated with a less efficacious view on community issues. However, the indirect effect was tiny and on the edge of significance. Using bootstrap estimates of 95% bias-corrected standardized confidence intervals, the indirect effect ranged from slightly above .00 to .05.

We found no association between avoidant coping style and perceived frequency of interparental conflict since all paths between them could be removed. In other words, people reporting more interparental conflict did not tend to respond to problems by avoiding them. Therefore, no indirect effect of perceived conflict frequency on political efficacy via avoidant coping style was possible.

Finally, the change in interparental conflict efficacy between T1 and T2 was not predicted by conflict frequency. It means that perceived higher level of interparental conflicts did not cause a drop in interparental conflict efficacy. Thus, there could be no indirect effect between conflict frequency and political efficacy via interparental conflict efficacy.

Table 4.3. Selected path coefficients and fit statistics of three structural models predicting political efficacy and controlling for neuroticism, extraversion, or openness.

	Personality trait added to the model		
	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness
Path	β	β	β
PT (T1) → Dep (T1)	.77**	-.32**	.03
PT (T1) → Frq (T1)	.30**	-.06	-.02
PT (T1) → ICE (T1)	-.38**	.34**	.12
PT (T1) → PE (T2)	.06	.01	.28**
ICE T2 → PE (T2)	.14*	.15*	.13*
Frq (T1) → Dep (T2)	.13**	.13**	.14**
Dep (T2) → PE (T2)	-.20**	-.23**	-.25**
χ^2 (df)	339.09 (183)	345.48 (183)	348.50 (183)
CFI	.93	.92	.92
RMSEA	.04	.05	.05

Note. Completely standardized full information maximum likelihood parameter estimates are reported. PT = Personality trait added to the model; Dep = Depressive mood; Frq = Perceived frequency of interparental conflicts; ICE = Interparental conflict efficacy; PE = Political efficacy.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

4.3.5 Personality traits

Finally, we tested whether or not the association between interparental conflict perceptions and political efficacy is spurious, given various personality traits. We extended the model in Figure 4.1 by adding exogenous variables representing three personality traits (measured at T1). In order to retain a reasonable ratio between free parameters and sample size, (1) we removed avoidant coping style, which had no relation to interparental conflict, from the model, and (2) we added personality traits to the model separately; hence we estimated three structural models.

All associations remained unchanged when were controlled for the personality traits. The path from interparental conflict efficacy to political efficacy, and the paths from perceived conflict frequency to depressive mood and from depressive mood to political efficacy, remained significant even when we controlled for personality traits. Neuroticism and extraversion were significantly associated with predictors, but not with political efficacy. On the other hand, openness was significantly associated with political efficacy but not with its predictors (see Table 4.3). These results allow stronger interpretation of discovered predictions of political efficacy.

4.4 Discussion

Our study identifies two pathways linking interparental conflict perceptions with political efficacy. First, perceived interparental conflict efficacy is positively associated with political efficacy. Young people who perceive themselves as able to achieve something positive with arguing parents perceive that they have more influence in their communities, as well. One possible explanation is that perceptions of efficacy within the family generalize to perceptions of efficacy in politics, because of similarities between these two contexts arising from the common presence of hierarchy, conflict, and subordinate position of adolescents/citizens. When adolescents think about politics and their roles in that context, their family schemata are activated (similar to the findings on political trust by Gniewosz et al., 2009). However, more in-depth analysis is needed to uncover the mechanisms and conditions of that possible generalization. Specific perceptions associated with political efficacy should be identified. For example, do adolescents' perceptions that they are not taken seriously by parents/authorities matter? Or do their assessments of their own capabilities, such

as negotiating and voicing one's own opinion, play a role? The former perception would be associated with the external aspect of political efficacy, while the latter perception would be associated with the internal aspect. Next, interparental conflict efficacy can be a part of a broader set of adolescents' family perceptions that affect political efficacy as a whole. For instance, further studies should consider so-called 'filial efficacy', understood as adolescents' perceived capacity to communicate and manage difficult situations in parent-child relationships, overreaching the area of interparental conflict (Caprara, Regalia, Scabini, Barbaranelli, & Bandura, 2004). Moreover, the described effect might be transient and specific for a given age. As adolescents acquire an increasing volume of political information and personal political experience on their way to adulthood, their political efficacy may start to mirror those explicitly political lessons, and become less reliant on nonpolitical schemata.

Another possible explanation for the association between interparental conflict efficacy and political efficacy is that both beliefs are related to some more general personality trait that is already formed at the age of 15 and that makes young people feel effective in managing their environments. We controlled for Big Five personality traits, but other characteristics should be considered (note also that our measure of openness had poor quality). For example, some studies have found that generalized belief in control over person's life, that may be responsible for high conflict efficacy, correlates also with a belief in control over community events (Israel, Checkoway, Schulz, & Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman, 1990; 1995). Similarly, life optimism is expected to boost both coping with interparental conflict (Robinson, 2009) and political efficacy (Beaumont, 2010). Finally, attachment theory suggests that internal working models, representing young people's general expectations about social relationships, are formed in childhood (Bowlby, 1973; Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). These models are relatively stable (Hamilton, 2000), and might drive adolescent's efficacy perceptions in both contexts. The examples suggest that greater number of personality variables must be controlled in future studies in order to bring conclusive evidence about the relation between interparental conflict efficacy and political efficacy.

A second pathway concerns the finding that adolescents who perceived frequent conflicts between their parents became more depressed during late adolescence, which in turn was associated with a lower level of political efficacy. The association between depression and low political efficacy makes intuitive sense because depressive mood is characterized by persons' pervasive feelings that negative events are uncontrollable (Abela & Hankin, 2008). Recent studies have found that people with depression are somewhat alienated from the

political system: they have lower voter turnout in local election (Lofors & Sundquist, 2007) and trust less in political institutions (Lindstrom & Mohseni, 2009; authors refer to "mental health" that is measured by questions similar to our measurement of depressive mood). Our study helps to explain these findings by revealing that low political efficacy, known to predict low political participation (Zimmerman, 1990; Zukin et al., 2006), may play a role here. Moreover, the results suggest that the developmental origins of increased depressive mood, which affects political efficacy, may be partially found in the negative family events. Specifically, frequent interparental conflicts seem to matter, which is consistent with previous findings that depressogenic schemata about deficiency of the self and uncontrollability of the world are established in adolescents during such conflicts (Rudolph, Kurlakowksy, & Conley, 2001). It should be noted that the indirect effect from conflict frequency to political efficacy via depressive mood was rather inconclusive in our data. One probable reason is that considerable part of the effect of conflict frequency on depressive mood happens before the age of 15 (O'Donnell et al., 2010). Also, more nuanced measures of depression, focusing solely on its cognitive control-related aspect, could bring more convincing results.

Some of our expectations have not been confirmed. Adolescents who tend to solve problems by avoiding them feel less efficacious in their communities, but their avoidant coping style has not been show to have a relation to their interparental conflict perceptions. The finding that adolescents from families with frequent interparental conflicts do not acquire an avoidant coping style contradicts some previous studies (e. g., Michael et al., 2007). However, it can be explained by the fact that avoidant coping is not directly influenced by perceived conflict frequency, but depends instead on the adolescent's perception of threat, which does not have to be the same as perceived frequency (Shelton & Harold, 2008). Another unsupported expectation is that adolescents who perceive a high number of interparental conflicts come to feel less efficacious in this area. Although young people who perceive frequent conflicts feel considerably less efficacious, their interparental conflict efficacy is already stable and does not change because of conflict frequency in late adolescence. It is possible that the interparental conflict efficacy is established earlier in adolescence, similarly to some other interparental conflict perceptions, such as perceived self-blame (Richmond & Stocker, 2007).

One remark should be made concerning the political efficacy scale that we employed. As mentioned above, political efficacy is usually understood to be composed of two interrelated beliefs (Bandura, 1997). Although our scale contains items assessing

perceptions both of individuals and of the political system, it does not ask explicitly about perceived personal capabilities and resources. Therefore, political efficacy captured by this scale differs from what studies refer to as 'political self-efficacy' (Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna, & Mebane, 2009) or 'internal political efficacy' (Beaumont, 2010). Rather, it captures so-called 'external political efficacy' (Beaumont, 2010), because it assesses the belief that a person can influence the social system in terms of system responsiveness and opportunities. A more fine-tuned analysis, using various political efficacy scales, is needed.

Our study had several limitations, beyond those already mentioned. First, tested models were not fully longitudinal, as they did not meet all criteria suggested by Cole and Maxwell (2003). Specifically, we did not control for the initial level of political efficacy since it was not measured at T1. Methodologically speaking, presented predictions of political efficacy should be understood in terms of association, rather than causality. Instead of concluding that specific interparental conflict perceptions cause changes in political efficacy, we should conclude that those perceptions are associated with a certain level of political efficacy. Second, our data came from a longitudinal study with considerable dropout (see the Method section); therefore, it is possible that children from families with serious problems systematically dropped the study and thus were not included in the sample (Magnusson, Bergman, Rudinger, & Torestad, 1994). Thus, we should take into account the risk that our study was conducted mostly on adolescents from families with a rather low frequency of interparental conflict, which would have an impact on the generalizability of the results. Studied effects might be underestimated because of low variance in interparental conflict perceptions. Third, all the effects we found were small; hence they should be taken cautiously until they are confirmed by other studies. Finally, our results cannot be simply related to political behavior since other factors such as perceived norms or behavioral skills come to play along with political efficacy (Glasford, 2008).

The main contribution of the present study is that it offers a broader view of the relation between family and political efficacy. Existing research on the role of parents in political socialization usually focuses on parental political beliefs, values, and political behavior (Jennings, 2004; Zukin et al., 2006). We have broadened this perspective by focusing on adolescents' family experiences that have no explicit political content but can be linked to politics indirectly. If certain family perceptions served as a model for political efficacy, it would give a new meaning to the well-known feminist saying that "the personal is political." The political development of adolescents would not be separate from their family

experiences, and private interactions between adolescents and their parents would have more far-reaching consequences than might previously have been expected. Such findings would put more pressure on parents who want to bring up responsible citizens, since not only political discussions, joint civic activities, or political persuasion (Beaumont, 2011), but also seemingly nonpolitical experiences may help to form adolescents' views on politics. It must be noted that our study is only a starting point, and that further in-depth research needs to be conducted. However, it shows a previously unexplored way to better understand adolescents' political development.

