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Understanding children's and parents' mutually constitutive mediation environment

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Emotions in the Mediated Civic Context of the Family: Understanding Children's and Parents' Mutually Constitutive Mediation Environment

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Abstract

This article proposes that more attention should be paid to how mediated civic engagements are shaped in a family context. Through an interpretive literature review of research that studies the family's role in mediating civic engagement, we identify several problematic conceptual understandings that create rigid distinctions between the family sphere and its members' civic engagement, as well as between their analogue and digital engagements. The article introduces a conceptual framework that has implications for further research on mediated civic engagement by taking into consideration parents', children and youth's emotions and affective relations as relevant for engaging in the civic realm.

Keywords: Civic engagement, affect, family, mediation, children

Introduction

How do family members co-shape one another's ways of contributing to civic society? After all, family members conduct an everyday life and coordinate actions with one another, and they establish and actively maintain everyday routines and rhythms together. In spite of our ambition to better understand and promote children's and youth's 'communicative agency' (Ytre-Arne

& Das, 2020) and well-being (Smahel et al., 2020), especially in the context of current debates on datafication's implications for everyday life (Lomborg et al., 2020; Van Dijck, 2014) and concerns about increasing disinformation (Bennett & Livingstone, 2018), we still know relatively little about the fundamental relational dynamics of everyday family negotiations and their importance for mediating young people's civic engagement. This article, building on an interpretative literature review (Eisenhart, 1998; Hammersley, 2004) on the family's everyday role in developing civic engagement, argues that there is a conceptual gap in understanding mediated civic engagement in family context. It aims to propose a conceptual framework that may help with amplifying the analytical scope when working at the nexus of digitally and analogically mediated civic engagement in the context of families.

Currently the relevant literature, at least on studies conducted in the European and North American contexts, tend to analytically separate the dynamic relationality of these processes, by either focusing on parents' mediations alone (Smahel et al., 2020), on children's and youth's agency in peer interactions (Johansen, 2016), or on educational institutions' attempts to support children's learning (Tomé & Brites, 2020). Children's and youth's agency, and arguably herewith their increasingly digital engagement in what some scholars label "datafied societies" (Schaefer & van Es, 2017), however, neither only emerges from their interaction with educators in educational institutions, such as preschools, schools and after-school centres, nor is it constituted via their interaction with peers alone. It also emerges from their daily interaction with the family (e.g., Højholt & Kousholt, 2018; Gurdal & Sorbring, 2018; Nolas et al., 2017).

In this article, we suggest that the relatively little attention granted to the familial context and its 'informal' relations in the discussion of media literacy as foundation for civic/political engagement in datafied societies may rest on a rigid distinction between private and public spheres, due to which civic engagement and/or political participation are considered to belong to the public sphere and seldom acknowledged as happening on an ordinary and everyday scale.

As a result, only the extreme tip of the agency iceberg is regarded as ‘real’ political participation, for instance in the form of public deliberation, voting, activity in political parties, among others (Mouffe, 2005).

The research question that is going to be guiding in the interpretive literature review and following discussion is: What aspects need to be considered in the constitution of the civic environment at home, including what role emotions, audiences and digital media contexts play in its constitution? As the interpretative literature review will show, what is more easily missed are all those micro-instances where discontent is uttered, and where it is rather unclear whether the discontent only has to do with concrete family relationships, or with the wider structural conditions. It is therefore this article wishes to offer a cross-disciplinary conceptual discussion that may help with building analytic frameworks that, in particular, can systematically integrate the study of emotional expressions within the familial context as politically relevant expressions, as herewith as a form of civic action.

We draw on theoretical discussions that acknowledge the ‘affective turn’ in the social sciences (Kligler-Vilenchik & Shresthova, 2014; Mouffe, 2005; Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012), for instance a body-phenomenological view of affect that takes into consideration the affective as part of all perception and action. These provide us an opportunity to go beyond the rigid distinction between private and public, and between digital and analogue, in order to better account for the role emotions play in media users’ sense of civic engagement in the context of familial relationships.

