

THEORETICAL ASPECTS RELATED TO THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND THE PARTY ATTACHMENT FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE

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Abstract: *The political values of a society and the attitude of its citizens are transmitted through the mechanisms of the political socialisation, a life-long process. The socialisation process aims to adapt the individual's personality to the norms of the society and the system of values manifested as political desiderates. There is a descendant trend to the level of the European societies for the electoral participation. The higher percentage to the local elections can be explained to a certain extent by the more profound interaction of the individuals with the necessity to find common solutions for the community. Values as the participation, the attitude toward the authority, and the ethnic and religious positioning are transmitted and developed since childhood in the family. The dedicated literature pays special attention to the so-called signals of vote transmitted to the children by the family or by one parent. These signals of vote will give birth to the concept of party identification, a work hypothesis in the field of political science and sociology, because the parents transmit to the children their party identification, a fact proved by many theories on the intergenerational transmission of the party attachment*

Keywords: *sociology; citizens; participation; party; political*

1. Introduction

The interests in politics and the party attachment represent an important field of study in the political sociology and also in multiple cultural approaches in the European society, especially due to the fact that the rigorously founded conclusions of various studies are able to express to a large extent the interest in the complex democratic processes coming from individuals belonging to different age and socio-professional categories. The present dynamic societies, which is unpredictable as desire of permanent change in the relation between the individual and the political entities, are based on sociological studies capable to explain the interest in the democratic processes, such as the elections, using a series of socio-demographic factors, among which the most frequent are: the age, the residence, and the education, and attitude orientations, as the trust in other individuals and in institutions, civility, participation, etc. The civility, in the broad sense of the term, includes the political participation. Still, this does not mean that the lack of participation

to the elections is a lack of civility. The mechanisms of the participation to the elections are more psychologically complex and must be analysed inside a context. The civility, the trust in institutions and in others are values and indicators capable to describe the democracy level in a society to a certain point in time. To a scientific level, the democratic culture and the complexity of its manifestation occupies a central role. The mechanisms influencing the development of this type of culture fundamental for the present society are impressive due to the variety and variability of the ideological constructs on which they are based. Whether we discuss the trust in institutions or the participation level, we are in a situation of founding an explaining relation between the affinity to a political party or a political platform and the attachment level for a longer period. The interest in politics and the party attachment are fundamental features in the democratic education of the individuals. Their origins reside in the political socialisation. The political values of a society and its citizens' attitude are transmitted through the mechanisms of the political socialisation, a process present or not during our entire life. The socialisation process aims to adapt the personality of the individual to the norms of the society, a system of values manifested through political desires. The relation with the society, the environment, and the rigours of global social constructs are in fact a process of political origins.

Adapting to a changing world is the political desire of our evolution as society. In general, we discuss socialisation trying to exclude its connection with the society values gained through it, but, to a profound level, the identifying attitudes, as the ethnic and class self-representations and the religious actions, are political values. (Almond, Powell & Mundt, 1993) (Andrei Gheorghiuță, 2005)

This type of in-depth debate is always based on the need to clarify some ontological aspects, in this case the dispositional consistency of the interest in politics and the party attachment during the election process and campaigns and also beyond them, where the influence of the ideologic factors is different, especially in relation with the development degree of the society and with the constitutional organisation. Next to the ontological aspects, the modern society identify with the political systems that lead the collective destiny; the trust in the political parties, the capacity to actively participate to the periodical evaluation of the relation between individual and the attachment level to a party, and the civility are values characterising a specific society during a specific period.

Which are the reasons for the scientific interest in the manifestation of the party attachment? Why should we debate the political options to a generation? The answer is simple and engaging to a conceptual level. The political socialisation, the relation between family and society to this level, the way we understand to transfer valuable models, behavioural patterns, and cultural reasoning are contouring in fact the global society where the participation and the trust in democracy maintain an open societal environment, which still is rigorous as collective destiny.

A descendant trend is observable to the level of the European societies in the field of citizens' participation to several electoral scrutiny. A higher percentage for the participation to the local elections is partially explained by a more pronounced interaction between individuals, due to the necessity to solve community problems, as the local taxes, the infrastructural projects, the school networks, etc. a descendent trend is also observable in the Romanian society, where the participation to the vote visibly decreased after 2000 for the adult population and especially among the young people. New approaches on the political interest and the party attachment have as starting point several well-known points of view, according to which the politics in general does not manage to motivate anymore large masses of people, including the adult and young people, or the different vision of the society, especially to the young people.

