

Prospettiva temporale e partecipazione civica negli adulti emergenti

Manuela Zambianchi¹

Sommario

Lo studio ha esaminato la relazione tra prospettiva temporale e partecipazione civica in 388 studenti universitari italiani (età $m.= 20.08$; $DS = 1.72$; 19% maschi e 81% femmine). Essi hanno compilato l'Inventario Svedese di Zimbardo sulla prospettiva temporale (S-ZTPI) ed il questionario sulla partecipazione civica. Essi presentano un basso coinvolgimento nella partecipazione politica, preferendo attività prosociali quali il volontariato e la raccolta di donazioni. Per la prospettiva temporale, il presente fatalistico risulta associato negativamente con la partecipazione civica prosociale, mentre il passato positivo, il presente edonistico ed il futuro positivo presentano correlazioni positive con essa. Adottando un approccio centrato sulla persona, sono emersi quattro profili di funzionamento per la prospettiva temporale e la partecipazione civica, con differenti livelli di organizzazione temporale e di partecipazione civica.

Parole chiave

Prospettiva temporale, Partecipazione civica, Partecipazione politica, Adulto emergente, Sviluppo positivo.

¹ Università di Bologna; Istituto Universitario ISIA, Faenza.

Time perspective and civic engagement in emerging adults

Manuela Zambianchi¹

Abstract

The study examined the relationship between time perspective and civic participation in 388 Italian undergraduates (mean age = 20.08; SD =1.72, 19% male and 81% female). Participants filled in the Swedish Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (S-ZTPI) and a questionnaire on civic engagement. Participants show a very low involvement in political participation, preferring prosocial civic behaviours such as volunteering and donations. For the time perspective dimensions, present fatalistic is negatively associated with civic prosocial participation, while past positive, present hedonistic and future positive show positive correlations with it. Adopting a person-centred approach, four cluster profiles of functioning for time perspective and civic engagement were identified, with different levels of civic participation and time perspective organization.

Keywords

Time perspective, Civic participation, Political participation, Emerging adulthood, Positive development.

¹ Università di Bologna; Istituto Universitario ISIA, Faenza.

Introduction

Positive development at a young age: the role of civic involvement

In contemporary society, a new phase of life has been inserted between adolescence and young adulthood, known as «emerging adulthood» (Arnett, 2004). It is defined as a period of development between adolescence and adulthood, extending from ages 18-25. This stage of life is characterized by the need for exploration and uncertainty over personal life paths. Contrary to adolescents that have not acquired complete autonomy from the parental home, and are not yet as autonomous as young adults, who have reached several important objectives such as a stable job and own family (or a stable couple relationship), emerging adults hold the perception of «feeling in between» two crucial phases of life (Arnett, 2004). Tanner and Arnett (2009) suggest that emerging adulthood is not only a distinct, but also a critical juncture in human life development and they introduce the concept of *recentering* as its primary psychosocial task. They also assume that the development of individuals is the result of a complex interaction between their personality and the characteristics of their environment. Recentering comprises the shift towards relationships where power is shared rather than imposed or controlled by parents, and the exploration of new roles and commitments. As the phase of emerging adulthood is a new relevant stage of human development, several theoretical models have pointed out the relevance of an approach towards it, aimed at identifying resources as well as risk factors for its positive development.

Masten et al. (2004) sustained that the period of transition from adolescence to adulthood presents, in our contemporary society, both risk factors and opportunity factors. They highlighted in the construct of *individual agency* a set of resources and fundamental competencies for a positive transition towards adult roles. Among these competencies, the authors pose a positive future temporal orientation, problem solving strategies, the ability to plan personal life objectives and civic engagement. Hawkins et al. (2009) proposed a theoretical model of positive development in the stage of emerging adulthood, which is rooted in three theoretical perspectives: developmental psychopathology (Masten & Curtis, 2000), life-course psychology (Lerner, 2006) and social capital perspective (Whitley & McKenzie, 2005). It comprises five constructs: civic engagement and active responsibility (group participation, group donation and civic action); trust and tolerance of others; trust in authorities; social competences (responsibility for self and for others, self-control, and empathy); and life satisfaction (for personal social life and for achievement/direction). O' Connor et al. (2011) examined, using this model, the early predictors of positive development in emerging adulthood, identifying an important role exerted by community