On the following pages we introduce three predominant analytical perspectives on families’ dynamic role in mediating civic engagement, namely research perspectives that focus on children's agency, on parents' agency, or on their interconnectedness, - which resulted from our interpretative literature review. The ensuing analytical discussion draws on additional cross-disciplinary literature that may help to further extend our understanding of the family’s

mediating role. Here we introduce three conceptual areas that are needed to be taken into consideration for enabling future conceptual work on the affective mediation of families' digital literacies. These conceptual areas emphasise: (1) civic engagement as also taking place in the family, forming political participation and citizenship, (2) the need for collectivizing agency, in that family members can promote mutual constitution of possibilities for mediated participation and action in everyday life, and (3) the need to politicize emotion to underline its relevance for everyday life civic agency. A concluding discussion will bring these strands together, proposing a conceptual framework that can assist in better grasping affective complexities and ambiguities in the mediation of civic engagement through the family context.

The Role of Family in Mediating Civic Engagement – an interpretative literature review

Citizenship is nowadays inextricably intertwined with technologies and media. Civic and political engagement are increasingly tailored to the respective individual, embedded in personal lifestyle values, and are not necessarily built upon a group-based understanding of political identity that arose in the 1960s (Bennett, 2012). A term that describes the characteristic of recent civic engagement is 'everyday activism': "Sharing of personal stories in public spaces with the aim of challenging the status quo" (Vivienne, 2013, p. iii) is a prevailing course of action in social and political engagement and participation. The new trends in civic engagement challenge previously assumed sharp divisions between public and private actions, blurring digital and analogue communication, formal and informal arenas of doing politics. It is in this context that the role family plays in civic engagement still appears conceptually underdeveloped. Clark and Brites (2018), meanwhile, argues that family life is a key location for the development of civic culture.

The family context plays an important role, not only in how children are guided to use digital media (Clark, 2011; Livingstone et al., 2018), but also in how political debates are brought up through conversations and negotiated in the family (Brites et al., 2017; Clark & Brites, 2018; Lemish, 2007; Nolas, et al. 2017). More generally put, family context plays an important role in shaping children's and youth's civic and political agency. For instance, parents who embrace a commitment to social justice or have political knowledge might initiate political talk (Bennett et al. 2000) and produce agentic environments (Brites et al., 2017). In this light, young people may come to view practises of citizenship as an extension of their experience of agency within their home contexts. In contrast, families with relatively low degrees of agentic discussion and decision-making may reinforce low digital agentic options, actions, and decisions (Clark & Brites, 2018). The following interpretative literature review works out the varying conceptualizations of agency, and especially how agency is distributed among family members, in literature on the family's mediation of civic engagement. As will be shown, three different emphases of agency are present in the literature that guide the researchers' knowledge interests and research questions: children's mediated agency, parents' mediation of agency, and mutually constituted agency.

Children's (mediated) agency in family context

In general, family is considered a key element and context for developing civic interest, at least when families actively promote a democratic sense of life, by considering children's perspectives and reinforcing civic debate. Research on political socialization in the family context argues for the importance of family culture for political conversation (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013), and for "the intergenerational transmission of political engagement, values and preferences" (George, 2013, p. 46). A common perspective in media literacy research on families' importance for civic action puts the focus on children's mediated agency in the family context. Although children/youth studies about the interplay of news engagement and

traditional political engagement establish a connection between political socialization and family (Brites et al., 2017; Calavita, 2003; Kiouisis & McDevitt, 2008), this does not necessarily mean that children/young people are actually conceptualized as agents in the family context in such studies. For instance, daily talk about news can potentially stimulate youth' civic and political engagement. However, it has been shown that environments where children and young people can develop their agency, for instance through news consumption, in the context of the family constitute a minority. Even in environments where it is common to watch news, children and young people tend to be viewed as spectators and not as actors of conversation and free sharing of opinions (Brites et al., 2017).

Lemish (2007) points to families as potentially open media environments, where free conceptual conversation ensures and promotes children's expression of ideas. For instance, research on political talk in family context shows that children can draw the attention of their parents to political discussions (George, 2013). One of the most challenging and currently prominent topics of discussion at home, and one that lets children's agency most manifestly emerge, regards environmental debates (Nolas, 2021). In the meantime, research points out that environmentalism is more distinctly developed among children and young people, compared to their parents (Larsson et al., 2010), especially in Nordic and Western European and North American countries. Considering that children can influence their parents' civic practices, reveals unprecedented late modernity contexts "in which negotiations have become a permanent feature of child–parent relations" (ibid. p. 135).

