

# DEMOCRACY BEGINS AT HOME

Parenting, Empathy, and Adolescents' Support for Democratic Values

Marta Miklikowska

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## Abstract

**Background:** Democracies are rare historically and inherently fragile. Their existence depends on more than formal institutions or an absence of dictators and extremists. In other words, the democratic quality of a political regime requires citizens who support democratic values. To this end, it is important to understand which factors lead individuals to feel committed to a democratic creed. Although it is assumed that support for democratic values develops as a result of social learning, concrete socializing circumstances are less obvious. The classical literature on political socialization pointed to parents as a direct determinant of youth civic formation. However, in contemporary societies, few parents hold explicit goals to influence the political preferences of their children. The present study aims at advancing this discourse by assessing the direct and indirect role of parenting for the democratic commitments of adolescents.

**Method:** This study was conducted on two random samples. One consisted of 1,341 secondary-school students, aged 17, from three regions of Finland (South, South-West, and West). The second consisted of 678 secondary-school students, aged 16 at baseline, from the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium. The study comprised of questionnaires which were administered during regular school hours.

**Results:** The present study yielded some important findings. First, it showed that empathy is a good predictor of adolescents' democratic commitments (Article I). Second, it provided evidence for the influence of supportive parenting on the development of empathy in adolescence (Article II). Third, it tested empathy as a predictor of democratic values in light of other significant variables (Article III). Fourth, it provided evidence that democratic parenting might be directly and non-directly, i.e. through adolescents' empathic skills, related to youth support for democratic values (Article IV).

**Conclusion:** Overall, this study showed direct and indirect ways in which parenting might influence the democratic orientation of adolescents and gave recommendations for the democratic education of citizens.

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## List of Original Publications

### Article I

Miklikowska, M. (submitted). Democracy-empathy = ? Empathy-related characteristics as predictors of support for democratic values in adolescence.

### Article II

Miklikowska, M., Duriez, B., & Soenens, B. (2011). Family roots of empathy-related characteristics: The role of perceived maternal and paternal need support in adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 47, 1342-1352.

### Article III

Miklikowska, M. (submitted). Psychological underpinnings of democracy: Authoritarianism, empathy, self-esteem, interpersonal trust, identity style, openness to experience, and social intelligence as predictors of support for democratic values.

### Article IV

Miklikowska, M. & Hurme, H. (2011). Democracy begins at home: Democratic parenting and adolescents' support for democratic values. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 8, 541-557.

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## 1. Introduction

In public discourse, democratic values are often invoked as arguments in favour or against certain policies or political actions. Democracy movements in the Arab world, recent electoral successes of right-wing parties and politicians, as well as rising trends of antidemocratic attitudes of youth are just a few examples of events to show that the themes of democratic values are vivid *hic et nunc*. Moreover, democratic political institutions depend critically upon the citizens' particular orientation toward political life with support for democratic values as its *sine qua non* (Almond & Verba 1963; Eckstein, 1966; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Given the centrality of democratic values both in the life of all societies and in the theories of system effectiveness, it is of no surprise that the study on its determinants has received scholarly attention. Although it has been generally assumed that support for democratic values develops as a result of social learning, concrete socializing circumstances are less obvious.

Developing a civic orientation, described as identifying one's place in society and participating in civic responsibility, is considered a developmental task in adolescence (Havighurst, 1972; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). The classical literature on political socialization pointed to parents as a direct determinant of youth civic formation. In contemporary societies however, few parents hold explicit goals to influence the political preferences of their children. This research aimed at advancing this discourse by assessing the role of parenting for youth democratic commitments.

Here, I present the conceptualization of democratic values as well as the research findings concerning significant predictors of democratic commitments. Next, I present the concept of democratic parenting and its role in youth political socialization in general and democratic development in particular. Finally, I summarize previous literature and state the aims of the present study.

### 1.1. Democratic Values

Democratic values refer to the basic principles of democratic governance such as e.g. equality, impartial justice, or the need for limits on majority power. On the one hand, people have been shown to endorse democratic values when stated in abstract terms, and on the other hand, the majority of the same respondents do not support those rights in certain contexts, for instance when they conflict with other values e.g. public order (McClosky & Brill, 1983). Researchers on political socialization have extended these findings to children and adolescents (Helwig, 1995; Jones 1980, Patterson, 1979; Zellman & Sears, 1971) and demonstrated that, similarly to adults, adolescents support democratic

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rights in the abstract but often do not endorse them in specific contexts. Therefore, democratic norms have been conceptualized at two different levels of abstraction: one reflecting an unconflicted, generalized support for democracy, and one at a lower level of abstraction reflecting support for civil liberties when they are in conflict with other values (e.g. Helwig, 1995; Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003).

### 1.1.1. Who Supports Democratic Values?

Factors which have been found to alter support for rules of democracy and the system itself are traditionally classified as socio-structural, political, and psychological. Niemi and Junn (1998) pointed to the importance of education in the promotion of democratic values. Gender has often been a significant predictor of democratic commitments although research offers contradictory findings concerning sex differences showing at times men (Golebiowska, 1999) and at times women (Jones, 1980) to be more supportive of democratic values. One of the early discovered political determinants of stronger support for democratic values was political expertise and activism (McClosky & Brill, 1983; McClosky & Zaller, 1984). More recent studies, however, challenge the importance of political knowledge to support for civil liberties (Green, Aronow, Bergan, Greene, Paris, & Weinberger, 2011).

In addition to demographic and political characteristics, support for democratic values has been linked to psychological properties. In light of social-cognitive and motivational theories, personality can either enhance the attractiveness of ideas which are congenial to a person's psychological needs, and hence facilitate their acquisition, or decrease the persuasiveness of ideas which are in conflict with the psychological needs, and hence hinder their internalization (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986; Greenstein, 1965; Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008; Lane, 1955; Levinson, 1958; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Furthermore, findings that political attitudes are genetically influenced highlight the connection to personality traits (Alford, Funk & Hibbing, 2005; Carmen, 2007).

Research shows that individuals supportive of democratic values are far more flexible and secure psychologically and lower in authoritarianism than their nondemocratic counterparts. Psychological inflexibility, i.e. the tendency to divide the world into friends and foes and a closedness to information that threatens internalized beliefs, has been shown to be negatively correlated with democratic values (Gibson & Tedin, 1988; McClosky & Brill, 1983; Peffley, & Rohrschneider, 2003; Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1982; Zalkind, Gaugler, & Schwartz, 1975). In contrast, psychological security, i.e. trust and high self-esteem, leads to the embracement of less defensive worldviews (Hart,



Shaver, & Goldenberg, 2005) and hence a greater endorsement of democratic norms (Sullivan, Marcus, Feldman, & Piereson, 1981; Shaffer & Hastings, 2004; Sniderman, 1975; Zellman & Sears, 1971; Zalkind et al., 1975). Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) has been considered as an expression of dispositional prejudice (Altemeyer, 1998; Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002) and as such has traditionally been a good predictor of negative democratic commitments (Adorno et al., 1950; Cohrs, Kielmann, Maes, & Moschner, 2005, McFarland, Ageyev, & Abalakina-Paap, 1992; Duckitt & Farre, 1994)

### 1.1.2. Empathy: A New Predictor of Support for Democratic Values

Dewey claimed that democracy is more than just a form of government, but that it is “primarily a mode of associated living” (Dewey, 1966, p.87). In line with this, psychological attributes related to handling social exchanges have been suggested as possible building blocks of democratic orientation. Here, two new predictors are considered, namely, empathy and social intelligence.

