Supportive Social Contexts and Intentions for Civic and Political Participation:
An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior

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This is the pre-peer reviewed version of the following article: Pavlova, M. K., & Silbereisen, R. K. (2015). Supportive social contexts and intentions for civic and political participation: An application of the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 25*, 432-446, which has been published in final form at http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/casp.2223/abstract. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving.

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Acknowledgements

This study was partly conducted during the postdoctoral fellowship of the first author at the Jena Graduate School “Human Behaviour in Social and Economic Change” (GSBC) funded by the Federal Program “ProExzellenz” of the Free State of Thuringia, Germany. The survey “Demography and Democracy – Regional Characteristics of Demographic Change, Individual Developmental Assets, and Local Potential for Civic Participation and Political Personnel Recruitment” (Co-PIs: Everhard Holtmann, Rainer K. Silbereisen) was the “Innovation Project” of the Collaborative Research Center 580 “Social Developments in Post-Socialistic Societies: Discontinuity, Tradition, Structural Formation” funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). We thank the participants and our colleagues who contributed to designing the survey and preparing the data: Sebastian Grümer, Everhard Holtmann, Tobias Jaeck, Thomas Ritter, Maik Runberger, and Karina Weichold.
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Abstract

We investigated how general social support from family, friends and acquaintances, and community predicted intentions for civic (e.g., volunteering) and political (e.g., petitioning) participation via the constructs specified in the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Participants were young adults living in the former East Germany, a post-communist region, who were surveyed by telephone in 2010 ($N_{\text{civic}} = 695$, $N_{\text{political}} = 694$). Civic participation was perceived more favorably than political participation. Supportive family predicted intentions for civic participation; supportive community services predicted both types of intentions; and supportive friends and acquaintances had no significant effects. The mediating variables were subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, but not attitudes. All effects were controlled for sociodemographic variables, richness of the social network, and past experience of civic and political participation. Findings underscore the role of supportive community in fostering both civic and political participation.

Keywords: behavioral intentions; civic and political engagement; developmental assets; family and peer support; social and community support; volunteering; young adulthood.
Social context matters for civic and political participation. The presence of role models in the family, peer group, and community (Mustillo, Wilson, & Lynch, 2004; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006); recruitment through the network of relatives, friends, and acquaintances (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Wilson & Musick, 1997); and a direct support of civic and political activities from significant others, even if uninvolved themselves (Klandermans, 1997), are the most straightforward pathways of social influence.

In the present study, we argue that general (i.e., not pertaining specifically to civic and political participation) social support may also facilitate participation. This is a nontrivial issue because, in contrast to social support for specific activities, general social and community support may be easier to target through psychological interventions and broad community development measures. We use a sample of contemporary young adults from post-communist East Germany to investigate the role of multiple supportive social contexts (i.e., family, friends and acquaintances, and community) in fostering intentions for civic and political participation. Our theoretical argument draws on the theory of planned behavior (TPB) that specifies the cognitive precursors of behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010); positive youth development approaches that address the link between social support and civic participation (Benson, 1997; Leffert et al., 1998; Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003); and community psychology that emphasizes the role of community for civic participation in adulthood (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Nowell & Boyd, 2010).

**Civic and Political Participation**

Civic participation, such as volunteering, refers to unpaid voluntary activities structured by an organization and undertaken for community benefit (Wilson, 2000), whereas political participation, such as petitioning, involves activities that are likewise unpaid and voluntary but aim to influence local or national government policy (Verba et al., 1995). Although the two constructs are often used interchangeably in the literature (Duke, Skay, Pettingell, & Borowsky, 2009; Grillo, Teixeira, & Wilson, 2010; Marzana, Marta, & Pozzi,
2012) or the former is believed to foster the latter (Verba et al., 1995), some scholars argue that one kind of participation is not easily translated into another and that different factors promote them (Neufeind, Jiranek, & Wehner, 2014; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005; van der Meer & van Ingen, 2009).

