

CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION ACROSS GENDER AND AGE A QUANTITATIVE STUDY ON A SAMPLE OF ITALIAN YOUNG PEOPLE

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pidop

Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation



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Civic and political participation among young people

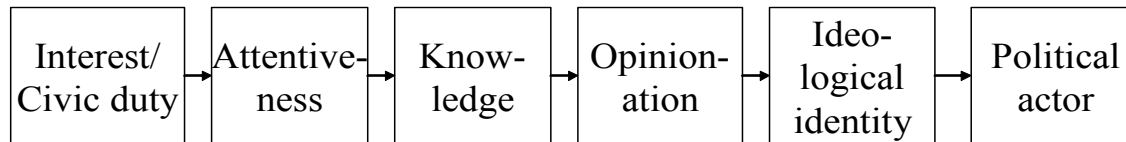
The general aims of the project are:

- a) to examine the level of involvement of male and female youths (16-26yrs; natives and migrants) in different forms of civic and political participation
- b) to identify psychosocial factors influencing young men and women engagement and participation

A typology of participation (Ekman & Amnå, 2009)

	Latent Political Participation			Manifest Political Participation	
	Social Involvement	Civic Engagement	Formal/ Conventional	Legal/ Extra-Parliamentary	Illegal Forms
Individual Forms	Taking an interest in politics/society. Perceiving politics as important	Writing to an editor. Giving money. Discussing civics. Wearing T-shirt with political message	Voting in elections (or deliberately abstaining from voting)	Boycotting Boycotting Signing Petitions	Civil Disobedience e.g. hiding refugees
Collective Forms	Belonging to a group with societal focus (life-style related involvement)	Volunteering in social work e.g. women's shelter	Being a member of a political party/ organisation of Trades Union	Involvement in new social movements or forums. Demonstrating Participation in protests and actions	Participating in civil disobedience actions. Sabotaging Participating in violent demonstrations or in animal rights actions

A process model of political engagement (Emler, 2010)



Civic and political participation: indicators included

- ❑ *Interest toward politics and attentiveness*
- ❑ *Political-social knowledge*
- ❑ *Civic and political activities (current and future intentions)*
- ❑ *Membership in (civic, political, religious and recreational) associations/organisations*

Psychosocial factors (correlates)

- *Perceived effectiveness of participatory actions*
- *Political efficacy* (personal and collective, as gender/generational group member)
- *Conceptions of “good citizen”*
- *Trust* (in institutions, government, interpersonal trust)
- *Relationship with the larger community (sense of community and social well being)*

Participants

- 100 adolescents (17-19yrs) and young adults (20-26yrs)
- 50% male and 50% female
- Mostly students (98% adolescents, 76% young adults)

Measures

Sociodemographic characteristics

Civic and political engagement and participation

Interest toward politics (7 items, Likert-type scale, range 1-5; $\alpha = .88$)

Political-social knowledge (4 multiple-choice questions; total score range 0-4)

Civic and political activities (18 items, Likert-type scale, range 1-5): Current participation; Future intentions of participation; Perceived effectiveness

Membership in civic, political, religious and recreational associations (9 items, Likert-type scale; range 1-4).

Political efficacy (individual and collective) (12 items; Likert-type scale, range 1-5)

Conception of the “good citizen” (16 items, Likert-type scale, range 1-5; 2 factors: “adult with rights and duties” and “active and informed citizen”)

Trust in institutions (14 items), **government** (6 items) and **people** (1 item) (Likert-type scale, range 1-5)

Relationship with the community: sense of community (Chiessi et al., 2010, 2 subscales) and social well being (Keyes, 2005)

Civic and political participation: factor analyses and scales

Civic and political activities

Factors:

net-activism (6 items; current α .85)

direct political participation (6 items; current α .79)

economic-symbolic support (3 items; current α .62)

critical consumerism (1 item)

volunteering (1 item)

vote (1 item)