engagement (e.g. attending a public meeting) during mid to late adolescence, which confirms the relevance of civic engagement at these developmental stages of life. According to these theoretical perspectives, the relevance of personal as well as contextual factors that influence the level of civic participation of the youngest generations has been examined in several studies. Flanagan (2004) argued that adolescence and young adulthood have long been considered the periods in which individuals develop attitudes and habits of civic participation that last for their lifetime. Although civic engagement is considered a crucial component of positive development (see above), research finds that adolescents and emerging adults are generally more politically disengaged than previous generations of citizens (Putnam, 1995; Pontes, Henn, & Griffiths, 2017). A study that has taken into account the generational differences in young adults' civic orientation has highlighted that the generation of «baby boomers», born between 1946-1961 possessed higher levels of civic engagement compared to the generation of «millennials» (born after 1982), especially in the area of political involvement, while the only exception to this trend was represented by the involvement in community service, such as volunteering, during the stage of late adolescence (Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012). Chrissochoou and Barrett (2017), in a review of factors involved in civic and political engagement of young generations, highlight the role of efficiency, identity, not only at an individual level, but also at a collective level, and values, with growing relevance to social media. Other studies (Barber & Torney-Purta, 2009; O' Toole, 2015) have shown that today's youngest generations are less interested in politics compared to previous ones, but that, at the same time, they are attracted by voluntary associations and social movements. Several studies have highlighted also gender differences in political participation, where females show a lower engagement compared to their male peers (Coffè & Bolzendhal, 2010); (Albanesi et al., 2012; Crocetti et al., 2014).

Crocetti et al. (2012), adopting both a variable-centred approach and a person-centred approach, examined the relationship between identity status and civic engagement in a sample of adolescents. Youths with an achieved identity (commitment to clear values and roles), or those who are exploring their identity in-depth, are more likely to endorse the attitude of social responsibility (the feeling of responsibility in addressing social needs) and to be civically engaged. The level of social responsibility mediates the relationship between identity statuses and civic-political participation. Although several models of successful development highlight the importance of temporal dimensions, such as future planning, for reaching positive psychosocial outcomes in emerging adulthood (e.g. Hawkins et al., 2009), nowadays, few studies have examined the role of time perspective for engagement in civic and political participation during this stage of life.

Time perspective and its role in the positive functioning of young generations

Frank (1939) defined time perspective as «the totality of a person's views of his or her psychological future and psychological past existing at a given time». Lewin (1943), in accordance with Field Theory, which highlighted the relevance of time perspective, maintains that future time can influence present behaviours through its anticipation, and challenges the basic assumptions of psychoanalysis on the central role played by the past for the comprehension of an individual's actual present actions and behaviours. Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) defined time perspective as «the often nonconscious process whereby the continual flows of personal and social experiences are assigned to temporal frames, that help to give order, coherence and meanings to those events» (p. 1272). They argue that time perspective exerts a dynamic influence on any important decision and actions and conceptualized it as comprising five dimensions: Past Positive (a positive evaluation of the past, perceived as bearer of values and experiences that are related with happiness), Past Negative (which reflects a negative and traumatic view of the past, with as yet unelaborated events), Present Hedonistic (the preference for present pleasure, activities and people that can bring satisfaction, with little concern for future consequences), Present Fatalistic (which reveals a fatalistic and hopeless attitude towards the future and life, with a prevailing external locus of control), and Future (which reflects a general future orientation and behaviour dominated by striving for future goals). Carelli, Wiberg and Wiberg (2011) proposed adding a new future dimension to the construct of time perspective elaborated by Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), defined as Future Negative, arguing that a simple conceptualization of the future as having a unique dimension cannot capture all the psychological attitudes and emotions, perceptions and perspectives about the future of individuals. Boniwell and Zimbardo (2004); Zimbardo and Boyd (2008) and Wiberg et al. (2012) have proposed the construct of a balanced time perspective, which corresponds to a personal temporal pattern that is a combination of a high level of past positive, a moderate concentration on the future, a moderate concentration on present hedonistic, a low fatalistic view of the present and a low level of past negative experiences. This coherent temporal pattern seems to be one of the best time configurations for positive functioning across an individual's life-span (Drake et al., 2008; Boniwell et al., 2010). Several studies have examined the role of time perspective on overall psychosocial functioning in young people. Worrell, Mc Key and Andretta (2015) have examined, adopting both a variable approach and a person-centred approach, the associations between time related constructs (time perspective, temporal focus and consideration for future consequences) and psychosocial constructs (academic, social and emotional self-efficacy, aggression, self-esteem and the quality of parental relations) and the differences among time perspective profiles

