To Vote or to Protest?
Young Citizens' Unequal Participation and Descriptive Representation

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Abstract
The paper focuses on the relationship between descriptive representation and young citizens' political participation repertoire. The paper investigates its role in shaping the trade-off between institutional - voting - and non-institutional - protest - forms of participation. Building on the contextual cues theory, the empowerment theory and the political protest literature, the paper argues that by tackling political alienation, descriptive representation encourages young citizens to choose institutional over non-institutional forms of political participation. Combining individual level survey data (ESS) with an original dataset on the level of representation among candidates and MPs, the multilevel multinomial analysis of the political repertoire in 20 European countries supports the posited hypothesis.

Keywords: young citizens, political participation, political repertoire, protest, descriptive representation, candidates, MPs, multilevel, multinomial.

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1. Introduction

Declining turnout rates among young citizens have been the focus of much chagrin among political actors and researcher in the last decades (Blais 2007; Franklin 2004; Wattenberg 2006). While young citizens' withdrawal from institutional forms of participation, e.g. voting, has been interpreted by many as a seemingly manifestation of political apathy (Kimberlee 2002: 87), the simultaneous increase in non-institutional participation forms (Marien et al. 2010; O'Toole et al. 2003; Quintelier 2007), proposes political alienation from the political system and its institutions to be a more accurate determinant (Kimberlee 2002: 88).

The shift in young citizens' participation repertoire is problematic for the democratic process for at least three reasons. First, the decreasing electoral participation may result in an unequal responsiveness of the political system towards young citizens (Christiano 2004; Dahl 2006; Lijphart 1997; Verba 2003). Second, non-institutional forms of participation may not ensure the same responsiveness level from the political system as institutional ones (Hooghe and Marien 2014). Further, non-institutional forms do not appear to be able to balance the inequality of electoral participation (Marien et al. 2010; Stolle and Hooghe 2011). Third, the shift towards non-institutional forms of participation raises the question about the determinants of elections' unattractiveness to young citizens (Kimberlee 2002: 90).

So far, research efforts have predominantly considered the two forms of political participation separately. However, theoretical efforts suggest that non-institutional forms of participation are linked to the alienation from the political system and, thus, institutional forms of participation (Craig 1979; Gamson 1968; Hooghe and Marien 2013). The literature suggests that the citizenship norms (Dalton 2008; Norris 1999) and/or political attitudes (Gamson 1968; Henn and Foard 2012; Hutter and Braun 2013; Kaase 1999 among others) might explain the use of non-institutional forms of participation among young citizens. However, these literature strands predominantly focus on individual level determinants, thereby neglecting cross-country differences and characteristics of the political system as determining factors. The paper aims at filling these research gaps by analysing country level factors that influence the trade-off between institutional and non-institutional forms of participation among young citizen. In particular, it identifies descriptive representation as a political opportunity structure with the potential to affect young citizens' participation strategy (Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi 1995; Landmann 2008; Opp 2009). Building on the minority politics literature (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Atkeson 2003; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1998; Rocha et al. 2010; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), I link descriptive representation to political alienation and
contend that higher levels of descriptive representation encourage the use of institutional over non-institutional forms of political participation because they strengthen feelings of political efficacy and trust towards the political system. On the contrary, low levels of descriptive representation trigger feelings of inefficacy and distrust and thus increase the attractiveness of non-institutional forms of political participation. Accordingly, the aim of the paper is to analyse to what extent descriptive representation affects the political participation repertoire of young citizens.

The analysis shows that descriptive representation plays a significant role for the participation repertoire: young citizens are less likely to choose protest over voting in comparatively more representative political systems.

