Political rationality: Young Danish and Norwegian immigrant citizens and their political reasoning

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\textbf{Abstract:}
This article aims to uncover the dynamics of political reasoning among young immigrants. How do they people reason about the larger social and political world around them and what rationalities are in play? A dynamic approach is used to analyze cognitive functioning. A model of political reasoning combining identities, emotions, and information is suggested and examined empirically. In a qualitative study the reflectivity of the students and their willingness to act as rational and responsible citizens is evaluated. Based on a selection of young Danish and Norwegian immigrant students, the dynamics between the elements of the model are explored. In the analysis, some identities play a decisive role, while emotions seem fairly often to be the trigger and the mechanism of political action.

\textbf{Keywords:} political rationality – immigrants – political reasoning – young people – students

\textbf{Introduction}

Democracy is founded on the idea of the right and the duty of individuals to engage and participate in the public realm. John Stuart Mill, along with later participatory democrats like Carole Pateman (1970), pointed out that the community gains, when citizens take an active part. But also, that individuals grow and learn through their activity. Political participation builds individual capacities in several ways: Those who take part learn about their community and society, they develop civic skills that can be carried throughout their lives, and they often come to have a greater appreciation of the needs and interests of others and of society as a whole (Schlozman, 2002, p. 437). A long tradition in the social studies, like in the writings of John Dewey (1916/1966), heralds the philosophic assumption that political knowledge and participatory skills needed by citizens in a democracy are learned through practice in school and community. The very idea of a democracy includes public participation in elections, decision-making, and public engagement. Democratic participation distributes power among ordinary people, serves to legitimize decisions in public affairs, and is a vital characteristic of political culture. The term ‘political cul-
"nature" is often evoked in this relation as it refers specifically to political orientations—“attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system” (Almond and Verba, 1963, p. 12). Participation, as evidenced either by voter turnout or by other forms of public involvement, is regarded as a barometer of the quality of democracy in a country or serves to characterize the political culture in a democracy (Diamond and Morlino, 2005). The political culture of two particular countries, Norway and Denmark, is the context of the present study, which aims to address how young people reason about their political involvement. Scandinavian political cultures are characterized by high levels of trust and participation (voter turnout) (Blais, 2008, p. 623; Newton, 2008). Public debate is free, as are other forms of organizational and individual participation. However, both countries have over the last decades experienced immigration both from Western and particularly from non-Western countries, and the process of integrating new citizens into the prevailing political culture has to some extent been problematic. It turns out for instance that immigrants participate less than the Norwegian and Danish majority populations, and for some immigrant groups, it can be said that they occupy a new lower class (Bhatti and Hansen, 2010; Østerud, 2007). Research has pointed out a number of politically alienating mechanisms among immigrant youth (Solhaug, 2012). Despite these alienating mechanisms and the vulnerable situation of this group in a new country, immigrant youth consider themselves capable of political participation and committed to it. A number of studies have revealed important insights into how immigrant youth consider themselves politically passive overall but at the same time view themselves as politically active in certain contexts (Kristensen and Solhaug, 2011).

Looking more closely at political participation, citizens need to decide about their degree of political engagement on a number of topics (Dalton and Klingemann, 2008, pp. 9-10). These topics could be almost anything, such as choosing candidates and parties in elections, deciding on issues and the position to hold on each, and choosing the means of political involvement. Citizens approach these decisions in very different ways. Some may pursue their own personal strategic interests, while others actively use cues or values to make choices about personal involvement. How citizens choose to participate may also vary according to which decisions they have to make, the context of political involvement, or even their own mood. Consequently, we believe that citizens reach decisions about political involvement quite differently. This article proposes to focus on how immigrant youth decide on political matters by focusing on their political rationality. The research question is therefore:

What important dynamics can be traced in how young immigrant students in Norway and Denmark reason about their political participation?

The response to this research question is an exploration of the dynamics of different forms of political rationality among students. By clarifying these “dynamics,” predominant forms of rationality can be identified and situated. Theoretically, students’ reasoning can be viewed as a cognitive dynamic among their identities, their emotions, the information they have, and their preferred way of pursuing political activity.

A selection of 11 Norwegian and 12 Danish students in two secondary schools were interviewed in late fall 2010. We believe that selecting students across different political
cultures makes it possible to explore a greater variety of students and makes the research findings more valid. Furthermore, young students in secondary school are in the process of becoming political because they acquire citizen’s rights to participation during their time in school. The study of political rationality is highly relevant for the process of political socialization in which the school plays a significant role. Political socialization may be regarded as a process by which citizens become integrated into the existing political culture on the one hand and prepare for openness and political change (being critical) of the culture on the other (Sears, 1990, p. 90).