for these psychosocial constructs. The correlational design shows that past negative and present fatalistic are related with a high level of aggression and a low level of parental attachment and self-efficiency, while future is related positively with self-efficiency, parental attachment and a low level of aggression. Present hedonistic shows negative correlations with academic and social self-efficiency, and positive correlations with emotional self-efficiency and levels of aggression. The person-centred design centres on four temporal profiles, among which the balanced time perspective profile and the future-centred profile highlight the most adaptive psychosocial outcomes.

A study conducted on Italian adolescents and undergraduate students (Molinari et al., 2015) took into account the relationships between the six time-perspective dimensions and two facets of social engagement, namely personal responsibility (the feeling of being obliged to improve the conditions of those who are in need) and trust in a better future (the feeling of trust in a better world). They found that both types of engagement are positively predicted by present hedonistic and negatively by present fatalistic. Only personal responsibility is positively predicted by future positive. Neither past positive, nor future negative had significant influence on them. Kaluzna-Wielobòb (2014) carried out a study on the relationships between time perspective and preference for values (Schwartz et al., 2001) on a sample of Polish university students. She found that a «future-centred time perspective» is highly correlated with the value of Universalism, which encompasses concern for the welfare of all people, caring about the environment, justice, wisdom and peace. Also, young people who care for the welfare of others and for the global good are more future-oriented individuals, who set goals and pursue them persistently. A similar result was found by Milfont and Gouveia (2006), who showed that care for the natural environment was significantly connected with future orientation. Carmi and Arnon (2014), in a study on future time perception and pro-environment behaviours, highlighted that individuals with developed future orientation demonstrated more pro-environmental tendencies, confirming the role of temporal constructs for the understanding of several kinds of civic and social engagement of individuals.

To date, there are very few studies that have examined the relevance of time perspective for civic and political engagement in emerging adulthood. This study adopts both correlational analysis (variable-centred) and individual profile analysis (person-centred). Life-course and life-span developmental theories highlight the dynamic interactions between the person and their context, which underpins positive development (Lerner, 2006; Magnusson & Stattin, 1997). This interactionist perspective raises a question, related to the way in which the complex interplay between individual and social contexts are deepened and studied. They point out the limits that the so called «variable-centred approach» highlights in exploring these interweavings. Bergman and Magnusson (1997)

and Bergman and El-Khoury (2003) suggest a double approach to the study of human-environmental interaction: the first, most utilized approach, captures relationships among variables (e.g. the association between individual factors, such as self-esteem, locus of control and psychosocial outcomes, such as civic engagement; it corresponds to the «variable-centred approach»); the second approach, defined as the «person-centred approach» focuses its attention on the coherent organization of variables within the individual, which constitutes the unit of examination for the researchers. This study utilizes the six time-perspective questionnaire (Carelli, Wiberg, & Wiberg, 2011), which includes two dimensions of future, the future positive and the future negative, and two dimensions that could be relevant and strategic for a better understanding of the level of civic engagement of the young. The «question» of the future nowadays has, in fact, received growing attention from psychological science and sociological science.

Indeed, contemporary post-modern society highlights growing difficulty in planning for the future, especially for the youngest generations (Leccardi, 2009). The globalization of the economy, the digitalization of worldwide society, and the precariousness of the work-labour market have produced a perception of the future as an «opaque time» (Leccardi, 2009). While indeed the first modern society was based on the future, which was regarded as the time for self-realization and the present was perceived as «bridge-time» for the future (Reith, 2004), in the Second Modernity we witness the progressive opacity of the future, which becomes a time of uncertainty (Leccardi, 2009; Beck, 1992), where it is very difficult to realize personal life projects and plans. As stated by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), however, the disappearance of the future and trust in the future can reduce the perception of human agency and motivation for social engagement. Indeed, engagement for social change may be favoured by a representation of a positive, better future, which humans could reach through individual and collective self-efficacy and planning. For these reasons, the main objective of this study was the evaluation of the level of civic and political participation of young people and their relationships with time perspective. Also, potential differences between males and females were explored. On the basis of these objectives the following hypotheses have been formulated.