The concept of empathy refers to an ability to understand the internal states and feelings of others (Davis, 1983). According to most research, empathy is a multidimensional construct comprised of affective and cognitive components (Davis, 1983; Duan & Hill, 1996). The affective component is referred to as empathic concern and is based on the comprehension of the internal state of another person. Affective appraisals of another person’s emotional states often result in motivation to relieve the other person’s distress (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990). The cognitive component is referred to as perspective taking and may or may not result in an affective reaction towards the other person.

In light of attachment theory, empathic individuals are psychologically secure, free from self-preoccupation and therefore able to be engaged in and concerned about the welfare of others (Bowlby, 1980; Kestenbaum, Farber, & Sroufe, 1989; Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath & Nizberg, 2005; Sroufe, 2005). In line with motivational and moral foundations theories, individuals with high empathy have been shown to endorse political views which are congenial to their psychological needs, that is inclusive, caring, and accepting of others, e.g. liberal attitudes (Smith, 2006; McAdams, Albaugh, Faber, Daniels, Logan, & Olson, 2008), less prejudice (Monroe & Martinez-Marti, 2008; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003), positive attitudes towards outgroup members (Batson et al., 1997; Galinsky & Moscovitz, 2000), tolerant opinions (Finlay & Stephan 2000; Mutz, 2002), and support for human rights (Hunt, 2007; McFarland & Mathews, 2005). Moreover, empathy indicates an individual’s capability of taking on a sociomoral perspective, due to their ability to take into account the perspective of people with divergent interests and sympathize with different others. Both facets of empathy resonate with democratic ideals of inclusion and respect. If we put ourselves in the shoes of others, we will want them to be free

and treated equally fair. Similarly, if we sympathize with others, we will feel personal discomfort in the face of their negative experience. From this perspective, it seems likely that individuals with empathic skills would evaluate democratic values as right and just and we can expect empathic individuals to be more predisposed to endorse democratic values as resonating with their inner needs of care and engagement.

## **1.2. Political Socialization vs. Political Development**

Research on an individual's political development is framed by the classic concept of political socialization. Hyman (1959) defined political socialization as the "learning of social patterns corresponding to social position as mediated through various agencies of society" (p. 25). Several interacting socialization agents are assumed to contribute to the formation of civic attitudes such as parents (Jennings, 2002; Ter Bogt, Meeus, Raaijmakers, & Vollebergh, 2001; Westholm, 1999), peers (Smith & Roberts, 1995), school (Campbell, 2008; Sherrod et al., 2002; Torney-Purta, 2002), and societal values (Boehnke, Ittel, & Baier, 2002).

Adolescence has been defined as a crucial period in political development (Erikson, 1968; Krampen, 2000; Sears, 1975). Consequently, developing a civic orientation, described as identifying one's place in society and ultimately participating in civic responsibility, has been considered an adolescent developmental task (Havighurst, 1972; Sherrod et al., 2002).

While once a booming area of research, political socialization had until recently fallen by the wayside (Campbell, 2008). There have been two main reasons for this fact. Firstly, political socialization was conceptualized narrowly, as a top-down process of intergenerational transmission of political loyalties as opposed to a broader concept of political development (Flanagan & Gallay, 1995). Secondly, "political" was equated with "partisan" and thus other factors which have political relevance and constitute the developmental antecedents of political preferences, e.g. responsibility and empathy, were not paid sufficient attention to (Flanagan & Gallay, 1995; Flanagan & Tucker, 1999). I will discuss these issues in more detail in the following section.

### **1.2.1. Family Context in the Political Development of Adolescents**

Socialization theorists have recognized that families play an essential role in shaping adolescents' civic development. However they suggested rather simplistic processes by which families prepare children for membership in the polity. Early research on the role of the family has been dominated by the social

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learning perspective (Bandura, 1977; Gadsden & Hall, 1996), which assumes that political orientations are constructed through a process of social learning in which parents are role models for children to emulate. This in turn fosters a parent–adolescent coherence in attitudes (Acock, 1984; Hess & Torney, 1967; Knafo, & Assor, 2007; Singelmann, Ten Eyk, & Urban, 1999; Vollebergh, Iedema, & Raaijmakers, 2001) and behaviors (Jennings, 2002; Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Verba, Schlozmann, & Burns, 2005; Flanagan, 2003). The correlations between parental and offspring political orientations offered support to the top-down model of intergenerational transmission of political attitudes.

Results of further investigations into political orientations, however, showed that the family has been largely irrelevant to the formation of specific opinions (Connell, 1972; Jennings & Niemi, 1968; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 1999; Westholm, 1999, Beck & Jennigs, 1991). Once the “transmission model” had proven to be futile, researchers turned to family values and communication patterns as possible influences on youth political orientations (Chaffee, McCleod, & Wackman, 1973). Parent–child political discussions were then found to directly increase levels of political knowledge and political interest among youth (Verba et al. 2005; McIntosh, Hart & Youniss, 2007). Also family values of common good and public interest have been shown to explain a wide range of adolescents' political outcomes: their conceptions of democracy (Flanagan, Gallay, Gill, Gallay & Nti, 2005), political activism (Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, Sheblanova, 1998) and views on social problems (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999).

Whereas parents are unlikely to transmit their political preferences intact, in their daily interactions they communicate attitudes about consensus, compromise, and tolerance (Flanagan & Gallay, 1995). Research on parenting styles (Baumrind, 1966; 1991), for instance, suggested that the family context influences children and adolescents' attitudes by more subtle processes than via direct transmission of specific attitudes or their inference. A democratic style of interaction between a parent and a child, which is composed of acceptance/involvement, demands for maturity, and psychological autonomy granting (Baumrind, 1966; 1991), has been associated with youths of various socio-political competencies (Gniewosz, Noack, Buhl, 2009; see Steinberg, 2001, for review). Psychological autonomy granting, that is parental provision of choice, consideration of the child's perspective, and openness regarding the reasoning behind policies, has been found to foster qualities in youths such as political knowledge (Santolupo & Pratt, 1994), social tolerance (Owen & Dennis, 1987), and civic engagement (Smetana & Metzger, 2005). Parental warmth and acceptance have been shown to predict greater involvement, generativity, and the development of prosocial behaviors (see Berkowitz & Grych, 1998, for a review). By contrast, excessive psychologically controlling tactics such as guilt and

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anxiety induction and personal attacks have consistently been associated with a host of negative outcomes that run counter to democratic ideals (see Barber, 2002, for a review); a conclusion which also applies to the effects of harsh and punitive control (Rudo, Powell, & Dunlap, 1998). Clashes of opinions are inevitable in every democratic society, which makes the learning of noncombative conflict resolution skills important. Parental power assertion, however, models a lack of concern for others, aggression (Rudo et al., 1998), and an authoritarian outlook (Duriez, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2007).

