



Partecipazione e Conflitto
*** The Open Journal of Sociopolitical Studies**
<http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/paco>
ISSN: 1972-7623 (print version)
ISSN: 2035-6609 (electronic version)
PACO, Issue 8(3) 2015: 761-769
DOI: 10.1285/i20356609v8i3p761

Published in November 15, 2015

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SPECIAL SECTION - EDITORIAL

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BY THE DEPRIVED

A Comparative Analysis in Political Behavior by Unemployed Young Adults

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Research within the social sciences has argued recurrently that unemployment has a negative impact on political participation, particularly long-term joblessness. One of the milestones of this research is the Marienthal-study by Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, and Zeisel (1933/1971) that has convincingly demonstrated that unemployment reduces rates of civic and political participation, amongst many other detrimental consequences. This finding has been corroborated in the following decades, because the unemployed exhibit strong levels of political disenchantment and disengagement. For instance, they tend to abstain from elections or support extreme-right or left-wing parties (Chabanet 2007; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995; Schur 2003).

These findings seem to apply in particular to the young unemployed. Early studies have shown that long-term unemployment leads to political disengagement among youth (Breakwell 1986; Banks and Ullah 1987). Further research has corroborated this

general observation by qualifying its strictness. The young unemployed feel distant from politics, are less interested in political issues and processes, and have little confidence that the government protects their rights or even listens to their concerns (Harris, Wyn and Jones 2010; Henn, Weinstein and Wring 2002; Bay and Blekesaune 2002, O'Toole, Marsh and Jones 2003). However, this does not exclude politic activities, both at the individual level such as voting (Bay and Blekesaune 2002) and at the collective level, above all protest (Della Porta 2008). More recently Kern, Marien and Hooghe (2015) suggests the presence of a clear divide in the studies on the political participation (of the deprived). They suggest the presence of two broad models: the grievance model and the civic voluntarism model. The scholars of the first strand interpret unemployment as a possible trigger for collective action and increased interest in sociopolitical issues (Della Porta 2008; Piven and Cloward 1977; Demazière and Pignoni 1998), while the scholars in the second strand focus on its hindering aspects (Brady et al. 1995; Schlozman, Burns and Verba 1999; Verba et al. 1978). The grievance model focuses on the importance of dissatisfaction, while the civic voluntarism model stresses individual determinants of politics, that is, the positive relationships between level of political activity and access to material resources, time, and civic skills (Brady et al. 1995).

Studies of both strands tend to confirm what has been said for younger generations altogether, namely that they distance themselves from conventional participation of institutionalized and representative politics. The young seem more interested in personalized politics in terms of local volunteerism, consumer activism, and support for specific issues and palpable causes (Bennet 2009; Dalton 2008; Harris et al. 2010; Stolle and Hooghe 2011; see also Carle 2009; Henn, Weinstein and Forrest 2005; Gauthier 2003; Furlong and Cartmel 2012). From this perspective, young peoples' disengagement in more traditional forms of political involvement is not to be confused with apathy (Furlong and Cartmel 2012; Harris et al. 2010; Gauthier 2003; Carle 2003). At the same time, research has highlighted that political disengagement is patterned along various social categories and institutional context. That is, the political attitudes and activities of young unemployed vary when considering gender, age, social class and residency in different welfare states (Bay and Blekesaune 2002; Carle 2003; Lorenzini 2012; Giugni and Lorenzini 2013).

In sum, research has advanced a number of insights into the political participation of the young unemployed that tend to highlight limits and reservations. However, our knowledge is far from conclusive or comprehensive. The observation that jobless youth is exposed to political detachment and marginalization is difficult to ignore, but we know little about the underlying causes and processes. Some argue that it is due to the experience of long-term unemployment itself. Following the Marienthal-study (Jahoda et al.

1933/1971) they refer to a mental state of resignation, fatalism, and apathy, and to an alienation from mainstream politics (Jahoda 1982, 83ff.; Breakwell 1986; Carle 2003). These conclusions have been questioned by scholars interested in the socioeconomic status, arguing that it is not necessarily joblessness, but the lack of important resources (money, education, contacts, skills) that lead to political inactivity (Sobel 1993; Brady et al. 1995; Schur 2003). In these terms, political behaviour is rather affected by social class (Scott and Acock 1979; Schlozman and Verba 1979). Additionally, scholars interested in processes of social and political exclusion have insisted that vulnerability might generate cumulative effects, but that full marginalization is not a necessary outcome. That is, the exclusion of people from certain fields (labour market, education, leisure, cultural life, etc.) might not translate into political exclusion, and vice versa (Kronauer 1998; Giugni and Lorenzini 2013).