2. Descriptive representation and young citizens' political repertoire
To equate declining turnout rates among young citizens to political apathy falls short of depicting the broader phenomenon. Young citizens' reluctance to take part in elections does not necessarily mean that they are apathetic, as posited by youth focused explanations (Kimberlee 2002: 87), but rather the manifestation of youth's alienation from the political process and institutions (Kimberlee 2002: 88). Indeed, simultaneously to the decline in voting, a substantial part of young citizens has resorted to participation forms outside the electoral arena, e.g. protest, to express their political needs and preferences (Dalton 2008, 2009; Gauthier 2003; Marien et al. 2010; Norris 2002; O’Toole et al. 2003; Quintelier 2007; Stolle and Hooghe 2011; Zukin et al. 2006). These non-institutional forms of political participation, as opposed to institutional ones, lack a direct link to the institutions and the functioning of the electoral decision making process (Klingemann and Fuchs 1995), are not necessarily directed towards elected representatives (Marien et al. 2010: 188), and its rules are not set by the political system itself (Hooghe and Marien 2014: 539). The abovementioned trend suggests that electoral participation forms have lost their attractiveness for young citizens. The shift in young citizens' participation repertoire calls for a closer examination of the determinants of this apparent trade-off. More precisely, the paper focuses on political system factors affecting the political repertoire of young citizens, namely descriptive representation. Building on the political minority (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Atkeson 2003; Banducci et al. 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Karp and Banducci 2008 among others) and the political alienation literature (Almond and Verba 1963; Gamson 1968; Lane 1959; Miller 1974 among others), I argue that descriptive representation influences the choice of preferred participation mean among young citizens. High levels of descriptive representation are expected to foster electoral participation and reduce the attractiveness of non-institutional
participation forms. On the contrary, low levels of descriptive representation lead young citizens to favour non-institutional forms of participation over institutional ones. Thus, descriptive representation has a positive effect on voting and a negative effect on protest participation among young citizens.

The expansion of young citizens' participation repertoire has not gone unnoticed in the political participation literature. One strand of the literature attributes the change in repertoire to an underlying change in citizenship norms (Oser and Hooghe 2013) and the correlated expectations towards citizens' role (Almond and Verba 1963; Dalton 2008: 78). Changes in the mode of political participation were accompanied by the emergence of "engaged citizens" (Dalton 2008), "critical citizens" (Norris 1999), or "monitorial citizens" (Schudson 1998). For instance, Dalton (2008) distinguishes between two types of citizenship: "citizen duty" and "engaged citizenship". While the former mainly draws on norms of social order and citizenship is expressed mainly via conventional and institutionalized participation forms such as voting, the latter reflects more libertarian values and citizenship is expressed by more active forms of political participation (Dalton 2008: 80–81). These three understandings of citizenship norms postulate that the emerging social expectations about citizens' involvement in politics involve different and more direct forms of influence on politics. Further, research suggests that these new forms of citizenship are predominant among young citizens (Dalton 2011). Another strand of the literature concentrates on individual level determinants, e.g. political attitudes such as political trust and efficacy, to explain young citizens' preference for non-institutional forms of political participation. The key argument of this strand of research is that political attitudes, and thus political alienation, affect (young) citizens' political participation (Gamson 1968; Henn and Foard 2012; Hooghe and Marien 2013; Hutter and Braun 2013; Kaase 1999; Marien et al. 2010; Southwell 2003 among others). However, not only individual but also country specific characteristics shape the participation of young citizens and their participation repertoire. In particular, I expect the descriptive representation of youths to shape their choice of political action because of its close link with political alienation. The theoretical framework links the concepts of descriptive representation and political alienation building on the social movement theory (theory of political opportunity structures) and the minority politics literature (empowerment theory and contextual cues theory).

Descriptive representation refers to the situation in which representatives and represented share ascribed characteristics (Pitkin 1967: 60), e.g. age, gender, or ethnicity. To understand why descriptive representation influences the political repertoire of young citizens, one has to conceive it as a political opportunity structure (POS). Lending from the literature on social
movements, we consider descriptive representation as a political opportunity structure influencing an individual's assessment of her chances at political action. The theoretical framework suggests that political opportunity structures filter political actors' mobilization and strategy choice (cf. Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi 1995). These are, in turn, defined as aspects of the political environment which causally influence a person's chances of success in pursuit of a (political) goal and thereby influence her/his behaviour. It follows that the openness and responsiveness of the political system is a major POS between young citizens' value orientations and issues, and their representation in the political system (Landmann 2008: 169).

The openness of the political system does not only have consequences for the success chances of young citizens to bring their issues into the political arena, but also for their choice of preferred articulation mode. They are expected to choose “assimilative” strategies or established political channels, respectively, whenever the input side of the state is open, “confrontational” or non-established forms of articulation and influence when the political system is marked by closedness (Kitschelt 1986: 66).