It is not hard to imagine how and why the family would have an impact on adolescents' democratic orientation. Parents are principally responsible for teaching their children to respect the rights of others and to distinguish right from wrong (Meyers-Walls, 2001) and many strive to achieve these aims by creating a democratic environment at home in which joint decision making and compromise are the guiding principles, thus providing youths with the opportunity to practice the democratic "rules of the game" (Tomanovic, 2003). In the give-and-take of the family, children formulate rudimentary concepts of power and competing claims and learn that resolving differences of opinions may require compromise from both parties (Flanagan & Gallay, 1995).

In contrast to the early research focus on the transmission of political attitudes, later on the family has been suggested to be an environment in which political development takes place at a more basic level of psychic organization, namely, at a level of basic beliefs, which have political relevance (Renshon, 1974, 1975). A basic belief is defined as a set of assumptions about the nature of people and the world in which one lives and is a result of the interplay between the child's basic needs and their satisfaction (or their lack thereof). Empathy, i.e. the ability to understand the internal states and feelings of others (Davis, 1983), has been suggested to be one of such basic beliefs (Renshon, 1974, 1975). Moreover, empathy is derived from an attempt to satisfy basic human needs in the social context, which at an early age means the family (Eisenberg & Valiente, 2002; Knafo & Plomin, 2006; Knafo, Zahn-Waxler, Van Hulle, Robinson, & Rhee, 2008; Koestner, Franz, & Weinberger, 1990). This relation between parental support and children's empathy has been explained in terms of attachment theory (Kestenbaum et al., 1989; Laible, Carlo, & Roesch, 2004; van der Mark, van IJzendoorn, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2002). Supportive caregiving has been suggested to foster a secure attachment through satisfying children's emotional needs, and in this way to free children from self-preoccupation, thus allowing them to display truly empathic behavior (Bowlby, 1980; Hoffman, 2000; Sroufe, 2005; Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). Also, there are strong indications that empathy has important political implications. Empirical studies show empathic individuals to be cooperative (Batson, Batson, Todd, Brummet, Shaw, & Aldeguer, 1995), prosocial (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990), helpful (Oswald, 2002), and less aggressive (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988). Individuals with high levels of empathy

have also been shown to endorse political views which are inclusive, caring, and accepting of others, e.g. liberal attitudes (Smith, 2006; McAdams et al., 2008), less prejudice (Monroe & Martinez-Marti, 2008; Vescio et al., 2003), positive attitudes towards outgroup members (Batson et al., 1997; Galinsky & Moscovitz 2000), tolerant opinions (Finlay & Stephan 2000; Mutz, 2002), and support for human rights (Hunt, 2007; McFarland & Mathews, 2005). From this perspective, it can be expected that empathic individuals would be more predisposed to endorse democratic values as resonating with their psychological needs of care.

### 1.3. Summary of the Literature Reviewed

The existence of democracies depends critically upon citizens' particular orientations towards political life, with support for democratic values as its *sine qua non*. To this end, it is important to understand which factors lead individuals to feel committed to the democratic creed. Although it is assumed that support for democratic values develops as a result of social learning, concrete socializing circumstances are less obvious. The classical literature on political socialization pointed to parents as a direct determinant of youth civic formation through the model of transmission or social learning. In contemporary societies however, few parents hold explicit goals to influence the political preferences of their children. Therefore it has been suggested that the family's role in political socialization is subtler and the process of political development takes place at a level of styles of interaction between parent and child and at a level of basic beliefs, e.g. empathy, which are politically relevant later in life.

### 1.4. Aims

This study aimed at advancing the discourse concerning the role of the family in the political socialization of adolescents by assessing the direct and indirect role of parenting for the democratic commitments of adolescents. The present study addressed this issue in four steps. Firstly, the study aimed at testing empathy-related characteristics as a relevant factor for democracy. Secondly, the study aimed at showing the family roots of empathic skills. Thirdly, the study aimed at testing the importance of empathy for democratic orientation in light of established variables. Fourthly, the study aimed at testing a direct relevance of democratic parenting for adolescents' support for democratic values and an indirect one, mediated through youth empathic skills. The results are discussed in light of relevant political-psychological theories, and their implications for democratic education will be considered.

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## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and Procedure

This study was conducted on two random samples. Sample 1 (Article I, III, and IV) consisted of 1,341 secondary school students. Schools were selected at random from the educational registry from three regions of Finland (South, South-West and West). The average age of the students was 16.94 years (SD=0.52), 56% female, 44% male. Sample 2 (Article II) consisted of 678 high school students (Mean age = 15.64; SD = 0.34; 50% male) in the first wave of the data collection (Time 1). After a one-year interval, 84% of the initial sample ( $N = 570$ ) took part in the second wave (Time 2), and after another one-year interval, 81% ( $N = 549$ ) took part in the third wave (Time 3). All participants were from the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium.

No claim for the representativeness of the samples is made. At this stage interest is directed towards exploring relationships rather than generalizing to populations.

The study consisted of questionnaires which were administered in the presence of the author (Sample 1) or one of the co-authors (Sample 2) during regular school hours. Confidentiality was guaranteed and it was stressed that participation was voluntary. Students in group sessions had approximately 45 minutes to complete the survey.

### 2.2. Measures

Questionnaires given to students consisted of assessment scales chosen on the basis of their reliability in measuring given constructs. The following sections describe the instruments used in the present study.

#### 2.2.1. Democratic Values

The Support for Democratic Values (SDV) scale was an additive index based on responses to 10 items which tap support for democracy both as an ideal regime in an abstract form and in situations of conflicting values (Prothro & Grigg, 1960). Items were derived from the Multi-Dimensional Scale of Democratic Values (Gibson, Duch, & Tedin, 1992 as cited by Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1999), the Democratic Values Scale (McClosky & Zaller, 1984 as cited by Robinson et al., 1999), the Fundamental Principles of Democracy Scale (Prothro & Grigg, 1960 as cited by Robinson et al., 1999),

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the Democratic Principles and Applications Scale (McClosky, 1964 as cited by Robinson et al., 1999) and the Support for Democratic Principles (Kaase, 1971). The new composite scale, Support for Democratic Values (SDV), included items such as "Everyone should have the right to express his (her) own opinion even if it differs from the majority" with response options ranging between 1 (strongly disagree) and 4 (strongly agree) and had the Cronbach's alpha value of .74.

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Democracy may have its problems, but it's better than other forms of government.

I don't mind a politician's methods if he manages to get the right things done.