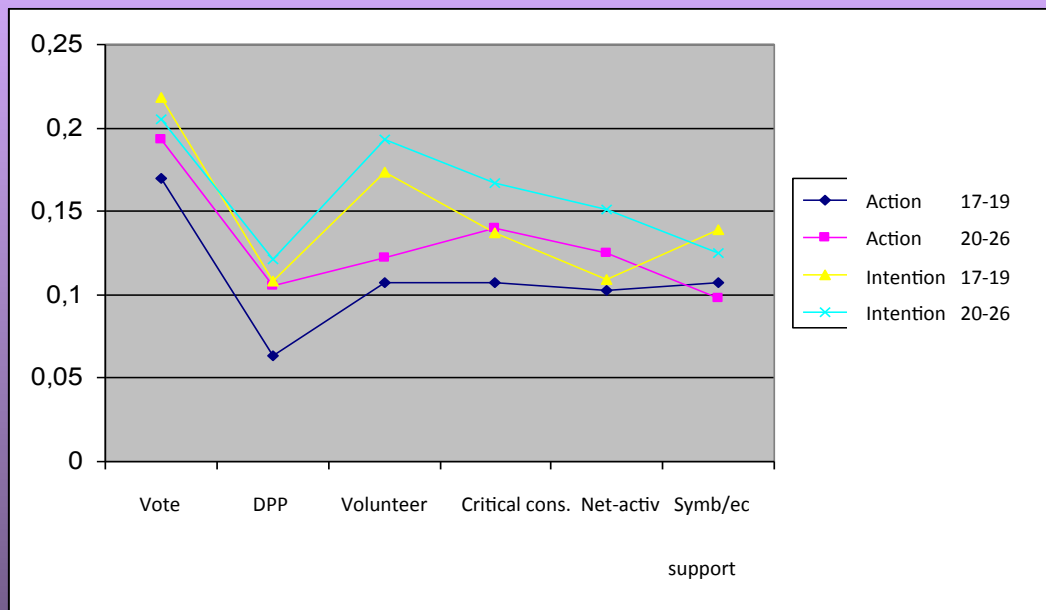
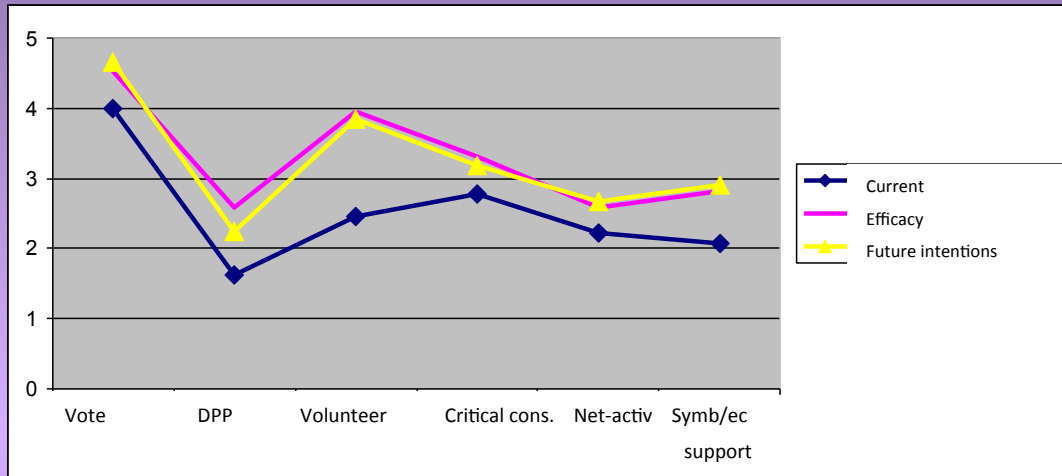
Civic and political participation

<i>Types of participation (range 1-5)</i>	17-19 M	20-26 M
Political interest	2.83	3.52*
Political and civic knowledge+	3.14	3.48*
<i>Current participation</i>		
Vote	3.65	4.38*
Direct political participation	1.31	1.92***
Volunteering	2.34	2.56
Critical consumerism	2.34	3.22***
Net-activism	1.88	2.60***
Symbolic-economic support	1.95	2.21
<i>Perceptions of effectiveness</i>		
Vote	4.70	4.38
Direct political participation	2.45	2.72*
Volunteering	4.04	3.88
Critical consumerism	3.10	3.54
Net-activism	2.34	2.81**
Symbolic-economic support	2.70	2.94
<i>Future intentions</i>		
Vote	4.75	4.56
Direct political participation	1.96	2.54***
Volunteering	3.70	3.98
Critical consumerism	2.78	3.60**
Net-activism	2.37	2.98**
Symbolic-economic support	2.80	3.00


Gender = ns

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ +range 0-4

Civic and political participation: current, future, perceived effectiveness



Civic and political participation: correlations

		Perceived effectiveness	Future intentions	Perceived effectiveness / future intentions	Political interest	Political knowledge
Current participation	Vote	.42***	.52***	.74***	-.04	-.09
	Direct political participation	.35***	.77***	.62***	.53***	.16
	Volunteering 	.22*	.50***	.49***	.02	-.03
	Critical consumerism	.54***	.74***	.70***	.49***	.24*
	Net-activism	.62***	.84***	.71***	.53***	.23*
	Symbolic-economic support	.45***	.57***	.62***	.27**	-.00