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5 Study II

Adolescents' perspectives on traditional, non-traditional, and direct political activities: The role of identity-processing styles and political beliefs[10]

Jan Šerek, Zuzana Petrovičová & Petr Macek

Abstract

The study examined whether adolescents' tendency to employ informational, or normative identity-processing style predicts their perceived effectiveness of different political activities. Data were taken from the broader longitudinal study conducted in the Czech Republic, and included reports from 179 participants (Time 1 = age 17; Time 2 = age 19). Path analyses suggested that adolescents who sought information tended to perceive non-traditional political activity (e.g., in civic organizations) as effective, while participants' normative conformism predicted disbelief in direct activity (e.g., petitions). Perceived effectiveness of traditional activity (e.g., voting) reflected adolescents' actual political trust rather than their identity-processing styles. These results complement previous findings on the correlates of identity-processing styles and adolescents' political thinking.

Keywords: Identity-processing styles; Late adolescence; Political activity effectiveness; Political efficacy; Political trust.

5.1 Introduction

The past years have seen growing youth engagement in unconventional political activities (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). Thus, the need to understand why young people prefer one kind of political activity over the others is becoming more apparent. Previous studies have shown that the ways in which adolescents process self-relevant information (identity-processing styles) have the implications for their values and social and religious beliefs (Berzonsky, Cieciuch, Duriez, & Soenens, 2011; Duriez, Soenens, & Beyers, 2004). So far, however, too little attention has been paid to the association between adolescents' identity styles and their perceptions of political activities. In order to fill this gap,

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the present paper examines whether adolescents' tendency to employ different identity styles relates to how they perceive the effectiveness of various political activities.

People can choose among various means how to express their political views and promote social change. Such means comprise (1) traditional activity, targeting established agencies such as political parties; (2) non-traditional activity, aiming at civic organizations; and (3) direct activity oriented towards specific causes and includes petitions or demonstrations (see Norris, 2003). Deciding among these activities depends on whether the person perceives a given activity as an effective instrument for achieving the desired outcome because people usually do not participate politically if they doubt the effectiveness of such participation (Klandermans, 1997).

The preference for particular forms of political activity is known to be associated with one's political beliefs. Traditionally, political trust and political efficacy are hypothesized to affect persons' willingness to act politically (Gamson, 1968) and their preference for either traditional or non-traditional means of participation (Bandura, 1997). Political efficacy consists of two interrelated beliefs: an assessment of personal capabilities and resources (internal efficacy), and an assessment of the openness of a social system to change (external efficacy). This paper focuses rather on the external aspect, which represents generalized belief that social changes are possible, and as such, positively relates to perceived effectiveness of a wide variety of political activities targeting these changes. On the other hand, political trust (a belief that political authorities observe the rules of the game and serve the public) relates to the preference for traditional activity while not for other activities (Bandura, 1997).

Besides, political thinking and behavior have to be seen at the context of personal and social development of the individual (Mondak & Halperin, 2008). These processes become salient especially in late adolescence, when political identity is being formed and young people express their identities and identity-related processes through their behavior, including political activities (Bynner, Romney, & Emler, 2003; Erikson, 1968). Using a social-cognitive developmental perspective, Berzonsky (1989) identified three ways in which young people seek, process, and use identity-relevant information: (1) the information-oriented style, characterized by the search for, and evaluation of information before committing to certain decisions, (2) the normative style, with a predominant focus on the norms and expectations of significant others, and (3) the diffuse-avoidant style with a tendency to procrastinate when making decisions. We suppose that namely two active

identity-processing styles (informational and normative) can influence the process of political thinking and participation of adolescents since people employing diffuse-avoidant style do not commit to specific planned actions and tend to drift from one decision to another.

We expect that young people employing informational style are more inclined than other people to non-traditional solutions to problems and appreciate creative and sophisticated political activities that go beyond traditional politics. It comes from the fact that they are able to cope with conflicting information, are more autonomous and complex in their thinking (Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996), have a higher need for cognition (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992), and are more open to new experiences, ideas or actions (Dunkel, Papini, & Berzonsky, 2008; Duriez et al., 2004). Moreover, their tendency to gather information and look for new solutions is associated with a perceived internal control over the events around them (Berzonsky, 1989). Thus, we suppose that the informational style positively predicts the overall sense of political efficacy.

On the other hand, people high in the normative style are expected to decry the direct forms of political activity and incline to the traditional ones. These people are conformist, internalize the values and goals of others, and protect themselves from information that might interfere with their perceptions (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992). Previous research has also revealed their tendency to approve of right-wing authoritarian political ideology and conservative attitudes (Duriez & Soenens, 2006; Soenens, Duriez, & Goossens, 2005), which are characterized by an adherence to conventional norms and an aversion to any form of social rebellion (Altemeyer, 1996). In addition, the respect for social authorities, typical among normative-oriented young people, may translate into higher political trust, which strengthens their appreciation of the traditional activity.

In sum, our question is whether the employment of different identity styles relates to how a person perceives the effectiveness of traditional, non-traditional, and direct political activity. We expect that people employing an informational style will perceive non-traditional activity to be effective, while people employing a normative style will appreciate traditional and diminish direct activities. Next, we suppose that the informational style affects the development of political efficacy, and that the normative style affects the development of political trust, thus the effect of identity-processing styles will be mediated by these two political beliefs.

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Participants and procedure

Our data came from the psychological branch of the broader European Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood, conducted in the Czech Republic (Ježek, Lacinová, Širůček, & Michalčáková, 2008). Original sample consisted of 883 children (age 8), randomly selected from almost all children born in medical institutions in a city with 400,000 inhabitants between March 1991 and June 1992. Data for the present study were drawn from the biennial 2008/09 (T1 = age 17; N = 477) and 2010/11 (T2 = age 19; N = 213) examinations. The analyses included all 179 participants (64 % girls) who had valid values of dependent variables at T2. Adolescents with higher education level were overrepresented in the sample due to dropout in the previous examinations (49 % grammar school, 44 % vocational school, 5 % art school or lyceum, 2 % not studying). Those who left the study between T1 and T2 did not have significantly different identity styles, political efficacy, or political trust from those who remained.

Adolescents completed self-report computer-based questionnaires at the research institute. Measures comprised identity styles and political beliefs at T1 and T2. Moreover, participants answered items about perceived effectiveness of political activities at T2.

5.2.2 Measures

Identity styles. Two information-processing strategies were measured by the two subscales of the fourth version of the Identity Style Inventory (Likert-type scale with responses ranging from one to five; Berzonsky, Soenens, Smits, Luyckx, & Goossens, 2007): (1) informational style (12 items, e.g. "When I have to make a decision, I like to spend a lot of time thinking about my options"; alphas .83 at T1, and .83 at T2); (2) normative style (seven items, e.g. "I find it is best for me to rely on the advice of close friends or relatives when I have a problem"; alphas .80 at T1, and .73 at T2). Latter subscale was formed from the original 12-item version by omitting five items, uncorrelated with total score. CFA showed that the present version was one-dimensional (standardized factor loadings from .32 to .78) and retained measurement invariance over time. A model with two correlated latent factors (normative style at T1 and T2), assuming equal factor loadings and intercepts of the same indicators, reached a reasonable fit (χ^2_{77} = 153.22, p < .01; χ^2/df = 1.99; SRMR = .08; CFI =

.90; RMSEA = .07) after two pairs of T1 residuals and three pairs of T2 residuals were allowed to correlate.

Political beliefs. Two Czech Likert-type scales with responses ranging from one to four, piloted in the previous studies (Šerek & Macek, 2010), were used. (1) Political efficacy scale assessed adolescents' beliefs that they can achieve any change or stop the negative development in their communities (eight items, e.g. "People like me can influence what is going on in the place where they live"; alphas .81 at T1, and .84 at T2). CFA proved one-dimensionality of the scale (standardized factor loadings from .43 to .80) and full measurement invariance. A model with two correlated latent factors (political efficacy at T1 and T2), assuming equal factor loadings and intercepts of respective indicators, reached an acceptable fit (χ^2_{109} = 171.45, p < .01; χ^2/df = 1.57; SRMR = .08; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .06) after one pair of T1 residuals was allowed to correlate. (2) Political trust scale assessed adolescents' perceived trustworthiness of political environment, regarding politicians' service to the public and observance of the rules (six items, e.g. "Although it may seem different, politicians pay respect to basic principles of decency and morality"; alphas .76 at T1, and .80 at T2). Similar to the previous scale, CFA confirmed one-dimensionality (standardized factor loadings from .48 to .76) and measurement invariance. One T1 residual correlation had to be allowed to reach an acceptable fit (χ^2_{57} = 76.36, p = .04; χ^2/df = 1.34; SRMR = .07; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .04).

Perceived effectiveness of political activities. Participants were asked: "If ordinary citizens want to influence decisions taken on social issues, they can choose from various activities. How meaningful do you think the following activities are in terms of influence on social issues?" Then they assessed seven activities on the four-point scale from "is always meaningful" to "never is." *Traditional activity* was represented by two items: voting, and political party membership (α = .61). *Non-traditional activity* was represented by two items: sending money to some organization dealing with the issue, and giving active help to some organization dealing with the issue (α = .72). *Direct activity* was represented by three items: petition signing, taking part in demonstrations, and illegal action (e. g., occupation) (α = .68). Confirmatory factor analysis proved the existence of three distinctive perceived forms of political activity. A model with three correlated latent factors exhibited a perfect fit (χ^2_{11} = 9.09, p = .61; χ^2/df = .83; SRMR = .03; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00), while an alternative model assuming only one latent factor fitted the data considerably worse (χ^2_{14} = 83.77, p < .01; χ^2/df = 5.98; SRMR = .08; CFI = .74; RMSEA = .17).

5.2.3 Strategy of analyses

In order to retain a reasonable ratio between free parameters and sample size, we estimated three separate path models with: perceived effectiveness of traditional, non-traditional, and direct activity. Full information maximum likelihood estimator (Mplus 6.1) was used to include the cases with partially missing data (covariance coverage from 82 to 100 %). All models contained T1 and T2 measurements of informational style, normative style, political efficacy, and political trust. Based on our assumptions, we allowed informational style to correlate with political efficacy, and normative style to correlate with political trust. Also both political beliefs were allowed to intercorrelate. Further, we assumed two longitudinal effects: from informational style to political efficacy, and from normative style to political trust. All T2 variables were set to predict perceived effectiveness of traditional/non-traditional/direct activity, which was measured only at T2 (see Figure 5.1).

