Breaking the Law
Till alla nära och kära
Abstract


Illegal political activity has always been part of a democratic society. Despite this, not much is known about young people's involvement in these political activities. Research portrays political influence attempts of this kind in different terms; as troublesome for the democratic political system, as expressions of conscious decisions vital for humanity’s future, and yet other times as illustrations of a coming-of-age rebellion. Overall there is a lack of collective knowledge on illegal political activity, and especially in adolescence – the age period when these political activities seem to peak.

The aim of this dissertation is therefore to enhance knowledge of involvement in illegal political activity in adolescence. This dissertation addresses this task in four empirical studies. Results show that mostly boys engage politically with illegal political means. Adolescents involved are also interested in politics, believe in their own abilities to take part in political activities, have long-term political goals, and approve of violent political tactics. In addition, these activities also seem to associate with a challenge of authority. This could be seen in how political dissatisfaction was translated into illegal political activity, and in the way these activities seemed to be reactions to a non-legitimized parental authority. Besides authority challenges, these activities are likely the result of important peer relations; influences from peers with experiences of illegal political activity seem to be a most probable answer to why adolescents adopt these political means. Taken together, the results of this dissertation show that adolescents involved in illegal political activity are well-equipped for political involvement, challenge authorities in most contexts of their lives, and are likely to adopt these political means from already involved peers.

Keywords: illegal political activity, adolescents, political socialization.

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I Introduction

The political activities of people in western democracies sometimes take on an illegal character. Animal liberation, non-legal political graffiti, and various acts of civil disobedience are only a few of a plentitude of illegal ways by which people try to exert political influence in the western democratic societies of today. In general, illegal political activity seems to be a preference of younger generations (Cameron & Nickerson, 2009; Norris, Walgrave, & Van Aelst, 2005) and attitudes in favor of illegal political activism has been shown to peak in mid-adolescence (Watts, 1999). Compared with involvement in legal political activity, the involvement in its illegal counterpart is far less common. However, the infrequency of illegal political activism does not make understanding of these activities, or its users, less important. This dissertation is an attempt to enhance knowledge on involvement in illegal political activity in the adolescent years on the basis of data on young Swedish people.

The context

Due to the most recent crises in Europe, several European countries are struggling with economic, environmental, and social difficulties. Daily, we witness protests, confrontations, and other disturbances to the social order as a result of the changing living conditions of many European citizens. In the midst of these demonstrations, there is growing concern about the legitimacy of contemporary democratic regimes and institutions (Weiler, 2012). Regardless of whether it is directed at a national or a supranational regime, citizens’ lack of trust in the democratic system, its functions, and representatives, risks carving a hole in the reservoir of political legitimacy (Easton, 1975). Democratic regimes that have gained legitimacy over decades are now questioned from both a normative and a social perspective. Put differently, citizens now question both the right of the current institutions to translate their powers into democratic political governance and the ability of these institutions to govern in an appropriate, fair and effective manner.

In such times, easy answers and fast political solutions may seem attractive, and the search for an all-blamable scapegoat makes political groups on the outskirts and extremes of democracy to intensify in numbers and sympathies. Usually, it is groups subsumed under the term political extremism that endorse and employ illegal political means. Regardless of
their ideological stances and the motives underlying individuals’ presence in these contexts, although some women are present, these groups primarily consist of young males (Swedish Security Service, 2010). During the decade of 1999–2009, the Swedish Security Service identified 845 right-wing and 564 left-wing extremists as active in performing illegal political activities. In 2009, the current estimates were approximately 100 active left-wing and 100 active right-wing extremist. With regard to religiously motivated extremism, the Swedish Security Service identified some hundred persons active in violent Islamist extremism (Swedish Security Service, 2010). However, the number of individuals inspired by and sympathizing with extremist groups is much larger (Swedish Security Service & The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, 2009). It is mainly in these three contexts that illegal political activities are seen as justified means of exerting political influence. Whereas the illegal political activity of the left-wing is a means to address political and social issues which often gain support from the general public – equal rights of immigrants, environmental concerns, and animal rights issues – the underlying reasons by which adherents of right-wing extremism justify illegal political means are seldom endorsed by the ordinary citizens. What both ideological groups, together with the religious extremists, have in common, is the justification of illegal and violent strategies as a means of exerting political influence (Utredningen om ett effektivare arbete för att förebygga våldsbejakande extremism, 2013).

Sweden is an established democracy, characterized by a strong welfare state, high voter turnout, low levels of corruption, and a vibrant civil society (Holmberg, 1999; Linde & Erlingsson, 2013). Despite this depiction, during the last decades of the 20th century, Swedish citizens expressed continuously declining levels of confidence in the political system (Holmberg, 1999). In recent years though, Swedish citizens have shown substantially higher levels of confidence in and satisfaction with political institutions compared with the late 1990s (Holmberg & Wiebull, 2013). Alongside this high trust in political institutions, compared with other European democracies, Sweden is a country with a lot of extra-parliamentary political activity (Harrebye & Ejrnæs, 2013; Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002) and therefore provides a suitable context for the study of illegal political activity.

The postwar era in Swedish 20th century democracy has seen several political events, with different agendas and scopes that include the use of
illegal political means (Nilsson, 2006). Of these, the best remembered are the protests during the EU summit in Gothenburg 2001 (Göteborgskommittén, 2002; Wennerhag, Holm, Lindgren, Nordvall, & Sörbom, 2006). Recent years have seen political events with illegal elements in the form of riots (Fokus, 2013; Nilsson & Westerberg, 2011), various illegal political actions, lawful demonstrations that turned violent, and acts of civil disobedience (Nerikes Allehanda, 2009; 2010; 2011; Västerbottens-Kuriren, 2003). Some of these actions have close connections to various types of political groups. Others share less obvious links to established political movements, and the extent to which illegal political activism has been understood in terms of politically motivated attempts to exert influence differs between commentators (Nilsson & Westerberg, 2011; Peterson, 2001; White, 2007). Different as they are when it comes to the targeted agents of influence, the scope of attention, the numbers of activists involved, and their peaceful or violent character (della Porta & Diani, 1999), these attempts to exert political influence all have one thing in common; people move beyond legal boundaries in their endeavors to effect social and political change. In sum, the political setting in which Swedish adolescents grow up bears both historical and contemporary traces of attempts to exert illegal political influence, which makes it important that the political setting is ever present when trying to understand adolescents’ political identity development.

**Illegal political activity**

The focus in this dissertation is on illegal political activity as a style by which political orientations are expressed. In contrast to the content of political orientations, which concerns the direction and ideological qualities of political orientations, the style of political orientations points to how a political concern is expressed and performed (Watts, 1999). The style and content of political orientations are related but not necessarily the same. This focus on illegal political activity as a style by which political orientations are expressed has two advantages: First, a focus on the style enables for including all political motives, regardless of the direction and strength by which these beliefs are held, in the analysis. Note, for instance, that: “Extreme beliefs do not always produce extreme behavior, whereas conventional, even moderate, beliefs may be expressed in an aggressive fashion” (Watts, 1999, p. 478). Second, it provides opportunities for comparisons purely between illegal and legal modes of political partic-
ipation. These two advantages are useful for finding generic understandings of adolescents’ illegal political activity that move beyond ideological explanations. Generally then, given the interest in adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity, rather than addressing the potential contents that are subsumed under illegal political activity, the concern is with the specific illegal style of political activity.

Illegal political activity has been understood as part of a broader cluster of political activities, generally referred to as unconventional political behaviors (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Kritzer, 1977). This group of political behaviors comprises a variety of extra-parliamentary political influence attempts, such as political protests, boycotts, and violent political actions, and also various other illegal political activities. A general concern in the broader field of political participation has been to disentangle what the concept should include. Scholars have discussed, for instance, the issue of uni- versus multidimensionality (e.g., Barnes & Kaase, 1979). With regard to illegal political activity, one of the major aspects of dimensionality is whether separation of illegal from legal political activity is either theoretically or empirically fruitful, or both. Scholars have not always agreed upon this matter, proposing both separation (Ekman & Åmnå, 2012; Kritzer, 1977; Wolfsfeld, Opp, Dietz, & Green, 1994) and an understanding where legal and illegal political activities are more similar than dissimilar to each other (Barnes & Kaase, 1979). In a broad sense, one of the major presumptions underlying this dissertation is that it is both theoretically and empirically fruitful to separate illegal from legal political activity. Hence, drawing on Brady (1999), illegal political activity is defined in terms of individuals’ political activities that attempt to exert influence on opponents, or decision-makers and their decisions, by using non-legal means. A fuller conceptualization of the dependent variable can be found in the Data and Method chapter below (Chapter IV).

One of the reasons why illegal political activity has been understood as unconventional is the norm-challenging nature of its political expression. As noted above, illegal political activity is a relatively uncommon way of exerting political influence, but sometimes citizens in democracies approve of the use of illegal as well as legal political means. Approval of illegal political activity has its basis in at least two normative underpinnings: a) people support a decision to influence politics in an illegal way by arguing that a particular law is unjust or immoral, and b) people support a decision to influence politics in an illegal way with the argument that the au-
Adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity

Turning to the research object of this dissertation, what is significant about adolescents’ illegal political activity? And why do young people consider breaking the law to impose their political view and will on others? With regard to adolescents and the way that illegal political dispositions develop, there are several ways of theorizing about illegal political activism. One strand of thought understands illegal political activity as an expression of deep-rooted affect toward political authority and alienation from democratic principles and functions. Since it challenges the principles and values of the democratic regime, illegal political activity is then regarded as potentially troublesome for the persistence of the democratic political system (Easton, 1965; Muller, 1972). Another view treats illegal political activity as foremost a conscious way of openly expressing discontent with an unjust law or the political system (Calabrese, 2004; Karpantschof & Mikkelsen, 2008); illegal political activities “demonstrate a
strong commitment to an objective deemed vital for humanity’s future” (della Porta & Diani, 1999, p. 176). From this perspective, illegal political activity operates as an important outlet through which both discontent with the present political system and demands for political change can be expressed. Peterson (2001), however, refers to a different way of understanding adolescents’ illegal political activity. According to this line of thinking, irrespective of why adolescents develop preferences for illegal political activities, these modes of political influence are the results of a juvenile or immature political identity development. Such an understanding equates illegal political expressions with the lack of a normative process of political identity development (Kuhn, 2004). All in all, adolescents’ illegal political activity has been treated in terms of expressions developed from feelings of discontent and alienation, or as rational, public expression of an unjust law or authority. Third, a contrasting branch of theory holds that adolescents’ illegal political activity is foremost a result of an underdeveloped normative political identity.

**Why adolescents?**

Adolescence is a time characterized by change. During this life stage, young people go through considerable developments: social, biological, and psychological (Feldman & Elliott, 1990). In terms of social relations, young people acquire greater independence from their parents while the importance of peers increases. This change co-occurs with continuing cognitive development, where adolescents’ perception of themselves, other people, and events jointly generate greater skills for understanding ideological positions and social institutions (Berndt, 1982; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). In short, all these factors make adolescence an age period characterized by rapid political identity development (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995).

Although adolescents generally strive for independence from their parents, several parent-adolescent studies show the importance of parents for adolescents’ political orientations and behaviors (e.g., Dalton, 1980; Dostie-Goulet, 2009; Hess & Torney-Purta, 1967). However, when it comes to illegal political activities, the findings are that such parent-adolescent similarities are scarce (Kuhn, 2004). Instead of resembling the values and attitudes toward illegal political activity embraced by their parents, adolescents seem to be more positive toward and more willing to partake in these modes of political activity (Oswald & Schmid, 1998). In
fact, positive attitudes toward illegal political activity seem to peak around the age of 15–16 (Watts, 1999). Despite this general developmental pattern, some adolescents may remain positive to and use illegal political means even in adulthood.

In addition, because of their age, adolescents generally lack one of the most common and decisive ways of expressing political opinions in a democracy, i.e., the right to vote. When people are shut out from established political channels for shaping public opinion, searching for alternative and non-traditional ways of obtaining political influence is more likely (Martinez, 2005). In sum, considering that adolescence is the age period when both approval of and actual involvement in illegal political activity seem to peak, a focus on adolescence is optimal when investigating this style of political activity.

Summing up, only a small fraction of citizens are usually involved in illegal political activity. During adolescence, however, preferences for illegal political activity are more common. At the same time, this is a complex political tactic, which comprises very different modes of political activity. Several explanations and underlying principles have been put forward as reasons explaining development of this mode of political participation. More than anything, the very possibility of finding clarity in this multifaceted web of explanations shows the importance of studying involvement in adolescents’ illegal political activity.

The development of adolescents’ political identity
The development of an individual political identity is inherently connected to political socialization (Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin & Silbereisen, 2002; Yates & Youniss, 1998). The field of political socialization has mainly been studied on the basis of two major approaches: the macro and the micro perspectives. Macro theories of political socialization have been concerned with how political systems transfer appropriate norms and practices to the next generation of citizens (e.g., Almond & Verba, 1963; Easton, 1965). By contrast, the micro theories study socialization processes through which citizens develop and learn political norms and practices.

In the course of defining political socialization, the field might earn benefit from conceptually distinguishing among certain related terms. Conover (1991) distinguished among political learning, political socialization, political education, and civic education. This conceptual separation
was based on two basic factors; whether or not the transmitted political material in question is: a) supportive of the current regime; and b) whether the transmission of political material is deliberate, or not. Political learning is the broadest form of transmission capturing all transmissions of political material, irrespective of whether the material is supportive of the regime or deliberately transmitted. Political socialization refers to the transmission of political material that is supportive of the current regime, regardless of whether it is deliberate or unintentional. Political education comprises deliberate transmissions of political material that is not necessarily supportive of the current regime. Hence, “not all political education is political socialization, nor is all political socialization political education” (Conover, 1991, p. 132). Finally, civic education is a combination of political socialization and political education; it refers to system–supportive political material that is deliberately transmitted. This conceptual schematic can be used to distinguish among various ways of transmitting political material.

Hess and Torney-Purta (1967) defined political socialization as follows: “Social learning and socialization refer [...] to the process whereby a junior or new member of a group or institution is taught its values, attitudes, and other behavior” (Hess & Torney-Purta, 1967, p. 6). This definition includes traces of both the macro and the micro perspectives, and it has been recognized that the field needs both these viewpoints (Conover, 1991). Regardless of whether they departed from a macro or micro perspective, early scholars in the field were guided by the objective of maintaining stability in a democratic political system (e.g., Conover, 1991; Cook, 1985; Greenstein, 1970; Niemi & Sobieszek, 1977). An example of this lies in the fact that most early political socialization studies assumed that political orientations were formed in childhood and persisted into adulthood (Easton & Dennis, 1969; Greenstein, 1965). This bias toward understanding the acquisition of prevailing norms as a molding process was guided by the primacy principle, i.e., that the earliest learning gives what is learned best (Searing, Wright, & Rabinowitz, 1976). The early learning assumption has in later studies been criticized as premature, and as unable to explain why people’s political orientations change as they enter adolescence and adulthood (Cook, 1985; Niemi & Sobieszek, 1977).

Scholars criticizing the early learning and system stability perspective understood political socialization more as a process of becoming a member of a collective. In contrast to early learning and the idea of molding
new members to be supportive of the system, this tradition emphasized lifelong socialization (Sears & Levy, 2003) and the processes of political learning (e.g., Hyman, 1959; Jennings & Niemi, 1974; 1981). People change their political orientations throughout life, and individual political identity development is dependent on social roles and gender. Altogether, in contrast to ideas of molding good citizens, this alternative understanding of individual political identity development was not guided by the idea of system persistence to the same extent. Instead, political learning was understood as a life-long process; people learn political values and orientations not only during childhood but also later on in life.

