Rejuvenating Politics: Young Political Participation in a Changing World

In the introduction, we demonstrated that youth participation in electoral politics has declined in recent decades, albeit at different rates and at different times in different democracies. The large, mainstream catch-all parties, founded on cleavages of blue-collar and white-collar workers, do not reflect the reality of our postindustrial societies. This partly explains the process of 'voter dealignment' – the weakening of collective ties between citizens and political parties. Furthermore, the total share of the vote for catch-all parties, such as the Conservatives and Labour in the UK and Christian Democrats and Social Democrats in Germany, has eroded dramatically during this period.

One reason for optimism regarding youth participation, is that young people continue to engage in 'politics' (broadly understood) despite their relative lack of enthusiasm for politicians and political parties. European Social Survey data reveal that young people in the UK are as interested in politics as their peers elsewhere in Europe, despite the slump in youth voter turnout after the early 1990s (Sloam 2016). This suggests that the problem is less to do with a general lack of political engagement and more to do with the disconnection between young people and the political system.

Further evidence is provided by the growth in non-electoral and non-institutionalized forms of political engagement over several decades. Inglehart and Welzel (2005), for example, showed how levels of

participation in petitions, boycotts and demonstrations doubled in the UK and the Federal Republic of Germany (and increased by around a third in the United States) between the 1970s and the 2000s. Dalton (2017: 93) similarly argues that, if we include other actions such as contacting local government, protest, petition signing, political consumerism and online participation, 'the contemporary US public displays a substantially higher level of activity than in the 1960s'.

Figure 2.1 illustrates how aggregate rates of youth participation in petitions, boycotts and demonstrations (just three of the many non-electoral forms of participation) today far exceed aggregate rates of voting in national elections and political party membership. This is the case in the United States, the UK and the six other established European democracies – France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden – included in Wave 5 of the World Values Survey. In the UK, 18–24 year olds were almost twice as likely to participate in these non-electoral forms of political action than they were to vote or be a member of a party. It is also worth adding that citizens do not have the opportunity to vote in parliamentary or presidential elections every year – indeed, they have taken place on average once every two or three years in the eight countries in Fig. 2.1.[1] By contrast, World Values Survey data shows that in 2011 around a third of young Americans, young Swedes and young Germans had signed a petition multiple times during the previous 12 months alone.
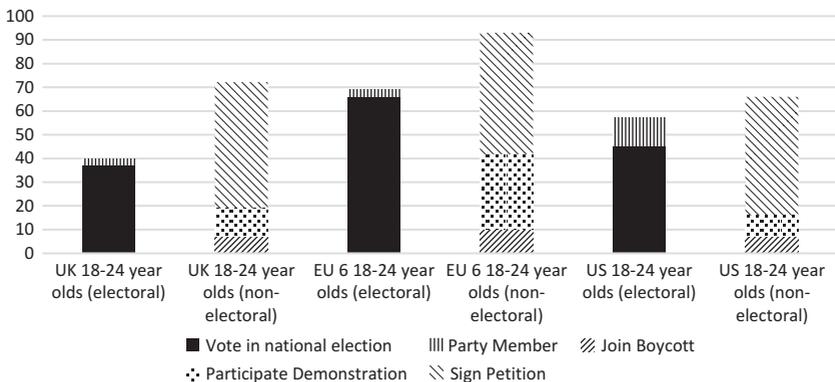

Fig. 2.1 Youth (18–24 year old) participation in electoral and non-electoral forms of politics in Europe and the United States (%). (Source: World Values Survey, Wave 5 (2005–2009))

When large, established political parties have prospered amongst young people in recent times, they have usually done so by electing a leader who is perceived to be more *authentic* or through the adoption of a radical policy programme. With regard to cosmopolitan-left politics, the Labour Party in New Zealand achieved a double-digit increase in its share of the vote in 2017, in an election that saw a 7% increase in youth turnout and about two thirds of 18–30 year olds voting for Labour (New Zealand Herald, 20 September 2017). This youth support for Labour, with its most interventionist agenda in decades, helped to propel 37-year-old Jacinda Ardern to the prime ministership at the head of a Labour-led coalition government. However, in the same year, the 31-year-old Sebastian Kurz (of the conservative People's Party) was elected as Chancellor of Austria. His anti-Islamic campaign was founded on the reassertion of 'Austrian values' and opposition to immigration. The People's Party, together with the far-right Freedom Party, captured the support of 58% of 18–30 year olds and two thirds of young men with low levels of educational attainment (SORA 2017). The unexpected success of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 US presidential race illustrated (even more starkly) the rise of radical, anti-establishment candidates. In all these cases, the resurgence of cultural politics, whether authoritarian-nationalist or cosmopolitan in character, has been evident. We would add to this list, the 2016 EU referendum and the 2017 General Election in the UK.