One difference is that civic participation is characterized by solidarity and mutual support among like-minded people, whereas political activities often involve conflict and contestation, which are inherent to democracy but aversive to most people (Eliasoph, 1998; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). Moreover, whereas activities such as volunteering quickly bring tangible results, attempts to influence policy makers may fail altogether or yield success only in the long term. The ultimate goal of political participation is producing systemic change in social institutions, an undertaking that is inherently more difficult than helping specific people in need, which is often the focus of volunteering (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). On top of that, politics is often seen as a messy, hypocritical thing (Eliasoph, 1998; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). For these reasons, individuals typically have more negative attitudes towards political participation and are less willing to get politically involved.

**Theory of Planned Behavior**

According to TPB (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), any specific behavior, such as volunteering or petitioning, may be reliably predicted from the individual’s intention to perform it and perceived behavioral control (i.e., perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior). In turn, the intention may be predicted from the attitude towards this behavior (i.e., favorable or unfavorable appraisal of it) and subjective norm regarding this behavior (i.e., perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform it) as well as from perceived behavioral control. TPB and its modifications have been successfully used to predict volunteering at a homeless shelter (Harrison, 1995), volunteering among older adults (Greenslade & White, 2005; Warburton & Terry, 2000), volunteer enrollment of college students in a campus-based program (Okun & Sloane, 2002), charitable giving (Smith &
McSweeney, 2007), voting behavior (Glasford, 2008; Netemeyer & Burton, 1990), and participation in conventional politics (Eckstein, Noack, & Gniewosz, 2013).

TPB does not specify where individuals’ beliefs, which form the basis of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, originate. However, it assumes that the relevant background variables are specific to a given behavioral domain and that they influence intentions and behavior only indirectly, via the TPB constructs (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Few attempts have been made to identify such background variables in the domain of civic and political participation. A handful of studies conducted in the US linked sense of community with other (i.e., not based on TPB) cognitive antecedents of civic and political participation, such as trust and efficacy (Anderson, 2010) and intentions (Hellman, Hoppes, & Ellison, 2006); only one such study tested for and found the indirect (via outcome expectations) effects of neighborhood conditions on the intentions to volunteer and to become politically active (Chung & Probert, 2011).

Supportive Social Contexts and the Development of Participation

Proponents of positive youth development maintain that youth growing up in warm and supportive families and communities develop a need to give back, which enables them to become responsible and engaged adult citizens (Lerner et al., 2003). In line with this approach, Benson and colleagues (Benson, 1997; Leffert et al., 1998) introduced the concept of developmental assets, which represent the positive aspects of environment and self that foster youth thriving, which includes the development of citizenship (Sherrod, 2007). Prior research has convincingly documented the positive effects of supportive families, peers, and communities experienced in childhood and adolescence on concurrent and subsequent civic and political participation (Duke et al., 2009; Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000).

Social support is also essential to positive adjustment beyond childhood and adolescence (Thoits, 1995). In young adulthood (a period of life when individuals make
autonomous decisions on whether to become engaged in civic and political life or not, which largely shape their lifetime pattern of participation; Flanagan & Levine, 2010), parents, romantic partners, and friends are the major sources of support and advice (Lang & Fingerman, 2004) and may therefore play a role in fostering civic and political participation. Unfortunately, few empirical studies conducted on adults have addressed this possibility. By way of exception, Marzana et al. (2012) investigated the effects of family support on volunteering and political activism among young adults and found no significant effects, whereas Omoto and Snyder (1995) even found negative effects of general social support on the duration of AIDS-related volunteering. However, including more proximal psychological predictors of participation could obscure the effects of social support in these studies.

Furthermore, civic and political activities reach across the boundaries of private networks as they involve helping relative strangers or combining efforts with them. Individuals’ willingness to do this may depend on whether they perceive their communities at large to be supportive and fulfilling their needs. In community psychology, needs fulfillment has been described as an aspect of sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), which has been argued to enhance the well-being of community members as well as their participation in community life (Nowell & Boyd, 2010). A number of studies found favorable associations between supportive community and both civic and political participation in adults where an overall sense of community index was used (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Marzana et al., 2012; for a meta-analysis, see Talò, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2014). However, sometimes no significant effects emerged (Mannarini, Fedi, & Trippetti, 2010). Moreover, one study reported a mixture of positive and negative effects for different types of offerings and services available in the community (Grillo et al., 2010). Findings from another study suggested that low sense of community does not rule out some forms of participation, such as political activism (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009).

