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V. V. BaliutaPostgraduate Student
Institute for Social and Political Psychology
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FACTOR INFLAMING YOUTH RADICAL POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR**

The author of the article gives the results of an experimental study of the illusion of understanding as a psychological factor inflaming radical political behaviour of young people. The methodical basis of the organization and the necessary conditions for conducting such kind of research are given. The author emphasizes the need to study factors of radicalization of young people's political behaviour, especially in current conditions. Based on the research results the prospects for further studies are determined.

Key words: political behaviour, radicalization, youth, depth of knowledge, attitudes, illusion of problem understanding.

Introduction. In times of social tension in society revealing of radical political behaviour becomes a self-evident fact. It turns double as evident among young people. Youth itself is a large social group with all specific social and psychological features peculiar to any other large social group as well as those which are unique only for this group. It becomes an evident fact that quite often young people are not skilled enough to resolve lots of conflicts and break out of numerous conflict situations due to their inability to restrain themselves. But on the other hand young people seek for different opportunities to claim about their rights.

A show of radical political behaviour may be determined by youth's demonstration of indifference to the problems facing Ukrainian society. The motivation to behave radically is most often inflamed by imaginary knowledge of these problems essence, so that radical political behaviour of young people is triggered just by illusion of understanding.

Analysis of recent studies and publications.

The problem of radicalization of youth political behaviour studying has always been acute. Researchers from different spheres are engaged into these studies, of whom T. Gurr, C. Sunstein, P. Fernbach, A. Ratinov, A. Oselkov, J. Dominick, R. Firat, M. Kroz and many other researchers studying not only politically radical behaviour but also its underlying reasons and prerequisites for its formation as well as its revealing.

R. Rozenblit and F. Keil's in their studies have concluded that most often people are too confident, even overconfident in how deep they understand those problems they think they do [5]. On the other

hand, those judgements are not steady and tend to be changed after young people find more convincing arguments in support of some other idea or ex cathedra opinion [3; 4]. So that as we see, radical political behaviour may be provoked and triggered by imaginary confidence in one's knowledge and illusion of important political issues understanding. Hence in many cases those young people who are radically oriented and demonstrate aggressive political behaviour are simply emotionally affected and do not perceive situation critically.

In this article we are **aimed at** studying and analysing how illusion of knowledge affects radicalization of young people's political behaviour and how we can use that knowledge for programmes for de-radicalization elaboration.

The main material presentation. Based on the results of our theoretical study and the aim of the paper we hypothesized that argumentation of the reasons for one's political position can lead to even deeper confidence in its correctness, and thus increase one's commitment to it. On the contrary, the explanation of the problem essence and how it is implemented actualizes one's awareness of the lack of objective knowledge, feeling of uncertainty, and thus de-radicalize political behaviour.

In order to test our hypothesis we have developed and conducted an experimental research.

Among young people whose political behaviour is characterized as radical there are many young people who are convinced that they understand the essence of the problem triggered the revealing of their radical political behaviour much better than they really do [3; 5; 2]. In other words, we experimentally

test if the request to explain the essence of the problem in response to which (s)he start acting radically leads to realizing how little about a particular situation (s)he knows. In turn it leads to doubts in one's position and hence the level of radicalism of political behaviour decreases.

74 participants aged from 18 to 35 years old were engaged in this experiment, of whom 38 participants formed the experimental group (23 men and 15 women; young people from the experimental group were tested in advance in order to reveal their predisposition to show patterns of radical political behaviour. Participants from this group were those young men and women who were prone to show politically radical behaviour), and another 36 participants formed the control group (18 men and 18 women) aged from 18 to 35 years old as well. Among them there were students of higher educational establishments, employees of commercial enterprises and state institutions, as well as temporarily unemployed young people. The topic for mechanistic explanation was formulated as "Distrust in state authorities". This issue was chosen as the one to discuss as it was quite contested and controversial at the time the experiment was being conducted.

Before our experiment started all its participants were asked about their political behaviour and ways they used to resolve the above-mentioned problem. The same testing was done after experiment in order to identify and compare changes which appeared after mechanistic explanation providing. So that participants' answers were recorded twice – before and after experiment.

We compared all the necessary data within subjects (between pre-testing and post-testing).

Firstly, we checked whether mechanistic explanation influenced participants' attitude to the issue they gave their explanation for. The results that we obtained showed that there was statistically significant change of answers before and after formulating mechanistic explanation of those young people who took part in the experimental group (Wilcoxon T-test, $p \leq 0,05$). Many participants in their post-testing answers noted that they were not absolutely sure that suggested issue was an actual problem. Most of their answers changed from "completely agree" or "completely disagrees" to "rather agree" or "rather disagree". Young people noted that they needed more information about the suggested issue in order to give some exact answer.

The answers in the control group of participants were almost the same in their post-experimental testing as they were in the experimental group. In this group the difference between two situations of testing was not statistically significant (Wilcoxon T-test, $p \geq 0,05$). As well as for the experimental group, the most common thing for the control group of participants was that the variants of their responses

were changed from the polar to the averaged ones. The main difference between the experimental and the control groups lies in the number of averaged post-testing answers (the number of them was bigger in the control group).

So our results prove that our hypothesis was right. Illusion of understanding makes young people think in extreme categories and that in turn determines their attitude towards different situations, issues, problems including political ones, so that we can consider this fact as the first step of radicalization of youth political behaviour. Providing mechanistic explanation of some political issue may cause two possible options:

1) either young person realizes that s(he) knows not as much as s(he) thinks s(he) does;

2) or young person becomes aware that that his/her assessment of the situation was determined by some subjective emotional ground.

But neither first, nor second option is enough to make the final decision to act radically.