The field of political socialization has primarily understood the transmission of political material as a causal parent-to-child learning process. This was a consequence of the tendency in the field to study the transmission of political values and practices from old to new members of a society; whatever the political orientation or practice of scholarly interest, the assumption was that agents of socialization actively influence passive recipients (e.g., Dalton, 1980; Jennings & Niemi, 1968). More recent theoretical reasoning has suggested that individuals are not passive in their socialization. Instead, adolescents are active in their efforts to acquire information about political ideas. They steer the progress of their own civic and political identity development (Amnå, Ekström, Kerr, & Stattin, 2009; Yates & Youniss, 1998). For instance, one idea is that young people are inspired by news about politics from the media or in school. They therefore initiate discussions with their parents about these issues. Additionally, parents communicate their view on these political matters, and influence their children accordingly (McDevitt, 2006; McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002). According to this line of thinking, children’s initiation of discussions with parents is what drives political socialization. Another suggestion goes as far as to claim that intergenerational similarities are spurious; when children report similar values to their parents, it is not due to parental influences, but because children, in the absence of individual experiences of their own, express the values of their parents (Achen, 2002).

Political socialization might be uni- or bi-directional. Nevertheless, for any transmission of political material to occur, certain obvious criteria need to be met. Tedin (1980) recognized two prerequisites for political influence: “(1) there must be communication about the political subject, and (2) there must be receptivity which usually involves an emotional tie
between individuals such as in the case of family or friends” (p. 137). In whichever way political material is transmitted, communication between socializee and socialization agent (a parent, a peer, school, the media, and civil society) is the defining part of the political socialization process. Communication – verbal or non-verbal – serves as the mechanism through which the political material in question can be transmitted (Eveland, 2004; McDevitt & Kiousis, 2007).

Scholars have suggested that the political communication process is context-dependent; different contexts (compare, e.g., parents and peers) might generate different political socialization outcomes. In the family context, where adolescents gain and test most of their political attitudes and orientations, political communication tends to reproduce a political identity with compliant norms toward society and authority (Braungart, 1974). However, political communication in peer groups may play a different role in adolescents’ political identity development. In adolescent peer groups, political communication has a dyadic function. Peer groups: 1) facilitate an environment where adolescents’ need for differentiation from parents can flourish, and 2) provide opportunities for adolescents to develop autonomous political identities, contrasting with the political identities of their parents (McDevitt & Kiousis, 2007). In addition, interactions within the peer network widen adolescents’ belief systems, a widening that is often associated with a challenge to authority (Daddis, 2010). These characteristics of peer relations prompted McDevitt and Kiousis (2007) to conclude that political communication in peer networks may foster adolescents’ illegal political activity.

In sum, political socialization is a contested concept. Using the conceptualization of Conover (1991), political socialization refers to the transmission of political material of a system-supportive nature. Similarly, due to the stability concerns of democratic regimes, early research in the field studied early learning and the making of system-supportive new members of society. An alternative understanding in the field focuses more sharply on lifelong socialization, and how, for instance, gender impacts on the political orientations that people acquire in political learning processes. Communication, in some way or another, is a prerequisite for any transmission of political material to occur. It should also be noted that there has been a shift from a uni- to a bi-directional understanding of political socialization; theorizing has moved from perceiving the socializee as a
passive recipient toward an understanding of the socializee as actively trying to acquire political awareness in his or her particular surrounding.

A deviant process of political identity development

General processes of political socialization may be useful for understanding both the prevailing of political systems and individuals’ learning of commonly shared political values and practices. However, it is possible that general political socialization processes might not capture the identity development of adolescents’ illegal political activity. Maybe there is a specific process of political identity development for adolescents’ illegal political activity.

One line of thinking suggests that adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity is to be regarded as an effect of a deviant process of political identity development. A deviant political identity development refers to a process that has a different socialization outcome, compared with the system–complying and democracy–enhancing outcome that was typically of interest in early studies of political value transmission. Adolescents undergoing a deviant political identity development have, according to the proponents of this idea, failed to embrace the commonly shared values of a democratic political system (Kuhn, 2004). This functionalistic way of interpreting a political socialization outcome establishes that “...a person is becoming or failing to become socialized, meaning thereby that he [or she] has or has not been adequately socialized” (Easton & Dennis, 1969; p. 29). If maintaining that involvement in illegal political activity is the result of a deviant political identity development, such an interpretation rejects a neutral character of political socialization. This, in turn, suggests that as outcomes of political socialization, illegal political activity would be a degenerate outcome and a waste product, something which is doubtful at least.

An understanding of adolescents who have not acquired the normative values of the current political regime as products of “failed socialization” suggests that values challenging a political regime cannot be learned, striven for, and adhered to by a particular socializee without understanding the socializee as not, according to societal norms, appropriately developed in terms of individual political development. Perhaps this conclusion concerning adolescents’ illegal political activity development has been drawn too hasty. Other scholars have nuanced the argument somewhat. For instance Finkel (1987) suggested that, as part of unconventional political
behavior, illegal political activity might foster legitimacy and self-realization, because this mode of political activity expresses political interests that are otherwise ignored. In turn, such individual political development progress may generate a sense of system responsiveness and a feeling that maybe the system should be supported after all. In comparison with a deviant political identity development interpretation, this contrasting view of adolescents’ illegal political activity acknowledges regime-challenging orientations as expressions of an alternative, yet not deviant, political identity development. According to my understanding, Finkel’s contribution is a reasonable questioning of the normative foundations of, in particular, earlier socialization studies. Thus, in this dissertation, illegal political activity is not per se regarded as the result of a failed socialization process.

**Theoretical perspectives**

There are various traditions of theorizing about involvement in and development of illegal political activity. This section will elaborate on two theoretical perspectives from which adolescents’ use of illegal political activity can be understood.

**The Political Dissatisfaction Explanation**
The political dissatisfaction explanation of involvement in illegal political activity stresses that people turn to illegal political means because they, in one way or the other, lack support for the political system. Easton (1965) separated between diffuse and specific support. The former concerns citizens’ perceptions of input support for the regime and the political community and is more about long-lasting bonds of, for instance, national identity and adherence to core regime values. In Easton’s own words, “diffuse support [...] refers to evaluations of what an object is or represents – to the general meaning it has for a person – not of what it does” (Easton, 1975, p. 444). Specific support, on the other hand, is more about a response to the authorities and concerns the “perceived outputs and performance of political authorities” (Easton, 1975, p. 437). People’s opinions about the performance and outputs of the political system (specific support) are more dynamic compared with the general attachments felt toward the political regime. And, in the short run, the two are understood as independent of each other; even though people sometimes reject the out-
put and performance of the government, this will most likely not under-
mine the underlying attachment of the political regime (Norris, 2011).

Furthermore, Easton separated among three distinct components to-
ward which people can hold support: 1) the political community – e.g., the
nation-state, 2) the regime – the institutions and constitutional arrange-
ments of the regime, and 3) authorities – the appointed actors holding
office. With these dimensions in mind, specific support concerns only the
incumbents currently upholding political office. Diffuse support, however,
is about support for the offices themselves, for the political community,
and for the regime as a whole (Easton, 1975). Norris (2011) expanded this
conceptual framework to include five distinct components of the political
system. Understanding political support as a continuum, ranging from
most diffuse to most specific, she recognized that citizens could support
the political system in the following ways: 1) by feeling they belong to the
nation-state, 2) by agreeing with core principles and normative values of
the regime, 3) by positively evaluating the performance of the regime, 4)
by having confidence in regime institutions, and 5) by approving of in-
cumbent officeholders (Norris, 2011, p. 24-25).

Regardless of whether using Easton’s or Norris’ conceptual model, peo-
ple will sometimes express that the political system cannot do for them
what they need. They become dissatisfied with the political system. In such
instances, irrespective of if such orientations originate from the general
meaning a political object has for a person or if this dissatisfaction is a
perception due to more recently acquired experiences, the idea is that peo-
ple will form their opinions about the political system because: of 1) cog-
nitions orientations – knowledge and beliefs; 2) affective orientations –
feelings; and 3) evaluative orientations – judgments and opinions. These
three constitute the basis for perceptions of the political system (Almond
& Verba, 1963). Summing up, people sometimes become dissatisfied with
the political system, an attitude that may later on be translated into illegal
political activity. Dissatisfaction with the political system can be directed
more toward the nation-state and the institutions that comprise the regime
(diffuse support), or more toward the authorities currently in office (spe-
cific support). This conceptual distinction has proven theoretically worth-
while and, according to Norris (2011), rather than understood as a di-
chotomous typology, the diffuse-specific concepts should be understood
on a continuum.
In the post-war era, one of the most important issues in political socialization research was to understand how to meet concerns about political stability. Gamson (1968), for instance, also aimed to understand the implications of such generalized affect using the term “political trust”. Regardless, however, of the term scholars used to label sentiments toward the political system, the objective of the early studies of political socialization was almost exclusively to understand the developmental roots and the intergenerational transfer of support, or the lack of it, for the political system (e.g., Easton, 1975; Easton & Dennis, 1967, 1969; Searing, 1986). Today, political scientists continue to scrutinize the importance of support for the political system (Dalton, 1999; Dalton, Van Sickle, & Weldon, 2009; Norris et al., 2005; Norris, Walgrave, & Van Aelst, 2006; Solevid, 2009), although they no longer depart from the same fear for the survival of democratic regimes. Instead, some scholars argue that negative sentiments toward the political system may be an important and beneficial input in democratic societies. As long as citizens do not oppose the principles and fundamentals upon which all democratic systems rest, critical and non-supportive attitudes may improve and enhance democratic societies. Negative sentiments toward the political system may therefore be a resource for, rather than a threat to, the democratic political regime (Abdelzadeh, Özdemir, & Van Zalk, 2013; Geissel, 2008; Norris, 1999).

A key feature of political support is legitimacy. According to Easton (1965), a political authority can be binding and legitimate on the following grounds: a) moral reasons – decisions and outputs are legitimate because the political authority is morally correct; b) expedient reasons – the political authority upholds some kind of order, with the implication that, people prefer order to chaos, and for that order, the political system is necessary and useful; and c) customary reasons – people have been socialized into a belief that the political authority is legitimate (Easton, 1965). The idea is that when people do not regard the political system as legitimate, they will have no reason to support it.

For illegal political activists in adolescence, legitimacy sentiments may be especially important. As a means of political activity that crosses the borders of legality, illegal political activity is, by default, a refusal to accept the formalized functions of the democratic political system. According to Tyler (2006), there are both instrumental and normative reasons why people comply with authorities. With regard to illegal political activity, an instrumental understanding could, on the one hand, help to explain
why people choose to engage in illegal political activity; they simply believe that these political means are the most efficient ways of exerting political influence, or the best way of reaching the public. On the other hand, the instrumental perspective can also provide a reason not to engage; maybe the reprisals for the illegal political action are too great if one gets caught. Put differently, people will shape their behavior in accordance with the incentives and penalties associated with following the law (Tyler, 2006). Applying normative reasoning, some people may turn to personal morals when dwelling upon breaking or abiding by a certain law. Additionally, the normative perspective encompasses a legitimacy concern toward the authority at hand, allowing the authority the right to dictate the law (Tyler, 2006). Consequently, regardless of whether the reasoning is instrumental or normative, involvement in illegal political activity is linked to legitimacy sentiments. If, for some reason, you believe the political authorities do not have the right to decide over you at all, or if you do not accept the way in which policies are implemented in certain areas, how you perceive the political system, in terms of being more or less legitimate, should still have an impact on how you act out politically.

The rationale of the political dissatisfaction explanation is as follows. People’s dissatisfaction with the political system, stemming either from negative legitimacy sentiments toward the political system (diffuse support), or from frustration with decisions made by the present political regime (specific support), makes people ready to engage in illegal political activity (Harrebye & Ejrnæs, 2013; Muller, 1972). People acquire legitimacy sentiments toward political the political system as children (Easton & Dennis, 1969; Greenstein, 1960). Departing from a terracing theory of learning, as children grow older and learn more things, new experiences will not replace but will overlay the early learning; and at the same time, the earlier the learning, the more long-lasting will be its effect. According to the primacy principle of political socialization, early learned legitimacy sentiments will have a major impact on the adult behavioral disposition toward the political system (Searing & Rabinowitz, 1976). Contrary to early learned legitimacy sentiments, dissatisfaction with the immediate performance and decisions made by the present political regime and incumbents has less of a connection to early learning. These perceptions are instead motivated by short-term factors such as governmental management of economic, environmental, and social policy (Norris, 2011). In addition, Easton stated that early learning of legitimacy sentiments is the
typical way by which diffuse support arises. However, socialization is not the only way people acquire diffuse support – experiences are a source for diffuse support too (Easton, 1975). Dissatisfaction with how the actors perform in producing outputs may, if recurring over a long period of time, transfer specific support into beliefs that question not only the present government but also the regime and the political institutions on their own.

What does all this mean for politically active individuals in adolescence? According to the political dissatisfaction explanation, on the one hand, adolescents who have learned not to legitimize the political system as a child are more likely to transfer perceived dissatisfaction with the political system into illegal means of political action. Put differently, adolescents with a negative affect toward the political system have less reason to avoid violating the authority of the political system, which entails that they can take on illegal political means to a larger extent. By contrast, illegal political practices on the part of adolescents embracing and legitimizing the political system would violate the legitimacy sentiments they hold, a practice that is therefore less likely. On the other hand, for other adolescents, dissatisfaction with the political system is more the result of contemporary evaluations of, for instance, the performance and responsiveness of the current regime. In sum, the rationale of the political dissatisfaction explanation is that individuals dissatisfied with the political system are likely to transfer such grievances into illegal means of political action.

As with many theories, there are people who do not agree with its assumptions or principles. Some scholars have argued that to expect early learned legitimacy sentiments to persist into adolescence, or for that matter, even adulthood, is a premature assumption (Niemi & Sobieszek, 1977). For instance, the primacy principle has not provided empirical support for the claim of an age persistence of political attitudes (Cook, 1985). In addition, the political dissatisfaction explanation was developed in an era of political socialization characterized foremost by concerns for stability of the democratic political system. As such, most of its strands have traces of replication between generations, and also of a functionalistic approach, which some scholars today would declare outdated.

Nevertheless, although contested from both a theoretical and an empirical perspective, the political dissatisfaction explanation still has relevance when studying people’s involvement in alternative outcomes of political socialization, such as illegal political activity. The theory shows that individual preferences toward the political system may be the reason for ado-
Adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity. As a conceptual framework from which to proceed, the rationale of the political dissatisfaction explanation seems to be valid. The theory captures both long-lasting bonds toward the nation-state and its regime values and more contemporary evaluations of the performance of actors running the present regime in its attempts to explain involvement in illegal political activity. Hence, the political dissatisfaction explanation provides a straightforward foundation which can be useful when aiming to understand the many predicaments surrounding adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity.

The Political Network Explanation

Another explanation for why adolescents come to use illegal political means resides in the political network. Scholars have argued that theories of political activity that do not take people’s political networks into account are underspecified (McClurg, 2003). One way of viewing a political network is as a setting that gives opportunities for adolescents to get involved in political activism in general, and in illegal political activity in particular (della Porta & Diani, 1999). A network approach to understanding involvement in illegal political activism ascribes less importance to individual attributes and more importance to previous experiences of political activism and to structural factors such as connections with other activists (e.g., McAdam, 1986).

In any social system – here, the political network – the basic unit is not the individual but a position, a role, or a status (Knoke, 1990b). This implies that members of a social system have specific ways of acting, which depend on their current position in the particular network. Being a parent is one such social role; being a peer is another. The analytic idea underlying this theory is to illuminate relational connections, or ties, between actors within a social system. These are structural ones, in the sense that the connections between the positions, roles, or statuses, are rather stable, which enables analysis of the ties between the actors.

The master premise on which the political network is based has been described as follows: “The structure of relations among actors and the location of individual actors in the network have important behavioral, perceptual, and attitudinal consequences both for individual units and for the system as a whole” (Knoke & Kuklinski, 1982, p. 13). An important aspect of this statement is that the political network is not only a conceptual framework for how to model interactions among network members,
but that its structure in itself has importance for what individuals experience, understand, and do. Positions and relationships always go together but the continually changing structures that constitute the formation of these positions, and the relationships among them, can alter the performance of a specific position, role, or status (Knoke, 1990b).

But for the structure of a network to be a relevant explanation for people’s political behavior, actors need to interact in some way with each other. Scholars have suggested two central preconditions for the transmission of political dispositions: communication about political content, and the presence of emotional ties between individuals (Tedin, 1980). These two aspects are intertwined. Communication is the mechanism by which social actors interact and communication, in turn, requires meaningful relationships between individuals for any influence to occur.