This chapter provides a theoretical account of young people's political engagement in the UK and other established democracies. It begins by outlining the changing social, economic and political conditions for engagement. These include the increasing prominence of identity politics, austerity in public spending since the start of the 2008 global financial crisis, and the role of new media in facilitating political engagement. Afterwards, it looks at *agent-centred* theories that account for Young Millennials' attitudes towards, and participation or non-participation in, various forms of politics. We proceed by highlighting the *cultural turn* – the emergence of postmaterialist politics and contentious cultural issues over recent decades. Finally, the chapter fleshes out the cosmopolitan character and leftward drift of youth politics in contemporary Britain and other democratic systems. Here, we present our own conceptualisation of *young cosmopolitans* in an era of economic and cultural conflict.

Youth political Participation
* *Identity Politics, Postmaterialism*
* *Everday Politics, Stand-by Citizens*
* *Digitally Networked Action*
* *Young Cosmopolitans*, Leftward Drift

Political Change
* Weakening Partisanship
* Politics-to-Policy (managerialism, *good governance*)
* Outsourcing of Policy (by national governments)
* New Forms of Political Communication

Economic & Social Change
* Increased Economic Prosperity (1960s to financial crisis)
* Individualization of Values & Lifestyles
* Economic & Cultural Globalization
* Emergence of Social Networks & Network Society
* Rise of Web 2.0 & Social Media
* Economic Hardship (since 2008)

Fig. 2.2 Trends in young people's politics

SHIFTING TECTONIC PLATES

Over several decades, the tectonic plates that shape and sustain democratic participation have shifted. The changes have been economic, social, cultural and political in nature, and are all interlinked (see Fig. 2.2, below).

Between the 1960s and the 2000s, postindustrial democracies experienced a prolonged period of economic growth, increasing levels of educational attainment, a reconfiguration of the labour market, and the loosening of traditional norms regarding religion and family life. As a

result, transitions from youth to adulthood have become delayed and staggered (Arnett 2004; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Flanagan 2013). Young people stay in education longer, enter full-time employment later, and marry and have children at an older age than was the case in previous decades. In the European Union, the number of 15–24 year-olds still in education rose from 49% in 1987 to 58% in 1995 to 68% in 2007, and the median age for a young person entering the workforce rose from 18 to 20 during the same period (European Commission 2008). In the United States, the proportion of 20 year olds who were married fell from 79% to 22% between 1967 and 2014 while the proportion of young men in work by this age fell by half (Dalton 2017: 92). Smets (2012) shows that these changes have profound implications for political participation – countries with more heterogeneous maturity patterns have larger disparities in voting between older and younger citizens.

Young Millennials have more opportunities than previous generations, but also face greater *risks* than their predecessors (Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Structural changes in the labour market mean that there is no longer any real prospect of a *job for life* (Goodwin et al. 2017; Bessant 2018), whilst the breakdown of traditional social mores has led to identities that are shaped by fluid categories of class, community, ethnicity and culture (Bauman 2000). These developments have led to the individualization of values and lifestyles and the growth of identity politics. Young people must constantly reinvent themselves economically and socially – from their CVs to their Facebook profiles – within a network society (Castells 2015). When citizens do engage, they increasingly participate in personally meaningful causes guided by their own lifestyles and shifting social networks (Norris 2002; Bennett and Segerberg 2013).

Another central dynamic in postindustrial economies and societies is *globalization*, which Held (2003: 516) describes as the 'growing interconnectedness and intensification of relations among states and societies'. This process has involved a sharp increase in the volume of international trade and financial transactions, and of multinational companies. In a globalized and globalizing world, individual outlooks, behaviours and feelings can transcend local and national boundaries (Held 2003). And, 'it is through engagements with various forms and representations of the global [from international markets to the European Union] that cosmopolitan, or anti-cosmopolitan values surface and find expression' (Woodward et al. 2008: 210). Indeed, cosmopolitanism is often defined as the acceptance of and adaptation to globalization, whilst religious fundamentalism,

nationalism, and ethnic and territorial identities are often depicted in opposition to this process (Beck 1996; Castells 1997).

Political action is increasingly centred around everyday issues that challenge citizens' identities, and can bubble-up with great speed and intensity. Black Lives Matter, for example, emerged as a national movement in the United States in 2014 in response to cases of police brutality against mainly black men (such as that of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri) and immediately struck a chord with civil rights groups across the country. In October 2017, #MeToo encouraged women to record their experiences of sexual assault in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal. Within two months, the #MeToo status had been posted on Facebook 100 million times across more than a hundred countries. In February 2018, a mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, led to the establishment of a survivors' group supporting tighter gun controls under the hashtag #NeverAgain. This grew into a nationwide movement pushing for gun controls and calling for action against politicians and companies associated with the National Rifle Association. The resulting 'March for Our Lives' rallies on 24 March 2018 attracted hundreds of thousands of young people across the country.