- On the basis of previous literature (e.g. Crocetti et al., 2014; Stefani et al., 2021), a more civic involvement of males in the area of political actions, compared with females, is expected. (H1)
- Positive correlations between past positive, present hedonistic, future positive and civic engagement are expected, while negative correlations between past negative, present fatalistic and future negative are expected. (H2)
- We hypothesize that different levels of civic involvement are related to different time perspective profiles, and that a positive time perspective profile

(a low past negative, a high past positive, a medium present hedonistic, a low future negative and a high future positive), corresponding to the concept of Balanced Time Perspective, which previous research has demonstrated to be associated to better psychological functioning (e.g. Boniwell et al., 2004), is related to a higher level of civic and political engagement. (H3)

Method

Participants

The research was conducted at the University of Bologna, Rimini Campus, Italy. 388 University undergraduates (mean age = 20.08; SD = 1.72; 19% male and 81% female) took part in the study.

Measures

- *A questionnaire on civic engagement* (Albanesi, Cicognani, & Zani, 2007). This questionnaire comprises 10 items and evaluates the level of engagement in activities in the previous year, such as political manifestations, protest marches, charity purchases, cultural events, local folk festivals, strikes etc. The scale was a four-point Likert scale (1= never; 4 = often). An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the scale, which highlighted a two-factor solution: the first factor, which gathered items related to political-protest actions, was labelled «political-protest participation»; the second factor, which gathered items related to cultural activities, charity purchases and donation behaviour, was labelled as «prosocial volunteering participation». The psychometric properties of the two dimensions was good: the first factor (political-protest participation) has a Cronbach's Alpha = .83, the second factor «prosocial volunteering participation» has a Cronbach's Alpha = .71.
- *A questionnaire on time perspective* (S-ZTPI, Carelli, Wiberg, & Wiberg, 2011; Italian translation by Molinari, Speltini, Passini, & Carelli, 2016). This questionnaire contains 64 items and is designed to evaluate six fundamental time dimensions: Past positive (a positive evaluation of the past, perceived as bearing the values and experiences that are associated with happiness, example of item: «Familiar childhood sights, sounds, smells often bring back a flood of wonderful memories»), Cronbach's Alpha = .66; Past negative (which reflects a negative and traumatic view of the past, with as yet unelaborated events, example of item: «the past has too many unpleasant memories that I prefer not to think about»), Cronbach's Alpha = .81; Present hedonistic (an

orientation towards present enjoyment, pleasure without sacrifices today for rewards tomorrow, example of item: «I believe that getting together with one's friends to party is one of life's important pleasure»), Cronbach's Alpha = .76; Present-fatalistic (a belief that the future is predestined and uninfluenced by human actions that leave individuals without hope for managing the present effectively, example of item: «Fate determines much in my life»), Cronbach's Alpha = .74; Future positive (efforts to plan for achieving future objectives, example of item: «When I want to achieve something, I set goals and consider specific means for reaching those goals»), Cronbach's Alpha = .65; Future negative (a threatening and anxious perception of the future, example of item: «The future contains too many boring decisions that I do not want to think about»), Cronbach's Alpha = .68. The score was computed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = «very untrue»; 5 = «very true»).

Procedures

The undergraduates were recruited during their lessons; they were briefly informed of the objective of the study and the anonymity of the measures. Then, after their consent, they filled in the self-report measures.