In this context, the attempts to establish an optimal relation between the expectancy level of a society to a specific time and the political representatives, disregarding the form of participation, generate an interesting and theoretically appealing approach. Observing the things from a perspective different from the one presented so far, we believe that it is important to depict how the family works as an agent of political socialisation for the young generations and which is the intensity of the relation between various groups and influence and the formation or consolidation of typologies of electoral behaviour, participation, and trust, in order to further evaluate the level of political interest and the party attachment in specific cases.

2. Theoretic aspects related to the civic and political participation

The study of such complex issues raises the question of the respondents' competence to approach to their level of understanding the political processes, mechanisms, and events. In the same time, democracy, in its fundamental nature, depends on this relation of trust between institutions and individuals as part of a society where the politics, in its general understanding, plays an essential role. The behavioural and attachment modifications, the possible ideological distance between declarations and votes, fundamentally require observation to better understand a certain configuration of the social vision in relation with what we, as specialists, believe to be. Exercising a role of direct political socialisation, the family transmits values, explicit attitudes, and various feelings in relation with the politics. In the same time, we must not exclude the vision according to which the family also indirectly acts on the formation of the political culture. E.g.: the parents' emotional reaction toward a party or the explicit expression of a point of view related to a political person can influence the child's point of view for a long period. The Anglo-Saxon space consecrate the family with the main role in socialisation. The transmission of the political values is made in this environment in most cases, in an unplanned and spontaneous manner; the

child acknowledges these acquisitions in time, the peak being the adolescent age. Therefore, we will relate to the vision of the liberal theoreticians on the politic socialisation, where the family is considered the main agent of socialisation. The influence of the family on the individual to the level of the politic socialisation process is fundamental, with a strong emotional character, sometimes manifested in the entire life. This type of conclusion does not exclude the idea of individual experiences with a consistent effect on the expression of the party identification, party attachment, and the interest in politics.

We present a relevant example from the Romanian reality, quoting Dragoș Bucurenci, a journalist and communicator, who expressed his point of view on the protests against OUG 13/2017: "I was 8 when my dad took me to see what was happening in Piața Universității and, in my socialist mind (grandparents' influenced), the first doubts related to the TV news on the event appeared. It was the most important lesson of democracy. Since then, I always felt a little envy for those who had experienced Piața Universității "in their youth", because they had lived things I needed to grow to understand". This example shows the power of the things inherited from the family as attitude and behaviour able to act for a long period of time.

From the point of view of the scholars studying the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission of the political options, the childhood years is the period for the formation and development of the first political orientations, which are fundamental because they tend to remain stable in time. This remarkable root of the political orientation is nuanced by various personal experiences, the individual's level of preoccupation, and the interpretations of the political environment, but they rarely change in a lifetime. When the parents were consequent in their political opinions and the child proved a certain accuracy of perception, the intergenerational transfer is different than in the families where the consequence was reduced by frequent changes of option, determined by events in the political life, and where the child accuracy was lower (Percheron & Jennings, 1981) (Acock & Bengtson, 2005).

Returning to the fundamental theoretical aspects of our paper, we highlight that, in contact with the family during childhood, values as the participation, the attitude toward authority, the ethnic and religious positions are transmitted and developed. The literature in the field pays special attention to the so-called vote signals transmitted to the children by the parents or family. These signals give birth to the concept of party identification, a work hypothesis in the field of political science and of the sociology, because the parents transmit to the children their party identification, a fact explained by the strong correlation between the parents' intention to vote and their children. Under this aspect, the concept of party identification was defined by the representatives of the Michigan School: "an individual's feeling of personal attachment in relation with the chosen political party" (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954).

The importance of partisanship for the electoral studies is important because the closeness or the distance to a political party can direct the intention to vote and, later, the vote. The party identification relates to the electoral behaviour, but it cannot be always perceived as an absolute predictor of the decision to vote, because an electoral event or a change of leaders can change the decision to vote for a certain party. Beyond the contextualisation of the options of vote appearing in various historical moments, the electors' general tendency is to return to a party based on an affinity manifested for a long period. Harrop and Miller (1987) discuss the preservation of the party identity and the return to a party as option to a later and clearly defined moment. Thus, the affinity to a party is a constant reality even if the electoral behaviour changes in some punctual situations.

Historically, the first theories on the intergenerational transmission of the party attachment belong to the representatives of the Michigan School. Herbert Hyman (1959) remarked the fact that the first orientations related to a political issue happens during childhood and reflects the immediate social environment – the family.

The high level of correlation between the parents' and children's partisanship preferences is explained by the success of the transgenerational transmission of the political data. Harrop and Miller (1987) appreciate that “children learn loyalty to a party long before they understand what is behind a party label”. Thus, the primary acquisition of the political values appears during childhood. The adhesion expressed by the parent to a political party affectively determines a response of orientation and conformation during the adolescence. The intensity of this adhesion in time can determine later a specific political or civic militancy, a possible identification factor of the way in which the individual relates to a civic duty.

