



**Maria K. Pavlova**  
**Center for Applied**  
**Developmental Science**  
**(CADS), Friedrich-**  
**Schiller University of**  
**Jena, Germany**

Civic engagement refers to unpaid, voluntary activities that address issues of public concern and are usually undertaken collectively (American Psychological Association, 2015; Wilson, 2012). Examples are volunteering for social causes, political activism, and donations to charity. In democratic societies, civic engagement is regarded as an important developmental task of the transition to adulthood (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Why? First, communities and societies need members who care about social and political issues, know how to express and defend their political interests in a constructive way, and are prepared to stand by disadvantaged groups. Such civic knowledge, skills, and motivations are largely shaped in youth and early adulthood (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Second, young people benefit from civic engagement, because it provides opportunities to develop useful skills and social contacts, brings pleasurable social experiences, and offers a positive, normative identity that makes deviant and risky behaviours less attractive (Piliavin & Siegl, 2014).

PATHWAYS collaborations have given me an opportunity to look closer on family factors that may promote or hinder civic engagement during the transition to adulthood. In this newsletter, I report on one longitudinal study that I conducted together with PIs Rainer Silbereisen and Katariina Salmela-Aro and with Prof. Salmela- research associate Mette Ranta. Our study (Pavlova, Silbereisen, Ranta, & Salmela-Aro, submitted) addressed the role of parental warmth and support for civic engagement in the transition to adulthood. It was based on the data from Finnish Educational Transitions Studies (FinEdu; <http://wiredminds.fi/projects/finedu/>). The FinEdu currently spans seven waves and 10 years of observation. It has been widely used by other PATHWAYS fellows to study school and work engagement as well as educational and employment transitions of Finnish youth.

#### **Effects of Parenting on Youth Civic Engagement and Their Explanations**

Traditionally, positive parenting has been regarded as a prerequisite to all kinds of prosocial behaviours in children and adolescents, including civic engagement (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995; Lerner et al., 2003). Warm and supportive parents are thought to convey the norms of mutual support

as ability to give back to others (Flanagan, 2003; Lerner et al., 2003). A lot of empirical

studies support these notions; most of these studies come from the US and Canada (see Pavlova et al., submitted, for a review).

However, there is accumulating evidence that warm and supportive family may also play a less positive role for civic engagement. Several studies, including our own, found nonsignificant or even negative effects of family support on civic engagement in youth and adults (see Pavlova et al., submitted, for a review). These findings come from various parts of the world, and various explanations for these surprising effects could be identified from the literature.

First, individuals with low family support may seek new sources of social support through involvement in voluntary organizations (i.e., self-selection; Omoto & Snyder, 1995).  
Salmela-Aro, R. & E. V. (2014). Journal of Research on Adolescence, 24(1), 1-16.

Predictor	Org. involvement 2013/14	Political engagement 2013/14	Volunteering 2013/14
Org. involvement 2011	1.19*** (0.09)		0.27** (0.08)
Political engagement 2011		2.27*** (0.15)	0.68*** (0.15)
Maternal warmth 2004			



# The Role of Contextual Factors on Parenting Practices and Outcomes in African Americans in the United States.

race-related parenting practices in African

questions have been addressed using data from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Contexts Study (MADICS; PI: Jacquie Eccles, 1991) a 20-year longitudinal study on African American and European American adolescents and their families who reside along the Eastern seaboard of the United States. Based on the integrative framework the study of developmental competencies in minority youth (Garcia-Coll et al. 1996), my research focuses on the role of race related parenting as a potential protective factor in the face of racial/ethnic discrimination and neighborhood disadvantage, which both have been associated with poorer mental health and lower academic outcomes for minority youth (Sellers et al., 2003; Neblett et al., 2006). Garcia-Coll and colleagues (1996) suggest that race-related parenting practices such as racial/ethnic socialization that can be protective for African American children and youth. African American parents may



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Harris-Britt, A., Valrie, C.R., Kurtz-Costes, B., & Rowley, S.J. (2007). Perceived racial discrimination and self-esteem in African American youth: Racial socialization as a protective factor. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 17, 669-682.

## Author profile:

### Meeta Banerjee

Dr Meeta Banerjee is a Research Specialist at the Achievement Research Lab, School of Education, University of California, Irvine. She is also a Postdoctoral Fellow, for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

Prior to joining PATHWAYS Meeta received her Ph.D. in Ecological-Community Psychology from Michigan State University. Her dissertation investigated the moderating relationship between racial-ethnic socialization and exposure to community violence on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American college students. Her area of research focuses on parenting

positive developmental outcomes. In particular, Dr. Banerjee investigates how racial-ethnic socialization is protective for ethnic minority youth in the United States with regards to

different contexts (i.e., discrimination, violence, poverty). During her time with PATHWAYS, Dr. Banerjee worked with data from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Contexts Study (MADICS) to examine how racial-ethnic socialization and racial discrimination is associated with psychosocial outcomes in African American families, as discussed in her article in this issue of Pathfinder. Furthermore, Dr. Banerjee has begun to explore if there are parallels to her findings utilizing the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE). Dr. Banerjee is



a recipient of a National Institutes of Health Minority Training Grant, which was awarded for 2014 and will continue to December 2015. In September 2014, Meeta joined University of California, Irvine as a research specialist in the School of Education. In January 2016, Dr. Banerjee will be joining California State University-Northridge as in a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in the Psychology department.

# MSU, Finland partners receive \$3.6M grant to study science learning

More students need to feel motivated and excited about learning science if the United States is going to succeed in producing a more scientifically literate workforce.

Michigan State University researchers hope to make that happen by testing the best ways to improve learning experiences in high school. The team is using a \$3.6 million grant from the National Science Foundation and partnering with scholars in Finland, where students outperform most of the world on international tests.

investigator Barbara Schneider, Pathways PI, John A. Hannah Chair and University Distinguished Professor in the College of Education and Department of Sociology.

all students need scientific knowledge to understand and contribute to the world. We want to develop a model where we can

Over the five-year project, science education researchers will work with teachers in the United States and Finland to design and implement curriculum units in physics and chemistry classes. These project-based lessons will allow researchers to study the impact of new science teaching strategies modeled after the Next Generation Science Standards, a voluntary set of guidelines now being introduced in schools in many parts of the United States.

Participating students will each receive smartphones to provide real-time data to researchers. The system prompts students to answer questions on the phones about their learning experiences from a social and emotional, as well as academic, perspective. Of particular interest are the classroom messages that may be discouraging underrepresented student groups from pursuing careers in science-related fields.

Like the United States, Finland is in the process of restructuring its science curriculum in an effort to increase overall interest in STEM learning. Joseph Krajcik, Lappan-Phillips Professor of Science Education at MSU and co-