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From the Same Starting Points to Moderate versus  
Radical Solutions. Hungarian Case Study on the  
Political Socialization of Young LMP and Jobbik Party  
Political Activists

Intersections. EEJSP  
1(3): 59-80.  
DOI: 10.17356/ieejsp.v1i3.98  
<http://intersections.tk.mta.hu>

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### Abstract<sup>1</sup>

In line with the general tendency in post-communist societies, several waves of youth research reported the low interest in politics amongst young people in Hungary from late 1990s until 2010 (Csákó et al., 1999; Bognár, 2010; Gázsó and Laki, 2000; Örkény, 2000; Gázsó and Szabó, 2002; Szabó, 2009). However, two political movements emerged that successfully attracted young supporters and managed to enter the Hungarian parliament in 2010: LMP, a center-leftist party, and Jobbik, a radical rightist party.

In-depth interviews with four young LMP and four Jobbik activists were carried out to examine how different agents of socialization contributed to political participation, and the influences that determine whether one or the other path is chosen, i.e., a democratic, leftist, or a radical rightist one. Informal socialization agents, such as the family and peer influences and political events played an important role in political socialization, while the influence of formal agents, such as school education was missing. The groups shared the same events as clues to their political awakening. In spite of starting from their shared generational community, they chose different solutions according to the ideologies stemming from their political socialization.

Our results about the lack of institutional influences on political socialization indicates the relevance of fostering future changes in the role of schools in conveying norms for democracy.

*Keywords:* Political Socialization, Youth Activism, Political Participation, Post-communist Hungary.

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<sup>1</sup> The authors thank Judit Kende and Melinda Kovai for help with the design and implementation of the study, and Paul DeBell for suggestions on improving the paper.

## *Introduction*

### *Political participation amongst the youth in Europe and specifically in post-socialist Hungary*

The decrease of political participation – in the form of voting and party activism – amongst young people is an important topic of investigation all over Europe, considering that participation is particularly important in determining the quality of democracy (Merkel and Croissant, 2004; Svetlozar, 2005). It is especially relevant for Eastern and East-Central European new democracies with post-communist heritage seeking improvement and stabilization of the quality of democracy, though political participation amongst the youth is even more limited in these countries (Robertson, 2009). Youth research on political participation looks at three basic forms of political participation in general: involvement in formal/institutional politics (e.g., voting, party activism), informal/protest activities (e.g., participating in demonstrations or new social movements) and civic engagement (e.g., doing voluntary work) (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002). The observation of a general decrease in formal/institutional participation in both established and new democracies has been widely supported by empirical data (Rose and Munro, 2003; van Biezen, 2003; Whiteley, 2011). The question is whether it reflects a crisis for democracy, or the transformation of participation amongst the youth: as we clearly see that young people choose new, and more informal forms of activism, like protest activities instead of party activism (Forbrig, 2005; Kovacheva, 2005; Robertson, 2009). Several studies suggest that the latter explanation is valid in Western democracies (Dalton, 2000; Norris, 2003), but this does not seem to be the case in Eastern, post-communist democracies. In these countries both formal and informal forms of participation remained low amongst the generation raised after the democratic transition, despite the fact that they do not even have personal experience of the socialist era (Wallace and Kovacheva, 1998; Robertson, 2009).

Despite the importance of investigating this generation in post-communist countries to understand their relation to politics and to reveal possible ways of mobilizing them, there is a lack of empirical work focusing on this question (Robertson, 2009). We would like to fill this gap with this qualitative case study carried out in Hungary amongst young party activists of two new Hungarian parliamentary parties. Our aim is to understand the influences that lead to conventional forms of activism in a context of general low level of political participation. Furthermore, we are interested in the differences between the political socialization of those choosing a democratic, leftist path and those opting for a radical rightist one.

Hungarians were characterized by a low level of all forms of political activism in comparison with the European average until the early 2010's (Szabó and Kern, 2011).<sup>2</sup> The European Social Survey 2008/2009 shows that party membership was the

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<sup>2</sup> This trend of low levels of protest activities has changed recently: there were some examples of mobilization amongst the youth against measures of the Fidesz government: e.g., student protests in 2012, mass street protests against a proposed Internet tax in 2014, and various protest actions against the government's anti-immigrant campaign in 2015.

lowest amongst Hungarian youth – besides Polish youth – in the 28 countries of the EU (Szabó and Kern, 2011). Research has consistently found that young people are indifferent toward and reject the world of politics (Csákó, et. al., 1999; Gázsó and Laki, 2000 and 2004; Örkény, 2000; Gázsó and Szabó, 2002; Szabó, 2009; Bognár, 2010).