Because demonstrations frequently become disorderly and disruptive, radical and extremist political groups shouldn't be allowed to demonstrate.

This country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are.

You can't expect democracy to work as long as so many uneducated and unintelligent people have the vote.

Society shouldn't have to put up with the views that are fundamentally different from the views of the majority.

It's necessary that everyone, regardless of their views, can express themselves freely.

Everyone should have the right to express their own opinion even if it differs from the majority.

No matter what a person's beliefs are, he is entitled to the same legal rights and protection as anyone else.

If a Russian was elected in a local government election, the people should not allow him to take office.

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### 2.2.2. Democratic Parenting

To capture a broad picture of democratic parenting in Sample 1 (Article I, III, and IV), the following measures were used: *Parental Warmth* scale, from what in the articles is referred to as the Örebro Parenting Style Inventory for Adolescents (ÖPSIA, Stattin, Persson, Burk, & Kerr, 2011). Adolescents rated 6 statements e.g.: "Does your mother (father) show she (he) loves you almost regardless of what you do?" on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was .88; *Parental Openness to Communication* scale (ÖPSIA, Kerr, Stattin, & Trost, 1999), in which adolescents rated 7 items e.g.: "Does your mother (father) usually try to talk with you about what happens and how you're doing?" on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was .84; *Parental Behavioral Control* scale (ÖPSIA, Stattin et al., 2011), in which adolescent rated 6 items e.g.: "When I do something that my mother (father) really dislikes she (he) becomes very angry and tells me off" on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 3 (very often), reversely scored. The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was .72; *Parental Psychological Control* scale from the Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI, Schaefer, 1965), in which adolescents rated 9 items e.g.: "My mother (father) would like to be able to tell me what to do all the time" with responses

ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often), reversely scored. The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was .79; *Parental Autonomy Granting* scale, in which the scale consisted of 9 items out of which 3 were taken from the Autonomy Support Subscale of the Perceptions of Parents Scale (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991), 3 were taken from the Perceived Autonomy-Supportive Parenting Scale (Knafo & Assor, 2007), and 3 were taken from the Örebro Parenting Style Inventory for Adolescents (Stattin et al., 2011). A sample item was: "My mother (father) is usually willing to consider things from my point of view" and responses ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was .84.

To capture parental need support in Sample 2 (Article II), the following scales were used: *Responsiveness/Warmth* scale from the Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI, Schaefer, 1965; e.g., "My father makes me feel better after I discussed my worries with him" with the mean Cronbach's alpha value for both mothers and fathers of .89; *Autonomy-Support* scale from the Perceptions of Parents Scale (POPS, Grolnick et al., 1991; e.g., "My father helps me to choose my own direction in life") with the mean Cronbach's alpha value for both mothers and fathers of .81; *Psychological Control Scale - Youth Self-Report* (PCS - YSR, Barber, 1996; e.g., "My father is always trying to change how I feel or think about things") with the mean Cronbach's alpha value for both mothers and fathers of .82. Items were accompanied by 5-point Likert scales anchored by *Completely disagree* and *Completely agree*.

In both samples all measures were converted into a composite score, following a procedure of Beyers, Goossens, and Baldi (1999).

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Warmth	<p>Does your mother praise you for no special reason?</p> <p>Does she show she cares for you with words and gestures?</p> <p>Does she do small things that make you feel special (e. g blinks)?</p> <p>Does she show how proud she is of you?</p> <p>Does she show she loves you - almost regardless of what you do?</p> <p>Does your mother support you and encourage you?</p>
Openness to Communication	<p>Does she take an extra time to sit down and listen when you talk about what happens during your free time?</p> <p>Does your mother often talk with you about things that are personally important to her?</p> <p>Does she usually tell you how she feels about things?</p> <p>Does she ever tell about things that she is a little ashamed or embarrassed about?</p> <p>Do you think that you really know your mother, how she is inside?</p> <p>Does she like you to tell her your troubles?</p> <p>Does she usually try to talk with you about what happens and how you're doing?</p>

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Autonomy	My mother listens to my opinion or perspective when she decides something in the family.
Granting	My mother is usually willing to consider things from my point of view. When my mother sets a rule for me to follow, she generally explains the reason My mother tries to answer seriously the questions I have regarding principles or behaviors important to her. I don't have an influence on the decisions my mother makes in the family. When my mother makes a decision, she tries to consider what I want. My mother encourages me to give my ideas and opinions even if we might disagree. My mother allows me to decide things for myself. My mother respects my privacy
Psychological	My mother insists that I must do exactly as I am told.
Control	My mother is always telling me how I should behave My mother says, if I really care for her, I would not do things that cause her to worry. My mother wants to control whatever I do. My mother is always trying to change me My mother will avoid looking at me when I have disappointed her. If I have hurt her feelings, my mother stops talking to me until I please her. My mother is less friendly to me if I don't see things her way. My mother would like to be able to tell me what to do all the time.
Behavioral	She becomes very angry and tells me off.
Control	She quarrels and complains loudly. She yells and argues with me saying unkind things. She hits/spans me. She has trouble controlling her irritation. She threatens me.

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### 2.2.3. Empathy

Although Davis's theoretical framework of empathy consists of four dimensions i.e. perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy, the present research focused on the two first. Participants were asked to complete the empathic concern and perspective taking subscales. Empathic concern measured the tendency to experience compassion and concern for others and was assessed with 6 items (e.g., "I get a warm feeling for someone if I see them helping another person") taken from the Emotional Empathy Scale for Adolescents (Caruso & Mayer, 1998). Perspective taking measured the tendency to adopt the viewpoint of other people in everyday life and was assessed with 7 items (e.g., "When I am upset at someone, I usually try to 'put myself in their shoes' for a while") taken from the Empathy Questionnaire (Davis, 1983). Respondents rated items on a 5-point scale ranging from 1

(does not describe me well) to 5 (describes me well). The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was .76 for sample 1 (Article I, III, and IV) and .74 for the empathic concern subscale and .68 for the perspective taking subscale for sample 2 (Article II).

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I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.  
 When I am upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in their shoes" for a while.  
 I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guys" point of view.  
 I try to look at everybody's side of an agreement before I make a decision.  
 If I am sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time on listening to other people's arguments.  
 It's often harmful to spend lots of time to get everyone's point of view - some decisions have to be made quickly.  
 When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.  
 Too much is made of the suffering of pets or animals.  
 I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.  
 I don't give others' feelings much thought.  
 I find it annoying when people cry in public.  
 Seeing other people smile makes me smile.  
 I get a warm feeling for someone if I see them helping another person.