Situating the study: previous research

A “word in title” search of “political rationality” in the ISI web of knowledge social science citation index yields 107 hits from 1970 to present. A large majority of these studies focus on political rationality as an analytical tool either for explaining political behavior or for studying rationality in a specific political context. Important early contributions to political reasoning and development include Adelson and O’Neal (1966) and Adelson (1971). Studies of political cognition, schemas, and development which are highly relevant for social studies teaching include Torney-Purta (1989, 1992, 1994) and Byrnes and Torney-Purta (1995).

Sullivan et al. emphasize that research in political psychology has shifted from a focus on personality and politics to a focus on political attitudes and beliefs and then to political cognition and information processing (Sullivan, Rahn, and Tudolph, 2002, p. 27). Studies of political rationality have been prominent within the field, and rationality models have been one of the key developments (Sullivan et al., 2002, p. 27). Thus, studies of political cognition and information processing are considered to be among the latest developments in political psychology (Sullivan et al., 2002; see also: Taber, 2003). It is argued here that the study of political rationalities will reveal how people use both an individual and a larger social perspective when reflecting on their political involvement. Forms of rationality seem to be dependent on context, which implies that different models may apply in different contexts (Sullivan et al., 2002). We believe that rationality can be studied as a general phenomenon among individuals and that identification of a predominant rationality is important and is likely to occur on many occasions. An overview of rationality models of political decision-making is offered by Lau (2003). Rational choice models as well as modes of imperfect information are discussed. However, emotions in particular, or non-consequentialist or non-cognitive rationalities more generally, which are analytical categories in the present study, are not dealt with in the Lau study. A recent study of rationalities and participation has been carried out by Børhaug (2010). He found that a majority of students find participation meaningful to the extent that they as citizens are able to influence the outcome of politics (Børhaug, 2010, p. 132).
Theory – proposing a model of reasoning

Democracy rationalities

The first step in this research is to tie an analysis of political rationality to a theoretical framework of citizenship. Despite the fact that political participation is axiomatic to democracy, it is valued rather differently depending on the approach used in various models of democracy (Dagger, 2002; Delanty, 2002; Habermas, 1995; Schuck, 2002). In Schum-peter’s liberal version of democratic participation in elections, competition over power is most important. In this political context, individual interest and instrumental rationality prevail. Pateman and other participatory theorists on the other hand argue that active citizen involvement is a goal in itself, which serves to educate people’s awareness of a larger collective (Pateman, 1970; see also: Mansbridge, 1999). Habermas, for his part, emphasizes public deliberation (deliberative democracy) as a particularly important form of participation to illuminate issues and to form opinions through public debate on issues (Habermas, 1984, 1994). The sociology of Giddens emphasizes that modernity is characterized by information seeking and reflexivity (Giddens, 1997). In other words, the way people reason about politics, pursue their interests, and reach decisions may be quite different. Individuals’ information processing therefore reflects specific approaches to the role of citizen and also specific perceptions of democracy. The study of political rationalities may prove, in a larger perspective of citizenship roles, to be an important approach for the study and may also reflect how people perceive their role in a democracy.

The qualities of individuals’ actions are not simple to determine. Individuals act in response to the social expectations and demands placed on them as well as the cultural messages to which they are exposed. Moreover, they reconstruct these in their own subjectively structured terms (Rosenberg, 2002). Most thinking about social and political life is structured around two basic perspectives. The liberal institutional perspective (dating back to classical liberal thinkers such as Locke, Mill, and Bentham) is based on certain core assumptions, including the following:

- Individuals perceive an essentially objective world around them.
- Individuals have the capacity to reason (they accumulate information and make calculations and inferences on the basis of experience as part of an ongoing reflexive and cognitive process).
- Individuals have preferences. Preferences are subjectively held, but objectively defined. They guide individuals’ choices and motivate their behavior.

Central to this understanding is the ongoing interplay between individuals and institutions (Rosenberg, 2002), and in a narrow sense, rationality can simply be seen as intelligent pursuit of self-interest (Sen, 2002). The liberal institutional perspective has a counterpart in a sociological alternative. In this view, people are not particularly rational in the sense of being calculating or goal-oriented. To the extent that they reason or that their actions are actually directed, the underlying comprehension is more likely based on values, faith, or feelings. In this sense, the structuring force is based on collectivity, rather than on individuality, which becomes the proper departure point of investigations into social and political life. This distinction has both ontological and epistemological implications, and
further points about the epistemological implications of this observation will be made later.

