

Pre-conference workshop

June 15th 2016

INRS-UCS (room 2109), 385 rue Sherbrooke Est, Montréal

Minding the gaps between disciplines: Political engagement among youth

Prior to the conference "**Youth Political Participation: The Diverse Roads to Democracy**"

Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship, McGill University,

Montreal, June 16th and 17th 2016

This workshop aims to bring together scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and practices, to collectively discuss the gaps between different approaches to the study of young people and politics, and to identify promising paths toward bridging those gaps.

Increasing interest in the topic of young people and politics has led to the accumulation of a plethora of data, which new research often fails to embrace, especially as it transcends diverse social science disciplines.

- *For example, while political science has been exploring political socialisation processes since its inception and more so since the development of specialized branches such as political sociology and political psychology, it has more recently identified the need to expand its conceptualisation of what is political, in order to encompass the broadening forms of political action among youth today. Yet, in efforts to rethink the very notion of politics (and how it is measured) in light of current youth behaviour, classic North American political scientists – despite some pleasant exceptions – all too often fail to consider relevant insight drawn from extensive qualitative fieldwork based in youth studies, cultural studies, and the like.*
- *Conversely, work in other disciplines too often dismisses political science research as being too narrow-focused or too constrained by top-down, often quantitative methods; these scholars are thus depriving themselves of solid knowledge rooted in decades of research on the underpinnings and processes leading to political socialisation of young people.*

Running much deeper than simple differences in methodological approaches, which may be partially resolved through mixed method designs, crucial issues that this interdisciplinary field needs to address also pertain to

- the very definition of what is considered “political”,
- how it is operationalised and assessed, as well as
- the implications of the choice of lens through which we study youth and politics (such as participation, engagement, action, socialisation, culture, etc.), most notably their impact on the ability to include non democratic activities.

This workshop aims to reflect on promising avenues for deepening the dialogue between different disciplines and approaches to the study of youth and politics, by:

- exploring the deeper reasons behind this segmentation of knowledge,
- attempting to pinpoint the conceptual and epistemological foundations of these divergences, and
- seeking to identify the conditions under which increased dialogue may be made possible.

The workshop will be divided into three steps:

1) The morning will begin with **short keynote presentations** from scholars whose approaches span and encompass various disciplinary angles. Scheduled speakers include:

- Sarah Pickard (Sorbonne Nouvelle, France)
- Anna-Britt Coe (Umeå University, Sweden)
- Julie-Anne Boudreau (INRS University, Quebec)

2) Then, **collective discussions** will seek to address **the foundations for disciplinary dialogue** and ways to bridge them by better organising the body of knowledge emanating from various fields and geographies, while taking into account their disciplinary foundations, implications and limitations.

3) Finally, the day could also lead to the identification of **avenues for future research** resting on accumulated data from various disciplines and addressing the many remaining gaps in knowledge. [The workshop could also lead to a publication such as a *Multidisciplinary reader on youth and politics*.]

This workshop organised and hosted by: Nicole Gallant, professor at INRS University in Quebec City, and director of the *Observatoire Jeunes et Société*. www.obsjeunes.qc.ca.

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