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#### 2.2.4. Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism was measured with a short, 12-item version of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWA) (Zakrisson, 2005). The scale consisted of items such as "Our country needs a powerful leader, in order to destroy the radical and immoral currents prevailing in our society today" which respondents rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was .64

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Our country needs a powerful leader, in order to destroy the radical and immoral currents prevailing in society today.  
 Our country needs free thinkers, who will have the courage to stand up against traditional ways, even if this upsets many people.  
 The "old-fashioned ways" and "old-fashioned values" still show the best way to live.  
 Our society would be better off if we showed tolerance and understanding for untraditional values and opinions.  
 The society needs to show openness towards people thinking differently, rather than a strong leader, the world is not particularly evil or dangerous.  
 It would be best if newspapers were censored so that people would not be able to get hold of destructive and disgusting material.  
 People ought to pay less attention to the Bible and religion, instead they ought to develop their own moral standards.

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There are many radical, immoral people trying to ruin things; the society ought to stop them.

It is better to accept bad literature than to censor it.

Facts show that we have to be harder against crime and sexual immorality, in order to uphold law and order.

The situation in the society of today would be improved if troublemakers were treated with reason and humanity.

If the society so wants, it is the duty of every true citizen to help eliminate the evil that poisons our country from within.

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### 2.2.5. Political Knowledge

Political knowledge was assessed by a self-constructed scale with 5 questions concerning both the institutions of government and the leading politicians or national parties in Finland. Respondents chose one of four options as the right answer. A sample item: "Which parties form the present coalition government in Finland?" The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was .56.

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How often are presidential elections held in Finland?

Which party does the current minister of foreign affairs, Alexander Stubb, represent?

Which parties form the present coalition government in Finland?

Which statement out of four is TRUE about Ministers in Finland?

Which party do farmers in Finland usually vote for?

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### 2.2.6. Political Activism

Political activism was assessed by a Political Engagement Scale taken from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP, 2004). Respondents reported whether they participated in various forms of political activities on an 8-item scale with response options ranging between 1 (have not done it and would never do it) to 4 (I have done it in the past year). A sample item: "Have you attended a political meeting or rally?" The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was .74.

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Signed a petition.

Boycotted, or deliberately bought, certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons.

Took part in a demonstration.

Attended a political meeting or rally.

Contacted, or attempted to contact, a politician or a civil servant to express your views.

Donated or raised money for social or political activity.

Contacted or appeared in the media to express your views.

Joined an internet political forum or discussion group.

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### 2.2.7. Psychological Security

*Self Esteem.* Self esteem was measured on a 12 item scale derived from the Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and the Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). The scale consisted of items such as "I perform well at a number of things" which respondents rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was .90. *Interpersonal Trust.* The measure of interpersonal trust consisted of 6 questions derived from the Interpersonal Trust Scale (Rotter, 1967) tapping a presumption of trustworthiness of people in general, and from the Generalized Trust Scale (Stolle, 2001) tapping trust towards highly abstract groups of people such as fellow citizens, strangers, and foreigners. This scale consisted of items such as "It is better to be cautious of people you have just met until you know them better", which respondents rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was .64.

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Self Esteem	<p>I have done well in life so far.</p> <p>I often fail to accomplish what I try for.</p> <p>I am a capable person.</p> <p>I am not very competent.</p> <p>I am mostly effective at the things I do.</p> <p>I perform well at a number of things.</p> <p>I don't succeed at much.</p> <p>I feel I have a number of good qualities.</p> <p>I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.</p> <p>I feel worthless at times.</p> <p>I feel good about who I am.</p> <p>Often, I think I am no good at all.</p>
Interpersonal Trust	<p>Would you say that most people are more inclined to help others, or more inclined to look out for themselves?</p> <p>How much do you trust the following groups of people: a foreigner?</p> <p>How much do you trust the following groups of people: a stranger?</p> <p>How much do you trust the following groups of people: another fellow citizen?</p> <p>Generally, I can trust people.</p> <p>It is better to be cautious of people you have just met until you know them better.</p>

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### 2.2.8. Social Intelligence

Social intelligence was measured with 8 items taken from the Social Intelligence Scale (Kaukiainen, Björkqvist, Österman, Lagerspetz, & Forsblom, 1995). The scale consisted of items such as "I notice easily if others lie" which respondents rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was .78.

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I easily notice when others lie.

I am able to get along with people.

I accommodate easily to new people and new situations.

I am able to get my wishes carried out.

I am able to guess the feelings of others, also when they don't want to show them.

I am aware of the weak spots of others.

I know how to get others to laugh.

I am able to talk others into taking my side.

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### 2.2.9. Psychological Flexibility

*Openness to Experience.* Openness to experience was measured with the subscale of the Short Five Scale (S5) (Lönqvist, Verkasalo & Leikas, 2008) designed to measure the openness to experience factor of the Big Five model of personality (McCrae & Costa, 1987). The scale consisted of items such as "I like to try different activities, to visit different places, to try out unfamiliar and exotic things from time to time; I love novelty and variety" which respondents rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (the description is completely wrong) to 7 (the description is completely right). The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was .69. *Normative Identity Style.* Normative identity style was measured with the Identity Style Inventory (ISI-4) (Berzonsky, Soenens, Luyckx, Goossens, Dunkel, & Papini, 2011). The scale consisted of items such as "I think it is better to adopt a firm set of beliefs than to be open-minded" which respondents rated on 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me). The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was .73.

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Openness to Experience	<p>I have a deep appreciation for fine arts and beauty. I am much impressed by and interested in music, poetry and art.</p> <p>I find my feelings to be very important in my life and I pay a lot of attention to them. My world of feelings is deep and varied.</p> <p>I have a vivid imagination. I like to fantasize and let my thoughts run free.</p> <p>I like to try different activities, to visit different places, to try out unfamiliar and exotic things from time to time; I love novelty and variety.</p> <p>I am intellectually curious and I have a wide range of interests; I am intrigued by new and unusual thoughts and I like to toy with theories and abstract ideas.</p> <p>I am tolerant of other people's lifestyles and opinions. In my view, absolute right or wrong do not exist.</p> <p>I like people; I am friendly and talk openly to strangers.</p> <p>I enjoy meeting and associating with a lot of people. I take pleasure in the company of others - the more people, the better.</p>
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Normative Identity Style	<p>I automatically adopt and follow the values I was brought up with.</p> <p>I strive to achieve the goals that my family and friends hold for me.</p> <p>I never question what I want to do with my life because I tend to follow what important people expect me to do.</p> <p>I think it is better to adopt a firm set of beliefs than to be open-minded.</p> <p>I think it's better to hold on to fixed values rather than to consider alternative value systems.</p> <p>I prefer to deal with situations in which I can rely on social norms and standards.</p> <p>When I make a decision about my future, I automatically follow what close friends or relatives expect from me.</p> <p>When others say something that challenges my personal values or beliefs, I automatically disregard what they have to say.</p>

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### 3. Statistical Analyses

#### 3.1. Empathy as a Predictor of Support for Democratic Values of Adolescents (Article I)

To assess whether empathy-related characteristics would predict support for democratic values (SDV) when controlling for gender, political knowledge, political activism, and authoritarianism, sequential regression was used. In the first step gender was entered, followed by political knowledge, political activism, and authoritarianism in the subsequent steps. As the last step, perspective taking and empathic concern were entered.