This way of thinking is very much reflected in March and Olsen’s work on political institutions and rationality. They distinguish between two different types of rationalities for action: a “logic of consequentiality” (actors are motivated by the pursuit of interests) and a “logic of appropriateness” (stressing the role of identity, moral considerations, and “reasoned obligation”). This distinction can be regarded as a difference between instrumental and identity-based or rule-based types of action in relation to political institutions (March and Olsen, 2000). The first perspective builds on images of a rational agent. At the micro-level, it borrows basic understandings from economic theory (e.g., Downs, 1957; Schumpeter, 1946). Action, from this theoretical viewpoint, is instrumentalist and is based on calculations of returns. In opposition to this approach, March and Olsen propose what they call the “conventional” or “obligatory” mode of action (which refers to the “logic of appropriateness”). Political action here aims to match identity to specific situations (March and Olsen, 2000). In such an institutional perspective, which is also very indebted to Mead (1934) and the symbolic interactionists, political action is primarily seen as driven by socially constructed meanings, roles, and rules as reflected in identities and institutions.

Political identity

In identity theory, an identity is a set of meanings applied to the self in a specific social role or situation. It defines what it means to be a particular person in that role or situation (Burke and Tully, 1977; Stryker, 1980). Political identity can be seen as a subset of social identity. The competing social identities offered by superordinate (e.g. one’s national identity) and subgroup (e.g. ethnic, religious, gender) identities interact in a complex manner to generate optimal distinctiveness (Brewer and Conover, 2009). In our study, political identity is seen as how citizens understand and represent themselves in relation to the field of politics. Still, political identity is a somewhat mixed and ambiguous concept because political identity-formation processes are often double-faced. For instance, they often signify an attempt to articulate membership or belonging, while at the same time involving a desire to define boundaries or to express involvement as well as creating demarcations on certain issues. Identity involves the process of defining us, typically in opposition to them, a group holding different interests and values. Without the adversarial component, Gamson (2009) argues, the potential target of collective will most likely remain an abstraction, as in the cases of hunger, disease, or pollution. Identity does not dictate rationalities, but surely adds direction and depth to them. Consequently, identity gives reasoning a direction and has a generative capability for political involvement. Much thinking in relation to identity theory points back to structural symbolic interactionism (Stryker, 1980). Two features that are particularly important in structural symbolic interaction are “society” and “self”. Society is viewed as a stable and orderly structure, as reflected in the patterned behavior within and between social actors. While actors are creating social structure, they are also receiving feedback from the social structure that influences their behavior. In this way, actors are always embedded in the very social structure that they are simultaneously creating (Stryker, 1980).
It is assumed here that immigrants and second-generation immigrants are often caught between committing to values representing a traditional world and to norms of democratic participation and citizenship. Studying these themes in the context of upper secondary schools is important because schools can be viewed as a political arena which stimulates political participation. It is also useful for analyzing the relation between public affairs and individual interests, which is a point of focus in the theoretical tradition of citizenship. Political participation research narrowly studies participation itself, whereas the introduction of the notion of citizenship ideally leads to a wider concept of democracy by defining citizenship as the sum of rights, duties, participation, and identity (Delanty, 2002). Citizenship entails both a status side and a praxis side, or otherwise put, a focus on rights (“objective empowerment”) and on identity (“subjective empowerment”). The identity dimension of citizenship makes it possible to focus on actual political participation as well as a subjective understanding of the individual as a member of a political community and a participant in democratic processes. Identity is the sum of our perceptions of self and others, our interpretations, and our attempts to match these interpretations to our social and political practices.

**Emotions**

In his analysis of human motivations Elster points to the 17th-century French moralists who made a distinction among interest, reason, and passion. Interest is the pursuit of personal advantage, be it money, fame, power, or salvation. Reason relates to the desire to promote the public good rather than the private good. Passions include emotions and other visceral cravings (Elster, 2007). Elster argues that emotions matter in their impact on behavior, and consequently it is desirable to incorporate emotions (such as contempt, indignation, liking, anger, pride, envy, or admiration) into an analysis of political rationality. Models of political choice and decision making that earlier were almost exclusively cognitive have over the past two decades been enriched by incorporating emotion (Mutz, 2007).