Descriptive representation has played an increasing role in the broader minority politics literature. Resting on the argument that the interests of an underrepresented group are better represented by a member of said group (Phillips 1998: 228), descriptive representation is expected to extend its effects beyond mere representation and to affect political attitudes and political engagement (Atkeson 2003; Banducci et al. 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993 among others). Changes in the level of descriptive representation, thus, tackle systemic barriers and psychological hurdles to participation generated by underrepresentation (Atkeson 2003; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Previous research efforts have mainly focused on the abstention vs. voting question and investigated to what extent descriptive representation fosters electoral participation among politically underrepresented groups (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Atkeson 2003; Banducci et al. 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Karp and Banducci 2008; Pantoja and Segura 2003; Reingold and Harrell 2009; Rocha et al. 2010 among others). I argue that in addition to fostering participation over abstention, descriptive representation also affects the political repertoire of young citizens, namely, whether they make use of institutional or non-institutional participation forms.

Following, the contextual cue theory and the political empowerment hypothesis (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Atkeson 2003; Banducci et al. 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Karp and Banducci 2008; Pantoja and Segura 2003; Reingold and Harrell 2009; Rocha et al. 2010; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), descriptive representation conveys its effect on political participation via two interrelated mechanisms.
The first mechanism, as posited by the contextual cue theory, argues that descriptive representation affects political participation by sending responsiveness cues to the members of the underrepresented group. Accordingly, the political system's legitimacy is strengthened by cues of higher responsiveness towards the needs and interests of the underrepresented group (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1998). The second mechanism, supported by the political empowerment hypothesis, argues that descriptive representation leverages political participation via the gathering of political information (Bobo and Gilliam 1990), building up trust towards the political system and its institutions (Rocha et al. 2010), and by bolstering feelings of efficacy (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007) among the members of the underrepresented group. The relevance of descriptive representation for the political repertoire of young citizens becomes clearer by looking at the individual level determinants of non-institutional participation, e.g. protest. Of particular interest is the relationship between political alienation and non-institutional participation.

Political alienation can be conceived as "a person's sense of estrangement from the politics and government of his society" (Lane 1962: 161). Political alienation, however, is a multi-dimensional concept incorporating different political attitudes. Miller (1974) identifies political inefficacy and distrust as the key elements of political alienation. In a similar vein, Southwell (2003: 101), building on previous research (Clarke and Acock 1989; Finifter 1970; Niemi et al. 1991 among others), defines young citizens' political alienation as an umbrella concept encompassing political efficacy - internal and external - as well as cynicism. Lane (1962: 162) further redefines the abovementioned definition of political alienation by singling out three aspects thereof that closely resemble external efficacy, government responsiveness, and political distrust. Almond and Verba (1963) further specify the dimensions of political alienation by distinguishing between input and output dimensions. Following their definition, political efficacy accounts for the input dimension of political alienation (Almond and Verba 1963: 115–122), whereas trust accounts for its output dimension (Almond and Verba 1963: 106–113).

The relationship between political trust and political participation has been highly debated (see Hooghe and Marien 2013; Hutter and Braun 2013 for a summary). While one strand of literature supports the argument that a minimal level of political participation is necessary to become active in any forms of political participation (Almond and Verba 1963), another strand argues that political trust, or rather the lack thereof, has a close relationship to the use of non-institutional forms of political participation (Dalton 2006; Norris 1999 among others). The main argument being that political distrust fosters the use of non-institutional forms of participation. This because distrusting citizens refrain from using institutionalised and conventional forms of
political participation perceived as a form of support towards the existing regime and political actors (Barnes and Kaase 1979: 444). Hence, as suggested by Hooghe and Marien (2013: 134), to better understand the relationship between trust and political participation, it is important to take the form of political participation into account. Accordingly, political trust is expected to foster participation in conventional and institutional forms of political participation, whereas political trust appears to be negatively related to non-institutional and unconventional forms of political participation (Dalton 2006; Hooghe and Marien 2013; Inglehart 1977). Initial evidence indicates that young citizens have a high level of distrust towards their counterparts. Comparing young people's trust levels and political participation in 2011 and 2002 in Britain, Henn and Foard (2012) found low levels of trust towards political parties and professional politicians. The survey suggested that low levels of trust were mostly driven by a perceived lack of effort on the side of parties to connect with young citizens (Henn and Foard 2012: 60). Further, the study revealed stable low levels of political trust, which following the authors of the study is symptom of an ongoing disengagement of youths (Henn and Foard 2012: 64).