#### 3.2. Parenting and Empathy of Adolescents (Article II)

Structural equation modelling with manifest variables was used to assess whether parental need support would predict changes in empathy-related characteristics.

#### 3.3. Strength of Empathy as a Predictor of Support for Democratic Values (Article III)

To assess the strength of empathy in predicting support for democratic values (SDV) in light of other psychological correlates stepwise regression was used. Gender was controlled for by introducing it in the first step with an enter method with the remaining variables introduced with a stepwise method.

#### 4.4. Parenting and Support for Democratic Values of Adolescents (Article IV)

To assess whether democratic parenting would predict support for democratic values (SDV) when controlling for gender, empathy, authoritarianism, political knowledge, and political activism, sequential regression was employed. In the first step gender was entered, followed by authoritarianism, political knowledge, political activism, and empathy in the subsequent steps. As the last step, Democratic Parenting Measure (DPM) was entered. The possible mediational role of empathy for the relations between democratic parenting and democratic values was tested using the bootstrapping method for simple mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

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## 4. Results

The results section summarizes the most important findings from the present study. More detailed results are found in the original publications.

### 4.1. Empathy as a Predictor of Support for Democratic Values of Adolescents (Article I)

Collinearity diagnostics for the regression analysis indicated no cause for concern using the criteria of Belsely, Kuh, and Welsch (1980). As expected, gender accounted for a significant amount of the variance in the SDV scores, showing girls to be more supportive of democratic values  $R^2 = .09$ ,  $F_{inc}(1, 1317) = 129.30$ ,  $p = .001$ . Political knowledge, political activism, and authoritarianism added significantly to prediction of SDV as well  $R^2 = .11$ ,  $F_{inc}(2, 1316) = 82.84$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $R^2 = .13$ ,  $F_{inc}(3, 1315) = 67.62$ ,  $p = .001$ , and  $R^2 = .29$ ,  $F_{inc}(4, 1314) = 134.84$ ,  $p = .001$  respectively. After controlling for gender, political knowledge, activism, and authoritarianism, perspective taking and empathic concern were introduced as a last step. The standardised regression coefficients show that empathic concern was a stronger predictor than perspective taking. Both variables, however, were positively and significantly related to SDV and improved  $R^2 = .39$ ,  $F_{inc}(6, 1312) = 137.47$ ,  $p = .001$ , explaining a proportion of variance comparable with gender. With all IVs in the equation,  $R^2 = .39$  with 95 % confidence limits from .34 to .43,  $F(6,1312) = 101.48$ ,  $p = .001$ . The adjusted  $R^2$  value of .38 indicated that 38 % of the variability in SDV scores is predicted by gender, authoritarianism, political activism, political knowledge and empathy-related characteristics. The Aikake's (1974) information criterion for the model with perspective taking and empathic concern (AIC = 1367.59) was lower than for the model with all the control variables (AIC = 1446.62) indicating that the model including empathy-related characteristics is a better approximation of the true model.

### 4.2. Parenting and Empathy of Adolescents (Article II)

In order to examine whether perceived parental need support predicts over-time changes in dimensions of empathy and whether dimensions of empathy predict changes in perceived parental need support, in a first step, estimated a baseline model specifying the stability coefficients between the measures of perceived maternal and paternal need support, empathic concern, and perspective taking (i.e., between Time 1 and 2, between Time 2 and 3, and between Time 1 and 3) was estimated as well as within-time



correlations between these measures. In a second step, this baseline model ( $SBS-\chi^2(46) = 220.39$ ;  $CFI = 0.97$ ;  $SRMR = .079$ ) was compared to a model specifying cross-lagged effects from perceived maternal and paternal need support to empathic concern and perspective taking (i.e., a parent effects model) as well as to a model specifying cross-lagged effects from empathic concern and perspective taking to perceived maternal and paternal need support (i.e., an adolescent effects model). Both the parent ( $\Delta SBS-\chi^2(8) = 36.73$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and the adolescent effects model ( $\Delta SBS-\chi^2(8) = 26.86$ ;  $p < .001$ ) fitted the data better than the baseline model. In a third step, these models were compared to a model specifying cross-lagged effects from perceived maternal and paternal need support to empathic concern and perspective taking as well as from empathic concern and perspective taking to perceived maternal and paternal need support (i.e., a reciprocal effects model). This reciprocal effects model ( $SBS-\chi^2(30) = 30.13$ ;  $CFI = 0.98$ ;  $SRMR = .063$ ) fitted the data better than the parent effects ( $\Delta SBS-\chi^2(8) = 26.61$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and the adolescent effects model ( $\Delta SBS-\chi^2(8) = 36.40$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

#### 4.3. Strength of Empathy as a Predictor of Support for Democratic Values (Article III)

Self-esteem and social intelligence were not significantly related to SDV,  $t = .01$ ,  $p = .64$  and  $t = .00$ ,  $p = .93$  respectively. Collinearity diagnostics for the regression analysis indicated no cause for concern using the criteria of Belsley, Kuh, and Welsch (1980). As expected, gender accounted for a significant amount of the variance in the SDV scores, showing girls to be more supportive of democratic values  $R^2 = .08$ ,  $F_{inc}(1, 1068) = 100.28$ ,  $p = .001$ . Authoritarianism and empathy added significantly to prediction of SDV as well  $R^2 = .25$ ,  $F_{inc}(2, 1067) = 232.35$ ,  $p = .001$  and  $R^2 = .34$ ,  $F_{inc}(3, 1066) = 150.03$ ,  $p = .001$  respectively. Normative identity style and interpersonal trust improved  $R^2 = .35$ ,  $F_{inc}(4, 1065) = 21.45$ ,  $p = .001$  and  $R^2 = .36$ ,  $F_{inc}(5, 1064) = 8.10$ ,  $p = .005$  respectively. Openness to experience was no longer significant when all the other significant variables entered the equation  $t(6) = 1.80$ ,  $p = .07$ . With all IVs in the equation,  $R^2 = .36$  with 95 % confidence limits from .31 to .40,  $F(5, 1064) = 119.59$ ,  $p = .001$ . The adjusted  $R^2$  value of .36 indicated that 36 % of the variability in SDV scores is predicted by gender, authoritarianism, empathy, normative identity style, and interpersonal trust.