5.3 Results

Three path models predicting perceptions of three forms of activity are depicted together in Figure 5.1. All models had a perfect fit, suggesting that no relevant path was omitted. Correlation matrix of all scales can be found in Table 5.1.

All variables measured at T1 were significantly associated in the expected way. However, informational style did not predict a change in political efficacy, and normative style did not predict a change in political trust. The paths could be removed from the model without significant worsening of its fit ($\Delta\chi^2_2 = 2.69$, p = .26). Thus, despite the association at T1 we found no longitudinal effect of identity styles on political beliefs. This result implicated that the effect of identity styles on perceived effectiveness could not be mediated by political beliefs.

Perceived effectiveness of different forms of political activity was predicted by different variables. Perceived effectiveness of traditional activity was predicted mainly by political trust, perceived effectiveness of non-traditional activity was predicted mainly by informational style, and perceived effectiveness of radical activity was predicted by adolescents' political efficacy and (negatively) by normative style.

Table 5.1. Bivariate correlations between all measures.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	M	SD
1. Information style T1											3.47	0.57
2. Information style T2	.61**										3.54	0.55
3. Normative style T1	.02	.04									2.98	0.64
4. Normative style T2	-.06	.09	.64**								3.04	0.56
5. Political efficacy T1	.19*	.08	-.10	-.09							2.61	0.49
6. Political efficacy T2	.17*	.18*	.01	-.12	.49**						2.65	0.52
7. Political trust T1	.04	-.01	.12	.08	.32**	.10					2.14	0.45
8. Political trust T2	-.04	.05	-.01	.03	.28**	.24**	.42**				2.18	0.51
9. Perc. eff. traditional act. T2	.12	.21**	-.02	.02	.22**	.27**	.19*	.35**			3.00	0.65
10. Perc. eff. non-trad. act. T2	.26**	.33**	-.02	.10	.05	.21**	.03	.14	.36**		2.74	0.69
11. Perc. eff. direct act. T2	.09	.12	-.23**	-.19*	.16	.27**	-.05	.06	.28**	.32**	2.47	0.56

$* p < .05. ** p < .01.$

Figure 5.1. Path models examining the relations among identity-processing styles, political beliefs, and perceived effectiveness of traditional/non-traditional/direct activity.
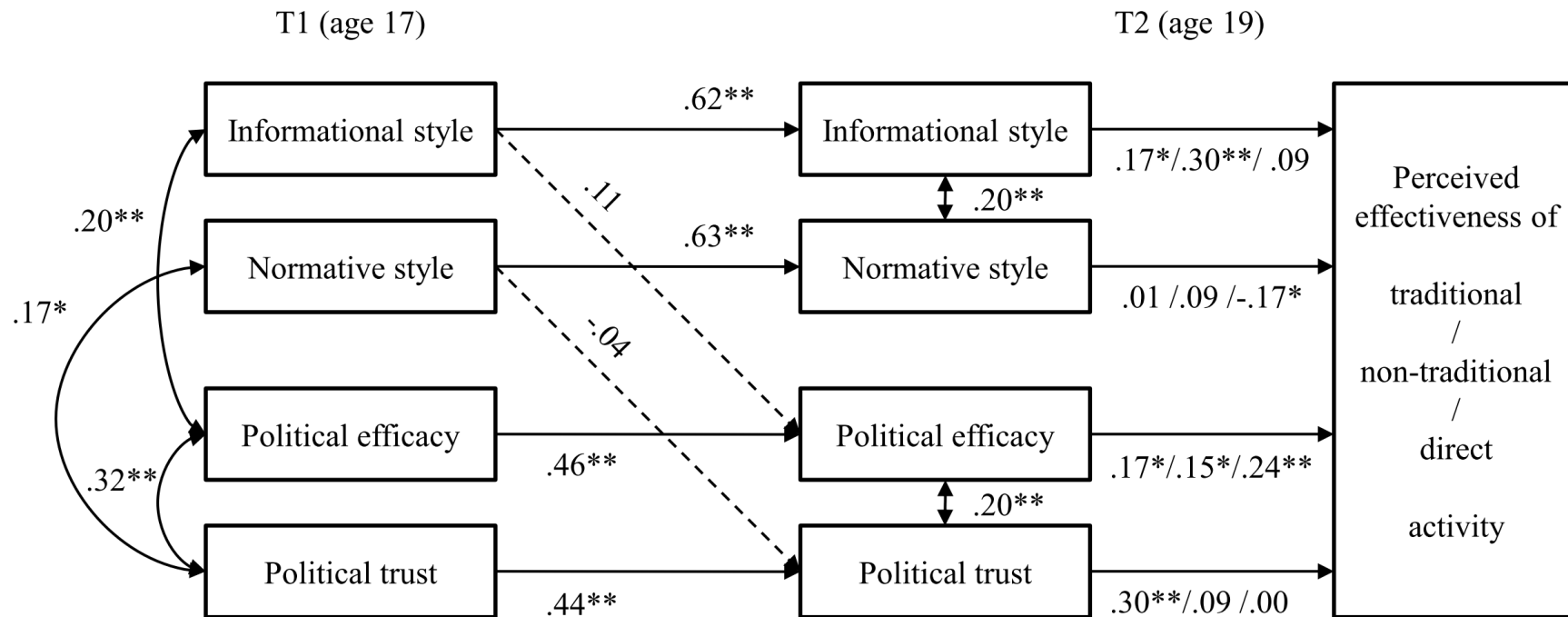
Note. Standardized path coefficients are reported. Coefficients in the left part of the figure were identical for all three models. Model fit: $\chi^2_{21} =$ 19.59, p = .55; χ^2/df = .93; SRMR = .04; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00 (model with traditional activity); $\chi^2_{21} = 21.95$, p = .40; χ^2/df = 1.05; SRMR = .04; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .02 (model with non-traditional activity); $\chi^2_{21} = 24.94$, p = .25; χ^2/df = 1.19; SRMR = .05; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .03 (model with direct activity).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

5.4   Discussion

We found that there is an association between how young people perceive the effectiveness of various political activities and their identity-related cognitive strategies. Information-oriented people are open to non-traditional ideas, actions, and values (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992). Our data suggests that this openness is reflected in their political thinking as well. Specifically, the tendency to search for information in the process of self-definition (informational style) positively predicts greater appreciation of non-traditional political activity aiming at organizations focused on specific social issues. At the same time, the information-orientation does not translate into perceptions of direct activity and only slightly affects the evaluation of traditional activity. The tendency of young people to conform and to dismiss inconvenient information (normative style) has a weaker but still noticeable relation to their perception of political activities. It is not true that highly normative people appreciate traditional political activity more than the others as we hypothesized based on their preference of conservative beliefs (Berzonsky et al., 2011; Duriez & Soenens, 2006). Nevertheless, consistently with their conservative beliefs, they distrust the effectiveness of direct activity. The associations are present despite the two-year interval between the measurements, suggesting that some political perceptions do reflect more stable cognitive styles.

Originally, we argued that the tendency to search for information strengthens one's general belief that achievement of social change is possible (political efficacy), and that the normative style leads to higher political trust. Although these associations were moderately present at the age 17, no longitudinal effects were found. These findings suggest that the development of political efficacy and trust in late adolescence is driven by different factors than the identity-related cognitive styles (e.g., direct and indirect experiences with political world). The associations with cognate personality traits that are reported in the literature (Mondak & Halperin, 2008) may originate from the earlier political development.

Looking at our results from another perspective, young people's thinking about political activities is associated with both their political beliefs and more general cognitive styles. However, both factors have unequal relevancy for different activities. Traditional activity is perceived as effective by people who trust politicians, while personality characteristics play only a minor (informational style), or no (normative style) role here. When considering the effectiveness of non-traditional activity, the tendency to look for

information is the only substantial predictor while political trust does not matter. Direct activity is favored by people who believe in the possibility to achieve social change and who tend to be nonconformists. At the same time, the appreciation of direct activity does not stem from lower political trust, which supports recent findings that direct activity is not the domain of people frustrated by traditional politics (Norris, Walgrave, & Aelst, 2005). Generally, it seems that perceived effectiveness of traditional activity reflects actual trust in the political system, while more general and stable personality characteristics matter within perceptions of less conventional activities.

Besides some limitations, our study extends current knowledge about the correlates of identity-related cognitive styles. Since it was conducted on participants with higher educational level, included a limited number of possible predictors, employed only one measure of perceived effectiveness, and had not completely longitudinal design (dependent variable was not measured at the age 17), further replications are needed. Based purely on the fact that people reported some degree of effectiveness for certain actions, we cannot infer whether they would engage in those activities in reality, because other factors come into play, such as resources and opportunities. On the other hand, most of our results are consistent with expectations deduced from the general characteristics of both identity styles. While previous studies have shown the implications for a person's values and social and religious beliefs, we have pointed out that the perception of political activities is associated with identity styles as well. At the same time, our research suggests that young people's perceptions in this area are not only based on their beliefs about the political system but also stem from more general ways of approaching the social world.

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6 Study III

Antecedents of political trust in adolescence: Cognitive abilities, perceptions of parents, and relationships with social authorities[11]

Jan Šerek & Petr Macek

Abstract

This study examined the predictors of political trust in late adolescence. Four-wave longitudinal data (age 11, 13, 15, and 17) from 1,202 Czech adolescents (of which 424 participated in at least three waves) were analyzed using structural equation modeling. Results showed that greater political trust in late adolescence was predicted by high verbal cognitive ability in early adolescence. This effect was not explicable by a positive relationship with authorities (school and parents) during adolescence. Next, early adolescents who perceived more parental warmth had greater political trust when they reached late adolescence. These results suggest that some young people might enter adulthood more skeptical regarding politics based on their abilities and early non-political experiences.

Keywords: Political trust; Cognitive ability; Verbal ability; Parental warmth; Relation to school; Alienation from parents; Civic development.

