



Youth Political Participation and Political Attitudes

S. RAMBABU

LECUTER IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

GOVERNMENT DEGREE COLLEGE: MANDAPETA

DR.B.R. AMBEDKAR KONASEEMA DISTRICT

ABSTRACT:

A Looking at political participation behavior of young adults in contemporary Europe, this paper provides the reader with a map of different terminologies and logics that are used to discuss youth political participation. The existing literature is examined through the lens of five guiding questions: what defines youth political participation? How does youth political participation differ from adult political participation? How do young adults develop political attitudes? How does youth political participation differ across Europe? What methods are being used to analyse youth political participation? For those researching youth political participation for the first time, this paper offers a useful overview of the topic. At the same time, it gives researchers who are already well-informed the opportunity to reflect on the current state of research in this field. Finally, this paper indicates where future research is needed.

Keywords: terminologies, contradiction. comprehensive picture, Political Participation (PP).

Introduction

Looking at the political participation behavior of young adults in contemporary Europe, one is faced with a contradiction. Representatives of the disengagement paradigm within the literature underpin their argument with empirical findings, such as young adults being the least likely to vote in national elections, the drop of youth membership in political parties, and generally low levels of political interest., which are more appealing to and are used more frequently by young adults.

Both perspectives raise questions about the role of young adults in European democracies. The two mentioned positions represent the respective end points of a much more nuanced line of research on this topic. Research in this area can appear confusing, but overall it is clear that a comprehensive picture of both the degree and the modes of youth political participation is lacking. This paper tries to take a first step in the direction of addressing this problem. on the following guiding questions:

- ❖ What defines political participation?
- ❖ How does youth political participation differ from adult political participation?
- ❖ How do young adults develop political attitudes?
- ❖ How does youth political participation differ across Europe?
- ❖ What methods are being used to analyze youth political participation?

The first step is to provide a structured inventory. On the one hand, this paper will be helpful for those encountering this research area for the first time as it provides an overview of the previous research in the field of youth political participation in Europe. On the other, it offers well-informed researchers the opportunity to reflect on the current state of research in this field.

With this in mind, I develop three main arguments within this paper. First, although existing definitions of political participation are adequate to capture youth participation, the current literature is inconsistent in the inclusion of new modes of participation that are increasingly common among young adults. Second, there are both methodological and substantive problems within the existing literature, which emerge from young adults' different conceptions of politics as well as from their differing awareness to adults of what constitutes political participation.

The Development of Political Participation Repertoires and Research

Political Participation research has undergone significant developments over the course of the last few decades. Multiple disciplines have contributed to broadening our understanding of the field, but because of this multidisciplinary input it has become less clear what the underlying core assumptions and definitions are that make up the term Political Participation (PP). This section therefore sketches the development of the term and answers the core question of what defines political participation.

. The authors therefore illustrate that “*the advantage of following these decision rules is not only that we can distinguish between political acts that fit into definitions with stricter or looser requirements, but also that we can systematically exclude those who do not meet the definitional requirements*” (Theocharis and van Deth, 2018b). Based on this concept, online PP could be recognized as a form of PP. However, this example also reveals that PP cannot be defined in a simple way, which is also reflected in the existing literature. Instead, it raises the question of whether a definition such as the one by van Deth does permit the development of means for unifying the existing discussion. At the same time, such a broad and yet clearly defined definition offers the possibility of being able to classify forms newly emerging in the literature. In the course of ever-changing social situations and behaviors, this seems to be a key aspect of developing a definition of PP, which can be used over the long term.

Political Attitudes of the Youth

Just like the research on political participation, contributions to the field of political attitudes have also broadened our understanding of how political attitudes develop and how the political attitudes of young adults differ from those of adults. This section takes the different approaches to socialization and the debated inputs from other fields and focuses on development, maturation, and the stability of attitudes in order to answer how young adults develop political attitudes.

Differences in Youth Political Participation Across Europe

Having discussed the possible differences that exist between young adults and adults and the role that political socialization plays, the next step is to look at how young adults and their participation differ across Europe. This section aims to illustrate the diversity of participation of young adults, which has already been covered by existing research. Of course, this cannot be an exhaustive view of all existing studies. Instead, it offers a nuanced view into different regions of Europe and, together with the following section on methods, provides the basis for identifying the research gaps in this area. Generally, each of the EU-member states' polities offers distinct institutionalized ways of participating. In 26 of the 27 member states, citizens need to be at least 18 years old in order to be eligible to vote; Austria, with its active voting-age of 16, is the exception.