The Present Study
Our study used the data collected in 2010 in the former East Germany. Under the communist regime (i.e., between 1949 and 1990), independent civic and political initiatives were suppressed, but many voluntary or quasi-voluntary associations, such as sport clubs, trade unions, and church-related welfare associations, did exist, which were, however, all sanctioned and supervised by the state and the socialist party. This arrangement promoted general mistrust towards community initiatives and skepticism about the effectiveness of collective action (Gensicke, Olk, Reim, Schmithals, & Dienel, 2009). A more recent history of economic difficulties after the German reunification has also hindered citizens’ participation in this region, although currently the rates of participation in the East are only slightly lower than those in the West (e.g., in 2009, volunteering rates amounted to 31% in the East vs. 37% in the West; Gensicke & Geiss, 2010). As psychological factors such as negative attitudes seem to be among the major obstacles to civic and political participation in the former East Germany (Gensicke et al., 2009), it makes sense to look at the background variables that may foster positive beliefs about civic and political participation.

Drawing on the above theoretical perspectives, we developed and tested a path model whereby supportive social contexts indirectly, via the TPB constructs, predicted future intentions for civic and political participation (see Figure 1). We considered family, friends and acquaintances, and community services (i.e., a proxy for sense of community, particularly the aspect of needs fulfilment; McMillan & Chavis, 1986) as plausible background factors that might promote participation in young adulthood. However, we expected their effects to differ between civic and political participation.

Supportive significant others (i.e., family and friends) may encourage and model prosocial behaviors of all kinds and thereby foster positive beliefs about civic participation as it is based on mutual solidarity and involves helping behaviors such as volunteering (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). Put in terms of the TPB constructs, supportive
significant others may foster prosocial attitudes, may themselves be involved in prosocial behaviors (i.e., subjective norms), and may boost one’s self-confidence to succeed in such pursuits (i.e., perceived behavioral control). In contrast, the climate of mutual caring and understanding may be less conducive to the formation of positive beliefs about political participation, which involves conflict and contestation (Eliasoph, 1998; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). One multi-country study even found negative associations between the strength of family ties and political participation (Alesina & Giuliano, 2011). We therefore hypothesized that supportive family and friends/acquaintances would have stronger positive effects on the TBP constructs referring to civic participation as compared to political participation.

Concerning supportive community services, these may be relevant to both civic and political participation. A community fulfilling one’s needs may itself be a result of the successful civic and political participation of its members, which may reinforce positive beliefs about participation of both types even among those who have not been involved themselves. Prior studies actually found that various aspects of sense of community were positively associated with the intentions to volunteer and to be involved in politics as well as with outcome expectations in both the civic and political domains (Anderson, 2010; Chung & Probert, 2011; Hellman et al., 2006). We therefore hypothesized that supportive community services would have positive effects on the TPB constructs referring to both types of participation. For all predictors, we did not expect to find differential effects on different TPB constructs. We reasoned that social and community support nonspecific to civic and political participation were unlikely to differentially influence these proximal, and closely interrelated, cognitive antecedents of participation.

Our study was based on cross-sectional data; we therefore controlled our analyses for a number of variables usually associated with the likelihood of civic and political participation (Verba et al., 1995; Wilson, 2000), such as age, educational attainment, employment status,
family status, and richness of the social network (i.e., having acquaintances of diverse occupations). In addition, we controlled for past experience of civic and political participation because past behavior is one of the most salient predictors of the TPB constructs (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

Method

Participants and Procedure

We used data from the survey “Demography and Democracy – Regional Characteristics of Demographic Change, Individual Developmental Assets, and Local Potential for Civic Participation and Political Personnel Recruitment.” Participants aged 20–40 were drawn from two federal states of the former East Germany, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia, via random digit dialing (RDD). The sample was stratified by regional administrative units (NUTS-3 level) and age; otherwise, the participants’ selection was random. Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) were conducted from October 2010 to January 2011 by the trained personnel of the CATI laboratory, University of Jena, Germany. Altogether, 1,400 full interviews lasting approximately 20 minutes were conducted, whereby all of the participants received questions about their sociodemographic backgrounds, perceived environment and psychosocial adjustment, and past experience of civic and political participation. As a measure to prevent response fatigue, a set of TPB items referring to civic participation was administered to a random half of the sample, whereas the other half responded to the same questions referring to political participation.