Political actions presume identities to provide direction for actions, but emotions add a dynamic element to a given identity. The qualitative dimension of commitment also reveals the early recognition of emotion in identity theory (Stets, 2009). Stryker pointed out the intensity of emotions, recalling that emotions are both a cause and a consequence of commitments (Stryker, 1980).

**Information**

People use many kinds of knowledge to form their political literacy, such as knowledge of political processes and how democracy works; how to get involved in politics and in organizations; how the media work; knowledge of their own role in society; and other information. Johnson calls such skills “operative knowledge for civil action” (Johnson, 2009) and considers them central to the capacity to participate in civic and political processes. According to Giddens, information seeking and processing are vital parts of modern agency and that mass media provide basic tools for participation in democratic public
life. Modern social life, though, assumes that new information is always reflected upon in a constant surveillance of social practice (Giddens, 1990). Reflexivity as ongoing cognitive reflection on information and as surveillance of present and future action is an integral part of political participation.

Action

In the present theoretical framework, the notion of action (and inaction) is used simply to refer to all kinds of political behavior caused by the desires and beliefs of an agent. Political science is often criticized for viewing political action and participation as a narrowly instrumental process. However, over the years, other motives for participation have been suggested by various scholars. Some point to social norms (Coleman, 1990; Elster, 1993; March and Olsen, 1995), stressing rules, obligations, and an internalized sense of duty to the wider community. Furthermore, another set of selective incentives is related to “expressive incentives” or “process incentives” which value participation in the process itself and to the fact that people participate simply to express their support or to reaffirm their identity (Calvert, 2002; Teorell, 2006). Finally, the category of emotions is seen as a generic incentive driving political action and participation. The conceptual and theoretical framework proposed is illustrated in Figure 1, which outlines the basic elements: identities, emotions, information, and action. These elements and their mutual relationships constitute the “dynamic” approach proposed here.

Fig. 1: Model of cognitive political reasoning

In the model different forms of political rationalities are seen as interplay between identities, emotions and information. In the long run, Identities play a major role in the decision process, but may occasionally be overruled by emotions or situational factors. Action is
an outcome of the process, but there is also feedback into identities from experiences. Identities, emotions, information and action are stimulated by communicative exchange with the social environment.

Elster’s concept of *mechanisms* is used in the present analysis to explain individual reasoning and behavior. A mechanism falls somewhere between the two extreme positions: the general law and a nomothetic approach on the one hand, and a narrative, idiographic approach on the other. A mechanism is a specific causal pattern triggered under generally unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences (Elster, 2007, p. 36). It can be recognized, but not foreseen (Elster, 1993).

### Methodology

Twenty-three immigrant students were selected from 2 Norwegian schools and 1 Danish secondary school in middle sized towns in Norway and Denmark. We attempted a matching sample of students along variables like gender, religion, classes, country of origin between and participation in schools. However, a sufficiently matching sample between schools and country in a comparative design and study could not be performed. We therefore focused on the present research question where the present variety of students from different cultures and countries is fortunate.

In the first stage of research procedure we discussed the selection of students with teachers who had recommendations. We attempted to maximize a variety as explained above. We particularly attempted to include students who were active and outspoken as well as passive and silent in school. In the second stage of the selection we had to ask students to volunteer for our study. In this process we ended up with a good variety on variables like participation, gender, country of origin and classes, but a somewhat biased selection on religion. However we believe that this variety of selected students is adequate for a research question which aims at finding similarities in political reasoning across cultural variation. (For selection see Table I.)

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Analytical procedure

The interviews were carried out with quite open ended questions according to the interview guide in appendix. They were recorded and transcribed. The analytical procedure started with reading all interviews and looking for varieties and differences in rationalities and identities. Upon the first reading of the interviews, surprisingly little instrumental reflection among the students was observed. On the whole, they were strikingly preoccupied with norms, values, and appropriate behavior. The students’ preoccupations with appropriateness led to a focus on rationalities as a key feature of political decision-making.

In a second reading we looked at varieties and differences in reasoning between gender, religion and participation. However, no particular differences between groups were found in terms of reasoning elements. A third analytical stage was to focus on similarities in the students’ reasoning. These similarities across such a cultural variety were the most striking finding in our analysis and lead to our suggested theoretical model in Fig 1. The theoretical model proposed here (Fig 1) may be considered as a dialectical interaction between reading the interviews, interpreting empirical elements and theoretical considerations. However, it may not be generalizable, but may serve as a basis for further research.
Empirical results

Identity

Empirically, identity is a multifaceted and complex topic in which a variety of global/national, religious, and personal aspects come into play to form political identity. Among the study participants, religion and belief systems as well as ethnic and national origin are important identities that become very relevant when these people reason about political involvement.