Parents' mediating and affective role in children's socialization

Another common perspective in family's civic engagement literature regards parents' mediating role in children's socialization. The civic environment within the family is considered fundamental in the promotion of a free and democratic environment, as

Valenzuela et al. (2016) underline: “more than 40 years of research on family communication have shown the impact of parent–child interactions on information processing, interpretation of media content, consumer behaviours, and adoption of social values, and have been linked to parental mediation styles and parental norms” (p. 4; see also Almond & Verba, 1989/1963; Brites et al., 2017).

Similarly, Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2019) argue that parents are increasingly becoming “aware that media literacy is no longer a matter of simply engaging with the media but of engaging with society through media” (p. 78). Moreover, these authors add another perspective to this established dimension of participation in media, by addressing how parents’ political and social engagement in society shapes their respective perceptions of the future, which in turn influences how they become engaged in parental mediation.

In this context, parents’ emotional attitudes towards their children’s media use can be considered as a process relevant to consider in the study of parents’ active engagement and parental mediation, thus challenging a conceptual premise of earlier parental mediation theory that was grounded in “assuming that behaviour grows out of intentional and rational decision making” (Clark, 2011, p. 330). Livingstone and Byrne (2018), for instance, discuss how emotional bonds are invested in parental mediation that seeks to promote the well-being of children, in the form of acts that strengthen the connection between parents and children. The quality of emotional exchange between parents and children are also paid attention to, both regarding their importance for the children’s development (Lim, 2018), as well as for how they influence a parents' engagements with an increasingly digitalized society (van den Bulck et al., 2016). A focus on the affective bonds involved in parental mediation practices could, for instance, shed conceptual light on the ambiguities and contradictions that more empirical studies of parental mediation have found, e.g., on the interplay between restrictive and active

mediation styles, and the tight interwovenness between co-use and active mediation (Zaman et al., 2016).

Toward mutually constituted agency in the family context

The literature review shows that especially a perspective building on an understanding of agency as mutually constituted in the family requires more attention. Meanwhile, in particular Lynn Schofield Clark's (2011) extension of parental mediation theory as not mere rationalist strategies for parental mitigation of children's media use, but as potential for participatory co-learning across family members, offers a more dynamic understanding of how mediated engagements in families open up for politically relevant negotiations of what is societally at stake. Not only the socioeconomic context in which a family is situated, but also the emotional exchange between parents and children are of importance. It is these dynamics that need to be further conceptualized and teased out, to avoid falling back into the rationalist trap of thinking parents as strategizing individuals, who for instance mitigate children's use of digital media (incl. video games) in gatekeeping, discursive, investigative and/or diversionary ways (Jiow et al., 2017). It could be said that these four strategies are always to some extent present, at least emotionally speaking, in an attempt to co-learn about how to meaningfully coordinate a largely digitalized everyday life with the rest of the family.

Meanwhile, it is this extension that may need further elaboration via affect theories: How parents and children are emotionally engaged or invested in societal discourses and practices, how they are in other words affected by what is digitally mediated in their everyday life, is highly contradictory and partly ephemeral - and thus difficult to turn into more deliberative processes across family members. But these engagements may be informally expressed also in activities that do not seem to be straightforwardly (verbally-rationally) related to questions of political participation, as we will argue in the upcoming conceptual discussions.

In order to more closely investigate these experiences of agency in the home context and their relevance for developing civic agency among the family members, we argue that debates on the family mediation of civic engagement would gain from a more dynamic and reciprocal conceptualization of how political engagement in the home takes place - one that goes beyond the analytically separating perspectives of hitherto research, presented on the following pages, by instead focusing on these sources' connections.

Conceptual Analytical Discussion: Main Areas for Further Conceptual Development in Citizenship in Datafied Societies

The literature review on the centrality of family life for mediating civic engagement reveals three central aspects that, in our eyes, require further specification, in particular in order to grasp their mutual constitution: 1) the centrality of affectively agentic family life for the family member's civic learning and engagement; 2) the inner relatedness of parents' and children's agency in the constitution of mediated family life; 3) the constitutive role of emotions or rather affects in mediated family life. The following sections will delve into each one of these aspects.