6.1 Introduction

In the course of their civic development, adolescents construct various expectations and beliefs about the world of politics, which, in turn, drive their civic activities (Metzger & Smetana, 2010). Political trust, defined broadly as perceived trustworthiness of the political environment and political authorities, regarding whether they observe the rules and serve the public (Citrin & Muste, 1999), represents an important part of young person's worldview. For instance, a lack of political trust in adolescence can result in a low interest in politics and nonvoting (Bynner & Ashford, 1994), or establish a preference for non-conventional political activities (Bandura, 1997). From a macro-level perspective, citizens' political trust is embedded in the broader civic culture of the country (Almond & Verba, 1963; Inglehart, 1997), is partially derived from the social norms and interpersonal trust present in the society

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11 Submitted for publication.

(Putnam, 2000), and is associated with citizen assessment of the actual performance of political authorities (Mishler & Rose, 2001). In addition, psychological research has revealed that political trust can reflect also individual adolescent histories. It has been shown that parental authoritarian practices (Gniewosz, Noack, & Buhl, 2009), adolescents' cognitive abilities (Schoon & Cheng, 2011), and educational performance (Bynner & Ashford, 1994) are associated with levels of political trust or alienation. These developmental hypotheses, however, had not been tested in a comprehensive model that would include early perceptions of parents, cognitive abilities, and subsequent relations to authorities (school and parents), all together. This study employed longitudinal data covering a six-year period in order to study predictors of political trust in late adolescence.

Political trust can refer to the evaluation of individual politicians, governments, or institutions, but it can also refer to generalized beliefs about the political process as a whole (Citrin & Muste, 1999). In our study, we drew on the latter concept of political trust. We understood political trust as being the opposite of political cynicism, defined as a generalized mistrust, not of particular politicians, but of the whole political environment, which is perceived as corrupting its participants and attracting corrupt persons (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). The lack political trust can be also understood as one component of political alienation (besides political efficacy or powerlessness), sometimes referred to as political normlessness (Finifter, 1970; Levi & Stoker, 2000).

Previous studies have reported that people with greater political trust have greater cognitive abilities as well. In large-scale longitudinal studies, general cognitive ability in early adolescence was found to be positively associated with political trust in adulthood (Deary, Batty, & Gale, 2008; Schoon, Cheng, Gale, Batty & Deary, 2010; Schoon & Cheng, 2011). Next, political trust was found to be positively associated with openness to experience (Mondak & Halperin, 2008), a relatively stable personality trait linked (although not identical) to verbal cognitive ability (McCrae & Sutin, 2009). In addition, some authors consider attained education level as a proxy for cognitive abilities (Rindermann, 2008). In this respect, there is certain evidence supporting a positive association between adolescents' education and their political trust (Henn, Weinstein, & Forrest, 2005; however, some studies on the general population do not support this association, see Catterberg & Moreno, 2006). To summarize, political trust seems to be positively associated with cognitive ability, particularly with its verbal aspect.

The association between political trust and cognitive ability can have several explanations. Regarding political trust in adulthood, achieved social status and income level are potential explanatory mechanisms. More precisely, higher cognitive abilities in childhood positively predict higher social status and income in adulthood, which, in turn, are associated with higher political trust (Schoon & Cheng, 2011). This explanation, however, is not sufficient when explaining the political trust of late adolescents who usually do not have any stable social status and income, but whose political trust is already formed (Hooghe & Wilkenfeld, 2008; Claes, Hooghe, & Marien, 2011).

Some scholars suggest that a basis for social trust in adolescence is being built by everyday nonpolitical experiences in small proximal communities (Flanagan, 2003). This can apply also to political trust, since it has been shown that, for adolescents, strong connections to their parents, schools and neighborhoods predict greater political trust in young adulthood (Duke, Skay, Pettingell, & Borowsky, 2009). We proposed that these processes might serve as a link between adolescents' cognitive ability and political trust. Specifically, we hypothesized that adolescents with different levels of cognitive abilities experience different developmental experiences in their schools and families, which can impact their political trust.

First, adolescents with greater cognitive ability are more likely to develop a positive relationship to school during their maturation, which can generalize to other social institutions, such as politics. It has been shown that children and adolescents with higher general cognitive ability report a more positive relationship to school (Richards, Encel, & Shute, 2003; Geddes, Murrell, & Bauguss, 2010). Consequently, based on the public institutional hypothesis, positive relations to school can generalize to politics. This hypothesis assumes that adolescents' political attitudes and activities are shaped by their experiences with public institutions such as schools (Amnå & Zetterberg, 2009). Schools are usually adolescents' first opportunity to learn how institutional systems of authority work and what to expect from them (Estévez & Emler, 2009). These experiences can shape later perceptions of other institutions in the public realm, including political authorities. Data from different countries support this notion, as middle adolescents' trust in school and positive perceptions of school are associated with their trust in governmental institutions (Torney-Purta, Barber, & Richardson, 2004).

Second, adolescents with better cognitive ability tend to have more positive relationships with parental authorities, which can generalize to politics. Research has shown

that a child's language competency is positively associated with the quality of the parent-child relationship (van Ijzendoorn, Dijkstra, & Bus, 1995). The relation is probably bidirectional as harmonious relationships provide space for the development of a child's verbal skills, and better verbal skills help the child make more harmonious social relationships (van IJzendoorn, Dijkstra, & Bus, 1995). In consequence, adolescents' positive or negative relationship to parental authority can serve as a model that fosters or undermines their trust in other social authorities, including political authorities (Flanagan & Gallay, 1995; Gniewosz et al., 2009; Duke et al., 2009). Thus we expected that adolescents who have poor relationships with their parents would report lower political trust.

The parent-child relationship, however, is not affected solely by the child's cognitive ability; a more important factor is the parental behavior toward the child. If children perceive their parents as emotionally warm, supportive and respectful of the child's dignity, they develop more positive relationships with them (Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003). Therefore, we expected that those early adolescents who perceive more parental warmth would report closer ties to (or less alienation from) parents in middle adolescence, which, in turn, can translate to greater political trust in late adolescence (Flanagan & Gallay, 1995; Gniewosz et al., 2009; Duke et al., 2009).

Having identified two characteristics of early adolescents that could be associated with political trust: cognitive ability and perceived parental warmth, our main research question was whether these two characteristics predict greater political trust in late adolescence. We differentiated between verbal and nonverbal cognitive ability, expecting verbal ability to be more closely related to political trust. Next, we tested whether the effects of cognitive abilities and perceived parental warmth on political trust could be explained by more positive relations to social authorities (school and parents) developed by relevant adolescents (a full mediation model). This model was compared with an alternative model, which assumed that political trust is determined by early characteristics rather than later relations to social authorities. Parental education was controlled for in all analyses.

6.2 Method

6.2.1 Participants and procedure

We analyzed data from the psychological branch of the broader European Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood (ELSPAC), which focused on risks to healthy and optimum development. The original sample comprised almost all families (5,549) with a child born between March 1, 1991, and June 30, 1992 in medical institutions in the Czech city of Brno (400,000 inhabitants). The psychological examinations started at the age of eight on a subsample of 883 families, randomly drawn from the original sample (Ježek, Lacinová, Širůček, & Michalčáková, 2008). Moreover, additional participants were randomly recruited from the original sample during the course of the project in order to compensate for attrition. In this study, we employed data from four biennial examinations: 2002/03 (age 11; N = 876), 2004/05 (age 13; N = 617), 2006/07 (age 15; N = 554), and 2008/09 (age 17; N = 480).

The dataset was characterized by a large amount of missing data due to attrition and the additional recruitment of participants. A total number of 1,202 adolescents (50 % girls) participated in at least one examination, but only 170 were present in all four examinations. In order to use all available information, we tested our models on all 1,202 cases at first (using the full information maximum likelihood estimator). In this case, however, small proportions of valid data were present for some combinations of variables (covariance coverage from 15 to 73 %, mean 32 %), which may have yielded unreliable estimates of respective parameters. Therefore, we re-estimated all models also on a subsample of 424 cases (49 % girls) that participated in at least three waves in order to get more reliable results (covariance coverage from 39 to 91 %, mean 65 %). Results obtained from this subsample are presented in square brackets in the following text.

Participants came to the research institute to complete self-report questionnaires. Measures were mostly paper-based, except for measures of relation to school (age 15) and political trust (age 17), which were computer-based. Tests of cognitive abilities (age 11) were administered by specially-trained research assistants. Information on parental education was provided by the participants' mothers.

6.2.2 Measures

Political trust (age 17). We assessed adolescents' perceived trustworthiness of the political environment in terms of politicians' service to the public and moral qualities. The scale was previously piloted and used among Czech adolescents (Agger, Goldstein, & Pearl, 1961; Šerek & Macek, 2010). Participants indicated their agreement with six items on a four-point response scale, ranging from "completely disagree" (=1) to "completely agree" (=4). The items were: "Although it may seem they do it differently, politicians pay respect to basic principles of decency and morality." "It is a typical feature of politics that it attracts individuals with bad character." "Those who want to advance in politics must learn to hide their true beliefs." "A decent person has no chance to succeed in politics." "Politicians more often fight for interests of the whole society than for their own interests." "In reality, politics is directed by a couple of manipulators in the background." Alpha reliability was .73.

Cognitive abilities (age 11). Two different cognitive abilities (verbal and nonverbal) were assessed by two subtests of the Czech translation of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, third UK edition (Wechsler, 1996). (1) Verbal ability, represented by verbal reasoning, was measured by the subtest "Similarities". This subtest captures the capacity for forming concrete, functional and abstract concepts, generalizing, and abstract thinking. Participants had to explain how two different things or concepts were similar (19 items). Responses were scored from 0 to 2, based on their quality. (2) Nonverbal ability was represented by perceptual reasoning and measured by the subtest "Block Design". The subtest captures nonverbal problem-solving skills such as part-to-whole organization, spatial visualization, nonverbal concept formation, and manipulative abilities. Participants had to replicate two-dimensional geometric patterns using red-and-white blocks within a specified time limit (12 items). The children's performances in both subtests were scored by trained research assistants in accordance with the standard scoring procedure. Weighted scores were employed in the analyses.

Perceived parental warmth (age 11). The warmth of parental behavior, as perceived by the adolescent (including parents' interest in child's activities, emotional support, sharing pleasant experiences, and respecting child's dignity), was assessed by a ten-item subscale from the Czech Parenting Styles Questionnaire (Čáp & Boschek, 1994). Adolescents assessed their mothers (alpha = .77) and fathers (alpha = .82) separately, using a three-point response scale "no" (=1), "partially", "yes" (=3). Sample items: "She/he is friendly toward me,"

"She/he really cares about my wishes and worries." Assessments of mothers and fathers were strongly correlated (r = .62).