#### 4.4. Parenting and Support for Democratic Values of Adolescents (Article IV)

Regression analysis showed that gender accounted for a significant amount of the variance in the SDV scores, indicating girls as more supportive of democratic values,  $R^2 = .11$ ,  $F_{inc}(1, 1008) = 120.23$ ,

$p = .001$ . Authoritarianism and political activism added significantly to prediction of SDV as well,  $R^2 = .28$ ,  $F_{inc}(1, 1008) = 247.50$ ,  $p = .001$  and  $R^2 = .29$ ,  $F_{inc}(1, 1008) = 18.53$ ,  $p = .001$ , respectively. After controlling for political activism, political knowledge no longer explained any additional variance in the SDV scores,  $R^2 = .30$ ,  $F_{inc}(1, 1008) = 2.45$ ,  $p = .12$ . Empathy improved  $R^2$  and explained a proportion of the variance comparable with authoritarianism,  $R^2 = .40$ ,  $F_{inc}(1, 1008) = 168.15$ ,  $p = .001$ . After adding the Democratic Parenting Measure,  $R^2 = .41$ ,  $F_{inc}(1, 1008) = 22.30$ ,  $p = .001$ , showing that DPM added significantly to prediction of SDV. With all IVs in the equation,  $R^2 = .41$  with 95% confidence limits from .36 to .46,  $F(6, 1008) = 116.72$ ,  $p = .001$ . The adjusted  $R^2$  value of .41 indicated that 40% of the variability in SDV scores is predicted by gender, authoritarianism, political activism, empathy, and democratic family functioning.

The total indirect effect of DPM on SDV was  $f = 0.0237$ . The asymptotic critical ratio for the total indirect effect of DPM on SDV (by the Sobel test) was significant ( $Z = 6.329$ ,  $p = .001$ ), which leads to a rejection of the null hypothesis that the total indirect effect is zero (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Also, when controlling for gender, the meditation remained significant ( $Z = 4.7768$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

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## 5. Discussion

The discussion section will summarize the central findings of the present research and discuss them in relation to previous research within the field of political development. More detailed discussion can be found in the original publications.

The results of the present study are interesting from several standpoints. First, based on the results of this study (Article I), it would appear that some of the individual differences in addressing democratic values may be a function of the empathy-related characteristics, i.e. empathic concern and perspective taking. Although suggested by previous literature (e.g. Hunt, 2007; Lakoff, 2009; Morell, 2010; Shogan, 2009), the connection of empathy to support for democratic values has not been empirically tested. The relation between empathy and support for democratic values can be interpreted in the light of the social-cognitive and motivational theories (Greenberg et al., 1986; Jost et al., 2008; Levinson, 1958; Pratto et al., 1994), according to which the adoption of political practices and beliefs reflects an individual's psychological needs. The previous studies have shown empathic individuals to be compassionate, understanding, and caring about others (Batson et al., 1995; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990; Mikulincer et al. 2005), and hence it seems likely that democratic ideals of equality, freedom of speech, or minority rights appeal to their psychological needs. Moreover, in light of the theories of moral development (Hoffman, 2000; Kohlberg, 1958), empathic individuals are capable of taking a sociomoral perspective by being able to look from the point of view of individuals with divergent interests and by sympathizing with different others. These empathic skills may lead to a "moral accommodation" (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, pp. 79-91), i.e. judging as morally right and ultimately supporting the policies that attempt to take into account as many views as possible and guarantee equal treatment.

Additionally, the findings (Article I) facilitate understanding of the linkages between empathy and support for democratic values. In light of the present study, empathic concern might be one of the process variables (Zellman & Sears, 1971) for democratic commitments, in a way that support for democratic rights might result predominantly from an extended concern for others. This result can be interpreted in light of the growing literature on the role of affect in political attitudes and behaviors (i.e. Lodge & Taber, 2005; Marcus, 2002; Redlawsk, 2002). According to, for instance, "how-do-I-feel?" heuristic (Clore & Isbell, 2001), or hot cognition hypothesis (Redlawsk, 2002), all sociopolitical concepts are affect laden and responding to them, people react according to their existing predilections. Individuals high in empathic concern might be particularly sensitive to others' general wellbeing and prone to respond with positive affect and attitude to political ideas which are inclusive and respectful of

others. Feelings of concern might be the motivational drive behind the commitment to democratic norms which might not be a result of perspective taking alone.

Second, in line with previous studies (e.g., Laible et al., 2004; Soenens Duriez, Vansteenkiste, & Goossens, 2007; Zhou et al. 2002) and with the broader developmental literature pointing to the role of a supportive family environment as an antecedent for empathy development (Barnett, 1987; Eisenberg & Valiente, 2002; Hoffman, 2000), the present research (Article II) found positive associations between supportive parenting and adolescents' empathic characteristics. The relation between parenting and empathy development can be interpreted in terms of attachment theory. It suggests that supportive caregiving is beneficial to interpersonal skills because it increases interest in others, resulting in higher empathy levels (Bowlby, 1980; Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986; Hoffman, 2000; Laible et al., 2004; van der Mark et al., 2002).

Furthermore, the findings (Article II) show that while paternal supportive parenting had a positive effect on perspective taking among both sons and daughters, maternal supportive parenting predicted empathic concern in daughters only. These findings suggest that, whereas fathers might be primarily involved in the socialization of cognitive aspects of empathy, mothers are primarily involved in the affective aspect. These results can be interpreted in terms of gender role orientations theory (Collins, Chafetz, Blumberg, Coltrane, & Turner, 1993; Coltrane, 1998) according to which males are socialized to value agentic traits, e.g. instrumental responding to other's needs, and females are socialized to display emotional connection (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; Hastings, Rubin, & DeRose, 2005; Olweus & Endersen, 1998). Mothers and fathers may choose to socialize different caring orientations, depending on the child's gender (Hastings et al., 2005) and the importance they attach to perspective taking and empathic concern (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). It seems likely that for fathers cognitive aspects of their offspring's empathy are more useful, whereas mothers socialize their children (and especially daughters) to behave in stereotypical feminine ways because they find the emotional components of empathy more essential in offspring (Collins & Rusell, 1991; Power & Shanks, 1987).

Third, in line with the broader literature on moral and political development suggesting individuals with low authoritarianism (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1998) and high empathy (Hoffman, 2000; Kohlberg, 1958; Levinson, 1958; Sigel, 1965) to be more predisposed for democratic commitments, this study (Article III), showed that along with right-wing authoritarianism, empathy was the strongest predictor of democratic commitments. The fact that empathy explained a greater proportion of variance of support for democratic values than many other previously established variables, e. g. interpersonal trust, confirms its utility as a predictor of support for democratic values (Article I).

Fourth, concerning the hypothesized relation between democratic parenting and adolescents' support for democratic values, the present study (Article IV) showed that every dimension of democratic parenting, as well as a global measure of democratic parenting, was positively related to adolescents' democratic values. These findings are in line with previous studies which pointed to the familial origins of various politically relevant competencies (Owen & Dennis, 1987; Santolupo & Pratt, 1994; Smetana & Metzger, 2005) and to social learning as a process by which adolescents acquire them (Flanagan, 2003; Hess & Torney, 1967; Sniderman, 1975). It seems difficult to imagine that youths whose daily life is patterned by controlling, nonresponsive or punitive parenting would easily grasp and appreciate democratic ideals and rules of conduct. In contrast, the democratic style of interacting between parent and child that provides children with opportunities to have an input in decisions and accommodates family practices in response to their suggestions may teach them that people vary in the way they perceive things, that resolving competing claims requires negotiation and compromise, and thus may make children more supportive of the rules of democracy (Flanagan & Galla, 1995).