1. Situating Civic Engagement: The Role of Family in Forming Political Participation and Citizenship

History shows that children and young people's voices have been limited (Carter, 2014), for a long time especially in the context of parental decision-taking (Qvortrup, 1997), but also in the communication of seemingly unpolitical mundane matters across social practices: Chimirri (2016) describes how two young children seek permission to uphold a specific action at a specific site, in their case of digging into a hill in the daycare center's garden in order to search for ant eggs, but whose communicative engagements become interpreted as either nonsensical

or even dissensual by the involved adults. So, while children and youth are often labelled and self-label themselves as future citizens (Buckingham, 2006), their possibilities for agentic empowerment faces the constraints of an adult decision culture (Amnå et al., 2009; Barber, 2009). The role of family in forming political participation and citizenship is absolutely central and increasingly challenging in addressing the multiplicity of civic and political dimensions of current society. It can be primarily in the family context that children and young people take the first steps toward civic engagement. Young people that have lived in rich civic environments report a strong interest in the political sphere (Clark & Brites, 2018). The family environments can be considered vivid, realistic and authentic contexts, where the learning process is very much rooted in the day-to-day actions, challenges and decisions of one's own life. These dimensions help to build present and future political and civic culture (Clark & Brites, 2018). Family is the place where we negotiate democracy in daily matters, re-negotiating established ways of being and doing. This forms a prototype for how young people may come to involve themselves in future political engagements.

Chimirri (2014) points out that democracy is a daily matter, in that it is

An ongoing collaboration through the re-negotiation of common sense which aims at involving all anyway involved human beings. This presupposes acknowledging that each and every one is always already dependent on the conducts of everyday life of all other human beings, as well as of all other world processes we ourselves are part of.
(pp. 266-267)

Just like any other democratic negotiation, family negotiation implies the attempt to bridge across power relations and family members' diversity of unique sets of experiences and viewpoints, and their collaboration is therefore always conflictual (Axel, 2011; Chimirri, 2019; Kousholt, 2016). Such negotiations are part of civic processes where the youngsters learn to

contribute to decisions that affect their lives, to have these decisions challenged, and to thereby emerge and regard themselves as agentic citizens:

When young people in their teen years are encouraged to see themselves as able to take agency in how they are represented, in how they speak about current events, and in how they participate in activities orchestrated to amplify youth voice and to secure rights for themselves and others, they learn to embrace an ethic of care through the enactment of civic actions (Clark & Brites, 2018, p. 87).

Routines of everyday talking about the world and politics, including about news, play a central part in the civic and political development of the younger citizens (Brites et al., 2017; Ekström, 2016). Dialogical environments that allow for open and deliberative viewpoint exchange and do not succumb to gender bias are central to foster civic engagement. Nevertheless, socioeconomic background can be a predictor of civic processes in the family context (Brites et al., 2017; Ekström, 2016; Kim & Chung, 2020). Types of political family talk can also vary significantly depending on whether the family is a safe context for opinions and disagreements (Ekström, 2016). The emotional atmosphere of living in a family, where we constantly negotiate details of our vision of the world, is crucial to take into consideration in the analysis of family environment as the crucial context of political engagements. Barber (2009) indicates that wellbeing is settled “within the social context where we function” (p. 33). The discussion about the meaning of wellbeing and young people “must be intrinsically connected to notions of being connected to the community as a citizen, and participating in activities which provide satisfaction” (ibid., p. 34).

Putting a focus on family as a pivotal civic actor is not only relevant for understanding children’s future political trajectories. It is just as important for conceptualizing current civic engagements and politics as necessarily bound up with (mediated) affects, and as necessarily

emerging from relationally lived everyday life. This has many consequences, for instance for educational programs that seek to promote democracy among children and youth. Educational programs, such as media literacy initiatives, tend to forget these family and informal contexts, privileging formal over non-formal, and by exclusion neglecting a fundamental place for considering and fostering civic realms.

2. *Collectivizing Agency: Family Members' Mutual Constitution of Possibilities for Mediated Participation and Action in Everyday Life*

In order to create a conceptual framework that also takes into account unequivocally present power relations within family as a site for contributing to democracy, as daily micro-engagements as well as public-oriented civic engagement, we need to consider the inner relatedness of parents' and children's agency in the constitution of mediated family life. Current conceptualizations of agency in a family context have been heavily shaped by the theory of socialization, which has traditionally put attention to ways in which children internalize norms lived by and learned through parents, siblings, and other significant others. This pervasive view offers a unidirectional conceptualization of agency and socialization, where adults are seen as thoroughly socialized and children as passive recipients (Van den Berg, 1998). But scholars have also shown that this unidirectionality can go the other way, in that they underline the role of young people in the households as increasingly seen as 'youthful experts', who help parents deal with new home media (Livingstone, 2007). In this context, youth has even been an agent of change in relation to mediation practices (Correa, 2014). In a similar vein but with a different focus, earlier research has shown how children have influenced parents' political view or communication on politics (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002).