Within this context of low political interests, two new movements managed to become parliamentary parties in the 2010 national elections and gain popularity amongst young supporters: LMP (Politics Can Be Different) and Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary). LMP declared itself as a green, liberal-leftist party, founded in 2008 with the purpose of reforming Hungarian politics, while Jobbik, a patriotic party founded in 2003, offered a radical right-wing alternative. The ratio of young supporters of LMP under 30 years of age was 43 per cent, while of Jobbik it was 40 per cent (Sik, 2011). They are still the most appealing parties for university and college students: 35 per cent would vote for Jobbik, and 25 per cent would choose LMP (Szabó, 2015).

### *The present study*

We carried out semi-structured in-depth interviews with young activists of LMP and Jobbik in 2012 to explore their political socialization through their personal stories of activism. Our aim was to understand how their political socialization led them to political participation in a post-socialist society where this form of activism is especially rare, even with the increasing support of these parties amongst the youth. Additionally, we were interested in their decisive influences that made them join either a moderate, left-wing, or to a radical right-wing party.

We used open-ended research questions to fit in with our method of using semi-structured interview allowing an analysis of the phenomenon in its complexity, and enabling patterns to emerge from the texts. However, we used the literature on political socialization and political participation as reference points for our interview guideline, coding and analysis.

Our research questions were the following: (1) What are the roles of agents of political socialization in becoming party activists? (2) In what ways do agents of socialization determine whether a moderate left-wing, or a radical right-wing path is chosen? (3) What are the commonalities in the mobilization of the activists based on their generational community?

Thereinafter, a theoretical framework of political socialization followed by a description of the political context of the study is provided. Subsequently, we introduce the methods and then the results supported by quotes from the interviews. Finally, we conclude our findings in a common discussion and conclusion section.

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## *Theoretical framework*

### *Political socialization*

Political socialization theory constitutes the central focus of this study. Political socialization is a lifelong interactive relationship between the person and the politicized society (Szabó, 2009). It is also the developmental processes by which people acquire political cognition, attitudes, and behaviors (Powell and Cowart, 2013). Agents of socialization convey relevant information and reference points that help people construct their own opinions and values in the social world (Bar-Tal and Saxe, 1990). Political socialization is a lifelong process, but childhood and adolescence play the most important roles in the formation of political attitudes through both political and non-political influences (Muxel, 1992; Deth and Abendschön, 2011; Szabó, 2009). Identity formation is a basic element of political socialization, as socialization is about the construction of identity (Percheron, 1974). The connection between political socialization and identity formation becomes apparent especially in the investigation of the effects of education (Adams, 1985). Therefore, we also focus on the effects of schooling.

Through the interaction between the person and different agents of socialization, these influences can serve as the basis of social identity construction, affirming a sense of belonging, perceived similarity and control (Turner, 1982). A frequent division of agents of political socialization is a distinction between family, school (teachers and peers) and mass media/political actors (Bognár, 2010; Giddens, 2006; Nagy and Székely, 2010). A survey about the political socialization of an older generation, which was socialized in the socialist system in Hungary, revealed the significant effects of historical traumas of the Horthy-era<sup>3</sup> and the Rákosi-era<sup>4</sup> in political preferences (Karácsony, 2005). However, these traumas had less effect on the younger generations who were raised after the transition. They do not necessarily take the preferences of their parents, but choose their own ways, and mass media and party political agents would be more important influences for them, than family (Karácsony, 2005).

Agents of socialization can be grouped into non-formal and formal, namely non-institutional and institutional agents (Adams, 1985; Szabó, 2009 and 2010). The non-formal factor contains everyday interactions, personal experiences with family members, peers and teachers, but also media effects and cultural influences, and so-called “*basic themes*” that refer to value-patterns and the basis of collective identities. In contrast, formal factors of socialization are institutions, e.g., schools, church, different organizations, and parties themselves, including their youth divisions. The function of formal agents is to integrate people in the social and political system, teaching them how to behave as (active) citizens and yielding norms and the recognition of democratic functioning (Szabó, 2009). There is clear evidence of the connection between education and democracy (Almond and Verba, 1963: 315-324). Although early findings suggested otherwise (Langton and Jennings, 1968), more

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<sup>3</sup> Regency with the leadership of Horthy, 1920-1944