Data analyses

The analyses were run in four steps. In the first step, mean, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis of all variables were calculated. In the second step, a correlation matrix (Spearman product-moment, due to the non-Gaussian shape of the variable political participation) was calculated. In the third step, a Manova model examined the gender differences on time perspective and civic engagement. A linear regression model examined the influence of age (as a continuous variable) on time perspective and civic participation. Finally, a hierarchical cluster analysis and a subsequent K-mean cluster analysis were conducted using civic-volunteering participation and the six time-perspective dimensions as grouping variables. The hierarchical techniques proceed by a series of steps to form larger groups and determine the stage at which the solution provides the best description of the structure of data. Ward's procedure was used, with squared Euclidean distance, a method that is estimated very efficiently (Ward, 1963). After, K-means clustering produced a partition of data into a particular number of groups. It was chosen because it minimizes the variability within clusters and maximizes variability between clusters (Everitt, Landau, & Leese, 2001). When groups were formed, ANOVA evaluated cluster differences in grouping variables. Data of variables that entered into the cluster analyses were computed with standardized scores.

Results

Descriptive statistics of study variables

Considering time-perspective dimensions, emerging adults show the highest scores on future positive and past positive, while they report the lowest scores on present fatalistic. Civic prosocial participation shows medium-low scores, while political participation has a very low score (see table 1).

Table 1

Description of study variables.

Variable	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Past negative	3.05	.70	-.16	-.30
Past positive	3.52	.61	-.30	.15
Present hedonistic	3.49	.55	.08	.03
Present fatalistic	2.53	.58	.11	-.07
Future positive	3.61	.51	-.27	.06
Future negative	3.17	.55	.002	-.29
Political participation	.50	.30	1.25	2.78
Civic prosocial participation	2.22	.70	.37	-.42

Age and gender differences on time perspective and civic participation

A Manova model highlighted that males differ significantly in political participation, compared with females (Wilk's Lambda = .96; $F(2,365) = 6.82$; $\eta = .02$) (Males $M = .59$; $SD = .27$; Females $M = .47$; $SD = .37$). Males show a higher score on this type of civic engagement than females. They did not differ in civic prosocial participation ($p < .74$).

Linear regression models show a significant effect of age on present hedonistic (Beta = $-.18$; $p < .01$). As age increases, the level of present hedonistic decreases. Age approaches significance for present fatalistic (as age increases, present fatalistic slightly decreases, Beta = $-.93$; $p < .07$).

Correlations among study variables

Civic-volunteering participation shows positive correlations with past positive, present hedonistic and future positive. Political participation does not show

significant correlations with time-perspective dimensions, but only with civic prosocial participation (see table 2).

Table 2

Correlation between S-ZTPI dimensions and level of civic and political participation.

variables	Past Negative	Past Positive	Present Hedonistic	Present Fatalistic	Future Positive	Future Negative	Political Part.	Civic-vol. Part.
Past negative	-							
Past positive	-.15**	-						
Present hedonistic	.07	.13*	-					
Present fatalistic	.33***	.003	.21**	-				
Future positive	-.05	.18**	-.19**	-.23**	-			
Future negative	.52***	.01	-.04	.39***	-.03	-		
Political participation	.02	.01	-.06	-.09	.07	-.05	-	
Civic-vol. participation	-.05	.14**	.10*	-.16*	.16**	.02	.33***	-

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

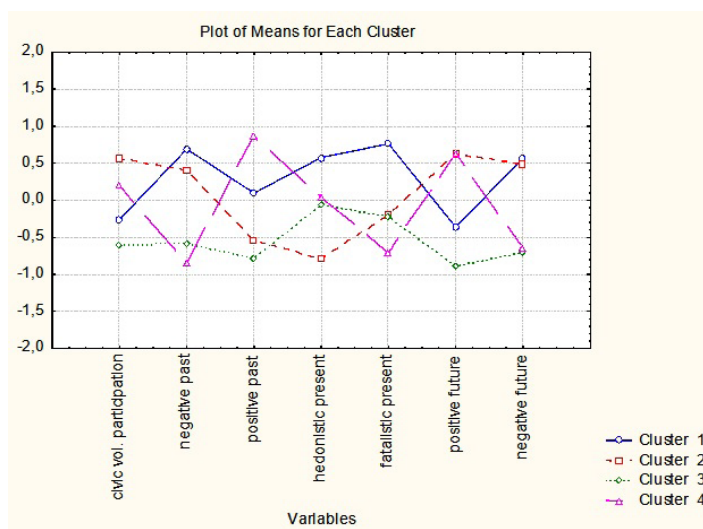
Cluster analysis. The temporal patterns of emerging adults in relation to civic participation

Due to the very low level of political participation, only civic prosocial engagement entered into the cluster analyses. The cluster analyses highlighted four clusters, which differ significantly on the Anova Test for all grouping variables (see table 3 and figure 1).