Relation to school (age 13 and 15). Adolescents' general relation to school was derived from their answers on two items. The first item was taken from the Inventory of Risk Behavior (Širůček & Širůčková, 2008): "How would you describe your relationship with school?" Response scale: "the worst enemy" (= 1); "rather an enemy"; "hard to say"; "rather a friend"; "the best friend" (= 5). The second item was taken from the Coping Style Inventory (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995; Kohoutek, Mareš, & Ježek, 2008): "I'm not interested in school and I would prefer not to go there anymore." Response scale: "completely true" (=1); "fairly true"; "somewhat true"; "not true" (= 4). Correlations between both items were .46 (age 13) and .49 (and 15).

Alienation from parents (age 15). Alienation from parents, understood as anger at parents and isolation from them, was measured by an eight-item subscale Alienation from the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Širůček & Lacinová, 2008). All items referred to "parents", thus they did not distinguish between mothers and fathers. Five-point response scales ranged from "never" (=1) to "always or almost always" (= 5). Sample item: "I feel angry with my parents." Alpha reliability was .78.

Parental education. The final score was computed by averaging the mother and father's educational levels as reported by the mother at the child's age of 11 ("elementary school" = 1; "vocational training centre" = 2; "vocational training centre with graduation" = 3; "secondary school" = 4; "college/university" = 5). Correlation between mothers' and fathers' educational levels was .49.

6.2.3 Data analysis

Before the main analysis, we computed a set of ANOVAs to determine whether adolescents who participated in one, two, three or all four waves significantly differed in some of the measured variables. Next, bivariate correlations between scale means were computed and a measurement model, assuming no directional associations between latent variables, was tested.

Several structural equation models were computed in order to test our hypotheses (Mplus 6.1 software; full information maximum likelihood estimator). Most constructs were

treated as fully latent variables (political trust, relation to school, alienation from parents, perceived parental warmth). If not stated otherwise, error terms of the indicators were not allowed to correlate. Since relation to school was measured at two ages (age 13 and 15), factor loadings and intercepts of the same indicators were constrained to be identical over time (measurement invariance), while their error terms were allowed to correlate. Alienation from parents was measured by a well-established scale with known one-dimensionality. Therefore, the eight indicators were reduced to four parcels by an item-to-construct balance procedure (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). Next, since the perceived warmth of mothers and fathers strongly correlated, we treated them as representing one latent construct. Thus, ten items representing the perceptions of each parent were transformed into two parcels (item-to-construct balance procedure) and perceived parental warmth was estimated from the resulting four indicators. Finally, both verbal and nonverbal cognitive abilities were treated as manifest variables, as well as parental education.

Initially, we estimated a model that directly predicted political trust (age 17) from adolescents' early characteristics, i.e., parental education, perceived parental warmth, and both cognitive abilities (age 11), in order to test whether our basic expectations were supported. Next, we added general relation to school (age 13 and 15) and alienation from parents (age 15) to the model. First, a full model was tested, allowing all direct and indirect paths. Second, a full mediation model was tested, assuming that early characteristics predict later relation to school and alienation from parents, which, in turn, predict political trust. No direct path from early characteristics to political trust was allowed. Finally, an alternate model was estimated, assuming that political trust is predicted by early characteristics, while relation to school and alienation from parents do not have direct effects on political trust.

Table 6.1. Correlations, descriptive statistics, and missing data analysis (analysis of variance).

	Correlations										*Descriptives*			*Missing data*	
	2.	*3.*	*4.*	*5.*	*6.*	*7.*	*8.*	*9.*	*10.*	*11.*	*M*	*SD*	*Range*	*F*	*df1, df2*
1. Political trust (17)	.18**	.05	.11	.16**	.11	.11	.13*	.13	-.15**	.12*	2.15	0.51	1-3.67	1.22	3,438
2. Verbal reasoning (11)		.38**	.16**	.11**	.13*	.21**	.11*	.17*	-.13*	.30**	12.18	3.97	2-19	1.67	3,754
3. Perceptual reasoning (11)			.02	-.02	.08	.09	.06	.15*	-.02	.29**	11.67	3.19	1-19	0.83	3,754
4. Perc. mother's warmth (11)				.62**	.08	.00	.16**	.11	-.17**	.06	2.71	0.29	1.20-3	1.02	3,868
5. Perc. father's warmth (11)					.06	-.01	.04	.10	-.25**	.06	2.61	0.35	1.10-3	0.40	3,811
6. Rel. to school – item 1 (13)						-.46**	.35**	-.17*	.11*	-.07	3.11	0.93	1-5	3.10*	3,604
7. Rel. to school – item 2 (13)							.29**	.42**	-.20**	.14*	2.80	1.01	1-4	1.36	3,447
8. Rel. to school – item 1 (15)								-.49**	.19**	-.10	3.11	0.87	1-5	0.24	3,536
9. Rel. to school – item 2 (15)									-.24**	.19**	2.99	0.94	1-4	0.33	3,346
10. Alienation from parents (15)										.02	2.38	0.64	1-5	0.53	3,548
11. Parental education											3.79	1.04	1-5	0.66	3,839

Note. Higher scores mean more extreme answers in the direction of the construct (more positive relation to school). * p < .05. ** p < .01.

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Missing data analysis

ANOVAs showed that the level of participation in the study (one, two, three or four waves) was not associated with the levels of the measured variables (see Table 6.1). The only exception was the first item measuring relation to school at the age 13. Bonferroni post-hoc test revealed that those adolescents who participated in all four waves indicated more positive relation to school than those who participated only in one wave (all other differences were not significant). We did not consider this finding as a serious limitation, since the association was not present two years later (age 15), and it did not appear in the case of the second item measuring relation to school.

6.3.2 Correlations between scale means

Bivariate correlations (Table 6.1) indicated that political trust (age 17) was weakly, but significantly, associated with verbal reasoning and alienation from parents (age 15). Mixed support was found regarding its association with perceived parental warmth and relation to school.

6.3.3 Measurement model

Confirmatory factor analysis revealed that hypothesized latent constructs were well-represented by the measures. A model including all latent variables and their indicators was a good fit ($\chi^2_{123} = 157.57$, p = .02; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .02). One correlation between the errors of two items measuring political trust had to be allowed (r = .34). Similarly, the errors of parcels measuring perceived mother's (r = .34) and father's (r = .26) warmth had to be allowed to correlate. Standardized factor loadings of items measuring political trust ranged from .39 to .71; standardized loadings of parcels measuring parental warmth ranged from .61 to .87; standardized factors loading of items measuring relation to school (at both ages) ranged from .62 to .76; and standardized factor loadings of parcels measuring alienation from parents ranged from .65 to .72.

6.3.4 Predicting political trust from early characteristics

A model predicting political trust (age 17) from early characteristics (age 11) and parental education was estimated (Figure 6.1). The results indicated that political trust was positively predicted by verbal cognitive ability and perceived parental warmth. Parental education was a weak predictor of political trust and its effect was significant only in the full sample. Finally, perceptual reasoning was independent from political trust.

6.3.5 Full model

In the next step, relation to school (age 13 and 15) and alienation from parents (age 15) were added to the model, and they were set to predict political trust. Additionally, all direct paths from early characteristics and parental education to political trust were allowed, except for perceptual reasoning that had been shown to have no direct effect on political trust (Figure 6.2). The results showed that political trust was directly predicted by verbal reasoning and perceived parental warmth. Next, relation to school was predicted by verbal reasoning; it remained very stable in middle adolescence; but it did not predict political trust. Further, alienation from parents was predicted by less-perceived parental warmth and lower verbal reasoning; but it did not predict political trust.

A brief comment must be made concerning parental education. Relation to school was predicted by parental education. However, it appeared more satisfactory (in terms of model fit) to predict relation to school at the age of 15 than at the age of 13. It seemed that the effect of parental education on relation to school was not present until middle adolescence; therefore, all tested models were corrected accordingly.

6.3.6 Full mediation model

Further, we estimated a model assuming that the effect of early characteristics was fully mediated by relation to school and alienation from parents. Therefore, two direct paths from verbal reasoning and perceived parental warmth to political trust were removed. This model, however, represented the data worse than the full model. A χ^2-difference test showed a significant drop in the model's fit ($\Delta\chi^2_2 = 10.46$; $p < .01$ [$\Delta\chi^2_2 = 12.92$; $p < .01$]). Thus, the effect of early characteristics could not be understood as being mediated by later relation to school and alienation from parents.