Physical location remains important for young people's politics: in fostering a sense of identity, in offering spaces to practice democratic skills, and in providing symbolic locations (such as city squares and university campuses) for political action (Weller 2003; Hopkins and Todd 2015). However, the sheer diversity of the Millennial Generation, coupled with the rise of new communication technologies has led to the reformation of communities across traditional territorial boundaries, so that political action has become increasingly channelled through social networks across 'hybrid public spaces' (Castells 2015). In this respect:

> A person may make use of diversity in order to create a distinctive self-identity, which positively incorporates elements from different settings into an integrated narrative. Thus, a cosmopolitan is precisely one that draws strength from being at home in a variety of contexts. (Giddens 1991: 88)

Conversely, greater diversity has also provoked an authoritarian-nationalist reaction, leading to the retreat of those who feel threatened by these changes into national, regional and religious identities.

As we have already noted, different democracies have quite different patterns of political participation. We can observe large variations even

across similar democratic systems. For example, youth voter turnout in the UK was approximately 40% for the four elections between 2001 and 2015, compared to 80% in Sweden during the same period (Sloam 2016). In France and Spain there is a strong tradition of youth participation in public demonstrations. In the UK, it is more common for a young person to sign a petition than in most other European countries. In the United States, young people are very active in community projects (Dalton 2017). However, as we pointed out in the introduction, there has been a worryingly large gap in the UK between the electoral participation of younger people and older generations.

Nevertheless, there are trends that are common to all these countries (Fig. 2.2, above). As we previously argued, the representative capacity of mainstream politicians and traditional political institutions has weakened significantly in recent decades. At the same time, the growth of issue-based lifestyle politics has supported a transition from politics to policy, whereby citizens, politicians and government officials have together shifted 'the emphasis from democratic participation to good governance' (Bang and Esmark 2009: 18). On the one hand, this can be viewed as a positive development, increasing opportunities for citizen interaction with policymakers through *small scale democracy* (Goul-Anderson and Roβteutscher 2007). On the other hand, the belief of many political representatives in the logic of deregulation of public services and the depoliticization of policy-making has led to the *outsourcing of policy* to expert bodies, international institutions and even international markets (Burnham 2001; Held 2003; Hay 2007). This, in turn, has helped fuel the rise of managerialism in politics.[2] Considering these developments, there is also a tendency to view citizens as customers rather than democratic citizens. As a result, public consultations can easily become instrumentalized. Chadwick and May (2003) show, for example, how e-democracy was transformed from being perceived (by politicians) as a tool of democratic participation to being viewed as an instrument for efficient government (providing cheap and convenient online services).

The economic *risks* for young people from all social groups have been exacerbated by the recent financial crisis (Fig. 2.2). In most countries, youth unemployment increased considerably in the five years after 2008, whilst jobs have also become more precarious (Verick 2009; Erk 2017). In those countries worst affected by the sovereign debt crisis, such as Greece and Spain, youth unemployment surpassed 50% (OECD 2015). Moreover, austerity in public spending has placed a disproportionate burden on the

young (Willetts 2011). The Intergenerational Foundation (2016) has demonstrated how intergenerational inequalities have increased in the UK due to the long-term pressures of an ageing population (such as the burgeoning of public sector pensions liabilities) and a further economic squeeze on Millennials since 2008: including, a 10% cut in real terms spending on education between 2010 and 2016, the stagnation of wages, the rising costs of housing, and the trebling of university tuition fees in 2012.

We should also remember that an individual's position and progress in society are not only determined by their cognitive and social skills (though they do play an important role), but also by their economic class, gender and ethnicity (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). These factors can affect whether a young person is invited to a job interview (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2003), how they are treated by official authorities, and the barriers or opportunities for their entry into representative politics. These intragenerational inequalities are particularly acute in the UK, Italy, France and the United States, which have the lowest levels of social mobility amongst advanced OECD economies (OECD 2015). This clearly matters for youth political participation given what we know about the key role of economic resources in determining whether or not an individual participates in politics (Verba et al. 1995).

Theories of Youth Participation

In the introduction we outlined competing claims regarding youth political participation. A number of authors have lamented the decline in youth voter turnout and engagement in key social and political institutions. Robert Putnam's (2000) *Bowling Alone* is perhaps the best-known example of this work. Another branch of the literature has pointed to the proliferation of youth participation across a vast array of alternative, non-electoral and non-institutionalized forms of engagement. Pippa Norris (2002) has, thus, conceived of political participation as a *Democratic Phoenix*, evolving to adapt to new political, economic and social realities.

What is certain is that young people's perceptions of politics and repertoires of engagement have changed. Political participation is increasingly viewed through the lens of individual action frameworks, whereby 'formal organizations are losing their grip on individuals, and group ties are being replaced by large-scale fluid social networks' (Bennett and Segerberg 2012: 748). These networks form the basis of alternative modes of political

engagement that seem to better fit younger citizens' preferences for horizontal forms of engagement. For example, it is much more attractive to sign an online petition, forwarded by a friend, on online 'snooping' by the state, than to actively promote the broad programme of a top-down organisation like a political party.