When aiming to explain adolescents’ political orientations, attitudes, and behaviors, most learning theories and intergenerational transmission perspectives depart from the context of the family (Easton & Dennis, 1969; Jennings & Niemi, 1974; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009). As adolescents grow older, however, an additional setting, the peer context, becomes increasingly important (Berndt, 1982; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Coleman, 1961). The peer network should be where connections to activists are most likely to be established, and peers are important for the adolescent in at least two ways: First, peers confirm the attitudes of the adolescents and thereby also their identities. Affirmation of this kind is a basic individual need, which is why adolescents are strongly attracted to such a peer group setting. Second, peer groups also have control mechanisms. By supporting what is believed to be correct, giving status to what is good for and repressing what is bad for the group, peer groups control the behaviors of their members (Campbell, 1980). Regardless of the ways in which peers may influence each other’s behavior, the peer context is likely to provide the political network of greatest relevance to adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity.

If the potential structural explanation positioned in the political network is neglected, the risk of misinterpreting adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity may increase. However, keeping in mind the structure of the relations and also actors’ locations within the network should give additional understanding of why adolescents get involved in illegal political activity.
Integrating the theoretical perspectives
The political dissatisfaction explanation and the political network are theoretical perspectives for adolescents’ development of illegal political activity that complement each other. While the political dissatisfaction approach explains the development of illegal political activity as a result of processes concerning individuals’ perceptions of the political system, the political network explanation rationalizes the development of illegal political activity as a result of structural processes of location and relations within networks. Stated differently, on the one view, theorizing about the effect of political system attitudes on illegal political activity has vertical implications. That is, adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity is a rational consequence of perceived political circumstances. By contrast, the structure of relations among adolescents reflects a more horizontal theoretical perception of how adolescents become involved in illegal political activity. Jointly, the two perspectives embrace individual, rational understanding and structural, interpersonal reasoning concerning adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity.

Previous research on adolescents’ illegal political activity

Who?
Illegal political activity has always been part of a democratic society. Despite this, not much is known about whom it is that use these political behaviors. As previously stated, research has found younger generations overrepresented in illegal political activism (e.g., Cameron & Nickerson, 2009; Watts, 1999). Additionally, boys have continuously been found to be more likely to get involved in political activities of this kind (Enosh, 2010; Kuhn, 2004; Oswald & Schmid, 1998; Watts, 1999).

The preference among young people to get involved in illegal political activity needs to be further nuanced, because not only are illegal political activities more the preference of young people, but they have also been understood as following a distinct age pattern (see Table 1). Watts (1999) found that young people’s approval levels of “hard” political tactics (i.e., blocking traffic, and damage to property, persons, and police) as means for political influence peaked at the age 15–16, after which they consistently declined with age. Such findings suggest that illegal political activities should not be lumped together as a political means preferred in younger years. Instead, age is probably a potent factor that needs to be considered
in a more delicate manner. In sum, research has shown age to be a factor of great relevance when studying illegal political activity. Additionally, Watts (1999) showed that future research needs to be more precise and not just regard young people as a more involved group than older groups.
Table 1

Readiness for law-breaking political activism among Swedish adolescents and young adults by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>13 year-olds</th>
<th>16 year-olds</th>
<th>20 year-olds</th>
<th>22 year-olds</th>
<th>26 year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I will stay within the law...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I can consider breaking the law...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I can consider breaking the law even if other people get hurt...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table is based on collapsed first-wave data for each cohort in the Political Socialization Program (Amnå, et al., 2009). Entries concern respondents’ readiness for law-breaking political activity. The stem question read: “What do you think about breaking rules to change something in society?”
With regard to gender, research on adolescents’ illegal political activity has shown that boys tend to be more frequently involved (Gavray, Fournier, & Born, 2012), and have a greater readiness for, and express more positive attitudes toward illegal political means than girls (Enosh, 2010; Kuhn, 2004; Oswald & Schmid, 1998; Watts, 1999). Some scholars suggest that boys’ overrepresentation in illegal political activity is due to male tendencies to partake in risky and aggressive behavior (Cameron & Nickerson, 2009; Wilson & Daly, 1985). Regardless of what might be the trigger, it seems possible to confirm that boys are more disposed to illegal political activity than girls (Table 1). Less is known about how gender impacts on the development of adolescents’ illegal political activity. One important aspect of this lack of knowledge is methodological; much prior research was based on attitudes in favor of or readiness to participate in illegal political activity. However, attitudes and intentions do not necessarily translate into actual behavior. Barnes and Kaase (1979), for instance, argued that the more controversial the political activity, the lower the attitude-behavior congruency. With regard to illegal political activity then, it is not necessarily the case that favorable attitudes and intentions to participate will be realized in actual behavior. In sum, research has repeatedly shown that boys have a greater preference for illegal political activity than girls. Nevertheless, drawbacks of previous studies have meant that research has not established whether attitudes in favor of illegal political means lead to actual political activity of this kind to the same extent among boys and girls.

Political participation research has also considered political resources, such as socio-economic background and education, in trying to understand involvement in political activity (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Addressing adolescents’ illegal political activity specifically, scholars have regarded illegal means of political activity as born out of social and economic difficulties (e.g., Karpantschof & Mikkelsen, 2008; Hart & Lakin Gullan, 2010). When studied empirically with micro-level assessments, however, these macro-theoretical beliefs have seldom been able to gain support (Gavray et al., 2012; Kuhn, 2004). Although previously hard to support empirically, the extent to which adolescents’ illegal political activity stems from social or economic struggles deserves greater attention.

All in all, certain answers to the question of who is involved in illegal political activity seem more evident than others. First, research shows that
young, compared with old people, are more inclined to use illegal political activity. However, studies in this field need to take into account that illegal political activity is likely an age-variant behavior also within adolescence. Second, prior research has found that illegal political means are foremost a preference of boys. Finally, previous research has not been able to give adequate support for the claim that adolescents’ illegal political activity is associated with social and economic conditions.

Why?
A review of studies of illegal political activity suggests several explanations for why people get involved in illegal political activity. For instance, scholars have understood illegal political activity as expressions of dissatisfaction with the political system (Easton & Dennis, 1969; Harrebye & Ejrnæs, 2013; Muller, 1972). Few studies have analyzed adolescents’ political dissatisfaction on political activity (for exceptions, see, e.g., Bynner & Ashford, 1994; Hart & Lakin Gullan, 2010). There is greater bulk of empirical research on dissatisfaction and political activity among adults. Although some ambiguous results have come from the analyses, the conclusion of several reviews is that people’s negative attitudes toward the political system may explain why they become involved in unconventional political activity, in particular illegal political activity (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1985; Tyler, 2006).

Involvement in illegal political activity has also been understood as the result of social identification, so-called affective commitment, to a politicized group. The general assumption underlying this explanation is that when people identify with and feel positive about a group, they tend to concur with the norms, attitudes, and behavior characterizing that group. Hence, to share a group identity becomes a way of following the set of behavior characteristics of a particular group (Terry & Hogg, 1996). Given this logic, adolescents with affective commitments to politicized groups approving of illegal political means will be more prone to use such means themselves. To find empirical examinations of the validity of the affective commitment explanation, one has to turn to research on adults. In general, it has found that people’s affective commitments are relevant to explaining involvement in various modes of political activity. This means that, on examination, scholars have been able to predict different modes of political activity using people’s affective commitments. For instance, people’s social identification with politicized groups has been shown to
predict involvement in conventional modes of political activity (Greene, 2004; Raney & Berdahl 2009). Additionally, studies have also been able to explain legal and illegal modes of unconventional political activity using people’s social identification with a politicized group (Cameron & Nickerson, 2009; de Weerd & Klandermans, 1999; Kelloway, Francis, Catano, & Teed, 2007; Klandermans, 2002). In sum, to the knowledge of the author, no studies of adolescents have examined the impact of affective commitments on their political activity. Despite this drawback, there are a lot of indices in research on adults supporting affective commitment as an explanation for why some adolescents would include illegal political means in their political action repertoire.

Political resources do not only come in the shape of economic and educational background. Political interest, political efficacy, and previous political involvement, have also been suggested as explanations behind individual involvement in political activity (Verba et al., 1995). Research gives an ambiguous answer to the question of the relevance of political interest to adolescents’ illegal political activity. Cross-sectional research has presented seemingly contradictory findings. While some have found political interest to be positively associated with (Schmid, 2012), others have shown that it appears to be unrelated to adolescents’ illegal political activity (Gavray et al., 2012; Oswald & Schmid, 1998). Research examining the effect of political efficacy on adolescents’ illegal political activity is also scarce. One study, however, found that political efficacy has a weak but significant effect on involvement in illegal political activity (Enosh, 2010). In addition, research on adults reports political efficacy as a strong predictor of subsequent illegal political activity (Finkel, 1987). To conclude, the extent to which adolescents’ illegal political activity is related to traditional political resources, such as political interest and efficacy, is currently unclear. More studies on these relations are needed to be able to give a more definite answer to this question.

The conclusion from reviewing explanations of adolescents’ illegal political activity is that a lack of studies of adolescents compels researchers to draw empirical inferences from studies based on adults. With this in mind, political dissatisfaction seems to be one reason why people may come to use illegal political means. Previous research also indicates that social identification, political interest, and political efficacy might account for some of the variations in people’s development of illegal political activity. However, the extent to which these explana-
tions are applicable when explaining why adolescents use illegal political activities remains to be answered.

From whom?
Previous research on adolescents’ political activity argues for the importance of political learning and socializing in the family (e.g., Dalton, 1980; Hess & Torney-Purta, 1967; Jennings & Niemi, 1974; Tedin, 1974). Fundamental as this may be, these studies have foremost examined the intergenerational transfer of system supportive political attitudes. This bias toward examining political learning, equated with regime persistence, has led to limited understanding of the importance of parents for adolescents’ development of alternative political outcomes, such as illegal political activity. Few studies have examined the role of parents in adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity. The few exceptions show that adolescents perceiving their parents as unimportant are more willing to engage in illegal political activity (Oswald & Schmid, 1998), that the less time adolescents spend with their parents, the stronger is their will to engage in illegal political activity (Kuhn, 2004), and that girls experiencing an undemocratic parenting style are more likely to engage in illegal political activity (Schmid, 2012). Despite these findings, the scattered studies examining this issue do not give a coherent picture of the role of parents in adolescents’ development of illegal political activity.

During adolescence, the socializing importance of peers increases (Berndt, 1982; Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Coleman, 1961). Nevertheless, the lack of empirical research in this field means that the role of peers in adolescents’ acquisition and development of illegal political activity is unclear. The few studies present are cross-sectional. Hence, their data prohibited them from going further than to establish that adolescents do share a readiness to participate in illegal political activity with their peers (Kuhn, 2004; Oswald & Schmid, 1998). Due to its cross-sectional design, however, this research cannot tell whether similarities are the result of adolescents finding peers with similar attitudes, or if peers and adolescents have influenced each other to become more alike in their readiness to participate in illegal political activity. In sum, peers are likely to have a role to play in how adolescents come to be involved in illegal political activity. At present, however, research cannot give a satisfactory answer to the question of how peers interact with adolescents with regard to such political activities.
By synergizing ideas from developmental psychology, criminology, and the field of media and communications, a third factor emerges as important to take into account. This is interpersonal communication about politics among peers. The principal idea that arises from combining theorizing in these three disciplines is that the peer group may foster deviant and illegal activity (Dishion, Spracklen, Andrews, & Patterson, 1996; Kuhn, 2004). More specifically, the peer group provides a context for political communication that may facilitate controversial and illegal modes of political action (McDevitt & Kiousis, 2007). Although the general empirical evidence confirms that peers adopt and reinforce each other’s deviant behavior, direct evidence for an understanding of the peer context as a place to learn illegal political activity from one another is scarce. However, adolescents reporting membership in a peer group are also more likely to be involved in illegal political activity (Kuhn, 2004; Oswald & Schmid, 1998). Indirectly, this shows the potential of the peer group for verbally socializing its members into approval of illegal political means.

The empirical research findings above show that both parents and peers should have a role to play in explaining adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity. There are indications suggesting that the rearing style of parents and the structure of the peer network are important for becoming involved in illegal political activity, as the political communication among peers might foster illegal political activity. Nevertheless, the general lack of comprehensive studies examining the impact of these socialization agents on adolescents’ illegal political activity shows that many questions remain to be investigated.

**Unanswered questions of previous research**

There are very few studies of adolescents’ illegal political activity to date. Accordingly, this particular subtopic of political socialization lacks theoretical, methodological, and empirical coherence. This dissertation tries to address some of the core limitations of previous research. Many of the assumptions about involvement in adolescents’ illegal political activity come from studies of adults. It is not necessarily the case that assumptions about adults hold when investigating the involvement in illegal political activity in adolescence.

First, there is a need to better understand who the adolescents involved in illegal political activity are. With regard to demographics for instance, prior research is rather clear about the claim that boys are more inclined
to use these political means. However, studies are less stringent on how socio-economic and educational background relates to illegal political activity. Disregarding the overrepresentation of boys, if there is a specific feature which characterizes adolescents in illegal political activity, this is yet not clear.

Second, with regard to system support, there are currently no studies examining the over time effect of political dissatisfaction on adolescents’ subsequent involvement in illegal political activity. Additionally, the extent to which macro-theoretical claims, such as social and economic struggles underlie illegal political activity, need to be tested specifically for adolescents’ illegal political activity. The appropriateness of theories based on adult's involvement and macro-level conditions still remains to be tested with regard to adolescents’ illegal political activity.

Third, if very few adolescents claim to have been involved in illegal political activity, from a quantitative perspective it is harder to study this behavior and obtain robust results from an analysis. To address this problem, most of the few existing studies in the field have surveyed respondents’ attitudes toward or intentions to participate (willingness, likelihood, preparedness, etc.) in illegal political activity. It is correct to say that adolescents’ attitudes toward and intentions to participate in illegal political activity are a valuable asset for research. A study design using either attitudes or intentions is a solution to the methodological and analytic problems at hand. Nevertheless, most such studies formulate their discussion and conclusion as if they had studied adolescents’ actual illegal political activity. This raises the question: To what extent are attitudes and intentions to be equated with actual behavior? Barnes and Kaase (1979) argue that the more controversial the political activity, the lower is the attitude-behavior congruency. Consequently, one objective of this dissertation is to further understand how attitudes toward and intentions to participate in illegal political activity lead to actual involvement in such activity over time. In addition, to overcome potentially misleading inferences from studying attitudes and intentions instead of behavior, the studies comprising this dissertation all analyzed adolescents’ self-reported, actual involvement in illegal political activity. Summing up, to examine the extent to which adolescents’ illegal political activity is a result of a positive attitude or a readiness to participate is also likely to give further answers to questions of why adolescents are involved in illegal political activity.
Forth, next to parents, it seems reasonable to assume that peers have a special role to play with regard to the involvement in illegal political activity in adolescence. Despite the scarcity of studies in the field, from the few exceptions, it seems fair to conclude that adolescents tend to have similar attitudes and intentions as their peers toward illegal political activity. By contrast, the cross-sectional design of the studies to date means that they give little insight into how adolescents’ illegal political activity develops in interaction with peers. On the basis of current knowledge it is not possible to indicate the extent to which adolescents involved in illegal political activity find likeminded others, or if similarities are more an effect of peers mimicking each other’s activity, and thereby become more similar over time.

In general, few studies have addressed adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity. Among the few exceptions, certain shortcomings provide opportunities for upcoming research to make contributions. It is the objective of this dissertation to move beyond cross-sectional research designs, which prohibit appropriate inferences on how adolescents’ come to use illegal political activity, and to examine whether assumptions based on research on adults hold for illegal political activity in adolescence. Over time analyses give the opportunity not only to study the prevalence of illegal political activity and its associations with other circumstances, but also to study changes in these political means and their underlying motives. Hopefully, these adjustments to study design will overcome some of the limitations and ambiguities that currently hamper research in this field.
II This dissertation

The aim of this dissertation

The aim of this dissertation is to enhance knowledge of involvement in illegal political activity in adolescence. To fulfill this purpose I will characterize the adolescents using illegal political means and try to identify underlying reasons fostering this mode of political activism. Three questions guide the realization of this aim:

1. Who are the adolescents involved in illegal political activity?

2. Why do adolescents use illegal political activities?

3. What are the roles of parents and peers in adolescents’ illegal political activity?

The following sections present the models used to examine illegal political activity in this dissertation. These models originate from the theoretical perspectives described above, and aim to guide further, in one or another way, adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity. The four articles comprising this dissertation are independent answers to the general aim of the dissertation.

