

Political cultures of heroism

Adult Development Theory perspectives on the politics of identity in Germany and Russia

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General question:

How can ADT be applied to social and political analysis
in general, and to the analysis of political culture/
political-cultural change in particular

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Three claims:

1. The construction of heroes always arises from some kind of social need for role models, objects of identification, projection screens and positive visions.
2. The way in which heroes are and have been constructed in particular societies at particular times, is an expression of the self images, identities and value structures of the societies in question (or those of relevant groups of actors).
3. Empirical changes in concepts of heroism can thus, (to a considerable extent), be explained by structural changes in collective self images and political identities.

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Research question:

To what extent can empirical forms and practices of heroization be explained by looking at the underlying social identities and self images which, in turn, can be analyzed by structuralist tools such as the stages proposed by adult developmental psychology?

Hypothesis:

In result of social transformation and learning connected to processes of cognitive differentiation, there should be important differences in how identities and, on this basis, heroes are constructed in different contexts in different times.

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Procedure

1. Deducing ideal-types of heroes from the 3-4 most pertinent models of development: Kegan, Cook-Greuter, Kohlberg and Graves
 - Can you combine those models for analyzing heroization processes at all?
 - Alternatively, is there an overarching general way to frame the stages of heroization (for example using the MHC) or
 - do you have to create a new developmental model: stages of heroization?

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Procedure

1. Deducing ideal-types of heroes from the 3-4 most pertinent models of development: Kegan, Cook-Greuter, Kohlberg and Graves
2. Finding evidence for those ideal types in history:
 - a) Ancient Greek heroes, type B-O (→ primary?)
 - b) Greek hero, type warrior (concrete)
 - c) Sacrificial, religious hero, type D-Q (abstract)
 - d) Modern hero of science/technology/economy (formal)
 - e) Post-modern deconstruction of heroes/entrepreneurial self (systematic)

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Procedure

1. Deducing ideal-types of heroes from the 3-4 most pertinent models of development: Kegan, Cook-Greuter, Kohlberg and Graves
2. Finding evidence for those ideal types in history
3. Exploring ontogenetic types of heroes via questionnaires:
 - 3.1: questions about heroes (who, why, when?)
 - 3.2: tools to inquire into adult development (Graves, Kohlberg, Cook-Greuter)

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Results: The sample:

Age groups	13-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	over 56
N° of interviews	45 (peers)	6	2	7	10 (parents/grandparents)
Sex/gender	male		female		
N° of interviews	40		30		
Education: highest degree attained	Elementary School	High School	Matura/A- levels	Vocational training	Higher education
N° of interviews	3	8	36	4	15

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Results (1): Definitions of heroes:

- have all those **good qualities** which the respondent did not (yet) possess him/herself (physical strength, beauty, independence, autonomy, critical thinking, intelligence, courage etc.)
- people who **did something good** for the sake of others irrespective of their own needs or wishes.

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Results (2):

- a) Four (5) **ideal-types** of heroes in the data
- b) Heroes change over time, **sequence** in which ideal types were important:

1. parents and close family
2. simple fictional heroes (often with single good and/or supernatural qualities)
3. idealistic heroes of adolescence (group idols, pop stars etc.)
4. heroes/role models of the mature adult (much more differentiated)
5. (or 3,5?) No heroes at all, or: I am my own hero

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Open questions:

- How to relate data on hero images with the respondents developmental data?
- How to score properly?
- How to establish relations between the different developmental models → or alternative general model?
- Alternatives?
- ➔ How to do a professional, developmentally informed inquiry into the political culture of heroism?

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Thank you!