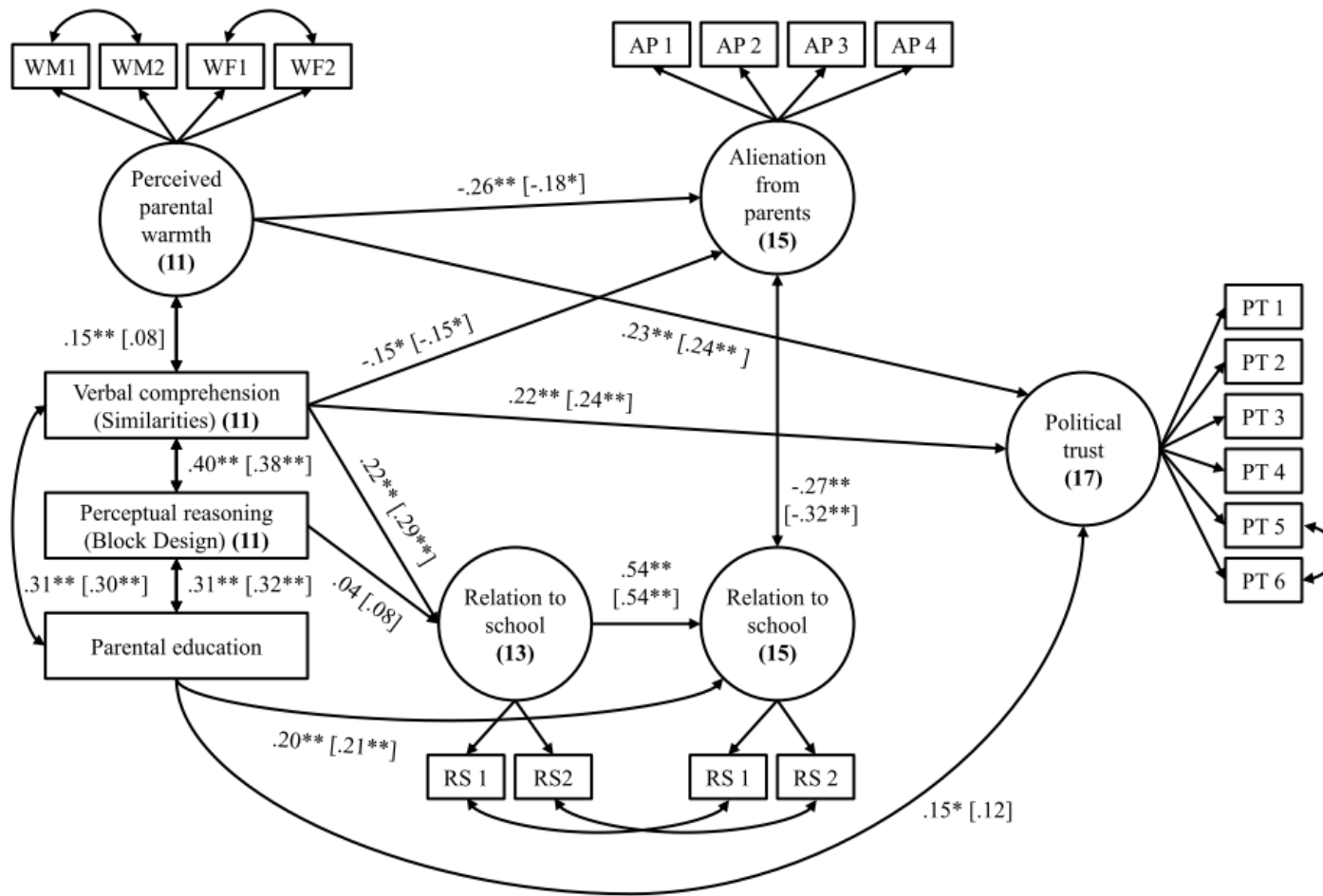**Figure 6.1.** Model predicting political trust from early characteristics.
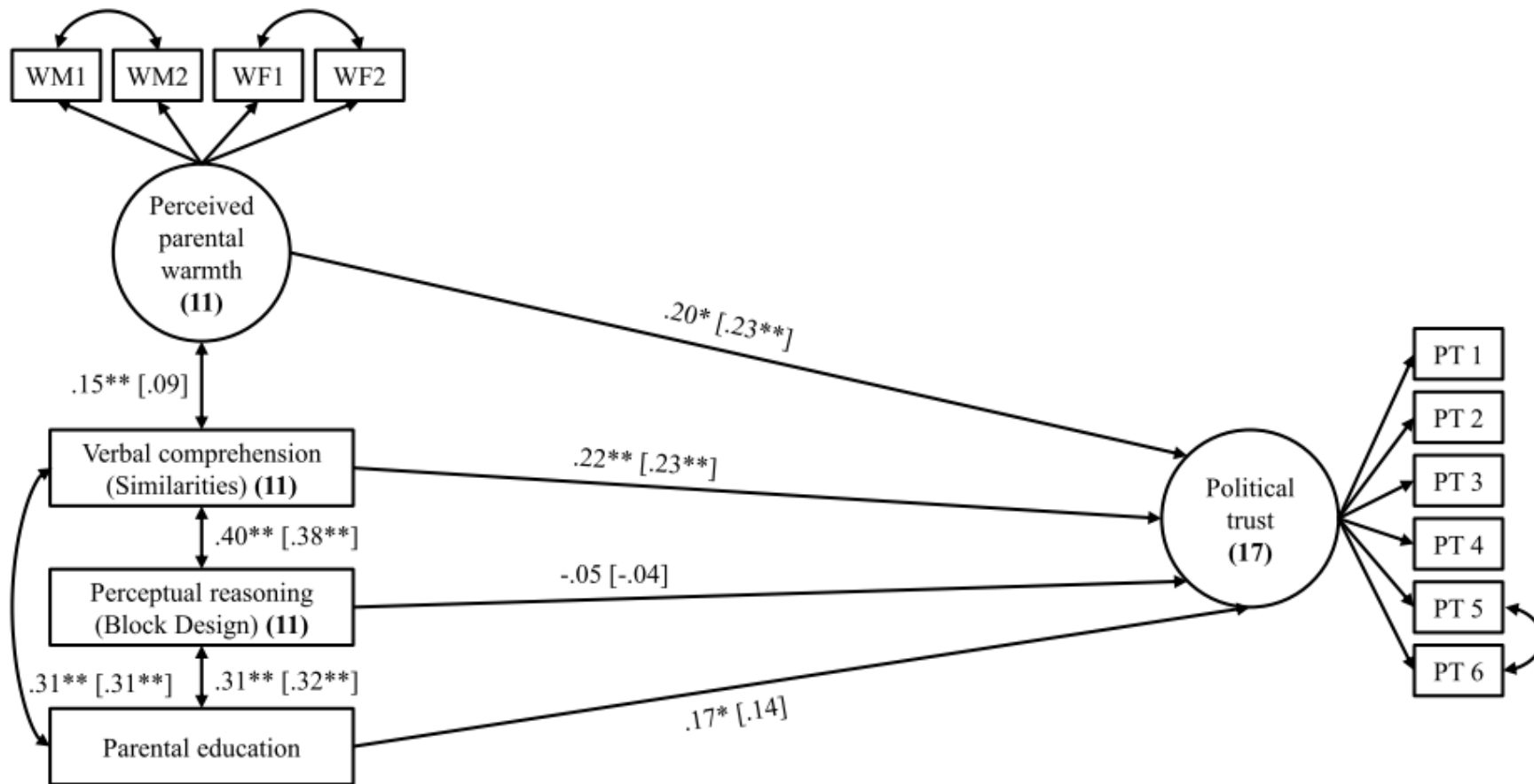
Note. Completely standardized full information maximum likelihood parameter estimates are reported. WM/WF = A five-item parcel representing perceived mother's/father's warmth. PT = an item measuring political trust. Model fit: $\chi^2_{57} = 70.45$, p = .11; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .02 [$\chi^2_{57} = 69.49$, p = .12; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .02]. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Figure 6.2. Full model predicting political trust.
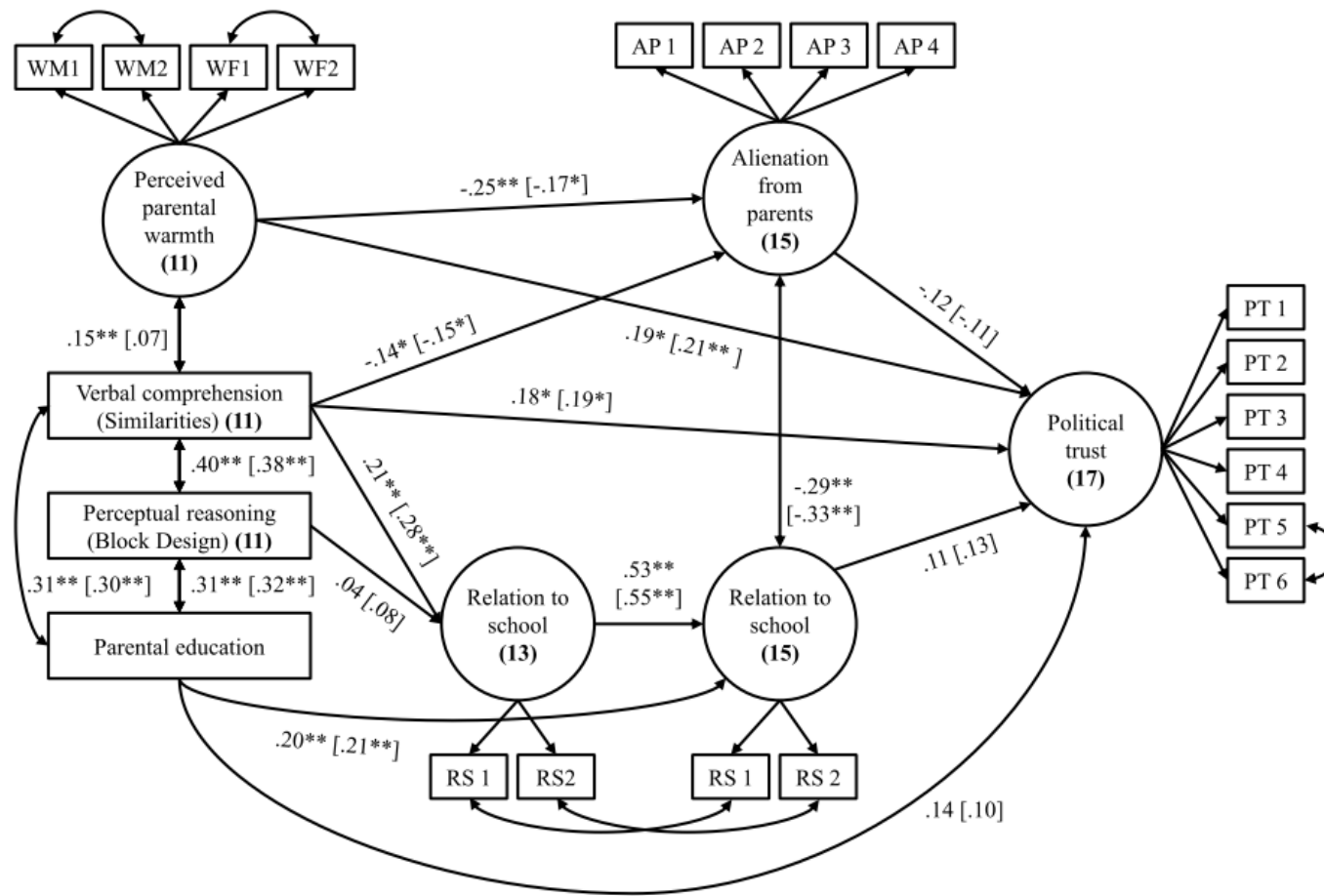
Note. Completely standardized full information maximum likelihood parameter estimates are reported. WM/WF = A five-item parcel representing perceived mother's/father's warmth. PT = an item measuring political trust. AP = a four-item parcel representing alienation from parents. RS = an item measuring relation to school. Model fit: χ^2_{174} = 212.28, p = .03; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .01 [χ^2_{174} = 226.96, p < .01; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .03]. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Figure 6.3. No mediation model predicting political trust.