Without a correction for unknown eligibility, response rate was estimated at only 5.0%; with such a correction, it was estimated at 50.5% (The American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2009). For comparison, another research institute in the former East Germany reported a 20% response rate in a RDD survey on citizens’ perceptions of local politics and democracy (Buchwald, 2008). In our sample, females as well as higher educated, nonworking, and single individuals were somewhat overrepresented. Using iterative
proportional fitting, we created sampling weights adjusting marginal distributions of age, gender, education, employment status, and family status within each of our two random subsamples to those in the German Microcensus 2010 (Forschungsdatenzentrum des Thüringer Landesamtes für Statistik, 2012). All statistics reported below are based on weighted data. For the present study, we excluded 11 cases with missing data on major sociodemographic indicators. Descriptive statistics for both subsamples of this study are presented in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

**Measures**

**TPB constructs.** The present items were based on the instructions for questionnaire construction provided by Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) and were administered after the questions on past experience of civic participation (CP) and political participation (PP), which covered a broad range of potential domains of engagement, so that the participants had been prompted with many specific examples of CP/PP. Each random subsample received the TBP items on either CP or PP. *Attitude towards CP/PP* was measured with four items (“I consider civic/political participation as: bad–good, worthless–worthy, false–honorable, selfish–helpful”; 1 = extreme negative; 5 = extreme positive; \( \alpha = .78 \) and .82 for CP and PP, respectively). *Subjective norm for CP/PP* was assessed with four items (e.g., “My significant others are civically/politically engaged”; 1 = does not apply at all; 5 = fully applies; \( \alpha = .76 \) and .79 for CP and PP, respectively). *Perceived control over CP/PP* was measured with three items (e.g., “I am confident that I can be civically/politically engaged”; 1 = does not apply at all; 5 = fully applies; \( \alpha = .71 \) and .71 for CP and PP, respectively). Finally, *behavioral intention for CP/PP* was measured with two items (e.g., “I intend to be civically/politically engaged”; 1 = does not apply at all; 5 = fully applies; \( \alpha = .89 \) and .89 for CP and PP, respectively). For each scale, mean score was used.
**Supportive social contexts.** The present scales were based on the instruments measuring developmental assets in youth (Leffert et al., 1998). *Supportive family* was assessed with four items (e.g., “My family supports me in all that I do”; $\alpha = .64$). *Supportive friends and acquaintances* were measured with four items (e.g., “My friends and acquaintances show that they hold me in high regard”; $\alpha = .40$). *Supportive community services* were assessed with five items (e.g., “My town or community actively strives to promote my well-being”; $\alpha = .64$). All the scales on supportive social contexts had the same item response format (1 = does not apply at all; 5 = fully applies). To capture the accumulation of assets in a given domain, for each scale, we calculated the sum of highly endorsed items (i.e., “applies” or “fully applies”).

**Results**

Descriptive statistics (see Table 1) show that our participants perceived a high level of support from their families and friends/acquaintances, reporting in each of these domains almost three assets on average out of four possible. In contrast, out of five items on supportive community services, only one was highly endorsed on average. Consistent with expectations, the mean scores on all TPB variables were significantly higher for CP than for PP, that is, the participants reported more positive attitudes, stronger subjective norms, higher perceived behavioral control, and stronger intentions regarding CP as compared with PP. In addition, within each subsample, the average scores on positive attitudes towards CP and PP were much higher than those on subjective norms, perceived control, and intentions regarding CP and PP (see Table 1).

**Analytical Approach**

To test our conceptual model (see Figure 1), we conducted path analysis with maximum likelihood estimation, using Mplus v.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). We employed a two-group design to compare the models for CP and PP as the respective TPB constructs were measured in two separate subsamples. We tested the indirect effects of supportive social
contexts on intentions via attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control following the procedure outlined in Shrout and Bolger (2002); in particular, bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals were used to test the significance of indirect effects. For simple regression coefficients, bootstrap standard errors were obtained for significance testing. To provide estimates of effect sizes, we report standardized regression coefficients; for indirect effects, we additionally report confidence intervals. All reported effects were controlled for age, sex, school attainment, income, employment status, partnership status, children in the household, richness of the social network, and past experience of both CP and PP (full results of regression analyses are available upon request).