Research on Northern European countries has had a great impact on questions of association membership and its effects on political participation.

Apart from these countries, some EU-Member states, namely Greece, Spain, and Portugal, have been severely hit by the financial crisis and have also been suffering from a high degree of youth unemployment (Tosun et al., 2019), which appears to go hand in hand with decreasing institutionalized and increasing non-institutionalized forms of political participation among young adults.

Previous research thus reveals a wealth of different forms of participation among young adults in Europe. The studies focused on very different areas, from membership in associations or voting behavior to political activism, e.g., in the form of protest. Here, young adults are exposed to different contexts, as, e.g., the case of Eastern Europe with many post-communist countries shows. The results of the studies also show which new spaces young adults use for participation and that participating in “older” spaces or institutionalized forms of participation can be problematic for them.

Previously Used Methods to Study Youth Political Participation

In this final step, the focus is on how and with which methods youth political participation has been investigated so far. In the past, some authors addressed one of the central questions—namely how young adults perceive and define politics and political participation—and developed tools for assessing youth definitions of politics.

This review article pursued several goals, among which were to give an overview of the landscape of definitions of the term political participation and to work out the specific features of youth political participation. Furthermore, it aimed to shed light on the state of youth political participation in the European context and the methods previously used to investigate this, in order to be able to identify gaps in the literature and to suggest avenues for further research.

In the first step, it became clear that the decades-long debate on the definition of political participation has produced many small-scale definitions. The (few) broader definitions seem to be more helpful, even when considering that there is no independent definition of youth political participation

Another, third major shortcoming is the lack of larger cross-national studies that take into account a youth-adequate definition of political participation and conduct research on the political participation behavior of youths. This certainly results from the absence of a unified theoretical foundation for studying “European” youth political participation. This is unfortunate considering the enormous amount of data available, especially from the EU. In addition, implications for European policy research can only be made on the basis of cross-country consistent studies.

conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the definition of youth political participation is currently nothing more than general political participation. However, the question remains regarding the use of forms of political participation by young adults. Hopefully, this article will trigger other researchers to spend more time on this topic and both to resolve the mismatch between the definition of political participation and the perception of young adults regarding what is “political” and to review existing and upcoming datasets so that they can scrutinize this concept.

Funding

This article benefited from financial support by the project Change through Crisis? Solidarity and Desolidarization in Germany and Europe (Solikris; Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany), the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research and Arts and Heidelberg University.

References

Ådnanes, M. (2004). Exit and/or voice? Youth and post-communist citizenship in Bulgaria. *Political Psychol.* 25, 795–815. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00398.x

CrossRef Full Text | Google Scholar

Abramson, P. R. (1977). *The Political Socialization of Black Americans: A Critical Evaluation of Research on Efficacy and Trust*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Google Scholar

Alford, J. R., Funk, C. L., and Hibbing, J. R. (2005). Are political orientations genetically transmitted? *Am. Politic. Sci. Rev.* 99, 153–167. doi: 10.1017/S0003055405051579

CrossRef Full Text | Google Scholar

Almond, G. A., and Verba, S. (1963). *The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. New York, NY: Sage Publications. doi: 10.1515/9781400874569

CrossRef Full Text | Google Scholar

Alwin, D. F., and Krosnick, J. A. (1991). Aging, cohorts, and the stability of sociopolitical orientations over the life-span. *Am. J. Sociol.* 97, 169–195. doi: 10.1086/229744

CrossRef Full Text | Google Scholar

Andolina, M. W., Jenkins, K., Keeter, S., and Zukin, C. (2002). Searching for the meaning of youth civic engagement: notes from the field. *App. Dev. Sci.* 6,189–195. doi: 10.1207/S1532480XADS0604_5

CrossRef Full Text | Google Scholar

Arnett, J. J. (2014). *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199929382.001.0001

CrossRef Full Text | Google Scholar

Atkin, C. J., and Gantz, J. (1978). Television news and the child audience. *Public Opin. Quart.* 42,183–198. doi: 10.1086/268442

CrossRef Full Text | Google Scholar

Banks, M. H., and Roker, D. (1994). The political socialization of youth: exploring the influence of school experience. *J. Adolesc.* 17, 3–15. doi: 10.1006/jado.1994.1002

CrossRef Full Text | Google Scholar