Note. Completely standardized full information maximum likelihood parameter estimates are reported. WM/WF = A five-item parcel representing perceived mother's/father's warmth. PT = an item measuring political trust. AP = a four-item parcel representing alienation from parents. RS = an item measuring relation to school. Model fit: χ^2_{176} = 217.62, p = .02; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .01. [χ^2_{176} = 232.24, p < .01; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .03]. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

6.3.7 No mediation model

Finally, we estimated an alternative model assuming that political trust was predicted by early characteristics and parental education rather than relation to school and alienation from parents, which were set to have no effect (Figure 6.3). This model was the best representation of the data since the fit, compared to the full model, remained unchanged ($\Delta\chi^2_2$ = 5.34; p = .07 [$\Delta\chi^2_2$ = 5.28; p = .07]). In this model, verbal reasoning predicted political trust, relation to school, and (weakly) alienation from parents. Perceived parental warmth predicted political trust and alienation from parents.

6.4 Discussion

The results of our study show that young people who have better-developed verbal ability in early adolescence have greater political trust when they reach late adolescence. This finding might mean that some early characteristics play a role in the formation of political trust. Originally, we suggested that the association between verbal ability and political trust can be explained by more positive relations to social authorities, such as school or parents. This expectation, however, was not confirmed, as the full mediation model represented the data worse than the model assuming a direct effect of verbal ability on political trust. Thus, although young adolescents who are more developed in their verbal ability have more positive relations to all three types of social authority (school, parents, and politics) during adolescence, their high level of political trust must be explained by reasons other than a high level of trust in school and parents.

Our finding that a more positive relation to school (held by adolescents with higher verbal ability) does not transform to higher political trust is seemingly inconsistent with the public institutional hypothesis, which suggests that experiences with public institutions shape adolescents' political beliefs and behavior (Amnå & Zetterberg, 2009). Related research has shown that political trust in adolescents is enhanced by some specific characteristics and practices present in the school environment, such as open classroom climates and school democracy (Clae et al., 2011; Gniewosz et al., 2009; Amnå & Zetterberg, 2009). However, these aspects were not distinguished in our study, which focused solely on general attitudes toward school. Therefore, it is possible that specific school practices (such as democratic functioning), rather than the general evaluation of school by adolescents, have a positive

impact on the development of their political trust. This could be the reasons why we were able to find only small effects of school in our study. Another important implication of our results is that the correlation between political trust and positive relation to school might be spurious in the studies that do not control for verbal ability. Adolescents with higher verbal ability tend to have more positive relation to school as well as higher political trust, although the two are independent from each other.

A possible explanation for the association between verbal ability and political trust might be that adolescents with greater verbal ability have more nuanced views on politics. Since politics is a complex and abstract topic which is perceived as distant from everyday life by many young people (Henn et al., 2006; Šerek & Macek, 2010), its deeper comprehension may require a higher level of verbal ability on the part of adolescents. Besides, having very low political trust is a norm in today's Czech society (Linek, 2010). Therefore, only young people who are able to seek, understand and discuss political issues can replace the generalized political mistrust inculcated by the society with a more nuanced view that would allow for the existence of both positive and negative aspects of the political environment. As a result, the political trust of these young people might be higher compared to those who do not engage in deeper exploration of political issues and accept the social norm of mistrust. A further study including measures of adolescents' cognitive engagement in politics is therefore recommended.

Another important finding is that political trust relates to verbal reasoning but not to other types of cognitive ability, such as perceptual reasoning. This helps to explain why older research studies, focusing mostly on a general one-factor cognitive ability, found only a small impact on adolescents' political socialization (for a review, see Gallatin, 1980). Moreover, our results support and expand those by Hillygus (2005) who found that verbal ability (measured by Scholastic Aptitude Test) predicts conventional political participation by college students while math proficiency does not. Our study shows that not only conventional political participation, but also political trust (an important predictor of adolescents' conventional political participation; Bynner & Ashford, 1994; Torney-Purta et al., 2004), is related to verbal ability. Therefore, further studies on political socialization should carefully differentiate between various cognitive abilities, because only verbal ability seems to be substantially related to political development in adolescence.

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Next, our results revealed that early adolescents who experience more parental warmth report higher political trust when they reach late adolescence. Thus, positive perceptions of parental authorities, regarding their respect and support, seem to shape adolescents' generalized trust to other social and political authorities in late adolescence. These longitudinal results corroborate the cross-sectional findings of Gniewosz et al. (2009), who found that authoritarian parenting, characterized by parental rigorousness and the absence of parental warmth toward children, predicts the political alienation of adolescents. The described effect can be explained in the context of attachment theory, which assumes that a person's expectations about broader social relationships (internal working models) are formed in childhood, based on the mental representations modeled by caregivers (Bowlby, 1973; Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). Consequently, these internal working models of parental authorities might be activated when adolescents form their views concerning other types of social authorities, particularly those that are not encountered personally such as political ones. Another postulate of the attachment theory states that the internal working models are formed early in the life and remain relatively stable to adulthood (Fraley, 2002; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000). This is also consistent with our findings since perceptions of parental warmth in early adolescence were better predictors of political trust than alienation from parents in middle adolescence (although both variables were associated with political trust). Hence, it is possible that it is particularly early attachment to parents (not explicitly measured in our study) that sets the general expectations regarding authorities reflected in later political trust.

A number of limitations need to be noted regarding the present study. First, we measured relation to school and alienation from parents on a very general level only. Additionally, our measure of relation to school was only a two-item measure. Although these generalized attitudes have their importance, future studies should also focus on more particular aspects of adolescents' school and family perceptions that might be more directly related to political trust (e.g., open classroom, as suggested above). Second, parental sociopolitical beliefs were not measured and controlled for in our study. Since both parenting practices and political beliefs shared in the family might stem from some parental social beliefs (e.g., regarding obedience to authority), their inclusion could shed more light on investigated processes. Third, our analysis was not fully longitudinal; all variables, except for relation to school, were measured only at one time point (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). Therefore,

any interpretation must be cautious regarding causality. On the other hand, the predictions from the ages 11 to 17 allow stronger interpretations than a mere cross-sectional study.

Taken together, the present findings enhance our understanding of the origins of political trust in adolescence. It has been revealed that cognitive ability and parent-child relationships are indispensable factors in adolescents' political socialization. In one comprehensive model, we have shown that early adolescents who have lower verbal ability and who perceive less warmth from their parents become less trusting in politics in late adolescence. These young people enter adulthood more cynical about political processes than their peers. We acknowledge that political mistrust is not necessarily something negative and can be beneficial when facing corrupted or authoritarian politicians. Nevertheless, the generalized form of political mistrust targeted in our study can easily turn into political apathy (Bynner & Ashford, 1994) and prevent young people from engaging in political life before it actually starts. More seriously, generalized political mistrust in adolescence is also correlated with a support for extremist political parties (Kuhn, 2004). Therefore, we suggest that research should pay greater attention to these young people and their political development. In addition, seemingly "non-political" developmental experiences must be considered in order to understand adolescents' approach to the political sphere.

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7 General discussion and conclusions

7.1 Discussion of the main findings

The overall aim of this dissertation was to study the antecedents of adolescents' conceptions of politics. The emphasis was put on the perceptions of proximal nonpolitical contexts and personal characteristics of adolescents.

The results of Studies I and III indicated that adolescents' perceptions of parents predicted their political efficacy and political trust in late adolescence. A possible explanation for this finding is that the schemata, created by adolescents on the basis of their family experience, have the impact on their perceptions and expectations regarding politics. More specifically, perceived parental warmth, characterized by the support for the adolescents and the respect for their dignity, serves as a model for perceived trustworthiness of politics. Further, the sense of self-efficacy, regarding the impact on parents in a conflict situation, serves as a model for perceived political efficacy on the community level. These findings support the argument made by Flanagan and Gallay (1995) who suggested that the processes of cooperation and negotiation in the family shape children's perceptions of the power relationships and democratic competition. It is within the families, where adolescents might learn whether they can trust the authorities and whether they can have any impact on them (see also Gniewosz, Noack, & Buhl, 2009). Moreover, McIntosh and Youniss (2010) recently pointed out the role of conflict in political socialization. According to the authors, in order to participate, adolescents have to be able to deal with different types of conflicts that are inherently present in politics. Study I shows that adolescents' self-perception regarding this political ability might have its roots in adolescents' previous family experiences.

This interpretation, however, must be taken cautiously since Studies I and III did not rule out an alternative explanation that the perceptions of parents and the beliefs about politics were determined by some stable characteristics of adolescents. In other words, the effects of some potentially confounding variables were not controlled for. Both the cognitive-contextual theory of child's reaction on interparental conflict and the attachment theory suggest that children's early perceptions of parental figures might have a far-reaching effect on their perception of other social contexts (Bowlby, 1973; Bretherton & Munholland, 1999; Grych &

Cardoza-Fernandes, 2001; Hamilton, 2000). This effect, however, is usually expected to take place in relatively proximal contexts, such as romantic relationships. In contrast, adolescents' perceptions of the community-, or even the country level-contexts might be qualitatively different from their perceptions of proximal contexts. Therefore, the alternative explanations must be ruled out by further studies before the effect of family perceptions can be definitely proved. In particular, the potential confounding role of adolescents' optimism should be examined, since it is expected to be associated with both family perceptions (Jackson, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer, 2005; Robinson, 2009) and sociopolitical beliefs (Beaumont, 2010; Klicperová-Baker et al., 2007; Uslaner, 1998).

Further, the results of Studies II and III showed that adolescents' cognitive characteristics predicted their perceived effectiveness of political activities and political trust. First, adolescents with greater tendency to seek information tended to perceive non-traditional activity as effective. On the other hand, adolescents with greater tendency to follow the norms and expectations of significant others tended to perceive direct activity as ineffective. Finally, adolescents with greater verbal cognitive ability had greater political trust. These findings are in line with the research showing that political beliefs mirror more general characteristics of the person (Deary, Batty, & Gale, 2008; Mondak & Halperin, 2008; Schoon & Cheng, 2011; Schoon, Cheng, Gale, Batty, & Deary, 2010; Vecchione, & Caprara, 2009). Nevertheless, additional research is needed in order to reveal the mechanisms, by which the personal characteristics translate into political beliefs. Although several possible mechanisms were tested in Studies II and III, none of these mechanisms was supported by the data. Thus, the nature of the association between cognitive characteristics and political beliefs was not fully explained. Above all, it should be revealed (1) whether young people with different cognitive styles and abilities have different experiences in proximal social contexts, which shape their political beliefs, or (2) whether different cognitive styles and abilities induce different behavior of adolescents, which shapes their political beliefs (e.g. discussing politics with friends, following political news), or (3) whether some political beliefs directly arise from different worldviews, held by adolescents with different cognitive styles and abilities.