Table 3

Anova Test for grouping variables.

Variable	Between SS	Within SS	F	p level
Civic prosocial engagement	86.68	67.80	210.94	.0000
Past negative	85.25	85.88	163.77	.0000
Past positive	5.87	122.4	7.90	.0004
Present hedonistic	3.00	95.20	5.21	.005
Present fatalistic	34.46	80.30	70.80	.0000
Future positive	6.60	81.63	13.34	.0000
Future negative	32.97	67.37	80.76	.0000

Figure 1

Plots of means for each cluster. Scores are computed with z standardized points.

The highest level of civic prosocial engagement (cluster 2) is shown by those young people with a medium-high past negative, a low level of past positive, a low level of present hedonistic, a medium-low level of present fatalistic, a medium-high future positive and a medium future negative. A medium-high involvement in civic participation (cluster 4) is related to a «balanced time perspective»: a low past negative, a high past positive, a medium present hedonistic, a low present

fatalistic, a high future positive, a low future negative. A medium-low involvement in civic participation (cluster 1) is shown by those emerging adults that present a high past negative, a medium past positive, a medium-high present hedonistic, a high present fatalistic, a low future positive and a high future negative. Young people with the lowest civic prosocial engagement (cluster 3) possess a low past negative, a low past positive, a medium present hedonistic, a medium present fatalistic, a low future positive and a low future negative (see table 4).

Table 4

Description of the four clusters.

	Cluster 1 (104 cases)	Cluster 2 (75 cases)	Cluster 3 (65 cases)	Cluster 4 (89 cases)
Variables	M SD Variance	M SD Variance	M SD Variance	M SD Variance
Civic prosocial engagement	-.25 .82 .67	.56 .94 .89	-.60 .75 .56	.20 .95 .91
Past negative	.69 .76 .58	.41 .69 .48	-.58 .82 .67	-.83 .79 .63
Past positive	.09 .74 .54	-.54 1.01 1.03	-.79 .69 .48	.87 .74 .55
Present hedonistic	.57 .83 .69	-.77 .77 .60	-.06 .82 .68	.03 .95 .91
Present fatalistic	.76 .81 0.66	-.20 .78 .61	-.21 .80 .65	-.71 .88 .78
Future positive	-.36 .82 .67	.62 .68 .47	-.87 .83 .70	.62 .80 .64
Future negative	.57 .78 .61	.48 .80 .65	-.70 .80 .65	-.64 .75 .57

Discussion

The study has examined, from both a variable-centred approach and a person-centred approach, the relationship between time perspective and civic engagement in the emerging adulthood stage. It confirms the role exerted by time perspective dimensions for taking active part in society.

As previous research demonstrated, young people's average level of civic engagement, such as volunteering, donations and charity purchases is not particularly high, but is still present; the level of political participation, on the contrary, is dramatically low, as already highlighted by Snell (2010) and also by European studies (EACEA, 2013). Males appear to be more involved in this latter type of civic action, confirming previous research (Francescato et. al., 2007; Albanesi

et al., 2012; Crocetti et al., 2014; Stefani et al., 2021). Although the participation of young males appears substantially low, women are less engaged than men in political activities. It may be that, as sustained by Stefani et al. (2021), reconnecting to the Social Role Theory (Eagly et al., 2000), family education influences the expectations of males and females during childhood and adolescence. According to this theory, cultural values of power, autonomy and decision making are seen as male, not female, stereotypical values. Political engagement, in this perspective, is assumed to be an activity related to power, requiring psychological characteristics that are associated with males, such as the ability to make decisions and cultivate autonomy.