Political efficacy represents the input side of political alienation (Almond and Verba 1963) and is generally understood as "the feeling that individual political action does have or can have an impact upon the political process" (Campbell et al. 1954: 187). Political efficacy has been closely studied by political scientists because of its positive effect on political participation. Accordingly, higher political efficacy leads individuals to become active participants in politics (Campbell et al. 1960; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Political efficacy encompasses two dimensions: internal and external political efficacy. Internal efficacy refers to the individual's appraisal of her own political participation capabilities. External efficacy refers to an individual's personal judgement about the political system's responsiveness to her own interests and needs (Converse 1972; Gamson 1968). Previous research suggests that specific combinations of internal efficacy and distrust lead individuals to become politically active (Gamson 1968: 48). Later research suggested restricting this effect to non-institutional forms of political participation (Hawkins et al. 1971; Hooghe and Marien 2013; Paige 1971). I go a step further and argue that external political efficacy also plays a role in determining the usage of non-institutional forms of political participation. Indeed, there has been theoretical discussion linking low levels of external political efficacy to unconventional and non-institutional participation (Craig 1979, 1980; Gamson 1971; Pollock 1983). For instance, Craig (1980: 198) argues that the combination of high levels of internal efficacy and low levels of external efficacy promote the use of participation forms outside the institutional realm; a claim supported by Pollock's (1983) empirical evidence. Referring to a person's assessment of the responsiveness of the political
system (Craig 1979: 229), external political efficacy is related (both refer to the output of the political system) though distinct from political. The latter does not need to be guided by individual action but rather refers to a more general expectation towards the system's output as being in the interest of the public (Craig 1979: 229). Thus, external efficacy has a closer relation to personal expectations towards the regime and the political system. As such, I argue it bears a stronger potential for non-institutional participation because it directly links to discontent with policy outputs. Nevertheless, I expect external efficacy to be related, at least to some extent, to distrust and cynicism towards the political system.

To sum up, the investigation of individual determinants revealed that three factors can be expected to influence the choice of participation form among young citizens: political trust, internal and external political efficacy. Accordingly, at the individual level the combination of low(external) efficacy and low political trust is the main trigger of protest, while internal efficacy triggers participation altogether. Combining this information with the two mechanisms identified for descriptive representation singles out the relevance of descriptive representation for the choice of the mean of political participation. Because it increases levels of political trust and efficacy, in addition to fostering participation over abstention, descriptive representation fosters young citizens to choose institutional over non-institutional means of political participation.

![Figure 1: Descriptive representation and means of political participation (political repertoire)](image)

Figure 1 depicts the theorized effect of descriptive representation: increasing levels of descriptive representation, as represented by the arrows, trigger participation over abstention (arrow 1), and institutional (voting) over non-institutional (protesting) means of political participation (arrow 2).

The effect of descriptive representation, however, needs to be expanded on at least one dimension: the understanding of descriptive representation. Previous efforts to understand the effect of descriptive representation can be roughly divided into two types according to their understanding of descriptive representation. The first type of empirical analysis, which includes the majority of empirical efforts (among others Banducci et al. 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990;
Karp and Banducci 2008; Norris and Krook 2009; Rocha et al. 2010), focuses on the presence of political minorities' representatives in the national legislative body. The second type of analysis investigates the role of candidates' descriptive representation in mobilizing underrepresented groups (Atkeson 2003; Brace et al. 1995; Reingold and Harrell 2009; Tate 1993). The presence of candidates and MPs of an underrepresented group are both expected to foster political engagement (Karp and Banducci 2008: 106). However, the effects need to be disentangled from one another and put in relation to the political repertoire. I differentiate the effects of young candidates and MPs on the basis of their temporal occurrence and the information they convey. On the one hand, the presence of young candidates easies the gathering of information on the side of young citizens, thereby empowering them to participate in the election (Reingold and Harrell 2009: 281). Thereby, the presence of young candidates can be understood to primarily tackle the internal efficacy of young citizens and thus the question whether to participate or not. On the other hand, the level of representation among MPs in the previous election is closely related to the responsiveness of the political system and the output of the political system. Thereby, the representativeness among MPs affects the output dimension of alienation and thus closely affects the question whether to participate by means of non-institutional or institutional means of participation.