<sup>4</sup> Stalinist regime between 1945 and 1956

recently there is a consensus about the great relevance of formal socialization for democracy (Niemi and Finkel, 2006), via increased knowledge (Dassonneville et al., 2012), democratic and open school climate (Campbell, 2008; Flanagan and Stout, 2010), and teaching human rights (Torney-Purta, et al., 2008). Furthermore civic education has proved to have long-term effects on adult life (Hooghe and Wilkenfeld, 2008; Torney-Purta, 2004). Formal socialization agents play an important role in more established democracies, while in post-socialist countries the efficiency of schools and other organizations tends to be low and less dominant (Szabó, 2009) giving more space to non-formal agents of political socialization. This fragmented model of political socialization is typical for Hungary (Szabó, 2009 and 2011). After the transition youth “disappeared” from organized political society, as neither political parties nor civil organizations ever even addressed them (Szabó and Kern, 2011). This resulted in a lack of proper political socialization of the youth in Hungary. In addition, the informal role of the family lost its importance (Somlai, 1994), whilst peer influences gained more significance (Szabó, 2011) creating a tendency that young people discuss political issues more with peers, and less with parents and teachers (Csákó, 2005). Several social scientists share their concerns about the low efficacy of schools as formal agents of socialization in Hungary: instead of taking up this responsibility, teachers (in agreement with parents) exclude politics from formal education (Csákó, 2005). A recent case study on the connection between quality of civic education and authoritarianism amongst the youth<sup>5</sup> confirmed that the democratic regression in Hungary is due to the failure of civic education, in contrast to post-socialist Poland that has a more successful education for democracy.

Democratic and national basic themes are historically embedded in society and can be overarching frameworks of non-formal socialization serving as the basis of collective identities, e.g., party-supporter identities (Szabó, 2009). In Western democracies, the democratic theme expressed in strong citizen socialization in education is central, and post-materialist values connected to it can be strong predictors of new movement participation (Inglehart, 1990). In contrast, in Central and Eastern Europe, the nation is the main theme through which societal problems are articulated, and can effectively mobilize emotions and communities (Szabó, 2009). These themes can be core elements in both the early and late political socialization, conveyed by family models in informal ways, while at the same time, they can also be the basis for either liberal or conservative ideologies that are conveyed by political parties, and political actors, as formal agents of socialization.

We chose the age cohort between 20 and 30 years, as a generation raised after the transition that is ideal to investigate the influences of both post-communist heritage and democratic trends in the socialization. The post-communist heritage hindered activism amongst this generation by their alienation from politics compared to youth in Western democracies (Robertson, 2009). Besides belonging to the same age cohort, it is also relevant to consider the construct of generation in the view of Mannheim, referring to common socio-political influences, as crucial in political

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<sup>5</sup> The study was based on the results of CIVED 1999, a cross-national study of civic education practices and outcomes, conducted in 28 countries in the late 1990s, and the comparisons provided by 2002, 2006 and 2010 waves of ESS on voting behavior amongst the same countries (Fesnic, 2014).

socialization and participation. According to Mannheim (1952), members of a generation share the same social experiences stemming from a common historical-societal context, and as a result, they share patterns in their political thinking and political awakening (Pilcher, 1994).

### *The context of the emergence of LMP and Jobbik in Hungarian politics*

By the late 1990s, a decade after the transition from the socialist system, Hungarian politics reflected a polarized struggle between the conservative right-wing Fidesz (Hungarian Civic Alliance) and the left-wing-socialist MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party). However, the power-balance between them was broken in 2006, after a scandal involving MSZP's prime minister that led to a sudden loss of popularity of the government and to the rise of Fidesz.<sup>6</sup>

In the 2010 elections, Jobbik achieved support of 16 per cent of the votes cast, increasing to 20 per cent in 2014. Jobbik declares itself a radical right, conservative and Christian- nationalist party, but denies being racist or extreme<sup>7</sup>. However, they reject basic Western values on an ethnic/racist basis, as is typical of far-right parties (Filippov, 2011).

LMP, a green leftist party declaring participatory democracy, economic sustainability and social equality<sup>8</sup>- entered the Parliament in 2010 with seven per cent support that decreased to five per cent by the 2014 elections.<sup>9</sup> The party had internal debates over their leftist or centrist identity<sup>10</sup>, and as a consequence of their inner struggles, LMP split into two in November 2012. However, our data was collected prior to their split. LMP has similar characteristics to other anti-establishment reform parties in Central Europe: these parties are considered to be moderate alternatives in the parliamentary elections, while Jobbik as a populist radical right party is often considered as a danger to democratic functioning (Hanley and Sikk, 2013).

### *Method*

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were chosen as a method to investigate participants' personal stories of activism. The relevance of this method is justified by the fact that youth participation research is mainly based on quantitative studies that

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<sup>6</sup> Fidesz won the elections holding a two third-majority in parliament in the elections of 2010, and was re-elected with nearly the same rate of mandates in 2014. In their rhetorics they greatly build on the national theme and national identity that was a successful strategy enabling them to build a wide supporter basis (Szabó I., 2009).

<sup>7</sup> [jobbik.com](http://jobbik.com): Jobbik Party Manifesto (2003) [http://jobbik.com/manifesto\\_0](http://jobbik.com/manifesto_0) Accessed: 27-07-2015.