Study I

An important question for this dissertation is the one surrounding the character of adolescents involved in illegal political behavior: Who are the adolescents involved in illegal political activity? The first study examines who the adolescents crossing the boundaries of legality in their political action repertoire are. Whether or not to separate among different unconventional political activities has for long been a research issue. Prior research in the field of political participation has discussed a uni- or two-dimensional understanding of the concept (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Ekman & Amnå, 2012). In addition, empirical research has shown that legal activity seems to be a prerequisite for illegal political activity (e.g., Bean, 1991; Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009). It seems likely that involvement in illegal political activity is about crossing borders, but who are the adolescents who move beyond the legal limits in their political engagement?
This study tried to understand the uniqueness of adolescents involved in illegal political activity by expecting that this form of political activism shares many aspects of the political involvement of its legal counterpart. Regardless of the political means by which they try to exert influence, adolescents in political activism should be interested in politics (Verba, et al., 1995), feel able that they can get involved in politics (Finkel, 1987), and be motivated or goal-orientated in their political engagement (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). Jointly, it is likely that all three of these factors will be present among politically active adolescents regardless of the style – illegal or legal – in which they engage.

So, in many cases, adolescents in illegal political activity should have the same goals as their legally oriented counterparts. Despite these similarities, one characteristic is likely to differentiate these two groups. Irrespective of the political goals, compared with legally oriented adolescents, adolescents in illegal political activity should be more willing to use political tactics that may be violent to other people (Opp & Roehl, 1990) and more accepting of the idea that the end justifies the means. But, how should we explain that adolescents in illegal political activities are more ready to accept that the end justifies the means? This study proposes that the explanation to why adolescents involved in illegal political activities are more ready to sacrifice other people’s well-being for their political motive is that they do not readily accept authorities. In fact, compared with other adolescents, these adolescents are likely to challenge authorities in all contexts of their everyday life (society, school, or parents).

To conclude, the first study aimed to examine the overarching question of who the adolescents involved in illegal political activity are. This was done by departing from the assumption that adolescents involved in illegal and legal political activity are similar on certain core aspects of political involvement. But that one characteristic, the willingness to use whatever means necessary to reach a political goal, would be a more rigid position among adolescents in illegal political activity.

**Study II**

Another question for this dissertation concerns the extent to which adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity originates from negative perceptions toward the political system. Generally, adults involved in illegal political activity have been found to express low levels of support for the political system (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1985; Tyler, 2006). By contrast, the
impact of support for the political system on illegal political activity is an understudied issue in adolescence. The few studies of adolescents’ illegal political activity that have taken the political dissatisfaction explanation into account (e.g., Bynner & Ashford, 1994, Hart & Lakin Gullan, 2010) did not examine explicitly how low levels of support are linked to adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity; nor have studies of adolescents’ illegal political activity examined impacts on adolescents’ later illegal political activity. If adolescents transform political dissatisfaction to illegal political activity is therefore more or less unknown.

The second study therefore starts in the theory of political dissatisfaction (Easton, 1965; Muller, 1972; Norris, 2011), and constructs a model that tests three forms of political dissatisfaction on adolescents’ subsequent involvement in illegal political activity. The assumption is that dissatisfaction with the political system will, over time, transpire as illegal political expressions. This study used three commonly used aspects of political dissatisfaction: performance of the democracy; lack of confidence in political institutions; and perceived lack of system responsiveness (Norris et al., 2006). It was expected that, all else alike, adolescents in either way dissatisfied with the political system would be more likely to be involved in subsequent illegal political activity. The possibility that illegal political activity might also foster dissatisfaction should also be noted (Finkel, 1987).

Dissatisfaction with the political system is unlikely to be the only underlying aspect of adolescents’ involvement in subsequent illegal political activity. Drawing on prior theoretical ideas and empirical findings, the model starting in political dissatisfaction therefore also includes demographic characteristics (Cameron & Nickerson, 2009; Gavray et al., 2012), affective commitments (e.g., de Weerd & Klandermans, 1999; Cameron & Nickerson, 2009; Greene, 2004; Klandermans, 2002; Raney & Berdahl, 2009; Stryker, 1987; Terry & Hogg, 1996; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & Mcgarty, 1994), and political communication (Kuhn, 2004; Oswald & Schmid, 1998; McDevitt & Kiousis, 2007). Each of these factors was assumed to impact on adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity over time. Finally, the analysis also controlled for political resources in the shape of SES, political interest, and previous political activity.

In sum, this study expected that political dissatisfaction will, over time, translate into illegal political expression. This study put the political dissatisfaction explanation to test while at the same time examining
the roles played by demographics, affective commitments, and political communication in adolescents’ subsequent illegal political activity. The analyses all controlled for adolescents’ SES, political interest, and previous political activity.

**Study III**

From a broad theoretical perspective, just like the second study, the third can also be seen as an attempt to evaluate how adolescents’ perceptions of their environment were connected to involvement in subsequent illegal political activity. However, here in the third study, perceptions concerning the political authority were replaced by perceptions concerning the first and closest authority of adolescents, namely their parents.

The third study started off in the overarching hypothesis that illegal political activity might be a result of undemocratic and controlling family environments. Drawing on reactance theory – a theory suggesting that adolescent behaviors are dependent on their perceptions of how they are treated (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 1981) – this study modeled the extent to which adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity is the result of a perceived undemocratic and controlling family environment. To put this idea to the test, this study contrasted the proposal that adolescents’ illegal political activity is a reactance to family conditions with the notion that, instead, illegal political activity stems from political interest (Verba, et al., 1995). In such a scenario, rather than emanating from certain family environments, inclinations for illegal political activism are formed on the basis of a general interest in politics. The extent to which adolescents’ parental experiences and illegal political activity are linked would show whether perceptions of control and democracy within the family go hand–in–hand with expressions of illegal political activity over time.

In addition, the third study also examined the extent to which a readiness to participate in illegal political activity is associated with actual illegal political activity. Drawing on the broader assumptions of the theory of planned behavior (e.g., Ajzen, 1991), recent research has shown that intentions to participate in conventional political activity predicted actual participation in conventional political activity (Eckstein, Noack, & Gniewosz, 2013). According to Barnes and Kaase (1979), however, the more controversial the political behavior, the lower the attitude-behavior congruency. So, when it comes to illegal political
activity, it is not necessarily the case that intention to participate is associated with actual behavior. To sum up, the third study was partly guided by a theoretical understanding of adolescents’ illegal political activity as a reaction to parental authority, and also by the idea that actual involvement in illegal political activity might stem from an intention to partake in such political means.

Study IV
The theoretical perspective of the fourth study was that adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity is closely related to their position in a political network. As adolescents grow older, peer networks become an increasingly important agent of adolescents’ socialization (Berndt, 1982; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Coleman, 1961; Dostie-Goulet, 2009). Previous research has found peer similarities in illegal political activities (Kuhn, 2004, Oswald & Schmid, 1998). Are these similarities in peer-adolescent illegal political activities the result of influence from peers already involved in illegal political activity? Or, can one ascribe such similarities to peer selection, to influences from peers involved in legal political activity, or to the impacts of adolescents’ gender?

With the aim of trying better to understand the extent to which peer influence on the part of adolescents already involved in illegal political activity explains how adolescents increase in illegal political activity, this study created a model that would take into account several aspects of the peer network simultaneously. The structural political network explanation maintains that: “The structure of relations among actors and the location of individual actors in the network have important behavioral, perceptual, and attitudinal consequences both for individual units and for the system as a whole” (Knoke & Kuklinski, 1982, p. 13). To be able to single out influence from peers already involved in illegal political activity, first of all, the model included structural aspects of the network. This refers to the size of the peer network, the frequency of adolescent-peer connections (ties), and how common it is for adolescents-peer ties to be reciprocated and connected through a third actor. Examining these structural aspects between time points informs about the extent to which adolescent-peer ties form, stay stable, or dissolve over time. Additionally, the model controlled for adolescent-peer similarities in illegal political activity being an effect of adolescents choosing to hang out with similar peers. The analysis controlled for selection effects based on same gender, classroom, and
school, and similarity in age, immigration status, SES, and legal and illegal political activity. These selection-based effects concern network evolution; that is, they are effects that describe the dynamics of peer formation.

This meant that the model was now set to control for both structural network effects and attribute-related characteristics of the adolescent. However, before it was possible to infer any influences from peers already involved in illegal political activity, there was a need to take account of influences from peers involved only in legal political activity. Including such effects in the model generated a more accurate estimation of influences from peers involved in illegal political activity. Additionally, the analysis also controlled for the impacts of adolescents’ and peers’ gender, adolescents’ age, SES, and legal political activity on increases in illegal political activity over time.

Finally, the analysis examined a model that took into account structural network effects, selection effects, and the influence effects of various relevant covariates. This enabled inclusion in the model of an effect that generated an estimate of the extent to which adolescents would have increased in illegal political activity over time if they had had peers who were involved in illegal political activity at an earlier point in time. Also, to be able to compare how peer network processes work in the case of adolescents’ illegal political activity, as a comparison, the model generated the equivalent estimate for adolescents’ legal political activity. In this way, it was possible to compare the processes of peer influence underlying adolescents’ illegal and legal political activity.
III Data and Method

Participants and procedure

The data used in this dissertation originate from a longitudinal study – Du och Samhället – planned, implemented, financed, and data collected within the Political Socialization Program, a program formed by the Youth and Society research group at Örebro University, Sweden. The Political Socialization Program was initiated in 2009, and the study began the following year, in 2010. The principal aim of the Du och Samhället study is to answer the question: “Through what mechanisms and processes do adolescents and young adults develop their civic engagement?” (Amnå et al., 2009, p. 31). The seven-year longitudinal study of five cohorts incorporates over 4000 individual respondents – adolescents and young adults from 13 to 30 years of age, their parents and peers – in a Swedish city of around 130 000 inhabitants. For the cohorts in this study, the sample was collected using the following procedure. Three high schools and 10 public-sector schools were chosen with the objective of having respondents of varying economic, ethnic, and social backgrounds. In a selected school, the sample comprised all members in the assigned classes. The first three annual measurements of respondents in the two youngest cohorts (starting ages 13 and 16) and their peers were investigated in this dissertation.

Before implementation, the Du och Samhället study was approved by the Regional Ethics Board of Uppsala. All studies are required to meet four general ethical principles based on: information, consent, confidentiality, and utilization. The information principle requires that study participants are informed about their part in the research and the conditions for their participation; in the Du och Samhället study, participants were informed in advance that their participation was voluntary, and that they could refrain from partaking at any point. The principle of consent states that participants have the right to decide about their partaking in the research. In addition, consent from caretakers is sometimes needed, such as when participants are younger than 15 years–old, or when the content of the study is sensitive by nature. The Du och Samhället study therefore asked caretakers of participants in the youngest cohort (13 years–old at outset) for consent for the first four measurements, and the caretakers of participants in the second youngest cohort for consent at the first measurement (16 years–old at outset). The third guideline is the principle of confidentiality. This concerns both those working with ethically sensitive
material and the material itself. As the Du och Samhället study works with ethically sensitive material about individual participants, all involved employees signed a contract of confidentiality. After data were collected, questionnaires were decoded and stored in locked facilities, in practice impossible for outsiders to reach. Finally, the principle of utilization establishes that data collected for research purposes may not be used commercially, for other non-scientific purposes, or in such a way that an individual is directly affected (taken into custody, etc.).

The use in this dissertation of the two youngest cohorts enabled three measurements at annual intervals. The Du och Samhället study asks participants about their social background, interactions with parents and peers, media habits, and political attitudes and behavior. Data collections took place during school hours and were administered by trained research assistants, while teachers were not present. Participants were informed about the types of items included in the questionnaire, the amount of time needed to complete it, and that their participation was voluntary. Participants were also guaranteed that their responses would not be seen by parents, teachers, or anyone else. Each class received a payment of approximately 100 EUR for participation.

**Study I sample**

In the first study, data for 1557 adolescents in the two youngest cohorts measured at the third wave (T3) were used. For the 817 adolescents comprising the younger cohort, Cohort I, the mean age was 15.4 and the response rate was 86%. The older cohort, Cohort II, comprised 740 adolescents with mean age 18.5, and the response rate was 81%.

**Study II sample**

For the second study, the analytic sample comprised 1938 adolescents from the two cohorts. The gender distribution for these adolescents was approximately equal (51.4% girls). At the onset of the study, the youngest cohort (Cohort I, \(N = 942\)) had a mean age of 13.4 and a response rate of 94.1%, and the respective numbers for the older cohort (Cohort II, \(N = 996\)) were: Mean age = 16.6 and response rate = 84.7%. For this study, data from the first two waves (T1 and T2) were used.
Study III sample
The third study used 720 adolescents from the two youngest cohorts. The youngest cohort consisted of 424 adolescents \(M_{\text{age}} = 13.4\) years) with a somewhat higher composition of girls \(n = 224\) than boys \(n = 200\). Among the participants in Cohort 1, 93.3% were born in the Sweden and most of them lived together with both parents (78.5%). Cohort 2 comprised 296 adolescents \(M_{\text{age}} = 16.6\) years) of whom 186 were girls and 110 were boys. The majority of these adolescents were born in Sweden (91.8%), and 67.2% of adolescents in Cohort 2 lived with both their parents.

The creation of the analytic sample for the third study was initiated by selecting all 720 adolescents who, at first measurement (T1), had stated that they would stay within the law when aiming to effect political change. By time of the second measurement (T2), 235 of these adolescents had changed their mind, and would consider breaking the law, some even if someone else got hurt. An independent-sample t-test reported a readiness for law-breaking political influence, with or without human causalities, not to be significantly different between the subgroups \(p > .05\). Hence, all adolescents who, by the second measurement, reported that they could consider breaking the law when aiming to exert political influence where placed into the same analytic category. Next, for the upcoming analyses, adolescents were divided into two groups. The first group was labeled “Stable legal” and comprised those adolescents who remained negative to the use of illegal political means for exerting political influence between the two measurements (Cohort I = 278; Cohort II = 208). The second group was labeled “Increasing illegal” and comprised adolescents who, by the second measurement, had become positive to the use of illegal political means (Cohort I = 146; Cohort II = 89).

Study IV sample
The fourth study targeted 1052 students. For the network used in the analyses, 1006 adolescents partaking at least at one measurement point were chosen. A total of 909 adolescents participated at T1, of whom 201 dropped out at T2; 97 participants entered at T2, and, altogether, 77.9% participated at both time points. The analytic sample included 352 students from 13 classes in School A (18.4% of foreign background), 354 students from 21 classes in School B (22.9% of foreign background), and 300 students from 23 classes in School C (9.5% of foreign background). At the onset of the study, the analytic sample was more-or-less equally
distributed by gender (51.2% girls) and the mean age of the partaking adolescents was 16.6 \((SD = 0.7; \text{Range 15-20})\).

As this study used a stochastic actor-based model that employed *Simulation Investigation for Empirical Network Analysis* (SIENA), the analytic sample took into account all adolescents with relevant adolescent-peer-tie data at only T1, at only T2, or at both times of measurement. Outgoing ties for participants still in school by the second measurement but who did not partake in the T2 survey were coded as missing. By contrast, adolescents’ ties to peers who did not attend school by the time of the second measurement were excluded from the analyses using structural zeros. This procedure is used to deal with situations where ties are not present, but where the aim is to be able to use data on participants in simulations of occasions where they have observed data (Ripley, Snijders, & Preciado, 2012).