For Muslims, Islam provides an important framework for reasoning about politics. As one participant stated, “As a Muslim, I believe in paradise and hell. Therefore, my goal is to come to paradise of course, and the best way to reach this goal is to act as the best possible human being in this world” (Dk 2). The student went on to explain that the Koran is the guide to life: “The best way to become the best possible person is to live according to the book and the life of its founder Mohamed.” This particular student continued to elaborate on democracy by saying: “As a Muslim, I am against systems of rules created by humans. I prefer Sharia. A lot of people have misconceptions about Sharia... but principally when studying Sharia, you find justice in it.” By suggesting the implementation of Sharia, the student emphasized that this religion-based belief system should create a new social order through the laws of Sharia. This was the only student among the participants to claim a belief in Sharia, but Islam was an important guideline to others, like one young student who said: “… I am a very religious Muslim and my religion is important to most of my active life. If I need to get an answer to different issues in life, I turn to my religion” (DK 4). The student continued to explain how religious beliefs are related to politics: “When it comes to politics, things like democracy and how society is supposed to work ... I try to bring in religious considerations, but religion is not always given the greatest emphasis in decisions.” Both these students described how religious considerations were important to them and came into dynamic interplay with other information and reflections. In one way, religious values seemed to feed a logic of appropriateness. However, “reaching paradise,” as stated by one of the students, also displayed a religion-based logic of consequentiality which might be an underlying drive and motive for political action. A mix of value and instrumental rationality was also apparent in reasoning about taxes, as expressed by one participant: “I think of something that can gain my interest like SU (student financial support). I do emphasize taxes and economic issues that affect me.” The student went on to explain that religious values (a value rationality) like paying taxes and doing good things to others seemed to be important, but instrumental rationality was also prevalent in his considerations, particularly on economic issues. An important point here is what may be termed the legality discourse. In what way is it perceived to be legal for immigrants to participate in politics? One student (Dk 4) emphasized that when writing articles, one should be neutral to avoid personal problems. Without bringing up Islam, toward which many Danes might be critical, it is difficult to participate. Moreover, discussions of foreigners and support for poor countries are controversial for a Danish audience (DK 4). This student was saying that his political participation (and that of immigrants generally) needed to be considered particularly carefully because of their vulnerable situation in Danish society. This was due partly to language difficulties, but also to
what viewpoints are considered legal to have for immigrants. Consequently, their (students’) religious value rationality needs to be carefully combined with instrumental (political contextual) considerations and their potentially vulnerable situation.

A third Muslim student expressed similar views on religion and life: “Yes, I am a practicing Muslim. Every day I think of being good to others and being a good Muslim” (DK5). When asked whether Islam is important to her views on politics, she answers, “of course it is.” She elaborated on this by talking about her choice of political party and how her religion and her immigrant identity seemed to focus her political interest and participation. However, she also voiced her frustration over media stigmatization and focus on Muslims as potential problems, observations which, as with the previous student, seemed to guide her feelings about politics. Without a doubt, here the media managed to evoke feelings related to values and identity. However, she also voiced positive experiences with public debates in school where she felt respected despite her views. Religious values were apparent in her expressions and guided her views and their rationality. An important point about the three dedicated religious participants described above is that certain issues related to religion and particularly to immigrant status touched on their particular feelings and interests. Although Muslim and immigrant identities are relatively stable personal elements which guide deliberation, feelings seem to be trigger points which lead to particular cognitive and other practices. Religion seems to promote value rationality, but situational factors and personal goals and motives may call for a logic of consequentiality. The students’ reasoning about self and society was also a part of the story of their becoming political beings. In their judgments of self as well as in the field of politics, normative systems played a decisive role in sorting out various viewpoints.