The correlations between time perspective and prosocial civic participation (e.g. volunteering, donation purchases etc.) confirm the role of positive time perspective dimensions for the understanding of level of participation in changing or building a better society. Past positive and future positive emerged as two fundamental time dimensions for active participation of emerging adults in society. The reminiscence of positive experiences belonging to early life stages constitutes a protective but also promotional factor for active engagement in prosocial behaviours at this stage of life, as suggested by the «Transference Model» proposed by Saribay and Andersen (2007). These authors, adopting the Attachment Models Theory elaborated by Bowlby (1988), argue that past experiences occurring early in life lead to the inner construction of specific attachment models, which have a long-lasting effect on relationships across one's life-span. Those emerging adults that present a higher level of past positive could have internalized a secure attachment model (an inner representation of others whose honesty and trustworthiness are expected), which, in turn, has facilitated the construction of satisfactory and trusting relationships, and the construction of positive attitudes towards social contexts, being perceived as trustworthy and predictable. At the same time, the envisioning of a positive future, where it will be possible to realize projects and actualize own potentials, together with the ability to plan and delay present gratifications in order to reach more important future results, constitutes a relevant factor for prosocial and pro-environment behaviours, as previous research has demonstrated (Molinari et al., 2015; Carmi & Arnon, 2014; Milfont & Gouveia, 2006). Hedonistic present, as also Molinari et al. (2015) highlighted, contributes to civic participation, perhaps through the enjoyment of shared interests with friends and groups to which the emerging adults belong.

A critical time dimension such as present fatalistic, on the contrary, undermines the involvement of the youngest generations in prosocial civic actions. The significant negative association found between present fatalistic and civic participation highlights the crucial role of perceived self-efficiency and internal locus of control (Bandura, 1997) for the belief and perception of being a powerful

force of social change. A fatalistic view of life may intercept another construct, «personal empowerment» (Francescato et al., 2007; Zimmermann, 2000). This construct consists of three dimensions: control (the capacity to influence decisions), critical awareness (comprehension of the method and of how to operate powerful institutions and structures); participation (the tendency to be active in order to make things happen and for social change). The tendency to take action in relation to demands for social change, as also Francescato et al. highlighted, the perception of being in control of life events, and of being able to intervene in order to shape one's personal life path (which are at the core of the concept of self-efficacy, Bandura, 1986). Those emerging adults that are lacking in self-efficacy and possess an external locus of control (which corresponds to a high level of present fatalistic) find it more difficult to take an active part in society through civic engagement. So, those with a high present fatalistic may also be defined as without personal empowerment. The examination of emerging adults' profiles of functioning highlights interesting results.

The highest level of civic prosocial engagement is seen by those emerging adults who have had negative past experiences that are not counterbalanced by positive ones (they declare a very low past positive), and a low present hedonistic. This latter data may suggest that they have a lack of enjoyable relationships, together with a medium-low fatalistic view towards life. They do, however, envision a positive future, even if the future may reserve also negative and critical situations, as highlighted by the scores reported on future negative. This group of emerging adults seems to move from a negative experience of their past, which, at the same time, does not lead to resignation and demotivation. On the contrary, they seem to take active part in social actions in order to change those situations perceived as unjust; their negative or painful experiences may have strengthened their desire for a better and more just society.

The emerging adults that show a medium-high level of civic engagement possess a balanced time perspective profile (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004; Wiberg et al., 2012). They have a pronounced past positive (which may have contributed to establishing a solid, constructive experience of others and seeing the world as trustworthy) and a medium present hedonistic, which might indicate the ability to share common social projects, besides the ability to enjoy relationships. A positive expectation about the future strengthens their engagement in social actions and provides motivation for participation.

A medium-low engagement in prosocial behaviours corresponds to a temporal profile with a prominent past negative and an equally prominent present fatalistic. This group of emerging adults does not believe they are able to change social situations perceived as unsatisfactory, due to their lack of self-efficacy and, perhaps, their lack of social skills. Their high level of hedonism may be related to the enjoyment of relationships, but without the presence of a collective

plan for future actions, it may be related to sensation seeking, the flip side of the meaning of present hedonistic (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). This must be taken as mere speculation, since the construct of present hedonistic does not permit us to evaluate participation in formal or informal social groups. The previous research of Molinari et al. (2015) also pointed out the relevance of present hedonistic for positive adjustment during these developmental stages of life, opening a discussion about the meaning and the view of this temporal dimension (p. 12). Further future research (e.g. qualitative research with in-depth interviews or quantitative research with other instruments evaluating engagement in formal or informal groups) may better clarify in which contexts or in which temporal organizational patterns the hedonic quality of present time could assume a positive value, since it has demonstrated a relevant association with involvement in health risk behaviours (Henson et al., 2006).