Earlier in the chapter, we recognised the transition from politics to policy as a fundamental change in modern democratic politics. Amnå and Ekman (2014) make some important arguments about the temporal nature of issue-based participation. In their study of young people in Sweden, they identified 'four faces of political passivity': an 'active' group with high levels of interest and participation (6% of the sample); 'standby' citizens with high interest and average participation (45%); an 'unengaged' group with low levels of interest and average participation (27%); and, 'disillusioned' citizens with low participation and low interest (22%) (Amnå and Ekman 2014: 274). So, just under half of young Swedes can be described as *standby citizens*, who 'stay alert, keep themselves informed about politics by bringing up political issues in everyday life contexts, and are willing and able to participate if needed' (Amnå and Ekman 2014: 262). This has implications for our understandings of why young people turn out to vote in transformative elections. It suggests that many young people will turn out to vote when they can identify with the issues emphasized by a candidate or party – a point reinforced by evidence from Henn et al. (2017).

If the Millennial Generation is primarily concerned with issue-based engagement, the outsourcing of public policy (within the context of globalization) helps to explain why today's young people target a more diverse range of political, economic and social actors than previous generations. Individual (young) citizens might simultaneously support issues and causes across several geographical planes – for example, by campaigning for better recycling in schools and colleges, while at the same time being an active member of an international environmental organisation such as Greenpeace.[3]

Yet, within the context of globalization and the individualization of values and lifestyles, young citizens also wish to anchor themselves to ideological or values-based parties, movements and candidates. According to Spannring and her colleagues (2008: 73), 'the managerial approach shared by most politicians does not offer young people ideals and values with which to identify'. The preference for issue-based engagement and the desire for politicians and causes in which they can believe, together pose

an immense challenge for political parties. To connect with young people, these parties must emphasize and communicate policies that young people are interested in, whilst at the same time providing them with an *authentic* set of values or ideology with which they can identify (Henn and Foard 2014). Electoral *youthquakes* are the consequence of a political party or candidate meeting this challenge.

After the onset of the financial crisis, we experienced an initial surge in youth participation in non-electoral forms of politics, motivated by frustration and anger with the politicians and public policy and facilitated by recent advances in communications technologies. The Internet and social media have enabled a dramatic speeding up of political mobilisation by: acting as a real-time filter for alternative politics, where only the most resonant ideas – such as 'The outraged young' and 'We are the 99%!' – rise to the surface; and, radically reducing communication costs for participation (Bimber et al. 2005). During this wave of youth protest we have witnessed the emergence of a new 'logic of connective action… based on personalized content sharing across media networks' (Bennett and Segerberg 2012: 739). This perfect storm of political outrage and readily available new technology facilitated the engagement of many young people into social movements, such as Occupy and the Spanish Indignados, with a cosmopolitan-left core. This, in turn, laid the seeds for their participation in the electoral process where and when the conditions were right.

Web 2.0 and social media have also become important features of electoral politics. First, they have dramatically altered how young people learn about politics. Comparative research across 36 countries by the Reuters Institute (2017) found that the proportion of adults using social media as a news source almost doubled (from 23% to 46%) between 2013 and 2017. Nearly two thirds (60%) of 18–24 year olds used online sources or social media as their main source of news (46% used Facebook to obtain political information) in 2017 compared to only 28% of over 55s.[4] The research also revealed that just under a quarter (24%) of young people used TV as their primary source of political news, compared to one half (51%) of over 55s. Interestingly, for our study of *young cosmopolitans*, the report also shows that, in certain countries (including the UK, the United States and Italy), new news media have a socially liberal and economically left-wing political orientation.

These new communication technologies are also increasingly utilised by political actors. The 2008 Obama campaign for the US presidency pioneered the use of the Web 2.0 and social media in elections. The Obama

team maximized the potential of email, text messaging and social networking sites to spread their message, raise money and mobilize supporters. In doing so, they established a nationwide virtual network of over three million contributors in less than 12 months (Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez 2011). The campaign, thus, empowered mainly younger citizens to engage their friends and family in Obama's bid for the presidency. And, the organic growth of the 'Students for Barack Obama' Facebook group was 'so effective at energizing college-age voters that senior aides made it an official part of the campaign' (Vargas 2008: 2). As we shall see in Chap. 5, this bears a resemblance to the communication strategy of the Labour Party in the run-up to the 2017 General Election. The use of non-traditional media and horizontal forms of citizen-to-citizen engagement was a vital ingredient in attracting young people to the Labour cause – especially given the negative portrayal of Jeremy Corbyn in the mainstream media.