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Corr. Interest – Knowledge $r = .22^*$

Psychosocial factors: descriptives

	α^1	Total	Gender		Age group	
			M	F	17-19	20-26
<i>Membership of groups/associations (range 1-4)</i>						
Political		1.43	1.50	1.36	1.12	1.74***
Religious		1.63	1.45	1.80	1.54	1.71
Civic		1.75	1.70	1.80	1.60	1.90**
Recreational		2.73	2.64	2.82	2.88	2.58
<i>Efficacy (range 1-5)</i>						
Personal efficacy	.71	3.12	3.27	2.96	2.95	3.28
Collective efficacy (as gender/generational group member)	.87	3.50	3.35	3.65	3.53	3.47
<i>Representation of the "good citizen" (range 1-5)</i>						
Adult with rights and duties	.81	3.33	3.27	3.39	3.39	3.26
Active and informed citizen	.60	3.91	3.93	3.99	3.92	3.90
<i>Trust (range 1-5)</i>						
Interpersonal trust		2.70	2.80	2.60	2.72	2.68
Political and economic power	.76	2.14	2.08	2.20	2.50	1.78***
Public administrations	.70	2.97	2.95	2.98	3.24	2.70***
Current government	.78	1.88	2.00	1.77	1.98	1.79
Form of government	.73	2.40	2.23	2.57	2.52	2.29
<i>Sense of community (range 1-5)</i>						
Satisfaction of needs and opportunities for involvement	.74	2.24	2.35	2.13	2.40	2.08*
Opportunities for influence	.74	3.23	3.26	3.20	3.27	3.18
<i>Social well being (range 1-6)</i>						
	.73	2.73	2.70	2.76	2.80	2.66

¹ alpha values are calculated for factors resulting from Factor analyses

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Gender = ns

Correlations between types of participation and membership in associations/organisations

	Membership political associations	Membership religious associations	Membership civic associations	Membership recreational associations
Political interest	,433**	-,065	,377**	,012
Vote	,207*	,231*	,049	-,125
Direct political participation	,530**	,068	,500**	,026
Volunteering	,204*	,186	,472**	,036
Critical consumerism	,188	,042	,404**	,080
Net activism	,446**	,026	,348**	,047
Economic and symbolic support	,260**	,193	,572**	,040

Correlations between forms of participation and trust

	Interpersonal trust	Trust in political and economic power	Trust in public administration	Trust in government	Trust in the form of government
Political interest	-,003	-,374**	-,352**	-,183	-,150
Vote	,300**	,064	,179	,117	,143
Direct political participation	,049	-,468**	-,379**	-,171	-,074
Volunteering	,033	,036	,176	,095	,005
Critical consumerism	,095	-,390**	-,116	-,138	-,114
Net activism	,015	-,424**	-,376**	-,360**	-,249*
Symbolic – economic support	,045	-,084	-,074	,036	-,085



Correlations between forms of participation and personal efficacy

	Individual political efficacy	Collective political efficacy
Vote	-,129	,199
Direct political participation	,388**	,052
Volunteering	-,143	,100
Critical consumerism	,429**	,042
Net activism	,560**	,104
Symbolic economic support	,160	,094

Correlations between forms of participation and citizen conceptions, sense of community and social well being

	<i>Conceptions of “good citizen”</i>		<i>Sense of community</i>		Social well being
	Good citizen rights and duties	Good citizen active and informed	Satisfaction of needs and opportunities for involvement	Opportunities for influence	
Political interest	-,188	,321**	-,001	,121	,172
Vote	,284*	,005	,069	,190	,171
Direct political participation	-,072	,347**	-,122	,023	,202*
Volunteering	,037	,015	,152	,234*	,222*
Critical consumerism	-,210*	,312**	-,205*	,021	,171
Net activism	-,003	,365**	-,099	-,006	,103
Symbolic –economic support	,075	,188	,009	,222*	,256*

What predicts vote?

CURRENT ($R^2 = .31$; $F=8.21$, $p<.000$):

- ❑ Membership in political associations/organisations (beta = .22*)
- ❑ Interpersonal trust (beta =.23*)
- ❑ Good citizen: rights and duties (beta =.19*)
- ❑ Perceived effectiveness of vote (beta =.34***)

FUTURE ($R^2 = .63$; $F=24.82$, $p<.000$):

- Membership in political associations/organisations (beta = .16*)
- Perceived effectiveness of vote (beta =.69***)
- Past/current experience of vote (beta = .22**)

What predicts volunteering?