Findings From Path Analysis

Figure 2 shows standardized regression coefficients for each of the paths specified by our conceptual model. Supportive family was positively and significantly associated with subjective norm and perceived behavioral control regarding CP but not with attitudes towards CP, whereas it had no significant effects on the same variables regarding PP. This difference in the effects for CP and PP was in line with our expectations. Contrary to our hypotheses, supportive friends and acquaintances had no significant effects whatsoever, neither for CP nor for PP. Supportive community services had significantly positive effects on attitudes and perceived behavioral control but not on subjective norm regarding CP. For PP, supportive community services were positively and significantly associated with attitudes and subjective norm but not with perceived behavioral control. On the whole, the effects of supportive community services looked very similar for CP and PP, which was as expected.

Furthermore, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control proved to be of unequal importance in predicting intentions. For both CP and PP, attitudes had much weaker effects on intentions than did subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, which were both positively and significantly associated with intentions. For CP, the effect of
attitude was not even significant. Concerning the direct effects of supportive social contexts, none of them was significant (see Table 2), which was as expected.

When all nonsignificant paths shown in Figure 2 and the direct effects of supportive social contexts on intentions were omitted, the models yielded an excellent fit with the data: for CP, $\chi^2(9, N = 695) = 14.7$, ns, CFI = .995, RMSEA = .030, SRMR = .007; for PP, $\chi^2(10, N = 694) = 17.5$, ns, CFI = .992, RMSEA = .033, SRMR = .010. The models accounted for 60.9% and 44.2% of variance in the intentions for CP and PP, respectively. Our next step was to estimate the indirect effects of supportive social contexts and to test the differences between the models for CP and PP for significance.

Table 2 shows the direct, indirect, and total effects of supportive social contexts. Supportive family had significantly positive indirect effects on the intention for CP via subjective norm and perceived behavioral control; the total indirect effect was also positive and significant. No significant indirect effects of supportive family on the intention for PP emerged, and the differences between the CP and PP subsamples were significant for the indirect effect via perceived behavioral control and for the total indirect effect. These differences were in line with our hypotheses. However, the total effect of supportive family on intentions was significant neither for CP nor for PP.

Contrary to our hypotheses, no significant direct, indirect, or total effects of supportive friends and acquaintances emerged. In contrast, supportive community services had positive and significant (or marginally significant) indirect effects on intentions for both CP and PP via subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (these effects were all of about the same size). The total indirect and total effects of supportive community services on the intentions for CP and PP were positive and significant. No significant differences in the direct, indirect, or total effects of supportive community services emerged between the two
subsamples. These findings supported our hypotheses with regard to the role of supportive community for both types of participation.

**Discussion**

In this cross-sectional study, we combined perspectives from TPB (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), positive youth development (Benson, 1997; Leffert et al., 1998; Lerner et al., 2003), and community psychology (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) to explore the background factors that might foster positive beliefs about civic and political participation in young adulthood. We argued that (a) general social support from family, friends and acquaintances, and community might contribute to young individuals’ intentions for civic and political participation (Lerner et al., 2003; Sherrod, 2007), (b) the links between supportive social contexts and intentions would be indirect, mediated by the TPB constructs referring to civic and political participation (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), and (c) support received in personal relationships (i.e., from family and friends/acquaintances) would foster civic rather than political participation because the former involves explicitly helping behaviors and is based on mutual solidarity whereas the latter involves conflict and contestation (Eliasoph, 1998; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). We tested our propositions in a sample of young adults aged 20–40 living in the former East Germany, a post-communist region that, at least formerly, suffered from general mistrust towards community initiatives.