A bilateral conceptual framework for parent-child socialisation emphasizes the bidirectional processes of agentic becoming (Saphir & Chaffee, 2002): that parent and child mutually

constitute each other's possibilities for agency. Kuczynski (2002) conceptualizes agency as "considering individuals as actors with the ability to make sense of the environment, initiate change, and make choices" (p. 9), and this is irrespective of the actors' age. Kousholt's (2016) concept of family conduct of everyday life implicates such a bidirectional socialization in the context of familial dynamics:

The concept of conduct of life directs [us] toward how persons, in social interplay, actively deal with and transform their life conditions while living their lives every day together with other persons. Conducting one's life entails prioritizing and dealing with different demands and engagements and this implies exploring conditions and action possibilities working to achieve influence on relevant life conditions in collaboration with others. (ibid, pp. 243-244)

Let us take youth's video gaming as an example, which is often considered to challenge the everyday routines that are organized by parents, at least in the context of Nordic countries: this makes gaming not only become a matter of concern in the family, it also emphasizes the agentic social roles youth have in the family (Sørensen, 2018). The history of mass media reception is full of similar, potentially empowering examples, such as in connection with the introduction of the television set and later on the personal computer in the bedroom of the children (Bovill & Livingstone, 2001). As Kousholt (2011) puts it: "the ongoing process of organizing the everyday life of a family demands both the integration and coordination of different perspectives and interests of different lives" (p. 104). Youth's media interests and engagements can bring about the reorganization of family everyday life and of relational interests. For instance, a research study on gaming among youth with immigrant backgrounds in Norway shows that there is a correlation between how gaming is regulated at home and parents' knowledge about this practice (Dralega et al., 2019). Parents' lack of knowledge about gaming on the one hand, alongside a limited digital media literacy among these parents on the other

hand, can cause frustrations in the participating families (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). This frustration can be seen as an expression of bidirectional interactions and socialization processes, which may bring about a reconfiguration in interests and social roles between child and parent, and thereby an expression of “a process full of contradictions, conflicts, and problems that continuously need to be solved” (Kousholt, 2011, p. 104).

While having in mind the national and socioeconomic backgrounds undoubtedly have an impact on civic processes and engagements in the family context (Brites et al., 2017; Nolas et al., 2017), the family conduct of everyday life, in which child-parent bidirectional socialization occurs and agency is reshaped, is under constant negotiation, not only among parents, but between parents and children and other family members, across the many social practices they participate in and contribute to (e.g., Højholt & Kousholt, 2018; Kousholt, 2016). Adding to these theoretical discussions of reciprocal agency, the discussed literature suggests that these dynamics are mutually and thus (micro-) collectively constituted, and should be understood as the basis for situating civic engagement in family context.

3. *Politicizing Emotion: The Power of Affective Relations in Everyday Life*

The constitutive role of emotions, or perhaps rather of affects, in (micro-)collectively constituted agency processes can further help us with taking into account power relations within the family context as a site for contributing to democracy, as daily micro-engagements in their connection to public-oriented civic engagement. While not dismissing the assumption that democratic deliberation should be achieved through rational consensus, the interpretive literature review highlighted that emotion and affectivity tend to be understood as standing in too binary or even oppositional a relation to reasoning. For instance, it is first and foremost the latter which some scholars consider enabling or delimiting the consumption or production of news or discourses (Barnes, 2013). Carter (2014) considers that news media play a central role in the promotion of children’s well-being, by creating a sense of ‘self-worth’ in society.

Emotion has often been associated with the feelings that are configured through discursive practices (Lutz, 2017), while affect refers to a

dimension of meaning in human affairs that is not a matter of established discourse, of stable identities, institutions, codified cultural norms or categories, but is rather something that is lived, from moment to moment... (Röttger-Rössler and Slaby, 2018, p. 1).