<sup>8</sup> [lehetmas.hu](http://lehetmas.hu): LMP Party Manifesto (2010): [http://lehetmas.hu/upload/10/10/200812/Alapito\\_nyilatkozat.pdf](http://lehetmas.hu/upload/10/10/200812/Alapito_nyilatkozat.pdf) Accessed: 27-07-2015.

<sup>9</sup> This decrease in popularity can be connected to their split in 2012, because they could not agree on the electoral cooperation with other opposition parties. (<http://www.politics.hu/20130127/lmp-rejects-proposals-for-new-strategy-at-party-congress/>, 2013). Accessed: 27-05-2015.

<sup>10</sup> [budapest.eu](http://www.budapest.eu) (2011): <http://www.budapest.eu/2012/09/the-dilemmas-of-the-lmp/> Accessed: 27-07-2015.

highlight relationships between variables, but more qualitative case studies are needed to capture the process behind mobilization or the lack of it (Kovacheva, 2005).

The richness of texts and the depth of qualitative analysis enable us to find answers to our open-ended research questions despite the low sample size, which is usual in similar qualitative research (Nasie et. al., 2014). Data was collected in the spring of 2012. Four activists of LMP and four activists of Jobbik participated in the research ( $N = 8$ ). We contacted a youth party member by phone and then used snowball sampling to recruit more participants. As being a case study with non-representative sampling, generalizability is limited, but it still has the capability to allow insights to the process of youth mobilization.

The age criterion for the participants was 20-30 years. Jobbik participants were more homogeneous in terms of age; they were between 20 and 22 years, while LMP supporters were 22-28 years old.

The gender distribution was equal in both groups. All participants attended higher education, or already had a higher education degree. They were all raised in Budapest, and worked there as activists.<sup>11</sup> Participants were involved in different types of activism: three of them worked for the party professionally, while the other five activists supported the parties as volunteers. All of them identified themselves as activists and their commitment to their party was high.

Table 1 shows the summary of basic information of the interviewees.

LMP activists	Jobbik activists
Szilárd, 23, male Student Family background: culturally right-wing	János, 21, male Student Family background: culturally right-wing
László, 28, male University degree Family background: culturally right-wing	Tamás, 20, male Student Family background: uncertain voters
Anna, 22, female Student Family background: left-wing	Orsolya, 22, female Student Family background: culturally right-wing
Réka, 25, female University degree Family background: left-wing	Flóra, 21, female Student Family background: culturally right-wing

Table 1. Information on the interviewees

Interviews took place in a calm environment that was neutral to all participants. All the interviews were carried out and transcribed by the first author, and analyzed by both authors. Voluntary participation with informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were assured, the names used in the paper are fictitious. We followed the interview

<sup>11</sup> It means a somewhat different position for the two parties, as Budapest is a traditionally liberal city, where LMP has a relatively higher support than Jobbik amongst the youth in comparison with other parts of the country, where the opposite trend is true (Szabó A., 2015).

guideline used previously in a study about human rights activists (Kende, 2011), tailored to the specific attributes of party political activists.

The interview consisted of three main parts. In the first part, participants were asked about the main issues that they consider important problems in the world to identify their basic world views and ideologies. In the second part, they were encouraged to talk about their most memorable experiences as activists, and the way they turned to politics and to their parties. They were asked about the influences of their childhood, adolescence and recent past, family, peer and schooling, political and media effects and circumstances of joining the parties. In the last part, they were asked about more abstract themes, such as their goals and their relation to their own activism, and politics in general.

Interviews lasted three to four hours on average. Thematic content analysis was carried out using Atlas.ti 5.5.9, a content analysis software package that enabled us to structure and systematically analyze texts with manually assigned codes. "Thematic analysis is still the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set, and it is also the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research." (Guest et. al., 2012:11). We also employed some elements of the interpretative phenomenological approach, as a set of case studies are under in-depth analysis driven by the assumption that the personal interpretation of studied phenomenon can grab the essence of the studied theme (Smith, 2004).

Codes were constructed both top-down based on the literature on political socialization and bottom-up from the interview texts. Examples for the literature-based codes are National and Democratic basic themes, and the codes for the agents of socialization: Family, School, Political actors/Media. Codes emerging from the texts were Events of 2006, Sustainability, Goals, Community and Problems. Results with the codes of Community and Problems are not discussed in this paper. In the process of analysis, we manually assigned codes to thematic parts of the texts.<sup>12</sup> Citations were grouped and displayed according to the codes, to help the thematic overview of the text and interpretations. The process of analysis was to collect quotes under each thematic code by the software, re-read them one after the other multiple times while writing memos, and identify patterns based on the similarities and differences within and between codes, identify code-combinations and the patterns of their occurrence, and finally make comparisons between quotes of LMP and Jobbik activists.