The lowest level of civic engagement belongs to those young people that possess a very intriguing time perspective profile. They show neither a prominent past negative, nor a relevant past positive, neither a prominent future negative, nor a robust future positive. They substantially tend to be over-focused on the present, declined in its hedonic qualities. They appear to be «trapped in the present», a condition that was previously identified by Cavalli et al. (1986) and Leccardi (2009), which defined them as young people that have a «presentified time». In this temporal profile, the past and the future seem to disappear, in favour of a unique time perspective, centred on the present. They also highlighted a poor psychosocial adjustment.

In summary, the most civically engaged youngsters are those who «hope» in the future and act in order to reach a better future. However, they come from very different situations. The most engaged youngsters had very negative past experiences, which they most probably tried to «neutralize» through civic and social action. Their risk is not living the present as a time of relational enjoyment (they show a low level of present hedonistic) but they hope that the future may have in store fulfilment of their desires and projects; and at the same time, they are aware that the future may reserve also negative and critical situations. Results found by Molinari et al. (2015) about the positive prediction of past negative for personal responsibility in young people seem to support this hypothesis. Other emerging adults with consistent civic engagement have a balanced time perspective, which is defined as optimal time organization, being associated with psychosocial positive functioning (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2005; Drake et al., 2008). Our results seem to confirm this assumption.

The least engaged youngsters also present different time perspective profiles, both critical and deleterious. A medium-low level of civic engagement corresponds to a critical experience of time, where negative past experiences are reinforced with a fatalistic perception of the present (and consequently poor

self-efficiency) and a threatening view of the future. Their present way of life evidently is not enough to reduce the noxious effects of a prominent, suffering past, and to give hope for a better future. But, perhaps, the most critical time organization belongs to those emerging adults for whom temporality is flattened on the present, without any relevance of the past and/or the future. It may be that this constitutes a defence mechanism against anxiety for the future and the incapacity to elaborate past painful or traumatic experiences, which other young people with equivalent experiences have been able to project at a collective level of action and for a collective future justice.

Pontes et al. (2017), highlighting the general decline in civic participation of the youngest generations, draws attention to the central role exerted by school for citizenship education. It may be that schools can also play a role in increasing or improving psychosocial and cognitive skills, such as individual and collective self-efficiency, and the ability to make plans for the future and identify useful strategies (e.g. proactive coping strategies, Aspinwall & Taylor, 2000) to accomplish them.

Boniwell et al. (2014) introduced the promising avenue of Time Perspective Coaching, a new set of strategies aimed at improving constructive time dimensions and reducing the power of negative-critical time dimensions, such as past negative and present fatalistic, and also at acquiring a more balanced time perspective, one of the most positive time-configurations and organizations for psychological well-being and for positive development. Reducing the level of fatalistic present in young people, for example, can improve the perception of being in control of life events, enhancing perceived self-efficiency (Bandura, 1986) and the perception of personal empowerment.

Zambianchi (2015) hypothesized that the ability to develop a deep awareness of the influence of time perspective on our functioning across many life domains and the ability to modify it can be regarded as temporal competencies and considered an authentic new life skill for dealing with the uncertainty of our society in every stage of life. On the other hand, Levy (2020), referring to the V.U.C.A Model (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014) that describes our society in its salient characteristics (Vulnerability, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) underlined the central role played by education systems in improving competencies and character strengths, among which we must mention perseverance and hope for their intrinsic temporal qualities, in order to enhance the participation of young people in society in an increasingly complex world undergoing rapid and often unpredictable changes.

The study has several important limits. One of the most important limitations of the study is its imbalance in gender, which does not enable efficient evaluation of the potential differences on time perspective and civic and political participation to be made, only suggestions. Another important limit is due to its

characteristics: it comprises only university students, and thus can be defined as a convenience sample; for this reason, participants possess a higher level of cultural capital that may have facilitated their approach to social groups and a wide range of civic activities (Flanagan, 2008). Other research, with working emerging adults, or those in other conditions (e.g. the unemployed, and/or those with fewer qualifications) may provide a better picture of the relationship between time perspective and civic engagement in its different facets.

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