Whilst the existing literature on youth political participation does a good job in explaining new trends, it often neglects the social inequalities of participation.[5] There are many young people who are not politically engaged or active. And, these young people tend to come from poorer backgrounds, to not go on to higher education, and to leave school with few, if any, qualifications. This large segment of the youth population tends to be – in Amnå and Ekman's (2014) terms – *disillusioned* and *disengaged*. Schlozman et al. (2010), thus, depict the Internet as 'the weapon of the strong', noting the *digital divide* in online participation. And, evidence suggests that young people who engage in non-electoral forms of politics are usually the very same individuals who also engage in electoral politics. Those disengaged or disillusioned young people are, in direct opposition to young cosmopolitans, likely to react negatively to the perceived threats of cultural diversity and immigration. When they do, on occasion, become engaged in politics, these young outsiders are often attracted to authoritarian-nationalist values and causes. The National Front (FN) in France is an example of a far-right party that has been very successful at appealing to this demographic (Lubbers and Scheepers 2002). The FN gathered 6% of the youth (18–24 year old) vote in the first round of the presidential election in 2007, 18% in 2012 and 21% in 2017 (Martin 2017). In the second round run-off of the 2017 French Presidential Election, Marine Le Pen, the FN Leader, gained 44% of the youth vote compared to 20% of over 65s (The Independent, 1 May 2017).

THE RISE OF POSTMATERIALISM

So far in this chapter, we have considered a range of debates and an array of empirical data that, when combined, point to the importance of economic, social and political changes in shaping young people's political values, engagement and participation across a range of contemporary postindustrial societies. We have also argued that these developments and processes have impacted on different groups of youth in different ways.

The underlying causes of these trends are much debated. One prominent theory which seeks to account for citizens' (of all ages) apparent disconnection with formal politics, their shifting values and their increasing rejection of mainstream parties and their concerns about the limitations of existing democratic processes, is Inglehart's *postmaterialist thesis* (Inglehart 1971; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). According to this theory, citizens' political values are profoundly impacted by their adolescent experiences, particularly by the material circumstances prevalent during any particular period – 'period effects' as opposed to long-term generational effects. Where pre-adult socialization occurs under conditions of relative economic austerity, people's values will tend to focus on immediate materialist concerns, emphasizing economic and physical security. Such citizens are likely to be attracted to policies geared towards low inflation, employment growth, immigration control and law and order. In contrast, where those socialization experiences are gained during times of relative economic prosperity, citizens will be pre-disposed towards postmaterialist preferences, valuing quality of life issues such as political and expressive freedoms, environmental sustainability and global social justice. They will also be increasingly disenchanted with the limits of existing democratic arrangements, and instead be drawn toward alternative and transformative politics (Inglehart 1997) including looser non-institutional forms of political participation created from below (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

The value of Inglehart's postmaterialist thesis has been the subject of significant debate, and its theoretical claims have been tested in numerous studies, including a small number that consider youth in Britain (Majima and Savage 2007; Sloam 2007; Theocharis 2011; Rheingans and Hollands 2013; Henn et al. 2017). Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence to suggest that postmaterial value change is gaining momentum, globally. Indeed, all eight of the EU15 countries studied by Inglehart and Welzel (2005) became much more postmaterialist between 1970 and 2000, and postmaterialist values are found to be particularly advanced within younger
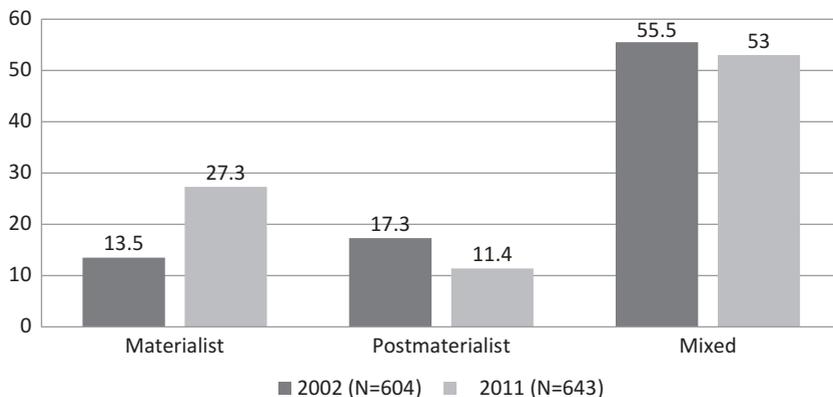
Fig. 2.3 Materialist, postmaterialist and 'mixed' value preferences of young Britons (19 year olds), 2002–2011 (%). (Source: Henn and Weinstein 2003; Henn and Foard 2012)

generations. Figure 2.3 indicates that even during the austerity conditions ushered in by the 2008 global financial crisis, postmaterialist values remained evident amongst a noticeable minority of young people in Britain – although as expected, numbers have fallen from the more economically secure environment of a decade earlier.

The endurance of postmaterialist values – even under current austerity conditions – is significant, because postmaterialists tend towards lifestyle politics, and are much more likely than materialists to engage in non-electoral forms of politics such as signing a petition, joining a boycott and participating in a demonstration (Copeland 2014; Stolle et al. 2005). What is more, the long-term spread of postmaterialist values has created new cultural cleavages to rival the old postindustrial (materialist-economic) ones. The emergence of new social movements and political parties from the libertarian left and the authoritarian right have made the political landscape more complex.