**Operationalization of illegal political activity**

Given the complexity of the concept of illegal political activity, it is in order to give a further idea of how illegal political activities are understood in this dissertation. Though it may seem tautologous to say that an illegal political activity is illegal, the term makes no juridical distinction when establishing the legal (or not) character of political means. Instead, as noted above, the reference to illegality is primarily about characterizing a style of political behavior. Two of the features that traditionally trail illegal political means are violence and system-challenging attitudes (e.g., Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002; Muller, 1972). Dwelling further on these two factors and their usefulness with regard to illegal political activity, the following diagram can be constructed (see Figure 1).
Figure 1 shows illegal political activity conceptualized along two continuums: from peaceful to violent, and from in line with societal norms to challenging the system and its authority. Before turning to illegal political activities it is important to be clear about what are not considered illegal political activities. Conventional political activities, e.g. voting, party membership, and serving in public office, are modes of political activity usually reinforced by a democratic regime. These actions are both in line with societal norms and generally peaceful by nature, which is why they are located in the lower left end of Figure 1. But there is a sense in which also conventional political activities can become illegal. In a recent election to the Swedish parliament, citizens aimed to sell their electoral votes to the highest bidder (Aftonbladet, 2006), an illegal act in Sweden. Although stemming from voting – a non-violent action in line with the social norm – the act of selling one’s vote is an action that would fall under the description of illegal political activity.

Political violence and riots are situated in the upper-right corner. These means of political activity are both violent and authority-challenging. The arrows accompanying each example of political activity in Figure 1 are
designed to show that, to some extent, illegal political activities always challenge the norms set by society. This is indeed a truism since illegal actions stress societal norms that are already legalized (Watts, 1999). However, as illustrated by the examples of civil disobedience and graffiti in Figure 1, illegal political activities are not always violent. In sum, the key inference from conceptualizing illegal political activities in this way is that they make up a style of political action that comprises not only one phenomenon but a very wide range of means of attempts to exert political influence. And, although, in this dissertation, illegal political activities are not judged according to their juridical status but instead characterized by their action style, they do involve actions that would result in criminal punishment if sentenced by the courts.

An additional question that arises when addressing the concept of illegal political activity is the extent to which these actions are to be distinguished from actions without political underpinnings? To achieve clarity in this regard, the indicators of the three concepts of illegal political activity, legal political activity, and delinquency were entered into a factor analysis, using the data for the two cohorts in the studies constituting this dissertation. Using SPSS with principal axis factoring and promax oblique rotation, the factor analyses generated a three-factor solution (Table 2). With no apparent cross-loadings, the factor structure seems clear: The first factor, explaining most of the variance, comprised solely items from the illegal political activity scale; the second factor comprised the six indicators of delinquency; whereas the last factor comprised the four items concerned with legal political activity. As far as this factor analysis is concerned, illegal political activity is something different from both legal political activity and non-political norm-breaking in the shape of delinquent behavior.

In most democratic countries, determining the extent to which a political action is violent or peaceful is a much harder task then establishing whether it is legal or illegal (Wolfsfeld et al., 1994). Nevertheless, regardless of their violent or peaceful character or their disposition to follow or challenge societal norms, some political activities cross the border of what is usually legally allowed in democratic countries (Brady, 1999). In sum, although not all aspects of this multifaceted phenomenon are addressed, it is the objective of this dissertation to understand better the prevalence of political actions that usually cross the borders of legality, irrespective of their level of violence or the nature of their challenge to societal norm.
Table 2

Principal Factor Analysis with Promax Rotation including items comprising the Illegal Political Activity scale, the Legal Political Activity scale, and the Delinquency scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>participated in a political event where property was damaged</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participated in a political event where there was a violent confrontation with political opponents</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participated in an illegal action/demonstration or occupation</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>written political messages or graffiti on walls</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broke the law for political reasons</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destroyed [public] property on purpose (e.g. windows, street lamps, phone booths, benches…)</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threatened or forced someone to do something they didn’t want to do</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shoplifted</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carried weapons in school or in the street (knuckleduster, knife, etc…)</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been caught by the police for something you did</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped to pay (e.g. at the movies, a café, the bus, the train, etc…)</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>signed a petition</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protested when someone outside your family has been unfairly treated</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boycotted or bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participated in a legal demonstration or a strike</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Share of explained variance (%)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Factor loadings above .40 in bold.
Measures
All the measures used in this dissertation were based on self-reports of adolescents’ perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. The measures are reported here in the direction asked to respondents. When examined in the studies, some measures therefore needed to be recoded for higher values to indicate the intended direction of the measurement. In addition, a measure with no reference specified implies that the measure was created in the project and used for the first time in the studies comprising this dissertation.

Adolescents’ democracy-compromising behaviors/disclosure of information about daily activities
In the Du och Samhället study, adolescents reported on their secrecy and disclosure (Kerr & Stattin, 2000), which captured two types of adolescents’ information management (Marshall, Tilton-Weaver & Bosdet, 2005; Tilton-Weaver & Marshall, 2008). The combination of these two scales measures adolescents’ democracy-compromising behavior (Persson, Stattin, & Keer, 2004). Two questions were asked for secrecy: “Do you keep a lot of secrets from your parents about what you do in your free time?” and “Do you hide a lot from your parents about what you do at night and on weekends?” The response scale ranged from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Very much). Disclosure was measured with three questions: “Do you tell your parents about how you are doing in the different subjects in school?” “Do you usually tell how school was when you get home (how you did on different exams, your relationships with teachers, etc.)?” and “When you have been out in the evening, do you want to tell your parents where you went and what you did?” The response options for these questions ranged from 1 (Keep almost everything to myself / Never) to 5 (Tell almost everything / Very often).

Adolescents’ feelings of being over controlled
This measure consisted of five questions capturing adolescents’ feelings of being over-controlled by their parents (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). Examples of the questions on this scale were: “Do you think that your parents control everything in your life?” and “Do you think that your parents intrude into what you do in your free time?” Adolescents responded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Yes, always) to 5 (No, never).
**Affective commitments**
Adolescents were asked to indicate their affective commitment toward four group composites: environmental organizations (including organizations such as Greenpeace, Klimax, and Friends of the Earth); human aid organizations (Red Cross, Save the Children, Doctors without Borders); radical left-wing groups (Motkraft.net, Young Socialists, Anti-Fascist Action, AFA), and radical right-wing groups (Info 14, Swedish Resistance Movement, Party of the Swedes). The stem question was: “There are a lot of groups and organizations in society. Which ones do you like?” Responses were coded 1 (Don’t like), 2 (Don’t know or uncertain), and 3 (Like a lot).

**Defiant behavior**
Adolescents’ defiant behavior toward parents was measured with four questions (Persson et al., 2004): “What do you usually do when your parents tell you to stop doing something they don’t like?” “What do you usually do when your parents ask you to do something that you don’t feel like doing?” “What do you usually do when your parents ask you to turn off the computer?” and “What do you usually do when your parents tell you to clean up in your room?” The response options ranged from 1 (stop/do it immediately or Turn off/Clean the room immediately without complaining or questioning) to 4 (does not listen to what they are saying or don’t care about what they are saying).

**Delinquency**
Adolescents responded to six items about their delinquent activities during the last twelve months (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). Respondents were asked about their shoplifting, arrests, property destruction, carrying weapons, threatening others, and skipping payment on buses or at the movies. The response scale ranged from 1 (No, never) to 5 (More than 10 times).

**Dissatisfaction**
Following the reasoning of Norris et al. (2006), dissatisfaction was treated as a threefold concept, tapping respondents’ dissatisfaction with the performance of democracy, lack of confidence in institutions, and perceived unresponsiveness of the political system. The measures comprising this construct have been validated in previous studies (e.g., Linde, 2004; Linde & Ekman, 2003; Norris, 1999).
Dissatisfaction with the performance of democracy
Respondents answered two questions: “How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Sweden?” and “How satisfied are you with the way the current government is handling the country’s affairs?” with the response scale ranging from 1 (Very satisfied) to 4 (Not at all satisfied).

Lack of confidence in institutions
Respondents were asked: “How much confidence do you have in the following institutions? The Parliament, the Government, and the Courts”. The response scale ranged from 1 (No confidence) to 4 (Very high confidence).

Unresponsiveness of the political system
“What do you think about people’s opportunities to influence how society is run?” The following three items were used as indicators: “Ordinary people lack opportunities to affect political decisions,” “Those in power in our society lack interest in how people like me live our lives,” and “Those in power make decisions without really knowing what people like me think.” The response scale ranged from 1 (Applies exactly) to 4 (Does not apply at all).

Goal-orientation
To assess the motives underling adolescents’ political activity, the adolescents were asked whether they had set up goals with regard to their political engagement. The stem question was: “Some people have set goals for themselves concerning their engagement in societal issues. Have you?” The adolescents then had four responses to choose among: 1 (I will work actively in organizations and I’m already a member in an organization), 2 (I will definitely work actively – in organizations or by other means – on issues like this but have not yet committed myself), 3 (I’m not interested in issues like this, and as far as I can see, I will not commit myself to getting engaged in them), and 4 (I’m not interested in issues like this, rather the opposite. I will certainly not commit myself to do anything about them).

Household income
This dissertation made use of both factual and subjective measures of household income. Both measures have been validated and used in previous studies (Ekström & Östman, 2013a; 2013b).
Factual income
This socio-economic status (SES) measure comprised two items tapping parents’ monthly income. A first question was about “The household income”: 1 (Does not at all cover the expenses), 2 (Hardly covers the expenses), 3 (Covers the expenses – we are not worried), and 4 (Is good and we do not think about expenses). The second question asked: “What is your household’s monthly income?” Response alternatives ranged from: 1 (1 – 10 000 SEK) to 7 (60 001 or over).

Subjective income
Adolescents responded to five questions regarding the economic situation in their family. The questions were: “If you want things that cost a lot of money (for example a computer, skateboard, cell phone) can your parents afford it?” “How is the economy in your family?” “If you compare yourself with other persons in your class, do you have more of less money?” “How often do you and your family go on vacation?” and “Does your family have more or less money than other families where you are living?” Response options ranged from 1 (Absolutely not / My parents always complain about not having enough money / I have a lot less money than other persons in my class / Seldom or never / We have a lot less money than other families), to 4 or 5 (Yes, absolutely / My parents never complain about not having enough money / I have much more money than other persons in my class / We go one or several times a year / We have much more money than other families).

Immigration status
Immigration status was measured using two items with regard to the heritage of the respondent’s parents. Having both parents born in Sweden or any other Nordic country was coded 0, at least one parent born in Sweden or a Nordic country 1, and both parents born outside Sweden or any other Nordic country 2.

Interpersonal communication
This construct measured communication about political and societal concerns, separately for peers and parents. The stem question was: “How often do you and your friends/parents talk about the following?” The adolescents indicated how often – on a response scale ranging from 1 (Very often) to 4 (Never) – they talked with their peers or parents about
“What you have heard on the news about what is happening in Sweden and around the world,” “Environmental issues,” “School,” and “Politics or societal issues.” The school item was only presented for communication with peers. These measures have been used and validated in previous studies (Ekström & Östman, 2013a).

**Involvement in family decisions**
This measure consisted of six statements concerning adolescents’ perceptions of their involvement in decisions taken in the family and parents’ encouragement of adolescents’ individual expression (Persson et al., 2004; Stattin, Persson, Burk, & Kerr, 2011). Examples of the statements were: “Your parents ask you when decisions are made in the family,” “You think you have an influence on and take part in what is happening in your family,” and “When you are discussing at home, you usually get to finish what you have to say.” Responses ranged from 1 (Don’t agree at all) to 4 (Agree totally).

**Parents’ coldness-rejection**
This construct was measured with the stem-question: “What does your mother [father] do if you do something she [he] doesn’t like?” (Tilton-Weaver, Kerr, Pakalniskiene, Tokic, Salihovic, & Stattin, 2010). Adolescents were provided with the following six statements: “Ignores what you have to say if you try to explain,” “Doesn’t talk to you for a long while,” “Is silent and cold towards you,” “Disregards your points of view or ideas,” “Makes you feel guilty for a long time,” and “Avoids you.” Adolescents were offered three response alternatives to these statements: 1 (Never), 2 (Sometimes), and 3 (Usually).

**Parents’ negative reactions to disclosure**
Adolescents reported on five items about their parents’ negative reactions to their disclosure (Kerr, Stattin, & Trost, 1999): “Has it happened that your parents have used what you told them against you?” “Has it happened that your parents have made fun of things that you happened to tell them about yourself and your life?” “Has it happened that have you have told your parents things and later regretted that you did?” “Do your parents usually bring up things that you told them in confidence again and again?” and “How often have you regretted that you have told your par-
ents too much about yourself, your friends, and your free-time?” The response scale ranged from 1 (Has never happened) to 5 (Very often).

**Peer nominations**
Participants were asked to identify up to eight of their peers: “At most schools there are groups of young people who hang out, talk, and do things together. Write below the first and last names of those you hang out with at school the most.” Similar measures of peer nominations have been used in several previous studies (Burk, Steglich, & Snijders, 2007; Kiesner, Kerr, & Stattin, 2004; Van Zalk, Kerr, Branje, Stattin, & Meeus, 2010).

**Perception of teachers as unfair**
Adolescents answered six items about the fairness of their teachers (Kerr & Stattin, 2000): “Most of my teachers treat me fairly,” “Most teachers don’t like me,” “Most of my teachers listen to what I have to say,” “There are scarcely any teachers who I can talk with if I have problems with something at school,” “Most teachers are keen that their students feel good,” and “There are scarcely any teachers who praise me when I do a good job.” The response scale ranged from 1 (Absolutely agree) to 4 (Absolutely disagree).

**Political activity**
Adolescents were asked to indicate their involvement in several kinds of political activity. This measure was developed on the basis of a recently developed typology (Ekman & Amnå, 2012).

**Illegal political activity**
The illegal political activity scale was created by averaging or summing responses to five items: “participated in illegal action, demonstration, or occupation,” “broken the law for political reasons,” “written political messages or painted political graffiti on walls,” “participated in political activity leading to fighting with political opponents or the police,” and “participated in political activity where property was damaged.” Participants could indicate whether they had 0 (Never), 1 (Occasionally), or 2 (Several times) participated in these political activities during the last twelve months (for frequencies by cohort, see Table 3).

It could also be asked whether the target variable of this dissertation, adolescents’ illegal political activity, was adequately measured using the
five indicators comprising the illegal political activity scale employed in this dissertation. To approach this issue, prior to use in practice, the illegal political activity scale was tested, tuned, and validated with satisfactory results in two pilot studies addressing respondents of the same age. In reality, this meant that, in relation to the pilot studies, some items were removed and others were rephrased. Thereafter, the factor structure and the inter-reliability of the items comprising the scale were examined in both an exploratory and a confirmatory factor analysis with satisfactory results. Using data for the two youngest cohorts’ participation in the first wave, both an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were performed. The EFA, performed using SPSS 20 with principal axis factoring and promax oblique rotation, generated a one-factor solution explaining 78% of the variance. All 5 items comprising the factor had satisfactory loadings (> .75). The CFA, performed using Mplus 5.1, set out to test the one-factor model generated by the EFA. The few degrees of freedom in the model led to an RMSEA value of .11, indicating poor model fit (Kline, 2011). With the exception of the RMSEA, the absolute model fit indices for this model suggested a good model fit: $\chi^2(5, N = 1747) = 112.55, p < .001$, CFI = .984, SRMR = .015. Altogether, the model obtained an acceptable model fit. Hence, after tuning the measure, the reliability and validity of the illegal political activity scale appeared satisfactory.
Table 3
Frequencies of indicators of illegal political activity for 13 and 16 year-old adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>13 year-olds, frequencies (%)</th>
<th>16 year-olds, frequencies (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written political messages or painted political graffiti on walls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>818 (92.0)</td>
<td>802 (93.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>44 (4.9)</td>
<td>28 (3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>27 (3.0)</td>
<td>27 (3.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in illegal action, demonstration, or occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>823 (92.9)</td>
<td>813 (95.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>40 (4.5)</td>
<td>25 (2.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>23 (2.6)</td>
<td>18 (2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken the law for political reasons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>792 (89.3)</td>
<td>788 (91.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>61 (6.9)</td>
<td>47 (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>34 (3.8)</td>
<td>22 (2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in political activity where property was damaged</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>803 (90.8)</td>
<td>810 (94.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>48 (5.4)</td>
<td>20 (2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>33 (3.7)</td>
<td>24 (2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in political activity leading to fighting with political opponents or the police</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>819 (92.5)</td>
<td>820 (95.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>37 (4.2)</td>
<td>16 (1.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>29 (3.3)</td>
<td>19 (2.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Response options: (0) Never, (1) Occasionally, (2) Several times

Legal political activity
The legal political activity scale was created by summing eight items (only the four last items were used in Study II and Study IV). The particular items included in this measure were guided by an attempt to tangent the illegal political activity counterpart on the amount of commitment, time, and resources needed to participate: “collected signatures,” “distributed leaflets with a political content,” “worn a badge or a t-shirt with a political message,” “attended a public meeting dealing with political or social issues,” “boycotted or bought a certain product for political, ethical, or environmental reasons,” “protested when someone outside your family has been unfairly treated,” “participated in legal demonstration or strike,” and “signed a petition.” Participants indicated whether they had 0 (Never), 1 (Occasionally), or 2 (Several times) participated in these political activities during the last twelve months.
Political and societal interest
Altogether, three items addressed adolescents’ political and societal interests: “How interested are you in politics?” “How interested are you in what is happening in the society?” and “People have different feelings about politics. How do you feel about politics?” The first item is a commonly used measure of general political interest (e.g., Verba et al., 1995; Watts, 1999). The response options ranged from 1 (Very interested / Great fun) to 5 or 6 (Not at all interested / Loath).