However, as Lutz (2017) has pointed out, such a sharp distinction and binary categorization between emotion and affect can primarily be traced to traditional binary thinking in natural science (cf. also Wetherell, 2015). According to White (2017), such a sharp distinction between binary categories of emotion and affect is highly problematic, as it leaves a gap between “how bodies feel and how subjects make sense of how they feel” (p. 177). We will accordingly avoid a sharp distinction between affect and emotion and use them interchangeably in this final part of the conceptual analysis.

Röttger-Rössler and Slaby (2018) concept of *relational affect* emphasizes the social-relational dynamics of affect as it evolves in social interactions, implying a formative character that contributes to modalities of agency. In this approach

affective phenomena are approached with a view to their embeddedness within ongoing complex situations in which various actors, objects, spaces, artifacts, technologies and modes of interaction coalesce, all contributing to the particular character of the affective process in question. (ibid., p. 7).

From a queered phenomenological perspective, Sara Ahmed (2014) conceptualizes emotion as “crucial to the very constitution of the psychic and the social as objects” (p.10), something that is embodied and circulates, something that ‘moves’ us and connects us. Drawing on this perspective, Aruldoss et al. (2021) ask how emotions matter in the ways in which children orient

themselves towards public life and argue that emotions shape children's orientation towards people, objects and public life. They draw on Reddy (1997) to emphasize that this has a consequence for children's capacity "to embrace, revise or reject" (p. 133) a public sphere.

A more body-phenomenological view suggests, in contrast, that the affective is part of all perception and action (Roald et al., 2018), which would consequently also include civic engagements in the family context and beyond. A Bergsonian understanding of affection furthermore "holds that affections are 'closer' to the body than perceptions, with such an understanding avoiding a boundary being drawn between the internal and external" (Tucker & Goodings, 2018), underlining that virtual or digital action is closely connected with bodily-analogue action, and drawing into questions distinctions between 'everyday activism' (Vivienne, 2013; see above) and other forms of political engagement.

We deduce from these theoretically diverse resources that affect and/or emotion must be considered as immanent to modalities of agency. An active public sphere, in which citizens actively engage and politically participate, is commonly assumed to build on and promote purely rational arguments and actions. Feelings are in these discursive contexts commonly considered in a purely negative or destructive light, as a trigger to mass mobilization and threat to democracy. In the field of political participation and mass civic engagement, in productive contrast, Mellucci (1995) draws the attention away from the well-established understanding of emotion as standing in opposition to rationality, by seeing emotion as a value that bypasses and thereby adds to competing interests in politics, and cautioning that "there is no cognition without feeling" (p. 45). Thus, feelings do not only enter into an analysis of civic engagement or political participation as a trigger for action, but as inextricably intertwined with action *per se*, as modalities of agency.

Concluding remarks and discussions: Emotions in the Mediated Civic Context of the Family

The writing of this article engaged us in a cross-disciplinary meta-reflection of various approaches to understanding the family's mediating role in civic engagement, guided by the question: What constitutes the civic environment at home, and what role do emotions, audiences and digital media contexts play in its constitution? On these premises, the interpretative literature review centred on **analytical perspectives of** how agency was studied within the family context, and categorised the literature in categories of children's mediated agency, of parents' mediation, and of mutually constituted agency. Aiming to go beyond distinctions between private and public, as well as digital and analogue, the interpretive literature review led us to consider **three conceptual areas** 1) the centrality of affectively agentic family life for the family member's civic learning and engagement; 2) the inner relatedness of parents' and children's agency in the constitution of mediated family life; and 3) the constitutive role of emotions or rather affects in mediated family life.

We temporarily concluded that emotions are constitutive parts of agency and the promotion of democracy, even if they tend to be neglected in research on political processes and engagement. The promotion of mutually constituted agency in the context of family can, however, foster a civic environment and broaden participative options. Collectively organized family dialogue spaces, where children and young people's opinions and actions are considered as pivotal and effective, active citizens, rather than as immature citizens still in need of growth, could contribute to a generationally more mutual socialization of active and engaged citizens.