Furthermore, the current study (Article IV) extends previous research on democratic parenting by showing that its role for adolescents' democratic commitments may be in part due to its influence on adolescents' basic beliefs and competences (Renshon, 1974, 1975). The results show that empathy, as well as its components—perspective taking and empathic concern—separately, were partial mediators in the democratic family support for democratic values relation. These findings are in line with the previous research showing supportive parenting to help adolescents to balance societal and individual needs, which results in their higher empathic skills (Koestner et al., 1990). In turn, these skills seem to be relevant when considering democratic ideals (Article I, Article III).

Overall, the results of this study are in line with the shift in political socialization research from the study of the directly political to the politically relevant (Flanagan & Galla, 1995; Flanagan & Tucker, 1999; Renshon, 1975; Sigel, 1965). To the degree that empathy appears to be a politically relevant factor (Article I & Article III), a significant part of political socialization might be taking place at a lower level than conventional political attitudes. Furthermore, the results are in line with the suggestions of a more subtle role of family in political socialization than through direct communication or identification with parents (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999; Gniewosz, Noack, & Buhl, 2009; Steinberg, 2001). Based on the results of this research (Article II & Article IV), it appears that political socialization in the family takes place at a level of styles of interaction between parent and child. Moreover, the fact that empathy seems to strengthen adolescents' democratic commitments can be interpreted as reflecting their agency in their own political development (Cummings & Schermerhorn, 2003; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002; Sapiro, 2004).

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## 6. Conclusions and Implications

The present study brings evidence for a significant role of democratic parenting for adolescents' support for democratic values. Based on the results of the present research, the role of democratic parenting seems to be twofold. On the one hand democratic parenting appears to be directly relevant for the democratic commitments of youngsters: adolescents who are accustomed to a democratic family in which autonomy granting, warm, and noncoercive parents provide them with opportunities to have an input in decisions may learn that people vary in the way they perceive things, that resolving competing claims requires negotiation and compromise, and thus they may more easily grasp and support rules of democracy than adolescents from nonresponsive or punitive families. On the other hand, the results show a possible indirect role of democratic parenting, which may be mediated through adolescents' basic beliefs about the nature of the world and people, i.e. empathy. To the degree that empathy is rooted in socialization experiences and constitutes one of the determinants of democratic orientation, a great deal of the family's role for the political orientation of youngsters appears to take place at a more basic level of psychic organization than attitudes or opinions, namely, competences and basic beliefs that are not political per se but involve a notion of morality and social maturity, and influence how political stimuli are perceived.

The results of this study point to three implications for research within the field of political socialization. First, the results point to the need of studying more subtle processes in the family than direct transmission of attitudes. Adolescents do learn political ideas in their families but this learning seems unlikely to occur in discussions about political parties. Rather adolescents' views may develop in concert with the daily interactions in their families. Second, there is a need of studying factors, e.g. empathy, which are not political per se but involve a notion of morality and responsibility and are "democratic dispositions" (Flanagan & Faison, 2001), foundations on which political preferences are built. Third, this research succumbs to the notion of the political development rather than political socialization and points to the need of studying developmental processes and antecedents of political preferences and the need of integrating findings from various fields of developmental science (Flanagan & Gallay, 1995).

From the perspective of democratic education, this study indicates that empathic skills might be one of the psychological underpinnings of democracy. Given the failure of the knowledge-driven approach in civic education (DiRenzo, 1995; Green et al., 2011), empathic concern and perspective taking might be dispositions worth promoting for the sustenance of democratic quality of a political regime (Morell, 2010). This interpretation would be in accord with Alexis de Tocqueville's understanding of civic virtue

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as a “habit of the heart”, that is as a commitment to values that manifests itself in the everyday lives of citizens: in caring and concern for others (Tocqueville, 1835-1840/2000). Since the public educational system is the primary place in which society can educate its citizens, it seems worthwhile to include empathy training as a part of civic education. Educating for empathic skills has an advantage over traditional civic education as it does not risk clashes between citizens’ deeply held values and the power of the state to control public education (Morell, 2010).

From the perspective of policy, this research sheds a light on the process in which democratic commitments develop. European institutions, i.e. the European Commission, have, for a long time, been interested in mainstreaming democratic values and promoting the democratization process. To be able to achieve some of these aims, the knowledge about the process of development of democratic commitments and the spheres of possible influence is needed. The failures of democratic breakthroughs indicate that the installation of formal democratic institutions is not sufficient for the survival of democracy (Kalandadze & Orenstein, 2009). Democracy requires democratic citizens and the present research suggests ways in which these develop and can be educated.

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## Sammandrag

### Bakgrund

Demokratiska samhällen är sårbara och historiskt sett sällsynta. Förutsättningarna för en fungerande demokrati innefattar mer än formella institutioner eller enbart frånvaron av diktatorer och extremgrupper. För att en regim skall fungera enligt demokratiska principer behövs medborgare som stöder demokratiska värden. Därför är det av vikt att förstå de processer som får individer att känna tilltro till demokratiska värden. Trots att man kan anta att stöd för sådana värderingar utvecklas som ett resultat av social inlärning är de konkreta omständigheterna som leder till ett dylikt lärande mindre uppenbara. Den klassiska litteraturen beträffande politisk socialisation lyfte fram föräldrarna som avgörande för de ungas medborgerliga fostran, men i moderna samhällen har föräldrarna sällan som en uttalad målsättning att försöka påverka sina barns nuvarande eller framtida politiska preferenser. Den föreliggande studiens mål var att fördjupa diskursen kring politisk socialisation genom att analysera föräldraskapets betydelse för demokratiska värderingar hos ungdomar.

### Metod

Den föreliggande studien utgick från två slumpmässiga urval. Det ena omfattade 1341 studerande, 17 år gamla, inom andra stadiets utbildning i tre regioner i Finland (södra, syd-västra och västra) och det andra 678 studerande, 16 år gamla vid studiens inledande, från den flamländska delen av Belgien. Studien innefattade frågeformulär som besvarades under skoltid.

### Resultat

De centrala resultaten från studien kan sammanfattas i fyra punkter. För det första kunde empatiskt tänkande konstateras vara en god förklarande variabel för ungdomars demokratiska värderingar (Artikel 1). För det andra gav studien stöd för antagandet att stödjande föräldraskap är av betydelse för utvecklingen av empati under ungdomsåren (Artikel 2). För det tredje utvärderades empati, i relation till andra betydelsefulla variabler, som förklarande variabel för demokratiska värderingar (Artikel 3). För det fjärde gav den föreliggande studien bevis för att demokratiskt föräldraskap, både direkt och indirekt, är relaterat till demokratiska värderingar hos ungdomar (Artikel 4).

### Sammanfattning

Sammanfattningsvis visade den föreliggande studien hur föräldraskap både direkt och indirekt kan påverka demokratiska värderingar hos ungdomar och hur dessa resultat kunde användas för demokratisk samhällsfostran.