Modes of Political Participation

Structure

I. Theoretical overview:
   • Civic decline or evolution in political activism?

II. Evidence
   1. Trends in party membership & civic activism
   2. Rise of protest and cause-oriented politics
   3. Generational patterns of activism

III. Conclusions
   • Causes & consequences of trends?

Concepts

Research on political activism compares the ways that citizens participate, the processes that lead them to do so, and the consequences of these acts.

Readings:
- Dalton Ch 3
- Norris ‘Political activism’ online chapter

Classics

Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba’s The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations (1963),
Sidney Verba and Norman Nie’s Participation in America (1972),
Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, and Jae-on Kim’s Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison (1978), and
Samuel Barnes and Max Kaase’s Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies (1979).

Newer themes

(i) Growing recognition of the importance of the institutional context of formal rules & multilevel analysis eg for electoral turnout;
(ii) Widespread erosion of party membership in established democracies;
(iii) Revived interest in voluntary associations and social trust spurred by theories of social capital; and
(iv) The expansion of diverse forms of cause-oriented forms of activism, including the spread of demonstrations and protests, consumer politics, professional interest groups, and more diffuse new social movements and transnational advocacy networks.

The civic decline thesis

- Half-empty ballot box? (Wattenberg)
- Desertion of party members? (Dalton, Mair)
- Partisan dealignment?
- Hemorrhaging union rolls?
- Emptying church pews?
- Anemic voluntary organizations? (Putnam)
- Rising political cynicism? (Nye et al)
Model of change

Figure 1: Typology of the evolution of political action

REPERTOIRES

Citizen-oriented repertoires, including voting, party work and contact activity

Cause-oriented repertoires, including consumer politics, demonstrations and petitions

Older generations

Younger generations

AGENCIES

Traditional voluntary associations, including churches, unions and political parties

New social movements and advocacy networks, including environmental and humanitarian organizations

If participation is changing...

Causes?

- Long-term processes of societal modernization?
  - Growing educational & civic skills
  - Decline of deferential loyalty to hierarchical institutions
  - Gradual ‘bottom up’ generational shift in ‘critical citizens’
- Result of changing institutions of representative democracy?
  - ‘Top down’ explanations
  - Globalization, decentralization & role of nation state
  - Growth of cross-cutting issues not accommodated by parties
  - Rational response to context of choices and channels of influence

If participation is changing...

Consequences?

1. Social inequality?
   - Greater civic skills, more demanding acts?
   - Who participates by class, income, education, gender, ethnicity
2. Quality of deliberative democracy
   - F-to-f interaction, on-going co-operation, social trust?
   - Rise of more demanding citizens?
3. For governance?
   - Stability and violence?
   - Fragmentation of policy process?

Evidence: civic activism

US Turnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Vote % VAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>75.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

US Turnout: 59.5% in 2000, 63.8% in 2004 (Vote/VAP)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1932-1996.

US Voter Turnout

US Turnout 1932-2008
(Presidential Vote/VAP)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1932-1996.
Trends official party members

Table 6.1 Phoenix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Change in Numbers</th>
<th>Change in Numbers as Percentage of Original Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France (1978-1999)</td>
<td>1.6 ± 3.48</td>
<td>-64.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy (1980-1998)</td>
<td>4.0 ± 5.61</td>
<td>-51.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway (1980-1997)</td>
<td>7.3 ± 8.04</td>
<td>-47.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Rep (1993-1999)</td>
<td>3.9 ± 3.10</td>
<td>-41.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland (1980-1998)</td>
<td>9.6 ± 6.09</td>
<td>-34.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands (1980-2000)</td>
<td>2.5 ± 1.78</td>
<td>-31.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria (1980-1999)</td>
<td>17.7 ± 10.82</td>
<td>-30.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (1980-1998)</td>
<td>5.5 ± 2.87</td>
<td>-28.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark (1980-1998)</td>
<td>5.2 ± 2.16</td>
<td>-25.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (1980-1999)</td>
<td>6.5 ± 2.42</td>
<td>-22.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (1980-1999)</td>
<td>2.9 ± 1.59</td>
<td>-8.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary (1990-1999)</td>
<td>2.1 ± 0.04</td>
<td>+5.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal (1980-2000)</td>
<td>3.9 ± 0.29</td>
<td>+17.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia (1994-2000)</td>
<td>4.1 ± 0.82</td>
<td>+29.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece (1980-1998)</td>
<td>6.8 ± 3.58</td>
<td>+166.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain (1980-2000)</td>
<td>3.4 ± 2.22</td>
<td>+250.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decline in many Western nations
Broader erosion of partisanship
Yet substantial cross-national variations

Does erosion of membership matter?
- For party in government?
- For party finance and staff?
- For party or campaign activism?

Campaign Activism, US 1952-2000

Trends in Gross Union Density

Union Density: Table 9.1

Interpretation

No simple decline in union membership across Western Europe
Substantial cross-national variations worldwide
Institutional explanations not secular trends
Secularization Trends
% Church attendance Eurobarometer 1970-2000

Interpretation?
- Evidence of secularization in W.Europe
- Development is linked to secularization
- Political implications?

Experience of Political Activism
Source: WVS mid-1990s

% "Have done"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>&quot;Have done&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss politics</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting turnout</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic activism</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signed a petition *</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended demonstrations *</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined in boycott *</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active union member</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined unofficial strike *</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active party member</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupied buildings *</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rise of Protest Politics
% "Have done" in 8 postindustrial societies: WVS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mid-1970s</th>
<th>1980s</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>mid-1990s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signed petition</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer boycott</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unofficial Strike</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupied buildings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Values Surveys

Protest & democracy

Protest & econ development

Source: WVS mid-1990s
Generational shifts?

Age differences?
- If so three possible causes:
  - Generational effects,
  - Period effects, and
  - Lifecycle effects.

European Social Survey 2002
15 European nations (22)

Type of acts

Citizen-oriented repertoires
- Voted
- Contacted a politician or official
- Donated money to political organization
- Party member
- Worked for a political party

Cause-oriented repertoires
- Bought products for political reasons
- Signed a petition
- Boycotted certain products
- Lawfully demonstrated
- Took part in illegal protest

Age profile of activists

Cohort | Young | Middle-aged | Older | Age Gap
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
18-29 | 72 | 50 | 79 | 84
30-59 | 16 | 12 | 19 | 14
60+ | 879 | 8 | -1

Citizen-oriented acts

Major Region
- Nordic Europe
- Northern Europe
- Mediterranean Europe
- Postcommunist Europe

Cohort
- Causes weighted by DWSIGHT
Mean age of activists

Note: Whether the respondent did these acts during the previous 12-months
Source: The European Social Survey, 2002

Cause–oriented acts

Note: Whether the respondent did these acts during the previous 12-months
Source: The European Social Survey, 2002

Age of members

Conclusions

- From the politics of loyalties to the politics of choice?
  - Citizen oriented action peak in middle age
  - Cause-oriented acts most common among young people
  - Associations: Mixed pattern
  - Young people not more engaged in new social movements