However, there are large variations across these postindustrial countries. In many, the increasing prominence of postmaterialist values has led to the rise of alternative political parties, resulting in the participation of Green parties in several European governments (Muller-Rommel and Poguntke 2013). In the United States, it has led to the rejuvenation of political campaigning for socially liberal candidates (as illustrated by youth

political activism in the Obama and Sanders campaigns) and a significant increase in collective political action for local causes (Dalton 2017). Young Britons, without the same opportunities for engagement, have become more involved with volunteering or charity work and direct action (Birdwell and Bani 2014).

Henn et al. (2017) use Inglehart's four-item materialist-postmaterialist scale to compare the values and political participation preferences of British young materialists, postmaterialists and those who hold intermediate or "mixed" views, during periods of relative economic prosperity and of economic insecurity. It supports Inglehart's claims (2016) that, even under the austerity conditions of the current global recession, the materialist-postmaterialist cleavage retains importance – this is evident in terms of young people's political values, and particularly so with respect to their political participation.

Henn et al.'s results (2017) indicate that during periods of both economic affluence and scarcity, postmaterialists are considerably more likely than other young people to feel dissatisfied with the way that democracy works in their country. Indeed, they are especially critical of the practice of electoral politics and are keen supporters of proposals to reform the first-past-the-post system to break the hegemony of the traditional mainstream parties, and to back emergent parties. Interestingly, although young postmaterialists in the UK seem particularly sceptical of the value of institutionalized electoral politics, they are significantly *more* likely than their contemporaries to consider voting in future elections, whether national, European or local. They are also the most likely youth group to engage in party politics by activities trying to convince someone else how to vote, donating money to a political party, or working for a political party during an election campaign. This seems somewhat contrary to Inglehart's thesis that postmaterialists would be especially frustrated by the limits of existing electoral methods. However, it might instead be argued that their willingness to vote perhaps reflects the fact that postmaterialist youth will turn to any form of political action available that offers them the means to challenge austerity politics in the UK.

Less surprising is that young postmaterialists are more interested in non-institutionalized and extra-parliamentary forms of action than materialist youth. This fits with the findings of other studies which suggest that young postmaterialists are attracted to political action that accords with their individuated life-styles and which they consider to be more expressive, less hierarchical, more flexible and ultimately more effective

(Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Busse et al. 2015; Soler-i-Marti 2014; Tormey 2015). These range from low impact activities such as discussing politics with family or friends through to more demanding activities such as involvement in community associations, charity groups or youth forums, participation in protests, rallies or demonstrations, or working with other people to address a public issue or tackle a particular social problem.

The data also indicate that young postmaterialists are particularly tolerant of others who engage in extra-parliamentary actions, and see the use of such methods of political participation as having potentially greater value and efficacy than voting in elections. For instance, they were much more likely than other young people to agree with the notion that people should be allowed to organise public meetings in protest against the government. Furthermore, they consider that getting involved with campaigning and single issue pressure groups (such as Greenpeace) provides a more effective means to influencing the government than being active in a political party. Interestingly, young postmaterialists also expressed support for people who use direct action *to change the political world*. Again, such styles of political participation are considered to have considerably more value than parliamentary-focussed activities.

In all of these areas, the distinctiveness of young postmaterialists is noticeably more evident for those socialised under conditions of 'austerity' (the 2011 cohort) than those who reached the age of attainment under the significantly more affluent circumstances in the early years of the new Millennium (the 2002 cohort). This would seem to run counter to Inglehart's thesis that postmaterialist values and outlooks would be most evident amongst young people socialised during periods of relative economic security, and support recent claims that young Britons have been radicalised by their experiences of austerity politics, and are choosing to embrace alternative styles of political action. We will develop this idea in the next section when we consider the rise of young cosmopolitans – a group of leftist-oriented youth who in many respects mirror Inglehart's postmaterialists in that they express particular dissatisfaction with existing democratic processes and institutions, and are increasingly drawn to new transformative agendas and visions for change.

Young Cosmopolitans

Our conception of young cosmopolitans builds upon the work of Norris and Inglehart (2018), emphasizing the *cultural turn*, which so distinguishes Millennials from older generations, but also the leftward drift that is particularly prevalent amongst many young people in countries which, like the UK, experienced a prolonged period of austerity after 2008.

Norris and Inglehart (2018) write of the increasing importance of a cultural axis in contemporary liberal democracies – from populism, conservatism and nationalism at one end, to cosmopolitan liberalism at the other end. Whilst the left-right economic axis remains significant, they argue that the emergence of this cultural cleavage has accelerated over the past ten years since the onset of the global financial crisis Norris and Inglehart (2018). In the UK context, Sanders and Twyman (2016) divide the electorate into four 'tribes': 'liberal left', 'liberal centre-right', 'centrist-moderate', and 'authoritarian-populist'.