Code family	Code	Description
Agents of socialization	Family	Mention of family members, opinions or influences, memories
	School	References of school memories, including contact with peers and teachers, any school influences

<sup>12</sup> Coding was carried out by the first author, and multiple re-reads of the re-structured units of texts by both authors.

Code family	Code	Description
	Political actors/ Media	Mention of parties or politicians, in either direct (personal) or indirect (media) ways
Basic themes	Nation	Mention of the nation, national sentiment or national identity
	Democracy	Mention of democracy, democratic functioning, citizen identity, European identity
Codes emerging from the interviews	Sustainability	Mention of any „green” issues, ecological sustainability, nature, animal welfare etc.
	Events of 2006	Mention of the Öszöd speech or the subsequent protests
	Goals	Expression of any personal or collective goals in connection with the activism, reference to social changes they wish to reach

Table 2. Summary of the codes manually assigned to thematic units of the texts

## *Results*

As our largest units of analysis were the different agents of socialization, we present our findings organized under the headings of the sub-themes of socialization. We present the agents of socialization in chronological order in the activist career: family, parties and political events in early socialization, school, and finally parties and political events in later socialization.

### *Family*

Family as a political reference point appears in all interviews, although the influence is not necessarily direct or described as deterministic. In the interpretations of these patterns, we used the constructs of biographical continuity and conversion (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2007). Continuity refers to the situation in which the chosen ideology of the activist is in accordance with his/her family's political orientation, while conversion refers to turning against family patterns. Interviews showed examples of both. Appearance of basic themes in family socialization is discussed later.

### *Continuity*

Biographical continuity could be observed in five interviews. Three Jobbik activists showed the most salient family influences: an internalization of conservative-national values and national identity. János emphasized a very direct impact from his grandfather, with whom he had a close relationship, and whose memories of the Horthy era and the issue of Hungarians living in other countries the respondent

listened to from his early childhood. His grandfather with a strong national identity functioned as a model to look up to and to follow. Interestingly, his parents did not represent this model at all, and in his closer family circle, there were no models for political participation.

*'It was good to listen to my grandfather about these things. I felt that what he said is credible from every point of view that we should take care of Hungarians stuck outside of Hungary, I agreed with. I don't know why, I felt that it must be important and that is right, we are Hungarians, they are too, it's obviously an important thing. I think he had a big influence on me, that this approach evolved in me.'* (János, 21, Jobbik)

*'I know that it sounds pathetic, but I would dedicate my life to help the nation to develop, progress, and survive.'* (János, 21, Jobbik)

Orsolya also showed direct influences of the family: her closest relatives contributed to developing a strong national identity and to become politically active as well. In her case, both values and models of doing politics came directly from her family background.

*'For example, when I asked something in a family debate, they didn't tell me, "oh darling, you are too young for that." They explained everything to me. My parents have a nationalist sentiment too, and it's important for them too, being Hungarians. This was my upbringing.'* (Orsolya, 22, Jobbik)

Flóra is another example besides János, whose closer family involvement in politics was low, but nevertheless the family conveyed some conservative values and patriotism, which had a great impact on her political socialization: she mentioned tight family ties, tradition, and "respect for her heritage" as values she internalized in the family.

*"Actually I think that my formative experiences are connected to my parents, unintentionally. ....I think if they knew that it's because of them that I'm here... they would definitely not be happy that they caused it, actually...So I think that it was them who put patriotism in me, unintentionally... But they succeeded in that."* (Flóra, 21, Jobbik)

As demonstrated above, the national theme and national identity were salient in three out of four cases stemming from family influences. The fourth Jobbik activist interviewed was influenced by Jobbik as a party in his national sentiment, so his case is discussed later in the article.

We can talk about continuity in the case of two LMP activists, however, with fewer direct family influences in comparison with Jobbik activists, but the presence of specific values. Anna described a model of political awareness and opinion formation in her family, where parents were liberal and left-wing, and the value of tolerance and critical thinking encouraged her to get involved in politics. However, she could not

name a direct, willful influence from her parents. She emphasized solidarity and openness to diversity, as basic values she internalized very early, which seemed natural to her.

*“My mom doesn’t really do politics, just passively, my father does so more actively. So I don’t think that would be the reason that it happened. Surely, it was present in my upbringing, but not explicitly, not with a strong influence. Still, it evolved in me somehow. I always had Roma classmates, I have a university mate, who is gay, I have friends who are gay, so it’s not a problem for me, and never has been.” (Anna, 20, LMP)*

Réka came from a left-wing, open-minded family, but she denied the influence of political preference in her family, as politics was not an important topic to them. Similarly to Anna, she mentioned solidarity and benevolence as values conveyed by her family in an indirect way.