According to the theoretical framework elaborated above, four hypotheses on the relationship between descriptive representation and young citizens' political repertoire can be formulated:

**H1:** The higher the level of descriptive representation, the more likely a young citizen is to choose to participate than to abstain.

**H2:** The higher the level of descriptive representation among candidates, the more likely a young citizen is to vote than to protest.

**H3a:** The higher the level of descriptive representation among MPs, the more likely a young citizen is to vote than to protest.

**H3b:** The effect is stronger among young citizens with low levels of political trust.
3. Research design

The focus of this paper lies in the analysis of the participation repertoire of young citizens as a function of the descriptive representation of candidates and MPs in national legislative elections in Europe. More concretely, the analysis investigates to what extent young citizens choose one of the following participation possibilities: vote, protest, both, or none of the participation forms. Based on the information provided by the European Social Survey (2013) (ESS), I analyse the political participation of 8750 young citizens in 20 European countries, in which voting occurs on a voluntary basis; the most recent election being the election of reference.

3.1 Operationalization

Political repertoire is based at the individual level on the participation information provided by individuals on whether they have voted in the last national election and whether they have taken part in a lawful demonstration in the last 12 months. The combination of these two participation information leads to a political repertoire comprising four participation options: having only voted in the last national election (outcome 1), having both voted in the last election and protested (outcome 2), having only protested (outcome 3), not having participated at all (outcome 4).

Age plays a central role in the analysis of voting behaviour. The key interest lies in the distinction between young and less young citizens, and their different approach to voting. Defining young citizens is a daunting task. However, considering that the habit of voting is acquired within the first two or three elections after enfranchisement (Plutzer 2002), individuals are deemed to be young citizens until the age of 30. Thus, only individuals aged between 16 and 30 were considered in the analysis. Further, to account for the variance in respondents' age, age in years enters the analysis as a continuous variables; simultaneously, the squared age term controls for the curvilinear relationship between age and political participation.

1 In bicameral systems, the focus lies on the lower chamber of parliament.
2 At the moment of writing, the European Social Survey (ESS) was carried out six times over a period of 12 years (European Social Survey). Only enfranchised individuals were considered in the analysis.
4 As opposed to countries in which voting is compulsory.
5 Countries do differ with respect to the length of the legislative terms. For the sake of analysis, a legislative term of 4 elections was considered. Provided enfranchisement is set at the age of 18, individuals are considered to be young citizens for a period of three legislative terms (12 years) after enfranchisement.
6 In the countries under study enfranchisement is set at the age of 18, with the exception of Austria where since 2007, citizens are entitled to vote from the age of 16 (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich 2007).
Young citizens' descriptive representation is the key explanatory factor in the analysis, and its effect will be assessed by two measures of representativeness. Rather than rely solely on the information on the age distribution among members of parliament, the paper proposes an additional and alternative measure of descriptive representation based on the age distribution among candidates. The descriptive representation of young citizens is operationalized as the percentage of candidates under the age of 30. Further, the age distribution among members of parliament in the legislature immediately preceding the election was considered in order to control for the level of representativeness in previous legislatures (% MPs aged 30 or less). The information about the age distribution among candidates and elected MPs relies on a unique database about the presence of young candidates and representatives based on official electoral and parliamentary sources (see Table A.2 in the Appendix).

Further, previous studies have shown that additional factors affect political participation. The socioeconomic status has been found to exert a positive effect on political participation (Brady et al. 1995). The socioeconomic status of the respondent was assessed by means of the educational attainment and the current occupational status of the respondent. Information about education and occupational status were introduced in order to account for the effect of socioeconomic status. Education was operationalized as the highest level of educational attainment achieved, as stated by the respondent. The following response categories were built: less than secondary (ISCED 0-1), completed upper secondary education (ISCED 3), completed post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4), and completed tertiary education and higher (ISCED 5-6). Occupational status is measured by two dummy variables based on the main activity pursued in the week previous to the interview: unemployment, and in education. Further, a dummy variable for female, informs on gender differences in political participation.