Emotion, as discussed, should be understood as immanent to agency, thus eliminating the binary categorization between emotion and reason. Once agency in a family context is considered to be grounded in bidirectional socialization, and thereby as mutually done between children and parents as part of the family's conduct of everyday life, emotion becomes a critical modality of

agency that highlights the affective engagement parents and children put into daily configurations of mediated experiences. These (micro)collective affective engagements imply an ongoing re-negotiation of common sense, which itself should be considered a form of civic engagement (and be it merely a ‘small act of engagement’; cf. Picone et al., 2019). Political-civic engagement starts with and is continuously and mutually co-shaped from within the family’s everyday living together - as a media context, as a caring context, as an educational context. This opens up for considering how uncertainty and ambiguity may be understood as necessary tenets of developing media, or more generally: democratic literacy. Moreover, it calls for expanding the role of emotion in theories dealing with mediation within the family context, and take into consideration the reciprocity or mutuality of interaction between parents and youth in the family as central mediation context, and herewith the importance of family life for developing civic culture.

As civic and political engagement are to a large extent mediated online, critical abilities, knowledge and interpretation of information are assumed to be important for maintaining and developing democratic institutions. For instance, Polizzi (2019) proposes that

in order to contribute to the active participation of well-informed and critically autonomous citizens in democracy in the digital age, critical digital literacy needs to include knowledge about the digital environment where information circulates. It needs to incorporate an understanding of how the internet operates socio-economically along with its potentials and constraints for democracy, politics and civic and political participation. (p.2)

The approach introduced in this article does not take the point of departure in individuals’ ability in operating digital tools and understanding of how information is accessed, used or produced digitally (Buckingham, 2006). It rather regards literacy as co-shaped through affective agency from within the family context. This expands the horizon of investigation on media

literacy by pointing to affect as a modality of action in and beyond the family context, which highlights the need to investigate how emotion contributes to re-negotiating the family conduct of everyday life and its established common sense, thereby potentially opening possibilities for children's and youth's – as well as other family members' – civic engagements.

Such understandings of affect and affection, we argue, can shed new light on ongoing public discussions about children and youth's media literacy and well-being, both of which family members affectively contribute to through their daily interactions. Affect theories could for instance help understand why parents and youth encounter much uncertainty and ambiguity in their attempts to meaningfully integrate and regulate media and other digital technologies in the households, at educational and care institutions, as well as in other arenas of everyday life (e.g., Hartmann, 2015; Zaman et al., 2016; Kumpulainen & Gillen, 2017).

Taking into consideration the interrelatedness of parents' and children' agency in the constitution of mediated family life also has methodological consequences. Research involving youth participation has traditionally been conducted on youth: here the young people become subjected to the research process, with no or very little influence on it. In recent years social science researchers have more often conducted qualitative research with youth, for instance a “participatory framework that encourage[s] youth to engage in the research process in various ways” (Tillers & Tylor, 2018). The epistemic ambition is to explicitly improve youth's life conditions and well-being from within their everyday lives (Honkanen et al., 2018; Chimirri, 2019, 2015). While the participatory methodologies might vary and for instance engage action research or community-based research, they have in common that their methods are built around an approach that attempts to put youth at the centre of the research process, inviting them to actively contribute to the research design and production of data (Kumsa et al., 2015).

With a conceptualization of socialization in the family as a bidirectional or mutual process, a participatory framework that encourages family members to actively contribute to the research

process is not only welcomed, but crucial. The research process could invite into creating productive arenas for negotiation of family conduct, for instance by highlighting topics and challenges that only a limited number of family members are concerned with. Research that utilizes methods of research that engages youth or families' engagement in the research process takes distance from the paradigm in which adult researchers have ultimate power over the research process and interpretation of data. Rather, researchers become interested in what methods of research might be relevant for youth's willingness to participate. In this approach the youth are co-researching the object and objective of the research:

Within these research approaches youth are characterized in ways that move beyond participant to include "research collaborators" and "co-researchers" and an attempt is made to account for, to varying degrees, the complex ways that power circulates throughout the research process (Tillers & Tylor, 2018, p. 2198; see also Kousholt, 2011; Chimirri, 2019).

The role of co-researcher grants family members the power to co-design the research in line with their knowledge interests. In the context of research that promotes youth participation, some scholars argue that youths' 'true participation' in research is first ensured when they are not only are seen as participants in data production, but also throughout the implementation of the research process (Jardine & James, 2012). In the context of the article at hand, families that take part in the research design, the data production and analysis as well as the interpretation of research results, thereby also exercise citizenship. Research can thus itself become a site for families' affectively mediated civic engagement.

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