Still another Muslim student (DK 6) claimed that he knew his religion, but was not very religious. However, he claimed that the Koran considers work and prayer as almost equally important to a Muslim. This statement fitted his current emphasis on becoming a man through work. He also claimed a split and uncertain national identity. Despite weaker ties to religious and national identity, he held strong normative views on the characteristics of a good citizen, who according to him should be active. He strongly emphasized that right now he was very determined to read (in school) and work and to become a man. There was a strong normative logic of appropriateness in his statements, which may have been influenced by his religious and cultural background, but which were not deduced from the Koran as with the other Muslims. The logic of appropriateness was present in a strongly reflective attitude. Throughout the interview, he was very outgoing and reflective and claimed that “I always participate in discussions. I do try to respect others’ political viewpoints, and I also claim respect for mine.” I think it is important to hear others’ viewpoints because I don’t learn anything if I only stick to my own beliefs. Therefore it is always good to have conversations and hear other views.” However, when asked about increased taxes to support the poor, he argued in a fairly instrumental fashion for reduced taxes. “There is a limit as to how much each person should give to support others...” The question of taxes obviously touched upon his explicit life project of becoming a man and seemed to evoke his feelings (observational protocol). His reasoning instantly turned to a logic of consequentiality and became instrumental. This Muslim was observed to be much more open to the prevalent views in his social environment, which reduced his emphasis on normative religious considerations. A value rationality was apparent, but his open-
mindedness and reflexivity was equally, if not more, prevalent. This can be seen as a case in which important religious and national identities were claimed to be weaker, which may have promoted more reflexivity and openness to society. Two other Muslim participants who have in common a more secular approach to Islam will now be presented.

The first of these is an Iraqi boy who said, “My religion is important and there are things that I don’t do like drinking and eating pork. On the other hand, I think Muslims overreacted in the case of Mohamed cartoons. We could just have ignored them (the cartoons)!” He continued by saying that he was not particularly interested in politics and society, but he still had some clear views on social order: “It is important that society works properly and that justice prevail. Justice is very important to me!” When asked about participation in demonstrations, he replied that “yes, I could in some cases participate if there was something relevant and important, I could do this. Such cases could be justice, repression of women, or the fight for something important.” Furthermore, the boy claimed that he would not be persuaded to demonstrate solely because of being a friend to someone. On the contrary, he would want to decide on participation on the basis of rational considerations. Two points should be emphasized here. First, when the student talked about “justice and issues of importance” to him, the interpretation is that such cases are not only dealt with rationally, but also have the potential to evoke strong emotions. Second, the student was observed to insist on arguing by means of logic of appropriateness. However, more instrumental motives might accompany this value logic. We see these emotions possibly as triggers or as setting the cognitive agenda for consideration and possible action.

A very interesting young Muslim woman was the sole participant with formal political experience in Youth City Council. “I really liked to be a representative in the council because we had some influence and we were able to make changes.” The student is a Muslim, but not religious and does not pray regularly. Her Muslim identity was still important, however, for more practical issues of life behavior and in her resentment of the Taliban associations related to Afghan identity. She claimed, for instance, that “In Islam, it is important that you don’t destroy things, and crime is forbidden, which I think is good.” She also had a positive reaction to an increase in taxes to support the poor. Furthermore, she emphasized the social and political responsibility to participate in political and social affairs. “One cannot just sit there and do nothing while others decide for you!” Her feelings came to the surface when speaking of issues of particular importance. Throughout the interview, her arguments followed the logic of appropriateness. Although instrumentality was not obvious in her statements, it might of course still have been there.

Muslims seem to hold a strong identity and also a belief system which may have many implications for social life. However, other religions like the Baha’i faith also play an important role, as one student explained (N 4): “In Baha’i it’s important to be a good model for others, to follow the norms and rules.” “My religion serves as a guideline for practice. It is a relatively young religion, and its main goal is to promote peace on earth.” The student then elaborated on how Baha’i adherents meet, discuss, and practice according to their norms and train for daily life. As for participation, he claimed that an issue would need to be personally important for him to engage actively. Once again, it was clear that personal affection is often a prerequisite for participation. The value logic of appropriateness is prevalent, but personal importance may of course involve instrumental
motives. Political reflexivity was less outspoken than with other participants, but could be traced from his reflections on daily practices.

When a young woman (N9) was asked about identity, she emphasized that this (the question of identity) was her major problem. She explained that she was a Muslim, but not a practicing one, and never went to a mosque. In terms of national origin, she came from the Middle East, but she also feels Norwegian and tries to understand her new social environment. This student found herself trapped in the uncertainty between conflicting emotions and religious orientation toward Christianity. When asked whether anything was personally important to her, she responded, “yes, particularly on Islam and culture and things like that, I like to hear others’ opinions.” She preferred to be reflective in a situation where sorting out different views had become a major issue in her uncertain identity. Her situation shows how conflicting or uncertain identities creates problems in dealing with social and political life in a “new” country.