The social cognitive approach appeared to be a useful framework for the study of political socialization. The concept of cognitive schemata enabled to explain the link between one's relation to politics, personal characteristics, and family experiences. On the other hand, only a limited number of opportunities, offered by this approach, were employed in Studies I-III. For example, according to the social cognitive approach, human development is shaped by

the dynamic interaction among personal factors, one's behavior, and environment (triadic reciprocal determinism; Bandura, 1986; 1989; Pajares, 2002; Zimmerman, 2000). In Studies I-III, only the interaction among personal factors and environment was considered. The inclusion of the remaining component, i.e. one's behavior, could bring an additional insight into the mechanisms of political socialization. It would be rewarding to test the model hypothesizing that (1) adolescents' family experiences (environment) affect their political beliefs (personal factors), (2) these beliefs lead to some form of political participation (behavior), and, as suggested by Beaumont (2010), (3) adolescents revise their political beliefs based on their personal experiences with participation. Such model could reveal whether family experiences have long-terms effect on persons' political beliefs, lasting to adulthood, or whether the effect of the family is only temporary and vanishes away as adolescents acquire real political experiences.

Based on Studies I-III, a further research focus on the period of late adolescence is recommended. Adolescents' political beliefs seem to represent meaningful political schemata at the age of 17 and 19, which can be deduced from several indirect indicators. First, there was a considerable interindividual variability in adolescents' political beliefs. This would not be the case if adolescents' political beliefs were generally vulnerable to major social or media influences. Second, political efficacy and political trust were considerably stable between the age of 17 and 19 (Study II). This suggested that late adolescents' political beliefs persisted in time and were not fabricated during the process of measurement. On the other hand, the stability was not absolute, thus there still were some intra-individual changes to be explained. Finally, political beliefs were meaningfully associated with each other (Study II), suggesting that they represented parts of an organized belief system, rather than random and separate impressions.

Although it is possible to understand adolescents' political beliefs as the antecedents of their future political behavior, the difference between political beliefs and participation must be acknowledged. As explained above, the association between political trust and participation is far from being straightforward, as the configuration with other factors (e.g., political efficacy), rather than political efficacy itself, explains political participation (Levi & Stoker, 2000). Moreover, even high political efficacy or high perceived effectiveness of some political activity alone are not sufficient (pre)conditions of political participation. As pointed out by Klandermans (2004), there are several other motivations for political participation that must be considered, such as group identity, ideology, or emotions (see also van Zomeren,

Postmes, & Spears, 2008). People usually do not take part in political activities simply because they believe in its effectiveness. Thus, there must be other complementary reasons for participation, such as ideology, or group-based anger. Also, political participation is often associated with participatory norms present in one's social environment. This association might have two forms: (1) young people in highly participatory environments imitate political behavior of other people, and (2) they are more likely to be asked by others to participate (Glasford, 2008; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). Next, despite their beliefs, political participation can be impossible for people who lack needed resources, such as time, money, knowledge, or behavioral skills (Verba et al., 1995). And finally, political participation is affected not only by a person, and his or her social environment, but also by political organizations that offer the opportunities for participation (Klandermans, 2004). Thus, although political beliefs might play an important role in adolescents' political development, their role as the determinants of participation should not be overestimated.

Finally, cautious interpretations concerning adolescents' optimum development are advisable. It was found that low political efficacy and low political trust relate to characteristics such as depressive mood, and experiences such as interparental conflict and low parental warmth. Consequently, it might be tempting to understand adolescents' political alienation (a combination of low efficacy and trust) as standing next to depressive symptoms, disharmonious family relationships and other components of suboptimal development in adolescence. This conclusion, however, would not be appropriate. As argued above, political alienation does not necessarily have to be something bad, and similarly, political participation is not always something good. For example, in some communities, a low sense of political efficacy is not a symptom of persons' developmental difficulties, but it is rather a rational evaluation of the real situation. Furthermore, different predictors were found to predict political efficacy and political trust. There is no evidence for the existence of something we might call general "political alienation syndrome" that would be associated with suboptimal developments in other areas. Instead, the mechanism, by which adolescents' specific characteristics and specific experiences lead to specific political beliefs, should be explored.

Moreover, the results must be understood with respect to the civic culture present in today's Czech Republic. The civic culture in the Czech society is characterized by a down-to-earth support of democracy, combined with a low willingness to subject to political authorities and only a moderate level of political activism (Klicperová-Baker et al., 2007). Accordingly,

Czech adolescents have relatively high civic competence, but on the other hand, they are less willing to participate in politics, do not perceive participation as an important part of citizenship, have lower confidence in participation in school, and less trust in government and media, compared to the international mean (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald & Schulz, 2001). In sum, a certain amount of political alienation seems to be normative among Czech adolescents. Therefore, it is more appropriate to conclude that certain personal characteristics and experiences make adolescents less alienated from politics, compared to the norm, rather than to draw a link between political alienation and suboptimal development.

7.2 Discussion of the measures

The scales measuring political efficacy, political trust, and perceived effectiveness of political activities performed well from a psychometric point of view. All of them had acceptable internal consistencies and factor structures. Moreover, Study II showed that the scales measuring political efficacy and political trust retained measurement invariance between the age of 17 and 19, which indicated that the scales were able to measure the same constructs when repeatedly administered at different time points.

The political efficacy scale seems to be a useful measure of political efficacy on the community level. Its focus on the community level only is in line with the assumption that a person can have different levels of political efficacy regarding different political contexts (Bandura, 1997). An advantage of the scale is that it provides participants with easily understandable items, supplemented by an example of the political issue where political efficacy plays a role. A limitation of the scale is that it does not distinguish between internal and external political efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Caprara 2009; Niemi, Craing, Mattei, 1991), which decreases its applicability in the studies that intend to discriminate between these aspects of political efficacy. Overall, both eight- and six-item version of the scale were adequate from the psychometric perspective (based on Studies I and II).

The political trust scale provides a good measurement of generalized political trust, which is understood as an opposite of political cynicism. Considering its association with adolescents' early characteristics (Study III) and its stability in time (Study II), the scale does not capture momentary evaluation of the political situation, but rather a broader political orientation of the person (Citrin & Muste, 1999). Overall, the scale has slightly worse (but still acceptable) psychometric properties than the political efficacy scale, which could be

attributed to a more general and abstract content. A six-item version of the scale, used in Studies II and III, seems to be adequate.

Finally, the scale measuring perceived effectiveness of political activities performed well, but the additional evidence is needed. Although the scale had the expected factor structure, it was used only on one sample and at one time point. Therefore, it should be tested whether the scale has the same factor structure in different samples, and whether its factor structure remains identical in the course of time. Furthermore, the number of items (i.e. political activities) should be extended in order to gain a more accurate assessment of the particular factors.

7.3 Strengths and limitations

Overall, three general characteristics of the research design yield both strengths and limitations. First, data from the broad longitudinal study, which focused on diverse aspects of psychosocial development in childhood and adolescence, were employed. Due to the broad scope of the study, only a limited number of variables regarding political socialization were measured. That is why many mechanisms could not be directly tested and could be only presupposed. On the other hand, the broad scope of the study allowed testing the hypotheses that are not usually considered in the political socialization research. The emphasis on the nonpolitical factors playing role in political development is one of the main contributions of this dissertation.

Second, although the dataset was longitudinal, i.e. the same participants were repeatedly attending the examinations, their political beliefs were measured only at the age of 17 (political efficacy and political trust) and 19 (political efficacy, political trust, and perceived effectiveness of political activities). Consequently, the initial levels of political beliefs could not be controlled for in the models (except for political efficacy and political trust in Study II). This limitation might yield the under- or overestimations of studied effects and makes the causal interpretations of revealed associations difficult. Besides, this type of analysis does not allow to directly asses the intraindividual changes, only the interindividual differences can be studied (Cole & Maxwell, 2003; Selig & Preacher, 2009). Therefore, some authors suggest speaking of the designs that do not control for the initial levels of dependent variables as time-ordered cross-sectional, rather than longitudinal (Menard, 2008). On the other hand, time-ordered cross-sectional designs are still preferable to simple cross-sectional

designs. The time lag between the measurements of independent and dependent variables takes into consideration that the effects usually need some time to unfold (in contrast to the unrealistic assumption that the effects can be observed instantly) (Selig & Preacher, 2009). Furthermore, as the independent and dependent variables are measured at different time points, there is a reduced the risk of the overestimation of the effects due to participants' momentary mood.

Finally, only the information from adolescents was employed in the Studies I-III. From the social cognitive perspective, the meanings ascribed to the experiences by adolescents, not the experiences themselves, play a role. Therefore, the exclusive emphasis on adolescents' perceptions does not have to be a serious limitation. On the other hand, if the information from other sources (e.g., parents or teachers) is considered, a more complex and detailed picture will emerge (see Westholm, 1999). For example, adolescents' interpretations of family experiences might reflect both an actual parental behavior and adolescents' preceding cognitive schemata, and the interplay between these two can be decisive for the development of political beliefs. Further studies are therefore encouraged to use also to use a multiinformant approach.

7.4 Conclusions and implications

As a whole, the studies have shown that there is no clear divisive line between adolescents' political development and their development in other areas. Political socialization cannot be understood as occurring only through political discussions, watching political news, or political participation. There are many other factors that might, under certain conditions, have an impact on adolescents' political beliefs. Specifically, it was found that adolescents' perceptions of parents, depressive mood, verbal cognitive ability, and identity-processing styles predict various political beliefs. The professionals who develop and pursue the programs on civic education must be aware that young people with different personal characteristics and family experiences might come to the programs having different beliefs about politics, including political efficacy, political trust, and preferences for various forms of political activity. Consequently, young people with different beliefs about politics might have different needs with respect to civic education.

Since the studies have several limitations, further research is needed in order to clarify the mechanisms, by which nonpolitical characteristics and experiences relate to

political beliefs. For example, we need to know why exactly adolescents with greater verbal cognitive ability have also greater political trust. Such and similar studies would extend our knowledge on political socialization to the area that remains almost unexplored so far.

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