*“On the one hand, our uncle, who was disabled, often visited us, and I have seen how to help others since my childhood. When we went somewhere in the city with mum and we saw, say, a blind man with a white stick, then we went there and learned how to help... So these things I surely internalized.” (Réka, 25, LMP)*

### *Conversion*

Conversion was identified in two LMP activists’ stories with right-wing family backgrounds. Both of them described their families’ orientation as determined by historical traumas and anticommunism and both of them sympathized with the right-wing conservative party, Fidesz, in their early stages of activism. Fidesz was the biggest opposition party at that time, in 2006. Later, they realized that Fidesz could not meet the demands they made about politics.

László mentioned the stories he heard as a child from his grandmother about the family’s losses suffered in the socialist era as early influences that made him interested in history and politics. Effects of anticommunism were important to him until his late adolescence, but later these influences faded away as he was in search for his own political community.

*“Events of 2006 pushed me toward doing politics. Then I had to realize, that I couldn’t believe in Fidesz for some reasons.” (László, 28, LMP)*

*“This feeling of happiness that you are searching an open-minded way, and waiting for something that you are really looking for, and finally, you realize that you get it.” (László, 28, LMP)*

Similarly to László, Szilárd reported a culturally influenced rightist preference in his family. Besides this, he mentioned that his father was a model in his attitude toward politics as well. However, when he too, changed his preferences from right wing to left

wing, peer influences, and his parents “liberal upbringing style”, not forcing him to choose any directions also became important reference points.

*“Recently my mum has been saying that I became left-wing just to annoy them, just from a child’s defiance. But it is not true; they just say it as a joke. What I am pleased about, that this interest, it was typical of my father, and I took up this interest from him, I could see it in him.” (Szilárd, 23, LMP)*

All LMP interviewees emphasized values of solidarity and diversity; however, these values were not always connected to the articulation of an overarching democratic theme. Sustainability, a core concept for the party, was emphasized by two of the four activists, indicating that this is not necessarily a shared basis of identity for them, either.

### *Parties and political events in early socialization*

Political protests in 2006 triggered by the so-called “Őszöd-speech” appeared as a highly important turning point in the mobilization of the interviewees. The recording of a confidential speech of the socialist Prime Minister, Ferenc Gyurcsány, in which he said, “we lied to the people” was disclosed, causing outrage, and a long wave of violent demonstrations. Radical right protesters attacked the building of the national television ending in a brutal struggle with the police. These events were memorable and emotionally intense for the entire society, and it turned out to be a very important point for the activists involved in this research, leading to their political awakening and eventually their political engagement.

The activists from both groups perceived the events in a similar way: it was a trigger for their political commitments, bringing the realization that there is an urgent need to change politics, and they are responsible for bringing about this change.

It was the early stage of their mobilization – they were high school students at that time – and there were only slight differences in their opinions, but ideological frames were already identifiable in the appraisal of the events. As a common point, they all condemned the speech, but reported different emotional reactions: some reacted with outrage (László from LMP, Flóra and Tamás from Jobbik), one reacted with fear (Orsolya from Jobbik), some talked about keeping an emotional distance or were more permissive (Szilárd and Anna from LMP).

*“When you see that the world is so unfair that the prime minister could do this without getting punished. You try to understand it, but it does not fit in your world view. And it is like a teenage rebellion, you rise up, you go to Kossuth Square, or other places.” (Flóra, 21, Jobbik)*

Tamás, who did not have strong political family influences, experienced the disappointment and outrage of his parents who previously voted for the Socialist Party. He and his parents began radicalizing at the same time, reinforcing each other in their choice and commitment for Jobbik. It is interesting to note that without

conservative family values and national sentiments, his socialization was connected exclusively to the political events and political agents like Jobbik itself.

*“... it was a turning point for them that this Gyurcsány is not a good guy, and that was why I started to care about these things. And that was why I started to pay attention to the events of October 2006, to see how far people get when they stand up against the system in this way.” (Tamás, 20, Jobbik)*

*“I look at Jobbik to understand why I started to deal with this, because I can see that these values [nationalist sentiment] are constructive.” (Tamás, 20, Jobbik)*

Jobbik and LMP activists differed in their perception of the violent acts of the protesters. Jobbik activists justified the radical actions by the necessity to engage in such actions, arguing that the situation was unacceptable, and there was no other way to react. No Jobbik supporters interviewed were critical about the violence of the protests. At the same time, LMP supporters were more critical about violent actions; two of them considered them as an unacceptable form of protest. The reason for this difference can be the ideological community Jobbik activists shared with the radical right protesters, while LMP activists did not identify with them.