Political efficacy.
Adolescents indicated on a 10-item scale their ability to get involved in political activity (Sohl, 2011). The stem question was: “If I really tried, I could.” Examples of items were: “Be a leader of a group working with societal issues,” “Help to organize a political protest,” “Take part in a demonstration in my hometown.” The response scale ranged from 1 (I could definitely not manage that) to 4 (I could definitely manage that).

Readiness for law-breaking political activism
This measure consisted of one introductory conditional statement: “If I think that something is wrong...” The statement was followed by three different response options: 1 (I will stay within the law. The law declares what is right. We must stick to decisions we make together. If something should be changed, that should be done within the boundaries of the law), 2 (I can consider breaking the law. If decisions taken by politicians are wrong, then it is right to break the law. I will consider breaking the law if needed), and 3 (I can consider breaking the law even if other people get hurt. When the law is completely wrong, drastic means are sometimes necessary).

Research design and analytical strategy
This dissertation uses quantitative data with statistical analyses to answer its overall questions. Given that the aim of the dissertation is to enhance the knowledge on involvement in illegal political activity in adolescence, a quantitate approach seems a good strategy when meaning to understand general mechanisms that apply to ordinary young people. Such data provide possibilities to give general answers to how young people, irrespective of their economic, ethnic, and social background, come to use illegal political means. Although quantitative studies on illegal political activity are
present with adults as the analytical unit (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1985; Tyler, 2006), the presence of studies on illegal political activity with a quantitative approach on adolescents are scare. A lack of prior studies does not suffice as an argument for using this approach. However, together with the rapid political identity development (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995) and the peak of these political orientations in adolescence (Watts, 1999), a quantitative approach seems valid when eager to better understand adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity.

As part of a longitudinal study designed specifically to try to answer mechanisms and processes on adolescents’ civic and political engagement, the data used in this dissertation seem appropriate for trying to answer the overarching questions of who, why, and what the role is for parents and peers for adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity. An alternative qualitative way to examine political activism could be to turn directly to political groups known to embrace illegal methods in their attempts to exert political influence. Such a procedure gives valuable in-depth insights about group members and their practices. However, such data are likely to be restricted to very similar groups and are less helpful when trying to examine general processes that may help to explain why ordinary young people express their political preferences using illegal political means.

Given the distributional character of illegal political activity, the studies in this dissertation were, by and large, guided by a dichotomous understanding of this style of political activity. Therefore, an either-or approach was used to analyze involvement in illegal political activity in both Study I and II. For Study III, this dichotomous understanding was set aside in order to realize one of the aims of this study; to analyze changes in levels of illegal political activity over time. Although the skewed distributional character of the dependent variable has implications for the normality assumption of the statistical analysis used to examine these changes (a repeated measures General Linear Model), this time the efficient choice to use a continuous measure of illegal political activity outplayed the dichotomous distributional character. In similar vein, the network data used in Study IV required a step away from the dichotomous distributional character. This time because the analytical technique used to examine network and behavior dynamics required a categorical outcome.
IV Results

Study I

Much research on political participation suggests that there is a close connection between legal and illegal political activity (e.g., Bean, 1991). Drawing on such a claim, adolescents involved in illegal political activity have a lot in common with those who remain legal in their political engagement. But what is it about those adolescents who step beyond the legal limit in their political engagement? Who are they?

The analysis started by creating three groups of political activists based on adolescents’ reports of political involvement in legal and illegal political activity. This generated three groups: politically inactive ($n = 484$), active only in legal political activity ($n = 961$), and active in both legal and illegal political activity ($n = 104$). Eight adolescents reported involvement in illegal political activity but no involvement in legal political activities. Because the general assumption in this study was that illegal political activity is about crossing borders, these adolescents were removed from the analytic sample. Using analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs), the analysis thereafter showed that adolescents in illegal political activity reported similar levels of political interest, political efficacy, and goal-orientation ($p < .001$), controlling for age. However, when compared on aspects meant to tap authority challenge in various contexts, adolescents in illegal political activity expressed more non-compliance toward authority in all three contexts under comparison (toward society, toward school, and toward parents).

When comparing adolescents in the three groups on their attitudes toward breaking the law to change society, an EXACON analysis (Bergman & El-Khoury, 1987) showed that non-active adolescents reported more often than expected by chance that they would stay within the law when trying to change society (T) and less often than expect by chance that they would consider breaking the law to change society (AT). No observed frequencies were significant for adolescents in legal political activity, but adolescents involved in illegal political activities reported less often than expected by chance to stay within the law (AT) and more often than expected by chance to break the law even if other people get hurt (T) when trying to change society.

To understand better why adolescents involved in illegal political activity would be more willing to break the law to change society, even if this
meant harming other people, we took the analysis further. Logistic regressions showed that it was four times as likely that adolescents involved in illegal political activity would approve of violent political means \((OR = 4.00; p < .001)\). In a next step, a forward stepwise selection procedure (Wald) was used to enter the authority-challenge measures to the function. In the final stage of the stepwise procedure, three measures of authority challenge – delinquency, perception of teachers as unfair, and adolescents’ non-disclosure of information – predicted approval of political violence. The inclusion of these authority-challenge measures reduced the explanatory power of the illegal political activity term by almost 50% \((OR = 2.29; p < .05)\). This suggested that the approval of political violence observed among adolescents in illegal political activity could be partially explained by a lack of acceptance of authority.

### Study II

In general, research on illegal political activity has focused on adults (for a review see, e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1985; Tyler, 2006), and the few studies where the unit of analysis has been the adolescents have almost exclusively employed cross-sectional research designs (e.g., Gavray et al., 2012; Kuhn, 2004). For these two reasons, research has not been able to give a clear-cut answer to the question of why adolescents come to use illegal political means. This study examined the impacts of demographic background, political dissatisfaction, affective commitment, and political communication on adolescents’ increases in illegal political activity over time. These four perspectives generated the following hypotheses for the second study:

**H1:** Age and gender will predict involvement in illegal political activity over time.

**H2:** Strong feelings of political dissatisfaction will predict involvement in illegal political activity over time.

**H3:** Identification with a politicized group with a more militant approach will predict involvement in illegal political activity over time.

**H4:** Involvement in illegal political activity over time will be an effect of political discussion with peers to a higher extent than with family.

To be able better to understand why adolescents come to use illegal political means, a comparison was made with how the independent variables would predict involvement in legal political activity over time. Given the
interrelated nature of illegal and legal political activity, in an analysis examining the underlying reasons for involvement in illegal political activity, it was imperative simultaneously to control predictions of illegal political activity against those concerned with legal political activity. To be able to attain such control, adolescents’ illegal political activity was analyzed using a structural equation model.

While this study tested whether dissatisfaction precedes illegal political activity, previous research has also noted that the relation might be inverse, i.e., that illegal political activity triggers dissatisfaction (Finkel, 1987). Nevertheless, when analyzing whether political activity affects dissatisfaction over time, the global fit indices gave no such indications. Neither legal nor illegal political activity at T1 predicted adolescents’ dissatisfaction at T2 (p > .05). With the aim of constructing a parsimonious model, these non-significant effects prompted a decision to omit the over time effects of dissatisfaction on political activity in the forthcoming models.

Controlling for resources and previous involvement in political activity, the results showed that adolescents’ subsequent illegal political activity was uniquely predicted by gender, lack of perceived system responsiveness, political interest, and prior involvement in political activity. Put differently, politically interested adolescents and boys were more inclined to increase in illegal political activity, as too were adolescents perceiving the political system as unable to listen and respond to the demands of its citizens. However, nothing in the analyses indicated that adolescents’ increases in illegal political activity were the effects of a commitment to behavioral group norms or communication in peer networks.

Finally, prior involvement in illegal political activity increased the likelihood of participation in illegal political activity at the second measurement almost six-fold. Additionally, previous involvement in legal political activity predicted subsequent illegal political activity, suggesting that legal political activity may help to clarify why adolescents become involved in illegal political activity.

In sum, this study showed that, in adolescence, subsequent involvement in illegal political activity may be rooted in a perceived lack of system responsiveness, high political interest, and also male preference. On top of all this, it is important not to ignore previous political activity. It seems that prior illegal political activity is a strong predictor of adolescents’ subsequent illegal political activity. However, prior involvement in legal political activity also predicted adolescents’ illegal political activity over time.
Study III

The importance of the family for the socialization of adolescents’ political and democratic values is well-established (e.g., Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 1998; Flanagan, Gallay, Sukhdeep, Gallay, & Nti, 2005). These findings suggest that a well-functioning family is imperative for a positive political identity development. However, there is a lack of knowledge concerning the role of the family for adolescents undergoing an alternative political identity development. A few studies have addressed this issue, showing that conflicts within families and an undemocratic parenting style are associated with a readiness to use illegal political means among adolescents. Consequently, for this study, the purposes were: a) to examine adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity as a reaction to an undemocratic and controlling family environment, and b) to examine the extent to which adolescents’ readiness to use illegal political means was associated with actual behavior.

Using path analysis and repeated measures general linear models (GLMs), the analysis examined whether adolescents consistently unwilling to use illegal political means differed from adolescents who had become ready to use illegal political means by the time of the second measurement. Additionally, in order to rule out the possibility that adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity was a product of a general interest in politics, and not a reaction to a negative family environment, the analysis also examined the impacts of adolescents’ political interest on involvement in illegal political activity.

When comparing the two groups (the group consistently unwilling and the group becoming ready to use illegal political means over time) on the four family environment variables, different developmental trajectories were found for the two cohorts. The path analysis showed that younger adolescents’ secrecy and older adolescents’ involvement in family decisions predicted changes in readiness to participate in illegal political activity. In addition, political interest did not predict a change toward a readiness to use illegal political means in any of the cohorts. This suggested that those adolescents who became ready to use illegal political means by the second measurement were not guided by political interest in their attitude transformation. Taken together, these findings show that the adolescents who were ready to break the law if faced by something that was against their beliefs perceived their families as more undemocratic and controlling than adolescents who would not use illegal political means at any time.
Moving to the second aim of the study, whether adolescents who increased in readiness to use illegal political means also increased in actual participation in illegal political activity over time, the results from the GLMs showed no significant differences between the “Stable legal” and the “Increasing illegal” among the younger adolescents. The Time X Cohort interaction was not significant, indicating that adolescents in the two cohorts did not differ in their overall changes in illegal political activity over time ($F(1, 655) = .08, p = .381$). However, the Time X Cohort X Group interaction, with illegal political activity as the within-subjects factors was significant ($F(1, 655) = 5.11, p = .024$). Among younger adolescents, the “Stable legal” and “Increasing illegal” groups were not significantly different in how actual illegal political activity developed between the two time points. For older adolescents, however, the results were somewhat different. Here, group membership proved to have a significant impact on changes in illegal political activity over time; the older adolescents who developed a readiness to participate in illegal political activity over time increased more in illegal political activity between the two measurements than the adolescents who remained unwilling to participate in illegal political activities (see Figure 2). In sum, the older adolescents who developed a readiness to participate in illegal political activity also increased significantly more in actual illegal political activity over time than the adolescents who remained unwilling to use illegal political means.
Additionally, the analysis tested whether adolescents’ political interest and perceived family environment were differentially associated with a readiness to use illegal political means between boys and girls. This was achieved by comparing four groups: (1) boys unwilling to use illegal political means at both measurements \((n = 210)\), (2) girls unwilling to use illegal political means at both measurements \((n = 275)\), (3) boys ready to use illegal political means at the second measurement \((n = 100)\), and (4) girls ready to use illegal political means at the second measurement \((n = 135)\). The results showed that only levels of disclosure was significantly different comparing the four groups \((F(3, 706) = 6.73, p < .001)\). A Hochberg GT2 post-hoc test revealed a difference between girls unwilling to use illegal political means at both measurements \((M = 3.69, SD = 0.83)\) and boys unwilling to use illegal political means at both measurements \((M = 3.37, SD = 0.80)\).

Finally, the analysis also tested if boys and girls were different in how a readiness to use illegal political means among associated with illegal political activity. To do this, GLMs with illegal political activity as the repeated measure, which included a Time X Cohort X Gender interaction term and

Figure 2. Changes in participation in illegal political activity between T1 and T2 among adolescents in (a) the “Stable legal” group and (b) the “Increasing illegal” group among the older adolescents.
also a Time X Cohort X Group X Gender interaction term, were conducted. The interactions were non-significant indicating that boys and girls did not differ on the extent to which their readiness to use illegal political means were associated with actual political activity.

**Study IV**

Peers are often referred to as one of the major socialization agents with regard to adolescents’ political attitudes and behaviors (Berndt, 1982; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Coleman, 1961; Dostie-Goulet, 2009). Yet, little is known about the role of peers in the development of adolescents’ illegal political behavior. This study took its point of departure in a lack of knowledge of the role of peers, and set out to understand what processes underlie adolescents’ involvement in illegal political behaviors.

Research has shown adolescent-peer similarities in a variety of contexts (e.g., Kuhn, 2004; Veenstra & Dijkstra, 2011). However, why adolescents report similar attitudes and behaviors as their peers does not always have the same explanation. In general, two processes have been presented as potential mechanisms, which are important when examining horizontal agents such as peers. The process of socialization, or influence, explains peer similarities as a consequence of peers imitating and supporting each other’s behavior and thereby becoming similar to each other over time (Savin-Willias & Berndt, 1990). A contrasting mechanism explains the similarities as due to adolescents choosing the company of peers similar to them in values, attributes, and behavior (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Byrne & Nelson, 1965; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954). In the study of political socialization, research has shown that processes of both influence and selection are present when it comes to political attitudes and behavior (Campbell, 1980; Kandel, 1978; Knoke, 1990a). Studies of peer relations and adolescents’ illegal political dispositions are scarce. The few available have concluded, on the basis of cross-sectional research designs, that peers are also similar on illegal political dispositions (Kuhn, 2004; Oswald & Schmid, 1998). Nevertheless, these studies are limited due to their cross-sectional design and give little insights into whether peers show similarities because they have influenced each other or selected similar others.

This study tested the extent to which adolescents increase in illegal political behavior by, over time, adopting similar behaviors to peers who are involved in these behaviors. That is, *to what extent does peer influence explain adolescents’ increases in illegal political behaviors?* To filter out
the potential influence of peers already involved in illegal political behavior, the analysis aimed at ruling out the impact of confounding processes. Accordingly, the model included the extent to which adolescent-peer similarities in illegal political behavior are an effect of: a) selecting similar others (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Byrne & Nelson, 1965; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954), b) having peers involved in legal political behavior (Campbell, 1980; Kandel, 1978; Knoke, 1990a), and c) the adolescent’s gender impacting on individual increase of illegal political behavior (Cameron & Nickerson, 2009; Wilson & Daly, 1985). Additionally, to understand whether the investigated processes were specific to adolescents’ illegal political behavior or not, the analysis also examined peer influence and selection on adolescents’ legal political behavior.