Political attitudes have been recognised as predecessors of political participation (Gamson 1968; Hooghe and Marien 2013; Kaase 1999). Accordingly, the analysis includes trust towards the parliament. Trust in the parliament takes the forms of a 10-scale self-assessment, where the value of 0 represents distrust in parliament and 10 represents a high level of trust in the national legislative body. Unfortunately, the European Social Survey (2013) does not include questions on political efficacy, so I am not able to test the effect directly.

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9 Other control variables were tested and subsequently dropped from the analysis because not statistically significant: competitiveness of the election, modifiability of the ballot (open list proportional representation).

10 Reference category.
3.2 Methodology
To analyse the effect of descriptive representation on young citizens' political participation repertoire, the hierarchical structure of the data (Bickel 2007; Hox 2010) and the dependency among individuals in the same cluster (Rabe-Heshket and Skrondal 2008) need to be taken into account. Indeed, individual responses are clustered within countries and elections. Furthermore, the multilevel analysis also needs to account for the dependent variable comprising four unordered categories (discrete choices) (Skrondal and Rabe-Heshket 2003). Therefore, to test the hypotheses, I apply a multilevel multinomial logit model (Rabe-Heshket and Skrondal 2012: 629ff.).¹¹

¹¹ All empirical analyses were carried out using Stata 12.1 and the user written commands gllamm for the multilevel multinomial logit model and gllapred for the predicted probabilities (Rabe-Heshket et al. 2004).
4. Empirical findings

The goal of the analysis is to test the relationship between descriptive representation and the political repertoire of young citizens. Following the theoretical model, young citizens are expected to choose non-institutional over institutional forms of political participation when the level of descriptive representation is comparatively low. Thus, in a country in which few young candidates run for election and few young MPs were active in the previous legislature, young citizens were expected to choose protest over voting. The empirical analysis rests on individual level data provided by the European Social Survey (2013) and an original dataset on the level of descriptive representation of young citizens among candidates and MPs (see Table A. 2 in the Appendix). The analysis covers a total of 8750 individuals nested in 20 countries and covers the most recent national elections available in the European Social Survey (2013). To test the hypotheses a multilevel multinomial logit model was estimated. The participation repertoire was constructed by combining information on two participation means: having voted in the last national election (institutional participation) and having protested in the last 12 months. The combination of these two variables brings about a political repertoire comprising four participation types: voting only, voting and protesting (both), protesting only, and none.

*Figure 2* depicts the level of use of the different forms of political participation by countries. Differences in the political repertoire are quite substantive in the 20 countries under study. The most common means of participation are voting and abstention, whereas protest attests itself on a comparatively low level. Protest is the least popular in Lithuania, Romania, and Sweden, whereas it is more commonly used in France and Italy. Levels of descriptive representation vary considerably between the countries analysed in the analysis (*Figure 3* below). The lowest level of young candidates was found among the candidates running for the Estonian parliamentary election of 2011 (7.7%), whereas the Swiss legislative election of 2011 mustered the highest percentage of young candidates running for election (33.6%). On a slightly lower level, the percentage of elected MPs (in the legislature immediately preceding the legislative election considered) ranged between 0% in Italy (2013) and Croatia (2011) and 9.7% encountered in the 2011 Danish election.

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Figure 2: Participation repertoire of young citizens by country (%)

Descriptive representation of young citizens (%)