The civic–political divide became apparent already in the average responses of our participants to the respective items: Civic participation was regarded more favorably than political participation in terms of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived control, and intentions. These results coincide with other reports from Germany (Gensicke & Geiss, 2010) and support the concerns of some US American political scientists (Eliasoph, 1998; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005) that civic participation is perceived as a selfless, morally pure, and also more feasible alternative to becoming involved in politics, which is seen as more difficult or even deemed a “dirty business” whose methods are opaque and morally questionable. In
our sample, attitudes towards political participation were still rather positive on average, but political participation appeared to be uncommon and unencouraged in our participants’ social environments (i.e., low subjective norms). Moreover, our participants seemed skeptical about their abilities to get politically engaged (i.e., low perceived behavioral control).

A test of our conceptual model (see Figure 2) confirmed that supportive social contexts could be seen as relevant background variables for the TPB constructs in the domains of civic and political participation, and the differences between the two domains were in line with expectations. However, not all contextual and TPB variables contributed to the prediction of intentions for civic and political participation as expected. For one thing, attitudes performed much worse than did subjective norms and perceived behavioral control in predicting intentions, and the effects of supportive social contexts on intentions were not mediated by attitudes.

Thus, in contrast to other voluntarily undertaken behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), civic and political participation may be governed less by the respective attitudes, which in our study turned out to be predominantly positive, and more by perceived social pressure and self-confidence with respect to such activities. In fact, several prior studies, which were conducted in the US and Australia, also found relatively weak effects of attitudes on volunteering intentions (Greenslade & White, 2005; Harrison, 1995; Okun & Sloane, 2002; Warburton & Terry, 2000). A message for policy makers is that individuals may view civic and political participation as “good” but they may still refrain from participation because they are excluded from recruitment networks and/or have doubts that they can make it or that their personal investment would be of value (cf. Klandermans, 1997).

Although peer support had been found to foster civic participation in adolescence (Duke et al., 2009), we obtained more evidence for the positive effects of supportive family, which was significantly and indirectly associated with stronger intentions for civic participation, than for those of supportive friends and acquaintances. In young adulthood,
parents and romantic partners may have more power to inspire or discourage individuals in their pursuits than do friends because friendships are noninstitutionalized relationships involving far fewer obligations and responsibilities and are less emotionally laden (Lang & Fingerman, 2004). However, friends are relevant to civic and political participation of adults in other ways; for instance, such participation may bring more pleasure when undertaken together with friends (“social gratifications”; Verba et al., 1995). Recruitment through friendship networks represents another obvious link between friendship ties and participation, and indeed, we found that subjective norms referring to perceived pressure from significant others (friends included) to participate in civic and political life were strong predictors of the respective intentions, which was in full accord with TPB (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

With regard to supportive community services, we expected and found that they were related to positive beliefs about both civic and political participation. As known from developmental and community psychology (Lerner et al., 2003; Nowell & Boyd, 2010), a supportive community is vital to civic participation because individuals living in such communities are likely to develop a drive to give back to their communities and society as a whole. Furthermore, supportive community services may in part be an outcome of successful civic and political participation of community members and may thereby reinforce further participation. This may be of a particular significance in a post-communist region, where state-run services used to be very client-unfriendly: A continuing improvement in this regard (or a lack thereof) may be a salient indicator of local policy makers’ efficiency, thereby disposing or indisposing individuals to engage in local politics themselves.

The finding that supportive community services played an even more important role than supportive families in promoting intentions for both types of participation indicates both a risk and an opportunity. The risk is related to the fact that, on average, our participants perceived services in their communities as little supportive, which could therefore hinder their
willingness to be civically and politically engaged. However, perceiving problems in the community may also prompt collective action to remedy these problems (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). Moreover, communities are more amenable to policy interventions than are families; this opens up opportunities to foster civic and political participation through community development measures.

Our study had its limitations, including a cross-sectional design; a sample collected in a particular cultural context; self-report measures; assessment of the TPB constructs for civic and political participation in two separate subsamples, albeit randomly selected; and a lack of prediction of actual behavior. Some of these limitations may also be seen as advantages. For instance, we provided evidence from the former East Germany, an underinvestigated region. Moreover, we used actual behavior as a control variable in predicting intentions rather than as an outcome of intentions, which would not be feasible with a cross-sectional design. Despite its limitations, this study enables us to draw several substantive conclusions.