The book focusses on these *cosmopolitan-liberal* and *liberal left* groups – referred to here as the 'cosmopolitan left' – who Sanders and Twyman (2016: 4) claim represent 37% of all British adults and 43% of 18–29 year olds. The *cosmopolitan-left* incorporates a leftist belief in state intervention to address economic inequalities and provide well-funded public services (including free education), and a cosmopolitan belief in human rights, outward-looking and inclusive societies, and a relatively relaxed attitude towards immigration (Young Cosmopolitans 2018; Sanders and Twyman 2016: 3). We would emphasize, in the UK context, this group's positive attitudes towards cultural diversity and European integration. In the following empirical chapters, we therefore investigate the existence of materialist and postmaterialist values amongst young people (before and after the onset of the financial crisis), and youth support for both social liberal and economically redistributive policy programmes.

Efforts to categorise emerging political and cultural cleavages are not without their critics (Bean and Papadakis 1994; Duch and Taylor 1994). The aggregation of individuals into broad groups may overlook important intra-group differences. Moreover, axes of political and cultural values may gloss over the nuanced realities of anti-establishment parties and movements. Young people may, for example, advocate protection of the environment, but favour tough action against terrorism. And, the cosmopolitan-left in Greece and Spain tends to be Eurosceptic – given the tough austerity measures imposed by the EU. But the same group in the

UK was overwhelmingly supportive of European Union membership in the 2016 referendum. So, national political and social contexts are crucial in determining how cosmopolitan-left values translate into political action. In the empirical sections of the book, we are sensitive to these structural factors.

The question of ethnic diversity and how countries should integrate different cultures and traditions has become a central feature of electoral politics. As our societies have become more open and diverse – and in response to terrorist attacks carried out by 'home-grown' Daesh-inspired individuals and groups – resistance to cosmopolitan values has also grown. Mainstream, usually centre-right, politicians have attempted to tap into this authoritarian-nationalist sentiment in order to outflank populist movements and parties. In late 2010 and early 2011, David Cameron, Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel (then, Prime Minister of the UK, President of France and Chancellor of Germany) all decried the *failure of multiculturalism* in their respective countries.[6] According to Sarkozy: 'We have been too concerned about the identity of the person who was arriving and not concerned enough about the identity of the country that is receiving him' (Daily Telegraph, 11 May 2011). What these statements mean in practice is open to interpretation.

These political interventions on the subjects of immigration and national identity fuelled a public debate in many countries about the future of cosmopolitanism. Jeremy Cliffe (2015), in a paper for Policy Network, addressed this theme directly from a liberal perspective. He argued that Britain was becoming more like London: its citizens were increasingly diverse, highly educated, urban, socially liberal, and possessing an international outlook. Cliffe's point that greater ethnic diversity will inevitably bring about a greater preponderance of cosmopolitan values may appear naïve to some, given the rise of UKIP and the EU referendum result (Ford and Goodwin 2014) as well as the conservative values of some immigrant groups (Katwala 2015). He nevertheless captured the essence of many Young Millennials, who, though outnumbered by older citizens, have become increasingly prepared to defend these values in the political arena.

After the EU referendum and the decision for Brexit, it was widely assumed that anti-cosmopolitan or populist-nationalist rhetoric would be politically useful in gaining the support of Leave voters. Prime Minister Theresa May's address to the 2016 Conservative Party Conference attacked political and economic elites as 'citizens of nowhere' (Daily Telegraph, 5 October 2016). Although this strategy succeeded in attracting

back many voters to the Conservatives from UKIP, it also turned many socially liberal, pro-EU, younger voters towards Labour. Jeremy Corbyn was able to capitalize on this sentiment through his liberal credentials on cultural diversity and immigration, despite his ambivalent views on the EU expressed during the referendum campaign.

In many countries, young adults have proved to be more resistant to authoritarian forms of populism than older citizens. In these places, they are likely to possess socially liberal and economically left-wing attitudes and values, and favour movements that set themselves apart from the political mainstream and protest against what is perceived to be a neo-liberal or corrupt political establishment. Elsewhere, there is evidence to show that economically disadvantaged young people are particularly susceptible to authoritarian-nationalist values, candidates and parties (Foa and Mounk 2017).

In this book, we demonstrate that the cosmopolitan-left orientation of young people is particularly widespread in the UK, but also relevant to a large segment of the youth population in other European democracies and in North America. From an international perspective, we note that young cosmopolitans vary in their adherence to economically left-wing attitudes according to the economic circumstances of the country or region in which they live. For example, Justin Trudeau's success with younger voters in Canada was much more to do with his socially liberal persona than any radical economic policies.

In the UK, we account for the resurgence in youth activism and cosmopolitan-left orientations in the following ways. First, the redistribution of resources away from younger citizens and youth-oriented public policy over the past ten years has persuaded more young people to favour state intervention and increased public spending. Second, cultural differences across generations have deepened. Young people are more approving of cultural diversity, more welcoming of European integration, and less concerned about immigration than older generations.