*“I saw what was happening on television, and I thought that it was obviously not by chance that people sacrificed their freedom and bodily integrity just to protest. Actually, I was interested in why this was happening.” (Orsolya, 22, Jobbik)*

*“My first memories are when rightists tried to smash the building of the national television. I had a very negative opinion about them because protest always meant a peaceful thing to me. The whole thing shocked and scared me, and I didn't understand, why it was good for them.” (Anna, 22, LMP)*

### *School: formal (institutional) and informal (teacher and peer) effects*

Schools enter the analysis on multiple levels: both on the formal/institutional level via education and general norms, and on an informal level via personal interactions with teachers and peers. Schooling as a normative, formal agent of socialization did not seem salient in the interviews. Some teachers appeared to convey an informal influence, but these were expressed mostly in indirect ways. An interesting comparison occurred between two interviewees in which one was tacitly encouraged, and the other discouraged to express political opinions by their teachers at school. Flóra from Jobbik described a class community in her Christian high school where almost all of her classmates expressed radical right-wing orientations. This was an open secret in the school that teachers implicitly tolerated.

*‘Actually, just this, like “Pistike, please do not sleep in class, I saw on the news that you were very energetic yesterday”, these kind of funny comments*

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*occurred, but nothing like punishing anyone, just because they were in the news. At the same time, it was really an open secret, when you see ten members of a class in the news that wow, there is something about them.’ (Flóra, 21, Jobbik)*

Their commitments were strengthened by the events of 2006, as they saw the models of protesting masses and the possibility to join them. They experienced these events, i.e., going together to Kossuth Square to protest, as teenage rebellion.

*“When, for example, two of my classmates participated in an evening protest, and the next day they would tell us their experiences. And then, wow, it must have been cool, let’s go out this afternoon, let’s see, and things like that. Actually, it might be that we pulled each other that I was there and you were not, but I never felt that it was the reason why I joined.” (Flóra, 21, Jobbik)*

At the same time, in another high school, Anna from LMP listened to her teacher telling stories about his participation in the 2006 protests during the history class, that made almost all of the students enthusiastic, making her feel excluded as a member of a minority who remained silent.

*“He told us that he was outside protesting in the 2006 waves of demonstration, and told us, how to fight with the police. He talked about it in class, we were seventeen, and about four of us sat silently and tried not to pay much attention, while the others encouraged him, and asked him, and expressed how good it was. And this was very negative to me, because I don’t think a teacher should act like that, and it probably determined how I saw that side...” (Anna, 22, LMP)*

These effects of conformity amongst peers and group norms seemed relevant in political socialization, especially when they were informally encouraged by the teachers. These examples show that teachers who are normally seen as conveying institutional norms by their pupils can assert an informal influence as well, blurring the boundaries between formal and informal socialization effects.

Peer influences as informal agents of political socialization appeared important in even more interviews. For example, the political conversion of Szilárd was a result of his debates with his peers from high school.

*“And we always had debates about it [politics] in high school, very interesting debates. And you can’t get by the Öszöd speech. That experience determines the approach to politics of this generation, how that scandal broke out and public talk started about it.” (Szilárd, 23, LMP)*

László mentioned his fights with his peers too, and the recognition of family influences in this early socialization, realizing that most of his high school peers seemed to borrow their political preferences from home, including him. Critical

reflection on these influences seemed to be important for László in his story of finding his own party preference later.

On the other hand, the normative, formal effects of education were missing. Only one LMP interviewee, Réka, mentioned that the promotion of a voluntary work program in their school gave her the chance to direct her attention to civil activities that later led to her engagement in the professional work of LMP. Nevertheless, this sole example demonstrated that schools could theoretically play a role in political socialization, even if these examples were practically missing from the interviews.

### *Parties and political events in later socialization*

Actual mobilization and joining the parties was very similar for all interviewees. 2006 turned their attention to politics, building upon the values from their early socialization, which they compared to the preferences of their peers, and finally, during their higher education years, they started to look for a community that expressed their values. In this period of searching, all of them went their independent ways. They collected information on the Internet, visited party gatherings, and followed the parties' actions and politicians, so parties as formal socialization agents appeared in their stories. Media and personal experiences strengthened their identification with the party, and the associated beliefs that these parties are worth joining because through them they can make a change.

*“What convinced me to join was the outcome of the EP elections. When I saw that Jobbik reached 15%, I saw that this is something effective, many people stand beside it, and it is reasonable to join.” (Tamás, 20, Jobbik)*

Common perception of the political crisis in 2006 led to interviewees' shared activist identities and the basic goals they articulated. The similarities appeared in two of their basic missions that they recalled in almost identical ways: one was to work for a society where people can lead a higher quality of life and can live together in harmony. The other aim was to “wake up the people”, and make them more sensitive to politics, to make public life fair and trustworthy. These commonalities support the idea of their togetherness as a generation (Mannheim, 1952).