Second, we analyse our judgement about the effect of illusion of understanding on political behaviour of young people. To study that, participants of the experiment were suggested to answer how they would resolve the above-mentioned political problem through their political behaviour. According to the results of Wilcoxon T-test, there were statistically significant changes between young people's answers before and after giving mechanistic explanation in the experimental group of participants ($p \leq 0,05$). On the basis of results of another statistical instrument and exactly the Mann-Whitney U-criterion (the level of significance of the coefficient $p \leq 0,05$) we found out that the experimental and control groups statistically significantly were alike in participants' answers in the post-experimental testing ($p = 0,386$). Among answers of participants from the experimental group after giving mechanistic explanation there were a lot of those which suggested to show their own activity in order to find more information about the suggested problem (for instance, "firstly I need to understand the situation and only after this you can ask me about my political behaviour"; "I cannot describe my political behaviour, because I do not know how to behave appropriately. I need more information"; "at least, I will not miss my lectures on political science at university. I will try to understand the situation better, not as how it turned out"; etc.). In other words, political activity of young people will be mainly determined by their conscious choice, rather than some emotional responses.

Participants from the control group also most often offered options of better understanding of the problem, a conscious and smart approach to what young people do, their political behaviour, etc. There also were many the same responses that they noted before and after providing mechanistic explanation.

Thus, on the basis of the results of our experiment we can argue that the effect of mechanistic

Table 1

Dynamics of activity, well-being and mood

Indicators	Experimental group		Control group	
	Pre-testing	Post-testing	Pre-testing	Post-testing
Well-being	4,8	4,4	4,7	4,8
Activity	6,1	5,7	5,4	5,1
Mood	3,8	5,3**	3,7	4,2

Legend: * – the level of significance of the coefficient $p \leq 0,05$; ** – the level of significance of the coefficient $p \leq 0,01$.

explanation of the problem essence indeed performs de-radicalizing effect. At least young people showed un in difference and their desire to understand the problem suggested for explaining. De-radicalizing effect of mechanistic explanation is partly lies in its deactivating of influence of suggestion, imitation and emotional contamination, lowering the level of conformism, and partly on the basis of intellectual processing of information, not emotional.

Next, we check the influence of mechanistic explanation on the emotional sphere of young people. For this matter we used the first block of psychological questionnaire “Well-being – Culture – Behaviour” by A. Skliaruk [1]. We hypothesized that mechanistic explanation would not affect the activity of participants from the experimental group leaving indicator the same, so that the desire for activity would remain the same, but it would affect participants’ mood increasing its indicator in post-experimental testing.

According to the results of Wilcoxon T-test, we found out that our assumption was true both for the indicators on the scale “mood” and for the indicators on the scale “activity”. In the control group there were no statistically significant differences on any of the scales (table 1).

Increase of indicators in the experimental group on the scale “mood” is an eloquent proof that participants’ mood changed qualitatively from a gloomy state to its bettering. This is extremely important when it comes to radical political behaviour, since negative mood acts as a catalyser of its actualization.

The proof of this is the choice of opposite indices in the dyads of statements (for instance, from “bad mood” to “good mood”, from “pessimistic” to “optimistic”, etc.). In our case, the betterment of mood, even despite fatigue after a tedious work during the experiment, has a connection with activity which was not changed statistically significantly, and therefore its indicator remained pretty high. Taking into account that many participants noted in their answers that they would strive their political behaviour in the direction of seeking information concerning problems for which their knowledge was insufficient, in combination with high indicators of activity and mood we have no doubts that such behaviour will be realized definitely.

Indicators in the control group statistically remained the same, though they were predominantly within the norm before the participation in this

experiment, so that the fact that these indices did not decrease and even tended to increase, although statistical insignificance, becomes an indication that in future political behaviour of these young people will not become radical, at least in relation to the problem that was introduces.

Conclusions. Based on the results we obtained, it can be concluded that the effect of mechanistic explanation of political problem essence has an obvious de-radicalizing effect on youth political behaviour. The experiment that we conducted de-radicalized actual political behaviour of participants whose political behaviour had some radical features as well as gave young people some skill for further orientation in political sphere, so that we hope this skill will be extrapolated to other spheres of life. Effect of mechanistic explanation of political issues essence is based on a comprehensive consideration of these issues, an explanation of their essence and principles of their implementation, which in some cases can lead to disorientation in a particular problem, so that it can even partly de-activate influence of other socio-psychological factors of radicalization and thus decrease the level of radical political behaviour of young people.

The prospect for our future work lies in incorporation of obtained knowledge into development of socio-psychological programme for preventing radical political behaviour of young people.

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Балюта В. В. Ілюзія розуміння як психологічний чинник радикальної політичної поведінки молоді

У статті представлено результати експериментального дослідження ілюзії розуміння як психологічного чинника радикалізації політичної поведінки молодих людей. Представлені методичні основи організації та необхідні умови проведення такого дослідження. Підкреслюється необхідність вивчення чинників радикалізації політичної поведінки молоді, особливо в сучасних умовах. Визначено перспективи подальших досліджень з огляду на отримані результати.

Ключові слова: політична поведінка, радикалізація, молодь, глибина знання, ставлення, ілюзія розуміння проблеми.

Балюта В. В. Иллюзия понимания как психологический фактор радикального политического поведения молодежи

В статье представлены результаты экспериментального исследования иллюзии понимания как психологического фактора, радикализирующего политическое поведение молодых людей. Представлены методические основы организации и необходимые условия проведения подобного исследования. Подчеркивается необходимость исследования факторов радикализации политического поведения молодежи, особенно в современных условиях. Определены перспективы дальнейших исследований, исходя из полученных результатов.

Ключевые слова: политическое поведение, радикализация, молодежь, глубина знания, отношение, иллюзия понимания проблемы.