Cosmopolitan values apply to many, but not all, young people. As we demonstrate later in the book, cosmopolitan-left individuals are very likely to hold university degrees, and to be students and women. Conversely, old, white males with low levels of educational attainment are least likely to possess these views. It is hardly new to state that young, highly-educated citizens are open to cosmopolitan values. Inglehart and colleagues have made this argument for several decades (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Our claim is that young cosmopolitans have crystalized into

a distinct and coherent political force, united by their common values and common positions on postmaterial issues such as Brexit, immigration and the environment, and material issues such as healthcare, housing and education, and in opposition to the authoritarian-nationalist forms of populism characterized by UKIP, Donald Trump and elements of the British Conservative Party. We also observe that the differences between younger and older voters are greater in cultural than in economic issues.

Summary

In this chapter we have considered the relationships between young citizens and democratic processes and institutions in a variety of postindustrial societies. In particular, we have noted that these relationships are beset by stresses that often result in young people withdrawing from parliamentary-oriented politics, as evidenced by reduced rates of voting and a generalised lack of appetite for engaging with mainstream political parties.

Pessimistic observers have concluded that such developments reflect an on-going and irreversible trend that is leaving representative democracies lacking broad societal support, and consequently in danger of losing their legitimacy. However, many have noticed that while today's youth seem to be abstaining from *formal* politics, they are increasingly attracted to alternative styles of politics such as petition signing, protesting, political consumerism and online activism. In large part this is because these methods appear to be especially valuable in helping them to actualise their political hopes and ambitions. Young people also seem to be increasingly open to the charms of new political candidates, parties and movements emerging from beyond the mainstream. These political outsiders often focus on issues of immediate relevance and concern to young people – and they also offer bottom-up and participative campaigning approaches that are particularly appealing to youth.

We have also examined various approaches and theories that seek to account for these patterns of youth political engagement and democratic participation. One approach considers a number of structural changes that have occurred since the 1960s and which have fused together to create opportunities, but also considerable risks and uncertainties, for young people. Extended and complex transitions into adulthood prompted by dramatic changes in the organisation of education and of labour markets, increasing levels of geographic mobility that reduce connections and

engagement within neighbourhoods, as well as powerful globalising forces. These processes have combined to problematize young people's life-courses and transform (or obstruct) their routes into democratic life.

More *youth-centred* approaches focus on the extent to which young people's experiences of politics – and of the professional political elite – shape their democratic values, orientations and participation. In particular, recent government austerity programmes have coincided with a deepening rift between young citizens and formal politics in many countries. Outraged at having to bear the brunt of these regressive social and economic policies, young people have increasingly embraced new technologies to mobilise opposition to these attacks on their living standards. However, the patterns of youth political engagement and political participation are socially uneven. Whereas many socially disadvantaged 'left-behind' youth are susceptible to the rhetoric of authoritarian-nationalist movements and parties, highly educated and middle-class youth are often attracted to cosmopolitan, anti-austerity and leftist forces. In many respects, these contemporary left-facing cosmopolitan youth were anticipated by Inglehart in his postmaterialist thesis. Characterised by a general dissatisfaction with the practice of democratic politics and a deep antipathy towards the political class, they are attracted to individualised, life-style and cultural politics and are interested in moral issues such as environmental sustainability and global social justice. In the next chapter we will consider the factors underpinning young people's patterns of political engagement and political participation in the early years of the new Millennium, and identify fundamental social, political and cultural shifts that have contributed to the shaping of the current *Youthquake*.

NOTES

1. Over the ten years between January 2008 and December 2017, there were two national elections in Sweden, three in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and the UK, four in Spain and France (including two presidential elections), and eight in the US (including three presidential elections).
2. Schmidt (2006) argues that the transfer of powers to the European Union has led to a situation where we have *policy without politics* at the EU level, and *politics without policy* at the national level. Mair (2006) claims that this process has resulted in a 'hollowing out' of representative politics in Europe.
3. Charles Pattie et al. (2004) demonstrate how widespread micropolitical engagement with regard to policy on schools, the health service and in the

workplace. However, it has also been discovered that these contact activities are even more dominated by older, male and well-off citizens than is the case with voting (Sloam 2013).

4. In a few places, including Germany, traditional media – TV and newspapers – retain their strong position as trusted and well read news sources, and new news media have failed to make the same headway as in the UK and the United States.

5. Accounts of the social inequalities of political participation can nevertheless be found in studies of citizen participation amongst all age groups. Verba et al. (1995) published the seminal text on this topic. Russell Dalton's (2017) book, 'The Participation Gap: Social Status and Political Inequality', updates these arguments.

6. In early 2011, other notable centre-right politicians, including former Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, and former Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar, made similar statements regarding the supposed failure of multiculturalism.

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