First, in contrast to civic participation, political participation was seen as particularly unattractive and onerous by our participants from the post-communist East Germany. This finding corresponds to the trends observed in the US and suggests that, in comparison with activities such as volunteering that help specific individuals in need and address local issues, political participation that aims at changing social institutions is more difficult to promote. Second, general social support from families and communities, but not from friends and acquaintances, was associated with intentions for civic and political participation. This result substantiates our contention that not only specific support for and modeling of civic and political activities, but also general social support, promote positive beliefs about participation in young adulthood. Third, only supportive community services predicted both kinds of intentions, which points at a pivotal role of community in fostering both civic and political participation. Policy makers in the region will therefore be well advised to pay more attention to community development.
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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Sociodemographic Indicators and Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>CP subsample</th>
<th>PP subsample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuringia, %</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female, %</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (20–40), $M (SD)$</td>
<td>29.9 (6.3)</td>
<td>29.8 (6.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–13 years of schooling, %</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income in Euros (50–4000), $M (SD)$</td>
<td>876.8 (591.1)</td>
<td>908.0 (565.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student, %</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working, %</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>74.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homemaker/unemployed, %</td>
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<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting/married, %</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in the household, %</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive family (0–4), $M (SD)$</td>
<td>2.8 (1.1)</td>
<td>2.8 (1.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supportive friends (0–4), $M (SD)$</td>
<td>2.6 (1.1)</td>
<td>2.6 (1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive community services (0–5), $M (SD)$</td>
<td>0.9 (1.1)</td>
<td>0.8 (1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards CP/PP (1–5), $M (SD)$</td>
<td>4.6a (0.7)</td>
<td>3.6b (1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective norm for CP/PP (1–5), $M (SD)$</td>
<td>2.5a (1.0)</td>
<td>2.0b (0.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived control over CP/PP (1–5), $M (SD)$</td>
<td>3.2a (1.0)</td>
<td>2.3b (1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention for CP/PP (1–5), $M (SD)$</td>
<td>3.0a (1.4)</td>
<td>1.9b (1.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Range of values, where applicable, is shown in parentheses after variable names. CP/PP = civic/political participation. Attitude, subjective norm, perceived control, and intention referred to CP in the first subsample and to PP in the second subsample. Values with different subscripts significantly differ between the two subsamples ($p < .01$).
Table 2

*Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Supportive Social Contexts on the Intentions for CP/PP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Intention for CP</th>
<th>Intention for PP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>95% CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supportive family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>[-.108, .005]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect via attitude</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>[-.004, .005]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect via subjective norm</td>
<td>.040*</td>
<td>[.006, .073]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect via perceived control</td>
<td>.036a*</td>
<td>[.006, .066]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total indirect</td>
<td>.077a**</td>
<td>[.021, .132]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>[-.057, .107]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supportive friends and acquaintances</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>[-.082, .015]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect via attitude</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>[-.003, .007]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect via subjective norm</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>[-.028, .029]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect via perceived control</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>[-.015, .039]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total indirect</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>[-.033, .063]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>[-.084, .046]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supportive community services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>[-.028, .086]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect via attitude</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>[-.002, .010]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect via subjective norm</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>[-.006, .052]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect via perceived control</td>
<td>.029*</td>
<td>[.004, .055]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total indirect</td>
<td>.056*</td>
<td>[.012, .101]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>.085*</td>
<td>[.011, .160]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note. Standardized coefficients are shown. CP/PP = civic/political participation. CI = bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals. Coefficients with different subscripts differ significantly between the models for CP and PP ($p < .05$). Differences between CP and PP were tested only where the respective coefficient was significant in at least one of the subsamples.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. 
Figure 1. Path model linking supportive social contexts and theory of planned behavior with intentions for civic and political participation. CP/PP = civic/political participation.

Covariances among the predictors are omitted for the sake of simplicity.
Figure 2. Path analysis results. CP/PP = civic/political participation. Standardized regression coefficients are shown; values without parentheses refer to CP, values in parentheses refer to PP. Covariances among the predictors and direct effects were estimated but are omitted for the sake of simplicity (direct effects were not significant).

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.