The model was tested by adopting a stochastic actor-based approach that can take several processes, in this case the four explanations of adolescents’ similarities in illegal political behavior, simultaneously into account. Previous studies have shown peer influence to be an important aspect of adolescents’ non-political deviant behavior (for a review, see Veenstra & Dijkstra, 2011). But, would peer influences also be found to be important in the context of alternative political outcomes such as illegal political behavior? The findings showed that the processes underlying adolescents’ increases in illegal political behavior were different from those underlying increases in legal political behavior. For legal political behavior, both selection and influence effects were present. By contrast, for illegal political behavior, adolescent-peer similarities were solely the result of peer influences. Put differently, adolescents with peers with higher values on illegal political behavior seemed to increase in illegal political behavior over time (see Figure 3). However, there were no indications of adolescents choosing the company of peers with similar values on illegal political behavior between the two measurements. The findings also show that the adolescents increased in illegal political behavior if they had peers involved in legal political behavior.

Gender, the third confounding factor, did not prove to be important for adolescents’ increases in illegal political behavior. First, the gender of the individual adolescent did not predict an increase in illegal political behavior over time. This meant, in general, that boys were not more inclined to increase in illegal political behavior than girls. Second, the gender of the peers in the company of the adolescent did not impact on adolescents’ increases in illegal political behavior over time. In sum,
neither the gender of the adolescent nor the genders of the peers in the company of the adolescent helped to clarify why adolescents increase in illegal political behavior over time.

Summing up, when examining the role of peers for increases in illegal political behavior, the findings support the idea that adolescents adopt these means of political influence from peers who are already involved. This finding remained after controlling for selection effects, legal political peer influences on political behavior, and gender effects. Consequently, the influence of peers involved in illegal activism seems partially to explain adolescents’ escalations in illegal political behavior. Nevertheless, adolescents did not seek out peers with similar dispositions for illegal political behavior. Accordingly, the results of this study suggested that adolescents’ illegal political behaviors are the products of socialization rather than selection.
Wave 2

Figure 3. A subsample of an adolescent-peer network demonstrating the dynamics of peer relations and changes in illegal political activity over time

Note: The circles are called nodes and equate to individuals in the sample. The lines are ties between individuals in the sample. Ties can be non-existent, or uni-, or bi-directional. The size of the nodes equates to level of illegal political activity – the bigger the node, the more involvement in illegal political activity. The colors appearing at Wave 2 are interpreted as follows: White (A) – no change in illegal political activity between the two measurements; Light grey (B) – small positive change, e.g., more illegal political activity by Wave 2; and Black (C) – large positive change, e.g., from none to the maximum level of illegal political activity in the two waves.
V Discussion

Overall questions and main findings

In principal, research in the field of political socialization has understood system-challenging and noncompliant norms and practices, such as illegal political activity either, as failed socialization (Easton & Dennis, 1969) or as the outcomes of a deviant process of political identity development (Kuhn, 2004). This tentative conclusion is likely to be a result of the bias in political socialization research toward studying transmissions of political values and practices believed to be in harmony with the present democratic regime (e.g., Almond & Verba, 1963; Easton, 1965). Although eager to understand better the transmission of attitudes compliant with system stability, early studies in the field of political socialization seldom took the opportunity to examine the learning of what were regarded as system-challenging and disobedient political practices among adolescents. Later on, scholars have taken more interest in how adolescents become involved in illegal political activism (e.g., Enosh, 2010, Gavray et al., 2012; Watts, 1999). Nevertheless, studies examining how illegal political activity emerges in adolescence are scarce and collective knowledge on young people’s involvement in illegal political activity poor.

Acknowledging these shortcomings in the field, it was the aim of this dissertation to remedy some of the limitations of research and to enhance understanding of alternative outcomes of political socialization. Two theoretical perspectives were used in this quest: the political dissatisfaction explanation, and the political network explanation. While the former uses adolescents’ perceptions of the political system as guidance, the latter depends on the structure of adolescents’ social relations. These two theoretical approaches rely on fairly distinctive assumptions and are better understood as complements to each other rather than opposites. To accomplish the aim of this dissertation, three overarching questions were asked:

1. Who are the adolescents involved in illegal political activity?

2. Why do adolescents use illegal political activities?

3. What are the roles of parents and peers in adolescents’ illegal political activity?
The four studies comprising this dissertation were the empirical examinations designed to address the questions above. Both the theoretical perspectives guiding understanding of illegal political activity in this dissertation gained support from the findings of these studies.

So, who were these adolescents? The findings of the studies showed that boys were more involved in illegal political activity than girls. With regard to age, none of the studies confirmed substantial differences in illegal political activity that could be traced back to adolescents’ age. Noted should be, however, adolescents around 16 years of age were found to realize positive attitudes toward illegal political means into behavior to a greater extent than younger adolescents. Hence, when under examination, attitudes toward law-breaking political activity, such as the ones described in Table 1 in the introduction, were not always found to be realized in actual illegal political activity. On the topic of attitudes for law-breaking political activity, a readiness to accept violence in law-breaking political activity was also one of the signifying characteristics of adolescents involved in illegal political activity. A factor that did not come out as a defining characteristic was socio-economic status. When under examination, adolescents in illegal political activity could not be portrayed as belonging to a specific socio-economic group. Altogether, boys were overrepresented among adolescents in illegal political activity. However, from the studies comprising this thesis it was harder to conclude anything substantial about how age and socio-economic status would help to characterize adolescents in illegal political activity.

But why were they involved in illegal political activities? The studies showed that adolescents in illegal political activity share certain core characteristics of political involvement with their legally oriented counterparts. Both Study I and II reported adolescents involved in illegal political activity as interested in politics. And, in addition, Study I also showed that adolescents in illegal political activity felt politically efficacious. They believed in their abilities to get involved in politics and had goals for their political engagement. Furthermore, it seemed that adolescents moving beyond the legal limits in their political activism were expressing authority-challenging and norm-breaking tendencies. And, they voiced such authority-challenging attitudes irrespective of if dealing with the political system, the school, or their parents. Most likely, authority challenging and norm-breaking attitudes can help to explain why adolescents come to use illegal political means.
In accordance with the political dissatisfaction explanation, Study II showed that dissatisfaction with the political system may underlie why adolescents come to use illegal political means. With one of the three indicators of political dissatisfaction predicting adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity over time, these results are partially in line with the political dissatisfaction explanation. In addition, Study II also showed that prior involvement in both legal and illegal political activity helped to explain why the adolescents became involved in illegal political activity. Together, these findings show that the adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity express some kind of discontent and negative attitude toward authority. This perceived discontent is sometimes, but not always, linked to underlying political grievances. All this means that adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity seems to rest on both political and non-political foundations.

Moving further, the findings of Study III show that adolescents’ perceptions of how they are treated by their parents, with regard to influence and participation in family decisions, may explain involvement in illegal political activity. Involvement in illegal political activity was found more likely among adolescents perceiving their parents as controlling and undemocratic. The suggested theoretical reason for this finding was that adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity might be a reaction to how adolescents perceived they were treated in the family. These findings point toward an understanding where adolescents’ illegal political activity is seen as a reaction against a non-legitimized authority, although this time not political but parental. In similar vein, the analysis in Study I reported that, compared with non-active and adolescents involved in legal political activity, adolescents in illegal political activity perceived the relation to their parents more in authority-challenging terms. In sum, reactions against perceived unfair conditions might be triggers behind adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity.

Just like Study II, Study IV showed the importance of prior involvement in political activity for an increase in adolescents’ illegal political activity. Both legal and illegal political activity seem to underlie adolescents’ subsequent involvement in illegal political activity. The main finding of Study IV, however, was that adolescents become involved in illegal political activity because of the influence of peers already involved in political activity. In contrast to perceptions of the political system or the family decision-making procedure, peer influence as an explanation for adolescents’ in-
Involvement in illegal political activity goes beyond individual perceptions and acknowledges how the structure of the political network impacts on adolescents’ choice of political action. This was a clear indication of support for the political network as an explanation for adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity.

Taken together, the studies comprising this dissertation provide empirical insights into the questions of who the adolescents involved in illegal political activity are, why they become involved, and what roles parents and peers play for their involvement. It seems that the adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity is expressions set of as a reactions to unjust and non-legitimized treatment by either political, educational, or parental authorities, and that peers already involved in illegal political activities have a crucial role to play in influencing adolescents to become involved in these practices too.

The findings and previous research

The findings of the studies comprising this dissertation were somewhat consistent with those derived from the theoretical perspectives of previous research on illegal political activity. In addition, some of the findings also extended previous knowledge of adolescents’ illegal political activity in certain critical respects.

Table 4 reports on the main assumptions of previous research and how this dissertation has addressed them. First, all the three studies in this dissertation where gender differences were examined reported differences between adolescent boys and girls with regard to involvement in illegal political activity. Together, all evidence points toward an understanding where boys are more likely to use illegal political means than girls. This is in line with the suggestions of previous research in the field (e.g., Enosh, 2010; Gavray et al., 2012; Oswald & Schmid, 1998). Nevertheless, when examining attitude-behavior congruency, the findings extend current knowledge on illegal political activity. When comparing boys and girls on the extent to which a readiness to use illegal political means was associated with actual illegal political activity, no gender differences were found. That is, if adolescents consider the option of getting involved in illegal political activity, their gender is of little importance for whether or not such a readiness is associated with actual behavior. This suggests that for these activities, the way an intention to participate associates with behavior is gender-independent. Therefore, as well as studying why illegal politi-
Adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity seems to be a male-dominated phenomenon, a second potential line of inquiry for upcoming research is to further investigate the extent to which attitude-behavior congruencies in adolescents’ illegal political activity are gender-neutral.
**Adolescents’ Illegal Political Activity – Comparing Previous Assumptions with the Findings of This Dissertation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous assumptions</th>
<th>This dissertation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Preference of adolescent males (Cameron &amp; Nickerson, 2009; Gavray et al., 2012)</td>
<td>• Boys still appear to be more inclined. However, the way a readiness to use illegal political activity associates with actual involvement in illegal political activity seems gender-independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Age-dependent (Watts, 1999)</td>
<td>• Partly age-dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Related to parent-adolescent conflicts and an undemocratic rearing style (Kuhn, 2004; Schmid, 2012)</td>
<td>• Seems related to a controlling and undemocratic rearing style. However, the underlying reason is different between early and middle adolescents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussions in peer groups may foster involvement in illegal political activity (McDevitt &amp; Kiousis, 2007)</td>
<td>• No direct evidence for peer group discussions fostering illegal political activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adolescents are similar to their peers in illegal political activity (Kuhn, 2004; Oswald &amp; Schmid, 1998)</td>
<td>• Adolescents are similar to their peers in illegal political activity. In addition, it seems that adolescents initiate relations with peers with similar legal political activity and not with peers with similar illegal political activity. By contrast, adolescents tend to endorse the style of political activity of peers involved in both legal and illegal political activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to gender-related concerns, Watts (1999) claimed that illegal political activity would be age-dependent. With only one of the studies reporting findings that pointed toward an understanding of adolescents’ illegal political activity as age-dependent, the findings in this dissertation did not help much to verify such a claim. It should be noted that the studies in this dissertation used at maximum two points of measurement when examining age-related patterns. Nevertheless, because the current studies primarily used reports of actual political activity and not attitudes or behavioral intentions, as has been the case in most previous research, the findings in this dissertation extend previous knowledge about illegal political activity in adolescence. Forthcoming research with the capacity to survey several time points, including both adolescence and young adulthood, has the potential to address in greater detail the delicacies of age-related developments in illegal political activity.

One of the theoretical perspectives of this dissertation, the political dissatisfaction explanation, states that people’s dissatisfaction with the political system is the reason why people come to use illegal political means (Kinder & Sears, 1985; Muller, 1972; Tyler, 2006). The results of the second study indicate that adolescents’ political dissatisfaction, in the form of a lack of perceived system responsiveness, generates more involvement in illegal political activity over time. This is in accordance with prior research in the field which suggests that, when people feel there is no point in voicing their needs because no improvements will be seen, such feelings are commonly expressed in the shape of illegal political activity (Harrebye & Ejrnæs, 2013).

Moving to issues related to parental influence on adolescents’ illegal political activity, research in the field of political socialization has shown that adolescents from families with more parent-adolescent conflicts and an undemocratic parenting style are more likely to consider using illegal political means (Kuhn, 2004; Schmid, 2012). The findings in this dissertation are similar, but also indicated, more specifically, that different family concerns are present between younger and older adolescents. Whereas the younger adolescents involved in illegal political activity kept secrets from their parents, the older adolescents involved in illegal political activity tended to feel alienated from the family decision-making process. Although prior research has repeatedly shown the family to be an important socialization agent for adolescents’ political development (Flanagan, et al., 1998; 2005), there has been a lack of theoretical understanding of the role
played by parents in adolescents’ illegal political activism. Study III showed that involvement in illegal political activity may be a reaction to a perceived non-legitimate and negative family environment. As such, the study further established the link between a negative family environment and adolescents’ readiness to use illegal political means while, at the same time, providing a theoretical explanation for the mechanism underlying this connection, something that has been lacking in previous research.

Previous research has also noted the importance of peers for adolescents’ illegal political orientations (Kuhn, 2004; Oswald & Schmid, 1998). In line with these findings, this dissertation found similar indications in one out of two of the studies where the peer context was included. In Study II, after controlling for several other factors, there were no indications that peers were particularly important for adolescents’ increases in illegal political activity. A within-time correlation was present for peer discussions about politics and illegal political activity. However, when in the model analyzing subsequent illegal political activity, political discussions with peers did not come out as a significant predictor. Hence, such discussions seemed not to help in explaining subsequently increases in adolescents’ illegal political activity. Study II gave no support for such a claim.

By contrast, when employing a social network approach, analyzing adolescents’ illegal political activity in a stochastic actor-based model, the importance of peers for adolescents’ political identity development was not only confirmed but also extended. Where previous research has come as far as to establish adolescent-peer similarities in various political orientations (e.g., Campbell, 1980; Kandel, 1978; Knoke, 1990), the findings of Study IV not only confirmed but also furthered these claims. More specifically, prior studies have reported similarities in illegal political activity between adolescents and their peers (Kuhn, 2004; Oswald & Schmid, 1998). Study IV, on the other hand, investigated the particular processes, e.g., peer influence and peer selection, that underlie such similarities. In the end, the analyses showed that peer influence seems to be more important than peer selection when comparing the processes underlying adolescent-peer similarities in illegal political activity.

Comparing the results of Study II and Study IV suggests that there are inconsistencies in the findings with regard to whether peers will influence adolescents to become more involved in illegal political activity. A closer look, however, shows that the two studies examined rather different peer
influence processes. Whereas Study II examined if general communication about politics among peers would foster illegal political activity on the part of the adolescents (McDevitt & Kiousis, 2007), Study IV examined whether adolescents with peers who were already involved in illegal political activity would increase in illegal political activity too. In short, for adolescent to acquire preferences for illegal political activity as a consequence of peer interactions and influences, such influences most likely require an established adolescent-peer relation. The likely explanation for the inconsistent findings is therefore that the two studies examined different processes: Whereas Study II examined communication processes about politics among peers in general, Study IV examined peer communication in established adolescent-peers relations.

**Political socialization, learning, and identity development**

Partaking in illegal political activities can be understood in several ways. The most obvious characteristic of these political means is that they oppose, by nature, at least some parts of the democratically enforced society founded in the rule of law. It has been the objective of this dissertation to empirically investigate what might characterize the adolescents involved in these political activities, why they do it, and the role of significant others for their involvement. Political actions such as animal liberation, illegal blockades, and illegal political graffiti are all examples of this style of political influence tactic. Given the rejection of the democratically enforced rule of law, a basic understanding of these political tactics might therefore be one that suggests that illegal political activity is problematic from a democratic and societal point of view; regardless of the underlying reason, these political activities are a burden and concern for democratic societies. Likewise, such an interpretation suggests that these political means are outcomes that are the opposites of political socialization. That is, illegal political activity is always a democracy-hostile behavior. However, we do not need to look far to find examples of illegal political events where the actor had no intention other than to verify and improve the democratic regime and its values (Martin Luther King, Thoreau, Rosa Parks, and so on). There is a flourishing scholarly debate about the place of civil disobedience in democratic societies (e.g., Dworkin, 1985; Habermas, 1985; Rawls, 1969; Thoreau, 1903). In comparison with other modes of illegal political activity, promoters of civil disobedience would argue that, due to
the inherent democratic value compass associated with this specific mode of illegal political activity, this one is superior to its counterparts.