It should also be emphasized that all these students, in one way or another, rooted their reasoning in strong normative considerations based on values and concepts of the good life. A logic of appropriateness was strikingly outspoken, and a pure and focused version of the logic of consequentiality was equally absent in these young people’s reasoning about politics. Their answers and reflections displayed indirectly normative considerations about what they thought of as a good citizen.

Emotions

This section will focus a little more specifically on the role of emotions in political engagement. When questioned about what issues were of particular salience to her, one student responded with crime and the conditions on farms for fur-bearing animals. (In Norway, there has been strong criticism of living conditions for fur-bearing animals on farms). Furthermore, she liked to support the protection of polar bears, work against drunk driving, and perform charitable work. Emotions are hard to read, but are often easier to experience when listening to an interview (N 5). Likes, dislikes, and indignations are triggers which direct attention to issues.

It was previously pointed out that interest reflects the pursuit of personal advantage. However, when people express political interest, they may also refer to their likes and to a more personal involvement: their fascination with something. One of the students clearly stated that “If issues interests me, I may participate; if not, I will not get involved” (N6). This student elaborated on personal interests in a way that may involve interest as a pursuit of advantage. However, we are inclined to think that “interest” also involves an emotional component of liking and disliking as well as other emotional aspects. It should therefore follow that when students voice their personal interests, they also display emotions about their more general personal involvement. This is important because in the authors’ opinion, these emotions guide students to further reading, participation of some kind, or personal reflections. Emotions may therefore become mechanisms in political action. The role of emotional involvement was particularly clear for one Norwegian female student, who said, “If I am going to participate, I really have to ‘burn’ for it.” This student
strongly emphasized that her personal political involvement had to be rooted in something deeply felt.

The Israel/Palestine question, conflicts, injustices, and issues of subversion were mentioned by many students as sources of emotions and political engagement. A Vietnamese student explained, “I remember participating in a demonstration about Gaza.” “I felt like supporting students from this origin.” This student claimed that he was not particularly interested in Middle Eastern countries, but that Gaza was special to him because it involved people that he knew. He then elaborated further: “I need to be personally involved to get the extra kick for participation” (N 7). This student appeared to point (among other things) to his emotional involvement as decisive for his political participation. Such an emotional precondition was quite clear in the last example presented here. A student was asked about the importance of personal involvement in her decision to participate. She responded, “If I go to town and I find something annoying to me, or if I don’t like something, I walk over and tell people that it is not right.” “So if things really matter to me I tend to take action.” We believe that this statement displays the role of emotions in political action for many. Some degree of emotional involvement tends to direct attention, to fuel interest, and sometimes to be the trigger for political participation.

**Information – reflexivity**

The reflexivity of the students was apparent and has already been noted. The point has also been made that religious secularism may accompany a more outspoken reflective attitude. This section will elaborate a little more on reflectiveness. The participant under consideration is a young student from the Middle East who does not yet have any party preferences for voting. “I will have to study (the parties and options) carefully to make a choice… I can’t just vote for something I don’t know anything about! I will sort out my preferences by reading.” This reflexivity was quite apparent in the words of another informant: “I do value discussions, and I considered joining a political party. However, I haven’t studied them (political parties) all yet, but I think my preferences are somewhere in the “Red Alliance” (cluster of four parties).” A third young Somali explained that his parents vote for the Socialist party, but that he himself wanted to have his own opinion. “Therefore I sit down to read, not the most extreme right-wing parties, but I do consider the leftists (three/four parties).” He continued by explaining that it is important to be informed about society and that this may also be important in life. More examples could be presented, but suffice it here to say that the thorough reflective inclination by these and other immigrants displayed a striving towards the identity of an informed and responsible citizen. All the participants seemed to take responsibility for making inquiries and preparing themselves for rational and informed choices. The forms of rationality may be based on values, identities, or simply instrumental pursuits.
Discussion

This article has proposed a dynamic model of political reasoning in which individuals combine identities, emotions, and information in different forms of rationalities. These elements (identity, emotions, and information) all seem to play a role in the reasoning of the informants, but in quite different ways. For some dedicated religious students, the norms of religion seem to be the major starting point for their reasoning. For others, information, emotions, or both are the triggers that move them forward. Situational factors may also come into play and generate reasoning about political affairs. The dynamics of the proposed model therefore involve interplay among the elements as well as the weights given to normativity, emotions, and information by each particular individual. The forms of rationalities are expressed in the students’ reasoning about politics and in their political involvement.