Figure 3: Descriptive representation of young citizens among candidates (t) and MPs (t-1) (in %)
Table 1 summarizes the estimates of the multilevel multinomial logit models of the means of political participation among young citizens. The estimates report the log-odds of an individual choosing a given participation mean over the reference category "voting only" (outcome 1). The effect of individual level characteristics is depicted in Model 1 of Table 1. The models report the log-odds of choosing the contrast category both (Model 1a), protest (Model 1b), and none (Model 1c) over the reference category (voting). The odds-ratio for educational attainment \(e^{(0.182)} = 1.199\) in model 1a in Table 1 suggests that a higher level of educational attainment leads young citizens to expand their political participation repertoire: higher educated young citizens are about 1.19 times more likely to both vote and protest rather than only to vote. With respect to protest, educational attainment does not appear to exert a significant influence: highly educated young citizens do not appear to prefer protesting over voting. However, educational attainment plays a significant role in guiding the choice between vote and abstention: young citizens are less likely \(e^{(-0.385)} = 0.682\) to abstain than to vote. Trust in parliament also appears to influence the political participation choice. More trusting young citizens are less likely to choose to protest than to vote, and also less likely to abstain than to vote. A one-unit increase on the trust in parliament scale leads young citizens to be less likely to protest and to abstain by a factor of 0.905 \(e^{(-0.0993)} = 0.905\) and 0.864 \(e^{(-0.146)} = 0.864\), respectively. Conversely, more cynical young citizens, rather than to vote, prefer to either protest or to abstain from participating altogether. Controlling for the effect of age also informs us on the choices operated by young citizens: age becomes a relevant factor for protesting and abstention. The odds-ratios indicate that young citizens approaching 30 years of age are less likely to both choose protest \(e^{(-2.504)} = 0.08\) and abstention \(e^{(-1.658)} = 0.191\) over voting as a means of political participation. The remaining individual level factors appear to exert an influence only on single choices. For instance, gender is relevant only for the question whether to vote or to abstain: female respondents were slightly more likely to abstain than to vote as compared to male respondents \(e^{(0.109)} = 1.116\). Similarly, unemployment seems only to matter for the question whether to vote or to abstain. Unemployed respondents were more likely to abstain than to participate in the last national election. Further, being in the educative phase only exerted a positive effect on the likelihood to choose to both vote and protest instead of only voting \(e^{(0.860)} = 2.362\). Turning to contextual effects, the theoretical framework postulates that descriptive representation increases the likelihood to participate and to choose institutional forms of political participation over non-institutional ones. Conversely, the absence of young candidates and MPs increases the likelihood of preferring non-institutional forms of participation - protest - over voting or to abstain altogether. Model 2 in Table 1 informs on the parameter estimates from the random inter-
cept multinomial model of the means of participation with descriptive representation. Model 2 reveals that the level of representation among young candidates does not appear to influence the choice of political participation among young citizens since none of the three estimates appear to be statistically significant. However, the level of descriptive representation among MPs appears to influence the political participation repertoire of young citizens. For instance, a 1% increase in the level of descriptive representation among MPs in the previous legislature reduces the likelihood of choosing to both vote and protest over voting by a factor of 0.899 ($e^{-0.106} = 0.899$). Similarly, young citizens were less likely to protest instead of voting in countries with higher descriptive representation among MPs by a factor of 0.929 ($e^{-0.0733} = 0.929$). Interestingly, a higher percentage of young MPs lead young citizens to increasingly abstain relative to participating in the election of the national legislature by a factor of 1.032 ($e^{0.0312} = 1.032$). Accordingly, a higher level of descriptive representation in the previous legislature decreases the likelihood of voting among young citizens.

Figure 4 reports the predicted probabilities of the means of political participation over different levels of descriptive representation among MPs for respondents aged 18, 23 (mean age), and 30. Figure 4 reveals that over the different ages, protest is not the most common mean of political participation. The most likely mean of political participation among young citizens was voting for 30-year and mean-aged olds and abstention for 18-year olds. Indeed, there is a substantial difference in the political participation repertoire of 18-year olds and the other two age groups (23- and 30-year olds). While 18-year olds are more likely not to participate at all than to either vote, protest, or both, more experienced young citizens are more likely to participate in elections than any other mode of political participation. With respect to descriptive representation, Figure 4 consistently shows a negative effect of the level of young MPs on the likelihood to protest. However, it is interesting to note that while young citizens increasingly refrain from protesting as the level of descriptive representation increases, this does not mean that they choose to participate in institutional forms of political participation. Rather than voting, non-protesting young citizens choose to abstain, as indicated by the decrease in the predicted probability for voting and the increase in the predicted probability for abstention.