In other words, we need to take in consideration the rigours of various political systems when we discuss the congruence of the party affinity between parents and children. The stability of a politic environment and the political culture of a society or the larger/ more restricted structure, as numbers and ideology, of a party system of a country significantly impact the party identification. The intergenerational transfer of the partisanship is largely spread where the political system has a restricted number of parties, as in USA or Great Britain.

Thomassen (2008) proved, example given, that the Danish electorate cannot clearly distinct between the component of the party identification and the voting behaviour. Various researchers proved in time an aspect that may seem surprising until one point for the sociologists – part of the electorate identifies with more than one party. This last aspect makes us think to the Romanian political environment and the volatile electorate of various political groups appeared in the transition period and to the firm conclusion that the voters' life is longer than the life of the political parties.

Percheron and Jennings (1981) showed that, at the beginning of the '80s, that the party identification and the left-right ideological orientation

easily reverses the directions. The two theoreticians also discuss a number of four mechanisms that favour the placement of the ideologic orientation in the intergenerational transmission of the party attachment in front of the party identification; b) the presence of a strong left-wing formation in the system of parties; c) the existence of a dominant Catholic group; d) the perpetuation of a long time relation between religion and politics.

Starting with this model, Westholm and Niemi (1992) proposed at the beginning of the '90s the theory according to which the political similarity between generations can be induced through a series of indirect processes. The authors present the most important conclusions related to the partisanship, which is superior to the transfer of left-right ideologic transfer. They also show that the partisanship transfer increases with the growth of stability of the system of parties. They also remark that the direct transfer of ideologic orientation is stronger in the multi-party systems. Perhaps the most important conclusion is that, for most analysed cases, the relevance of the indirect transfer processes grows with the development of the association between the left-right ideologic transfer and partisanship.

Related to the electoral reality and of the individuals' axiological left-right placement, the situation is more nuanced than in the classic theories founding as explanation the individuals' ideologic political placement. In fact, the terms 'left' and 'right' are not always used by the electors as perception of an exclusive ideologic space, but rather as need to relate to a political complex where the aggregation of ideas is part in a more dynamic process than the one perceived by the usual electorate. The last one is positioned more toward in relation with the partisanship affiliation than with the classic ideology at the base of the manifestation of the partisanship. Raphael Ventura's studies (2001) show that a significant number of persons cannot or desire not to integrally manage the complexity of information coming from the politic environment and searches ways to simplify the instrument to place them pro or against different politic signals. There is a compensation mechanism achieved by finding the informational shortcuts to allow to an individual to position in relation with some symbolic labels, managed to decipher the complex information from the political environment.

The political labels, in Ventura's opinion, can crystalize the individuals' voting pattern. From the point of view of the intergenerational transmission, the child learns to identify and to relate himself /herself to a specific label, an aspect that can be interpreted as transmitting voting signals, concretised to a mature age. In the Israelian politic scientist's vision, the family can directly (actively) transmit different types of labels, as explanation of the differences between certain negative and positive aspects in the political life or as clear explanation of the politic identity. Discussing this active manner, which is strategic to a certain level and consequent in time, Kent Jennings remarks that the well-socialised young people manifest continuity for a longer period in relation with the party identification. These young people resist more to the changes in the political environment, meaning that the changes of opinions and

behaviour are less present in their case. This type of conclusion can be interpreted as specific to the powerfully politized families, but the reality has proved a more nuanced state of things.

We will further refer to a theme which is interesting for the political scientists, sociologists, and psychologists in the same time: each parent's power to transfer to the children political values, attitudes, labels, behaviours, ideological typologies, etc. to a historical level, the wide accepted traditional vision considered that the masculine part of the family has a determinant political role in the family interactions. Traditionally, in the families with many political options, the women (wives) changed their political options more than the men. In many of the studied societies, the idea that the politics concerns more the husbands was a strong stereotype.

Kent Jennings and Langton performed at the end of the '60s a qualitative study based on triple interviews father-mother-child on 558 American families. The husbands and their wives were classified depending on homogeneity/ heterogeneity. Homogeneity was understood as mother and father with similar political opinions, while heterogeneity meant different opinions and even conflicts on the partisanship. The resulted distribution is presented as follows: in 57% of cases the mother, the father and the son had the same affiliation, in 17% of cases, even if the parents shared the same opinions, the child had a different opinion, and in 26% of cases the parents had a different opinion and the child shared one of their opinions.

The conclusions formulated by Jennings and Langton (1969) are centred around several ideas that put left their mark on the literature in the field. We briefly mention them. The two authors observed that the mothers tend to have the predominant role in maintaining this homogeneity in the families with consonant opinions. In the same time, the mothers' influence is higher in the families with divergent opinions. The same level of mothers' influence on the children was observed in the families with a high level of education.