Empirically, for most of the participants, the identities which they expressed in politics played an important role in how they viewed and anticipated their political involvement. In particular, Islam and the Baha’i faith lent a high degree of normativity to students’ political reasoning. These identities often seemed to be a starting point for rational reflections, or they might instantly come into play when triggered by particular issues and emotions. The rationalities were often influenced by normativity and were value-based. However, a religious (or other) logic of consequentiality might also have been present, but without manifesting itself. However, less religious Muslims and others used concepts of normativity to build an identity which might take the form of a civic and political identity. As pointed out earlier, the students also displayed strong and weak identities which might have very different consequences for their rationalities and how they perceived and related to politics. Here, it should be emphasized that much of the students’ reasoning took the form of a search for normativity in response to questions such as what would be the appropriate thing to do in particular situations or how do I see myself as a citizen. Regardless of which identity is active in a particular situation and the strength of each, strong support has been found for the authors’ belief that how people see themselves with respect to their identities nearly always matters in their political life. Although issues appear and disappear, identities are somewhat stable and may provide a basis for political orientation, information-seeking, and rationalities. It also seems that strong religious beliefs tend to promote a logic of appropriateness and reduce the importance of a logic of consequentiality.

As shown in the empirical analysis presented here, the various forms of rationalities are difficult to capture. In a logic of appropriateness, there might be instrumental motives which are empirically hard to uncover. Despite this uncertainty, the informants in this study were found to use the logic of appropriateness much more than instrumental rationality in their explicit statements. Sometimes the logic of appropriateness is combined with reflexivity. However, much civic normativity was found across very different identities. This phenomenon can be interpreted as young people striving toward a social, civic, and political identity.

Furthermore, some support has been found for including emotions as a vital part of a model of political reasoning. In the interviews described here, young people expressed the view that they might turn to political action because certain issues were salient and mean-
ingful to them. Sometimes they voiced their emotions directly and explained how they are related to issues and information. It is apparent that issues of particular salience touch in one way or another on their emotions. These emotions direct attention to information and issues of particular salience to a person, as well as being triggered by these issues. Emotions are triggers and can make people take action in their lives. They are closely related to identities in a two-way relationship. It is argued here that emotions should be part of a political decision-making model because they often play a decisive role in political reasoning. However, some people are labeled as “emotional,” while others are labeled as cool or calm (less emotional). Still, it is apparent that emotions play a role in political reasoning and orientation for most people.

Many of the students interviewed voiced the opinion that they turn to information-seeking when they feel uncertain. They also value discussions and reflexivity, which for many become an integral part of opinion formation and political involvement. It should be particularly emphasized that many of these students seem to act very rationally in their search for information to become “enlightened citizens.” This reflexivity and the information they obtain then take part in a dynamic interplay with identities and emotions. Information thus completes the proposed model of political reasoning.

Conclusions

The process of developing the model proposed here has been both theoretical and empirical. In the interviews conducted in this study, strong support was found for the model as a dynamic framework of reasoning. One conclusion from this discussion is therefore that the model presented here is supported both theoretically and empirically. This is the major response to the research question posed earlier.

However, in response to the dynamics of reasoning, two more specific conclusions can be added. The first is that these young people display a high degree of normativity in their search for appropriateness during their reflections on civic and political life. None of the students emphasized a purely instrumental and overtly egotistical approach to political involvement.

Second, many students explicitly voiced the need for information as a basis for their decisions on civic involvement. In this, they were acting as rational, enlightened citizens. This is an encouraging finding for democracy.

As pointed out in the methodological section more research is needed to confirm or change this model, which may not be generalized. However, we believe that the model may be fruitful as a basis for research and also a guide for teaching. As a final act we would like to suggest some careful school implications.

First of all in student’s process of becoming political they need to wrestle with issues of salience which may evoke emotions and engagement. Important issues are a prerequisite for “self-experience” of emotions and basis for reflections and possible participation. Second we want to emphasize a positive and open classroom climate for discussion. The social exchange of viewpoints in a civilized manner is of greatest importance for the stimulation of reflections of self and society.
References


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**Appendix - interview guide**

Students were asked to elaborate on the following topics:

- How they see themselves as citizens
- Students participation, socially, politically
- Participation in New-Media
- Organizational membership
- Political engagement
- Political issues
- Political identities – what’s important to students
- Political skills
- Political rights and responsibilities
- Conceptions of democracy
- Social trust
- Schools role and importance in political education
- Participation in school
- Political trust and self confidence