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13 All other variables are held at their mean, with the exception of gender (man), unemployment (0), and ineducation (0).
Table 1: Parameter estimates from the multilevel multinomial logit model of the means of political participation (political repertoire)

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<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
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<td>b</td>
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<td>-0.0993***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0.426</td>
<td>-0.373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.288)</td>
<td>(0.620)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In education</td>
<td>0.860***</td>
<td>0.647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.172)</td>
<td>(0.331)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young MPs (% , t-1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.106</td>
<td>-0.0733*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young candid. (% at t)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0137</td>
<td>0.0170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.831</td>
<td>28.93***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.119)</td>
<td>(2.904)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Random effects</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>0.297***</td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>-7585.13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>8750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses
Reference outcome: Voted in the last national elections (Voted)
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.00
Figure 4: Predicted probabilities for means of political participation at different ages as descriptive representation varies
Figure 5: Predicted probabilities of protest as descriptive representation changes, at different ages

Figure 5 graphs the predicted probabilities of protest over different levels of descriptive representation and at different ages. Moving from the left to the right side of the graph, the declining lines suggest that the probability of choosing to protest decreases as levels of descriptive representation increase. This means that young citizens are less likely to exclusively choose protest as a mean of political participation the more representatives are close to their own age. Further, the graph also reveals age differences in the use of protest among young citizens. At low levels of descriptive representation 16-year olds are the age-group most likely to engage in protest, while 30-year olds are the least likely to protest. Additionally, the steepness of the probability lines, suggests that the effect of descriptive representation is, again, more substantial for 16- and 18-year olds. Indeed, the curve is much steeper for very young voters than it is for more experienced young voters (30-year olds).
Figure 6: Predicted probabilities of protest at different ages as descriptive representation and trust in parliament change
Figure 6 compares the predicted probabilities of protest as descriptive representation changes for young citizens with low and high trust in parliament. The comparison of the two graphs reveals two main differences. First, with respect to the level of protest, cynical young citizens (low trust, left graph) are more prone to use protest as a means of political participation than more trusting young citizens. This is particularly true for low levels of descriptive representation and very young citizens (18-year olds). Second, descriptive representation appears to exert a stronger influence on distrusting young citizens: the predicted probability lines are steeper for cynical than for more trusting citizens.

5. Conclusion

The goal of the paper was to analyse the effect of descriptive representation on the political repertoire of young citizens. Building on the minority politics literature (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Banducci et al. 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990 among others) and the literature on political protest (Craig 1980; Gamson 1968; Hooghe and Marien 2013; Kaase 1999 among others), the theoretical framework posited that young citizens were less likely to make use of non-institutional forms of political participation when levels of descriptive representation were high. Similarly, abstention was expected to decrease among young citizens living in a comparatively representative system (in terms of descriptive representation). The stated effect of descriptive representation on young citizens' political repertoire rests on the close relationship between descriptive representation and political alienation. Descriptive representation is expected to trigger political participation and favour non-institutional over institutional participation because it increases the political efficacy and trust of young citizens. The analysis employed a multilevel multinomial logit model and combined individual level information (European Social Survey 2013) with an original dataset on the political representation in 20 European countries (see Table A. 2 in the Appendix). The analysis showed that descriptive representation, specifically the level of representation among MPs of the previous elite, matters for the political repertoire of young citizens. Youths were less likely to make use of protest as an exclusive form of political participation in highly representative settings, the more so the lower their political trust in parliament. However, the analysis also showed that in comparatively representative countries, young citizens chose to abstain rather than to vote. It is unclear whether this is the result of apathy or satisfaction with the output of the political system. Further, the analysis also revealed that the political repertoire is different for first time voters and more experienced young citizens. Looking at the preferred mean of political participation, 18-year olds (first time voters) were more likely to abstain than to
participate, and more likely to protest than more experienced participants. The latter were more likely to vote than to abstain, and less likely to protest than first-time voters. However, the effect of descriptive representation was more marked among first-time voters than their counterparts.

To conclude, descriptive representation appears to play a significant role for the political repertoire of young citizens, particularly for the choice between non-institutional and institutional forms of political participation. Although it remains unclear which sub-group of young citizens is mostly affected by this context factor, the paper delivers initial input for potential political measures aimed at increasing young citizens’ mobilization by means of elections.
References


Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich.


## Appendix

*Table A. 1: Descriptive statistics*

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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation repertoire</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age (in years)</td>
<td>23.94</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>Age squared</td>
<td>587.47</td>
<td>182.20</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational attainment</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.07</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust in parliament</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>In education</td>
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<td>0.47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Young candidates (% at t)</td>
<td>13.46</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>7.73</td>
<td>33.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young MPs (% at t-1)</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>9.70</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| N                               | 8750 |
| N groups                        | 20   |
### Table A.2: Descriptive representation - Sources

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Candid.</th>
<th>MPs</th>
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