*“We should somehow turn people back to politics to make them realize that politics is not bad. If it is done well, it is a very good and important thing. Politics is not guilty. Politics is everywhere, even in the lives of people, and they can change it.” (Anna, 22, LMP)*

*“We should wake up the people, show that you are not just a machine, you have your own thoughts that you can express. We are not just voting machines.” (János, 21, Jobbik)*

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## *Discussion and conclusion*

*1<sup>st</sup> research question: The roles of formal and non-formal socialization agents in mobilization.*

Family influence was strong, as patterns of continuity, parents and grandparents as models for political opinion formation supported this well-established effect of family influence on political commitments (Bar-Tal and Saxe 1990; Liebes et. al., 1991; Jennings et. al., 2009). However, in some cases family effects were limited: conversion took place in the political commitment of some activists coming from culturally right-wing background, showing that historical traumas do not have a determining effect on this generation (Karácsony, 2005). Instead, the crucial role of peer debates, personal experiences with teachers as authority figures and perceived peer norms were demonstrated, highlighting the excessive influence of informal experiences in the lack of perceived school norms. Our data highlighted the absence of formal schooling effects (Csákó, 2005; Szabó, 2009; Bognár, 2010; Szabó A. and Kern T. 2011). Before joining the parties, a formal influence of the parties through their rhetorics, and actions became salient.

*2<sup>nd</sup> research question: Determining agents of socialization in the choice for LMP or Jobbik.*

Conversion did not occur amongst Jobbik interviewees: instead, family effects were pronounced in inheriting the importance of the national theme. In contrast, open-mindedness and solidarity were LMP activists' common values that all of them mentioned, but they did not name such explicit family or party influences, as Jobbik activists did. We conclude that neither the democratic theme, nor the "green" ideology constituted such central aspects of the identity of LMP activists, as national identity was for Jobbik activists.

Differences in ideologies and identities were expressed even at the time of their common political awakening, leading Jobbik activists to identify more with the radical rightist protesters in 2006, and LMP activists to feel more controversial about them. LMP as a party cannot build on a deep-rooted pre-existing identity as Jobbik as a party do. A strong sense of national belonging, and nationalist sentiments rooted in the family socialization can be a powerful reason to choose a radical extreme right path. Furthermore, Jobbik seemed to be efficient in being a formal agent of socialization to their activists even without nationalist sentiment stemming from the family.

*3<sup>rd</sup> research question: Common points of mobilization based on the shared generational community of activists.*

The common political awakening of all the activists in 2006 supported the basic connection between the activists regardless of their family backgrounds. Goals of the activists can be interpreted by their generational community (Mannheim, 1952; Pilcher, 1992), as they all agreed that they have to elicit changes in society, wake up the people and involve them more in politics. The circumstances of joining the parties and their basic motivations for activism were also very similar. However, their different interpretations on the radical forms of protests in 2006 already reflected their different early socialization, paving their path to their different party choices.

Although previous research dealt with the problem of the lack of political involvement amongst young people (Csákó, 1999; Szabó, 2009; Bognár, 2010; Szabó and Kern, 2011), no research investigated the “other side”, the special group of young party political activists in Hungary. Our qualitative case study provided the opportunity to analyze the effects of different agents of socialization on mobilization within the complexity of personal activist careers. As we worked with a small sample, we cannot outline generalizable patterns of comparison of the two groups, but demonstrate the manifestation of political socialization and political awakening in individual activist careers.

We observed the absence of a formal socialization effect of school in the interviews: there were hardly any examples of perceiving school as an institution that conveyed clear values, norms, or the education for democracy. Instead, interviewees reported informal experiences with peers and teachers that became important reference points in their political socialization. This raises the question: in what ways should schools convey values of democracy and concepts of citizenship to students, and what differentiates these ways from personal political opinions that should stay out of school?

All the activists shared a generational community. They are members of the generation of the political crisis in 2006, when they started their active search for political alternatives, which met their personal and political needs.

In contrast to previous findings on the low level of political participation amongst the youth in post-communist countries (Robertson, 2009), we found that post-communist heritage – notwithstanding that reflected in the awareness of family traumas and the lack of political engagement by parents – did not hinder political participation of the interviewees. Instead, national identity amongst Jobbik activists, and the value of solidarity amongst LMP activists gained through informal socialization were enough basis for them to react to the political crisis of 2006 with their pre-existing ideologies. This suggests the importance and mobilizing effects of political crises in the political awakening of the youth on one hand, and the great importance of all informal, interpersonal influences on the other. Our findings underline the danger of the lack of efficient socialization for democratic values in schools, and the more pronounced mobilization potential of national identity in the context of post-communist Hungary. Nevertheless, we also argue that there is a possibility for change if informal and formal tools of socialization for democracy are properly understood and addressed.

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