In case of divergent opinions related to partisanship, the child will mostly choose the option of the parent he/she feels closer; the congruence between mother and daughter is higher than between mother and son, father and daughter, and father and son. Jennings' study is fundamental for the explanation of the differences of gender roles in the intergenerational transmission of the partisanship, showing the reality of the American model from this point of view.

The functioning of a democracy depends of a complex of interacting factors considered in the present approach: institutions and their representatives, formal and informal rules, and the citizens. To a conceptual level, the correlation between all these factors is determined by what we generically call the citizens' cultural politics, motivating them to participate to the governing levels, whether locally or nationally (Almond & Verba, 1996). This difference between the local and the national level becomes more relevant

for the citizens' level of trust in the institutions; the "separation" between citizens and institutions is larger for the national institutions (Comşa, 2004).

The doctrine considers that the civic-political participation mainly refers to the forms of the citizens' concrete participation to activities and actions dedicated to the representatives' political election, and the high influence on the decisions of the political representatives and institutions in their relations with the citizens. Thus, the political representation is a voluntary manifested process, where the individuals as citizens involve in activities aiming to influence the activities of some political decision-makers. The civic-political participation can be observed through the filter of the individuality or groups where it manifests. In a classical sense, we can observe that the level of social cohesion is higher when the interests of the representatives (elected by the citizens after a democratic process) are in harmony with the interests of the citizens. The civic-political participation was perceived in time as an individual's necessity to protect his interest, as a moral duty to the society, as a perpetuation of a social norm relevant as ritual (the participation to the vote is a relevant example), and as a way to report the level of expectancy in the society toward the behaviour and decisions of the political factor.

The main category of factors influencing the participation are everyone's specificity – education, income, residence, age, occupation – the features of the political and electoral system, the frequency of the electoral scrutiny, the electoral procedures and rules, the role of the parties, their number, the political and cultural context, the capacity of the parties to communicate and disseminate messages, the structure of the campaign and its type, the scrutiny type, the candidates' quality and the high stake of the scrutiny (Reitan, 2003).

The correlations between status and participation are more visible. The studies proved that the individual's economic level majorly impacts the area of civic or politic voluntarism in the field of a frequent participation to various social actions. The explanation is relatively simple: the individuals confronted with a material lack are more preoccupied to satisfy a certain type of needs; therefore, they have less time for aspects related to the social participation.

The place of residence also influences some aspects of participation. If we refer, for example, to the participation to the vote, we can observe that people living in the rural areas present a higher level of conformation to this type of social norms, when compared with the people living in the urban areas. If we refer to the participation to rallies and various protest actions, and to signing petitions, we can observe that the people living in the urban, especially the young people, area are more active. Observing the participatory act of voting, we need to observe if the continuously decreasing participation is an age feature, a positioning toward the relevance of this social norm or, on the contrary, a general effect of the relevance of the democratic system for the citizens.

The social system of values and the system of values of the young people is strongly connected to participation. The support for the principles of the political system represents a strong adhesion to a system of values with which the individuals identify beyond the dissemination power of the democratic mechanism. The traditional systems of values favour the conventional participation, e.g. the vote. To a general level, we can consider that most of the young people are aware of their power of influence, especially to a declarative level. It is proved that the young people participate to protests, boycotts and signs petitions for structural changes to the level of the political decision-maker.

The studies on the citizen participation in Romania and the empowerment of the institutions and of the elected decision-makers are few but valuable due to the presented methodological aspects. In a study dedicated to the evaluation of the Law 52/2003, Mircea Comșa analyses the involvement of the citizens and local institutions in the governance, and the preferred modalities for the interaction with the local public management.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the interest in politics and the party attachment are fundamental features for the individuals' democratic education and originate in what we conceptually call the politic sociology. The political values of a society and the attitude of its citizens are transmitted through the mechanisms of the political socialisation, a life-long process. The socialisation process aims to adapt the individual's personality to the norms of the society and the system of values manifested as political desiderates. There is a descendant trend to the level of the European societies for the electoral participation. The higher percentage to the local elections can be explained to a certain extent by the more profound interaction of the individuals with the necessity to find common solutions for the community. Values as the participation, the attitude toward the authority, and the ethnic and religious positioning are transmitted and developed since childhood in the family. The dedicated literature pays special attention to the so-called signals of vote transmitted to the children by the family or by one parent. These signals of vote will give birth to the concept of party identification, a work hypothesis in the field of political science and sociology, because the parents transmit to the children their party identification, a fact proved by many theories on the intergenerational transmission of the party attachment.

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