CURRENT ($R^2 = .28$; $F=7.15$, $p<.000$):

Membership in civic associations/organisations (beta = .42*)

FUTURE ($R^2 = .45$; $F=12.51$, $p<.000$):

Membership in civic associations/organisations (beta = .22*)

Perceived effectiveness of volunteering (beta = .41***)

Past/current experience of volunteering (beta = .30***)

What predicts direct political participation?

CURRENT ($R^2 = .57$; $F=14.92$, $p<.000$):

- Membership in civic associations/organisations (beta = .23**)
- Membership in political associations/organisations (beta = .28***)
- Trust in public administrations (beta = -.22***)
- Perceived effectiveness of direct political participation (beta = .19*)

FUTURE ($R^2 = .79$; $F=38.06$, $p<.000$):

- Individual political efficacy (beta = .21**)
- Perceived effectiveness of direct political participation (beta = .46***)
- Past/current experience of direct political participation (beta = .48***)
- Trust in public administrations (beta = -.22**)

What predicts net activism?

CURRENT ($R^2 = .68$; $F=16.72$, $p<.000$):

Membership in political associations/organisations (beta = .25***)

Individual political efficacy (beta = .34***)

Trust in public administrations (beta = -.20**)

Perceived effectiveness of net activism (beta = .42***)

FUTURE ($R^2 = .79$; $F=26.25$, $p<.000$):

Perceived effectiveness of net activism (beta = .35***)

Past/current experience of net activism (beta = .57***)

What predicts critical consumerism?

CURRENT ($R^2 = .51$; $F=10.57$, $p<.000$):

- Membership in civic associations/organisations (beta = .22*)
- Good citizen: rights and duties (beta = -.19*)
- Perceived effectiveness of critical consumerism (beta = .41***)

FUTURE ($R^2 = .70$; $F=20.55$, $p<.000$):

- Perceived effectiveness of critical consumerism (beta = .43***)
- Past/current experience of critical consumerism (beta = .39***)

What predicts economic-symbolic support?

CURRENT ($R^2 = .45$; $F=12.87$, $p<.000$):

- Membership in civic associations/organisations (beta = .44***)
- Perceived effectiveness of economic-symbolic support (beta = .32***)

FUTURE ($R^2 = .50$; $F=12.97$, $p<.000$):

- Perceived effectiveness of economic-symbolic support (beta = .46***)
- Past/current experience of economic-symbolic support (beta = .38***)

Summary and discussion (1)

- Civic and political participation: commonalities and differences across forms. Vote still the most widespread form, followed by critical consumerism, volunteering and net activism.
- Absence of **gender** differences (among students)
- Increase, with **age**, of interest and knowledge of political issues, of manifest forms of political participation (vote, direct political participation) and extraparliamentary forms (critical consumption, net activism). Increase in membership in political and civic associations/organisations.
- Strong correlations between “**new forms**” of participation (critical consumption, net activism) and **political interest and knowledge**. Vote in unrelated with interest and knowledge.
- **Membership in civic and politic associations/organisations** is correlated with almost all forms of participation. Religious associations membership is correlated only with vote.
- With the exception of vote, which positively correlates with **interpersonal trust**, other forms of participation are negatively associated with **trust toward institutions**, and especially net activism.
- Collective **political efficacy** is not correlated with any form of participation. **Individual political efficacy** correlates with direct political participation and “new forms” (critical consumerism, net activism)

Summary and discussion (2)

- **Conceiving the “good citizen”** in conventional legal terms (adult holding rights and duties) is positively associated with vote and negatively with critical consumption. **Conceiving the “good citizen” as an informed and attentive person** is positively associated with political interest, direct political participation and “new forms” (critical consumption, net activism)
- Local **sense of community** is positively associated with volunteering and symbolic economic support (**perceived opportunities for influence**) and negatively with critical consumption (**satisfaction of needs**)
- **Social well being** is positively associated with volunteering, direct political participation and symbolic economic support

Summary and discussion (3)

Specificities of vote vs other forms of participation: youths who are more likely to vote are not more interested and informed about political and social issues, they are likely to attend religious groups, to trust people in general and to hold a conventional conception of citizenship

Perceived effectiveness of actions is important for actual behaviors, but differently according to the form (cf. volunteering vs new forms)

Importance of membership in civic and political organisations/associations as “socialization niches” for different forms of participation (cf. literature on political socialization)

Trust: opposite influence on vote vs other forms of participation (cf. literature on social capital and political socialization)

Collective **political efficacy** not predictive; only individual political efficacy has a role (cf. literature on collective action)

Relationships between interest and attentiveness, knowledge and political behaviors (cf. Emler model)