Applying the separation of political learning and political socialization by Conover (1991) to acts of civil disobedience, despite their somewhat controversial character, it might be argued that moral justification of these actions is socialized by society. This is because civil disobedience is a political tactic that wishes for the political system to persist, for the democratic regime to be tested and – at least on the view of the activists – strengthened. Using the same logic, it might be deduced that other forms of illegal political activity are definitely learned, but not by default socialized. Put differently, to reject democratically established decisions using law-breaking political acts may be the result of an ultimate rejection of democracy. On the other hand, activists may, “contrary to their image […] prove themselves to actually be the true patriotic champions of a constitution that is dynamically understood as an ongoing project – the project to exhaust and implement basic rights in changing historical contexts” (Habermas, 2004, p. 9). From a macro-political point of view, understanding of transmissions of norms in favor of illegal political activity boils down to whether illegal political actions come about alongside an underlying morality that promotes the democratic constitution, or not. Thus, with Conover’s (1991) understanding, in cases where activists with a democratic constitutional compass embrace such means, they would be considered a result of political socialization. In cases where the acts are not related to democratic constitutional values, this line of thinking would understand such illegal political activities (i.e. not civil disobedience) as a politically learned, but not socialized, political behavior.

When contemplating on the varieties of illegal political activity it might also be that civil disobedience comprises less controversial modes of illegal political activity, and that civil disobedience does not, to the same extent as other modes of illegal political activity, involve non-political forms of norm-breaking in adolescence. Thus, although a separation between politically socialized and learned political behavior is not the sole way to nuance this style of political activity, to recognize that not all illegal political activities are system-challenging in a political sense is also important when understanding how these activities develop in adolescence.

The difference between civil disobedience and other illegal political actions is important from a political socialization perspective. But, as well as the macro-level perspective and the system supportive/challenging nature
of illegal political activity, a micro-level understanding of adolescents’ individual identity development should not be forgotten. Not all political socialization can be said to be progressive for all adolescents’ political identity development. In patriarchal democracies, for instance, female adolescents, and male too for that matter, are socialized into value compositions and ways of acting that can hamper their development of a political identity. Similarly, illegal political activity can be discussed from an individual political–identity development perspective. On the one hand, for instance throughout this dissertation, one of the theoretical perspectives has understood adolescents’ illegal political actions as expressions of dissatisfaction with the political system (Easton, 1965; Muller, 1972). A not too bold way of understanding the relation among these factors is that they reinforce each other; when lack of support for the political system underlies involvement in illegal political activity it is likely that perceptions of political inefficacy and dissatisfaction will increase with the attempts made to exert political influence using illegal political means (Muller, 1979). Nevertheless, another view upon illegal political activity is that this form of political activity promotes regime legitimacy and self-realization. The idea is that these actions channel expressions of political interests that would otherwise be unheard. Instead of reinforcing perceptions of the system as nonresponsive, involvement in these actions might actually develop a sense of ability to exert influence on the political system (Finkel, 1987; Thompson, 1970). Hence, from a political socialization or political learning perspective, illegal political activity may also be a way for adolescents to develop their individual political identity.

**Alternative, not deviant?**

Using Kuhn’s (2004) understanding of illegal political activity, adolescents’ involvement in this style of political tactics is the result of a deviant process of political identity development. This is because illegal political activism entails a refusal to accept the legitimacy of either a) a particular political system output, or b) the values and institutions constituting the regime on a whole. Adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity clashes with the socialization of democratic values and principles. Similarly, Conover (1991) went as far as to say that, if obstructive to the values of the current political regime, the transmission of political material is by default not political socialization. This functionalistic way of understanding takes us further in seeking to understand adolescents’ illegal political
activity. However, the legal nature of adolescents’ political activity should probably not be the deciding aspect of whether adolescents’ political identity development is in line with a democratic value compass, or not. Some of the results in the studies comprising this dissertation, together with Finkel’s (1987) argument that illegal political activity can foster legitimacy and self-realization, argue for a more nuanced understanding of the processes underlying adolescents’ development of illegal political activity. It is important to note that what might be urgently needed for a democratic regime to prevail is not necessarily the same as that which underlies a positive political identity development for the individual adolescent. The combination of a transmission of system-challenging values and behaviors with an understanding of the involvement as self-realizing and support-building for the individual adolescent suggests that illegal political activity shall be better understood, not as the outcome of a deviant process of individual political identity development, but as an alternative process.

**Limitations and strengths**

This dissertation has a number of limitations that requires additional consideration. First, throughout this dissertation very different modes of illegal political activity are treated equally. That is, the measure of illegal political activity comprises, for example, both acts of civil disobedience and more violent political activities. Hence, there was no conceptual distinction made between various modes of illegal political activity. And, even if both civil disobedience and political violence are political activities beyond the borders of legality, the processes underlying involvement in the two may work very differently. Future research should therefore keep in mind that diverse mechanisms may underlie different illegal political activities.

Second, generally, political participation is often considered valuable in today’s societies. In accord with such social pressure, people tend to overreport their involvement in political behavior (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina & Jenkins, 2002; Persson & Solevid, 2013). However, just as in research on other more delicate social issues, for illegal political activities, respondents may be unwilling to answer questions about their involvement truthfully. In particular, activists may be disposed to hide their involvement in illegal political actions. If so, the validity of the results could be affected. When comparing the data on illegal political activity with legal political activity, levels of missing data were roughly at the same level throughout the studies and across the two cohorts sampled. Although the
similarity in the pattern of missing data is a step in the right direction in terms of validity, it does not suffice. Next to those who were not present to fill in the questionnaire, it is therefore important to remember that some adolescents may have modified the picture of themselves.

Third, the single studies comprising this dissertation used data from at most two points of measurement in time. Such over time examinations can indicate, for instance, why adolescents’ illegal political activity increases. However, this procedure can only examine a linear pattern and a certain level of caution is required if eager to generalize these results further. In short, the results should be viewed as indications of how, for instance, political dissatisfaction can lead to involvement in illegal political activity.

Besides these limitations, several strengths also come through from the studies comprising this dissertation. First, the data used constituted large samples with high participation rates and three out of the four studies employed over time analyses. Such data offered the opportunity to investigate processes over time which, for instance, provided indications of direction of effects. In addition, the large samples gave strong statistical power which, in turn, made possible complex model assessments.

Second, most studies in the field of political participation have studied attitudinal dispositions to illegal political activity. However, a readiness to use illegal political means does not necessarily mean that such an intention will be realized in behavior. For instance, Barnes and Kaase (1979) argued that the more unconventional the political action, the lower will be the attitude–behavior congruency. Thus, to study adolescents’ behavioral intentions may be misleading if the research interest is in adolescents’ illegal political activities. The four studies in this dissertation therefore used reports of adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity, and thereby examined all models on the basis of actual political manifestations. By way of this procedure, the results will hopefully give a more adequate depiction of adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity than that obtained using reported attitudes or intentions.

Third, this dissertation maintains a multidisciplinary dimension. Although they have a solid anchoring in the field of political science, the studies are in dialogue with adjacent sciences in their efforts to understand the mechanisms behind adolescents’ illegal political activity. As such, the answers to the questions about adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activism may also speak, theoretically and empirically, to other fields.
More importantly though, the questions raised in this dissertation have hopefully been more accurately addressed.

A fourth and final strength that should be mentioned lies in the multiple ways in which adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity were approached in the studies comprising this dissertation. The combination of examining involvement in these activities using: a) individual perceptions and preferences, and b) social structures, together with a mixture of different methods, provides new insights into adolescents’ political identity development. The knowledge provided on adolescents’ alternative political outcomes is something the field of political socialization is most likely to benefit from.

**Issues of generalizability**

To what extent is it possible to generalize the results in this dissertation to other contexts, and what are the context-specific opportunities for political activity generated by the Swedish political context? It is of course possible that the results in this dissertation do not generalize to other contexts. The particulars of Swedish democracy; the strong welfare state, low levels of corruption, and the vibrant civil society, may generate context-specific answers to the prevalence of adolescents’ illegal political activity.

In addition, also the institutional setting impacts on how possible certain ways of partaking in the political process are. Governments differ in their openness to, and eagerness for, citizens voicing their demands and critiques through protests and the like. An example of a harsher way of dealing with unwanted political protests is the draft legislation bill against unauthorized public protest recently presented by the Spanish government (The Guardian, 2013). However, when people have less fear of reprisal, chances are that the step to involvement in protest activities is higher (Dalton, et al., 2009). Research reports high levels of extra-parliamentary political activity in Sweden (Harrebye & Ejrnæs, 2013; Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002), but these numbers are calculated for adults and may not equate with picture of illegal political activity in adolescence. When compared with adolescents in twenty-eight countries on their intentions to partake in illegal political activities as adults, Swedish 14 year-olds reported similar shares of positive answers (graffiti: 12%, traffic blockades: 9%, and occupying buildings: 10%) as their Nordic neighbors. However, in comparison with the top-ranking countries in the study, Swedish adolescents reported much lower shares of positive responses (e.g., graffiti: Cy-
prus = 37%; Chile = 31%; Greece = 30%; traffic blockades: Greece = 42%; Cyprus = 28%; Belgium (French) = 23%; and occupying buildings: Greece = 41%; Cyprus = 28%; Italy = 24%) (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). These figures indicate that the levels of involvement in illegal political activity in adolescence differ across context. Adolescents in Sweden may develop inclinations for illegal political activity for different reasons, and in different scope, than adolescents in other contexts. Nevertheless, it is likely that some theoretical mechanisms are less context dependent, and, as such, are more likely to be generalized to adolescents in other political contexts.

Noted should also be that the data comprising the studies in this dissertation are not collected as a random national sample, but as a strategically collected, regional sample. This could raise concerns about generalizability of the results. However, at the time of data collection, the income level, population density, and unemployment rate in the targeted community were similar to national levels. Only the proportion of young inhabitants (15–24 years) with foreign background in the city was slightly higher than the national average (24% versus 20%) (Statistics Sweden, 2012).

**Theoretical implications**

The results presented in this dissertation are important because they give further insights into the mechanisms of and socialization into an often neglected mode of political participation. One of the more important implications of the findings is that an understudied research objective now has received answers to some fundamental questions. By addressing some of the disputes of prior scholars, the pictures of the “who”, “why”, and “from whom” of adolescents’ illegal political activity have been further clarified.

From a political participation perspective, this dissertation acknowledges a view of illegal political activity as something distinct and separate from other modes of political activity. Some scholars hold that illegal political action is a means of political influence that transcends traditional modes of political action, which may have to do with the amount of time, effort, and expense that activists involved in illegal political activity have to put in (e.g., Bean, 1991; Wolfsfeld et al., 1994). The studies in this dissertation paint a similar picture of adolescents’ illegal political activity, suggesting that the point of departure for understanding this mode of po-
Another important implication is that the adolescents involved in illegal political activity seem to be a heterogeneous group. They seem to challenge authority, irrespective of the context of their life. This authority-challenging nature would probably capture many of those involved in illegal political activity. Also other factors seem to go hand in hand with an involvement in illegal political activity. For one thing, adolescents in illegal political activity seem generally to be interested in politics. Political interest comes out as a rather strong predictor. It should be noted, of course, that in Study III, adolescents with positive attitudes toward law-breaking political activity could not be separated on their level of political interest from other adolescents. This is not a finding that goes against the importance of political interest for adolescents involved in illegal political activity; it states only that adolescents approving of illegal political means are not less politically interested than those who would not break the law to try to influence politics. Next to political interest, these young activists seemed to have also other resources important for involvement in political activity. For instance, they seem confident in their abilities to partake in the political process and they report experiences of also legal political activism. Consequently then, to portray adolescents involved in illegal political activity solely as young people with authority-challenging attitudes is most likely an oversimplification. This group should be more versatile than that.

Despite the illegal style in which some adolescents engage in politics, an important aspect to observe is that the individuals comprising this group are a force in society; for some reason, they transform their acquired political information into action. Compared with instances where adolescents are demarcated as apathetic and uninterested in politics, the findings show that the adolescents involved in illegal political activity actively seek to attain recognition and attention in society and the political system (Harris, Wyn & Younes, 2010). Although often patronized, disapproved of (White, 2007) and condemned (Wolfsfeld et al., 1994) by many citizens in democratic societies, for the individual adolescents involved in these actions, their involvement in illegal political activity may equate with a positive individual political identity development.

In short, the findings of this dissertation highlight the importance of understanding of alternative outcomes of adolescents’ political socializa-
tion, such as illegal political activity. The political socialization of adolescents does not only concern those of us who are interested and involved in party politics, or those who develop public policy. How the young citizens in our democratic societies develop their political identities is a concern for us all (Youniss et al., 2002).

**Future directions**

The studies in this dissertation both confirm prior claims and extend some of the assumptions made in previous research in the field. For instance, one of the threads to follow up on from the findings revealed in this dissertation is the suggestion that adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity is very much the effect of important peer relations. One of the potential reasons why adolescents’ illegal political activity seems to be the result of peer influence and not peer selection may lie in the nature of these political actions. The theory of collective action, for instance, holds that what is important are activists’ perceptions of the costs and benefits associated with the actions in question (Wolfsfeld et al., 1994). The choice of adolescents involved in illegal political activity not to seek out like-minded peers might serve as an example of activists weighing their choice of political involvement very carefully. If adolescents involved in illegal political activity seek out other peers also involved in these activities, they would inevitably be forced to communicate their involvement. Adolescents involved in illegal political activity befriending likeminded peers may therefore be less likely to occur, because the risk of public condemnation (della Porta & Diani, 1999) is greater for illegal than for legal political action. For certain individuals, being less subject to social selection and more susceptible to influence have also been found elsewhere (de Klepper, Sleebos, Van de Bunt, & Agneessens, 2010). So, the extent to which peer influence trumps peer selection in adolescents’ development of illegal political activity is a task for forthcoming research. Needless to say, the existence of only a few studies that have investigated the whereabouts of adolescents’ illegal political activity demonstrates the need for further investigations before reaching any more substantive conclusions.

Another way to proceed further is to parallel the studies in this dissertation with examinations of processes and explanations concerning adolescents’ illegal political activity using experimental and qualitative research designs. Since the conclusions reached in this dissertation are the results of merely quantitative research, triangulation is likely to be needed to be able
Conclusions and final remarks

In sum, the findings in this dissertation show that adolescents involved in illegal political activity are likely to express negative and challenging attitudes toward authorities. This rejection of authority seems to some extent, but not necessarily, the consequence of underlying political grievances. Sometimes, the connection to the political context is less clear. However, it seems fair to conclude that the style of illegal political activity is in adolescence to be understood as associated with reactions against a non-legitimate authority, may it be political, educational, or parental. The overrepresentation of boys, and also the seemingly addictive feature of prior political involvement are additional issues that deserve attention when summing up this phenomenon.

So, why do adolescents start using illegal political means? Well, there are indications that political dissatisfaction is a factor that may explain why adolescents come to use illegal political means. What really proves to have relevance to involvement in illegal political activity, however, is the adolescent social network and its structure. This claim has importance for theoretical understanding of adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity. It is evident that the political dissatisfaction explanation and the political network explanation are interdependent. Nevertheless, the primacy of structural conditions and connections over individual perceptions shows how adolescents’ interpersonal networks, just like individual perceptions, shape the choice of political action. The structural analysis of adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity can also reveal from where individual’s perceptions of political objects and structures stem (Knoke, 1990b). In sum, this dissertation gives somewhat stronger support to the importance of structural connections for adolescents’ involvement in illegal political activity.
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