Finally, research about protest movements has shown lately that collective action by the jobless is not as negligible as assumed. In fact, the seminal study of Piven and Cloward (1977) has demonstrated that protest by the jobless do happen, for instance, during the Great Depression of the early 1930s. Further studies have underlined that the mobilization of the jobless was not that uncommon throughout history (Croucher 1987; Folsom 1991; Lorence 1996; Reiss and Perry 2011). The more recent waves of mobilization during the 1990s and 2000s has stressed this conclusion, thus allowing to unravel the complex dynamics of political behaviour by the deprived (Chabanet and Faniel 2011; Chabanet and Royall 2014). These studies have uncovered a series of beneficial forces leading to the mobilization of jobless people, such as local organizations and activists (Maurer 2001; della Porta 2010), supportive allies and coalitions, and the windows of opportunities provided by the political context (van Berkel, Coenen and Vlek 1998; Baglioni et al. 2008; Lahusen and Baumgarten 2006).

Research has thus shown that the relation between unemployment and political participation is mediated by a number of intervening factors. In particular, we want to highlight inhibiting or enabling factors located in the unemployed people's environment. First, micro-sociological studies have highlighted that communities exposed to deprivations develop own rules and structures of non-conformist or 'deviant' behaviour (Whyte 1943; Cloward and Ohlin 1960; von Trotha 1974), which means that the jobless might develop proper understandings and forms of political behaviour. This focus on informal webs of social relations has been stressed in current literature. Several studies highlight that informal networks often mould the jobless' political attitudes and practices (McClurg, 2003; Barber et al. 2009; Parsons 2014). Second, most literature on social capital has recurrently discussed the role of voluntary associations in explaining political

participation, also amongst the deprived. Even though there is consensus that civic associations do not arouse political activity per se, there are several indications that they play a facilitating role, such as by providing contacts, information, opportunities, and skills that might promote participation in conventional and unconventional political activities (Burt 2005; Passy 2003; van der Meer and van Ingen 2009). Third, comparative analyses have argued that the political participation by young jobless is affected by public policies and institutional settings, such as when considering welfare systems, social benefits, and the relations between public authorities and recipients (Soss 1999; Kumlin, and Stadelmann-Steffen 2014). Differences between the political participation of young unemployed are significant, even though they do not necessarily mirror the expected differences in welfare provision—its generosity and inclusiveness (Bay and Blekesaune 2002; Carle 2003).

Previous research has thus accumulated considerable knowledge. However, a number of questions are still unanswered. This is partly due to the attention young unemployed adults have received, much less attention than the unemployed population and/or youth in general. Additionally, research has conducted a series of single-case studies, but fewer comparative analyses of various countries. The papers of this open section aim to address some of these partially open research questions. Is unemployment a relevant factor when analysing the political participation of young jobless adults? And what is the most prominent element of being unemployed that affects political attitudes and behaviours? Does the immediate social environment impinge on the young adults' political participation in a rather inhibiting or beneficial manner? Do civic associations play a role for the long-term unemployed? And do they alleviate social and political exclusion? Do welfare policies and institutions make a concrete difference in explaining the political behaviour of the young long-term unemployed as welfare recipients?

The papers of this section are based on data generated in a European research project funded under the EU's 7th Framework Programme. The project dealt with "Youth, Unemployment and Exclusion in Europe" (YOUNEX) and targeted young people in the age between 18 and 34. The project gathered a comprehensive set of data, in particular a standardized survey conducted in six European cities amongst people in long-term unemployment, precarious jobs, and regular employment, and through a number of in-depth interviews with about 30 young unemployed people for each of the cities under analysis (Lyon in France, Cologne in Germany, Turin in Italy, Kielce in Poland, Karlstad in Sweden, and Geneva in Switzerland). These datasets provide rich materials for a comparative analysis of young jobless' life circumstances, political attitudes, and behaviours.

The following three papers present findings that take up the discussion portrayed before, and aim to highlight more clearly the impact of the 'intervening' factors listed before: informal networks, civic associations, and welfare institutions. The paper by Jennifer Hobbins and Christian Lahusen deals with Swedish and German long-term unemployed and try to disentangle the role of unemployment in the respondents' daily life. Their qualitative and inductive analysis shows that unemployment is very heterogeneous, but highly relevant administrative category that shapes the respondents' daily lives. Moreover, informal networks, particularly peers, play a considerable role in shaping political behaviour by reproducing shared beliefs and practices towards the political realm. The paper by Simone Baglioni, Pasquale Colloca, and Maria Theiss was interested in deciphering the impact of civic associations on political participation. The comparison of Kielce and Turin showed that membership in civic associations and social movement organizations alleviated the negative impact of unemployment on political participation, particularly among the Polish respondents. The authors argued that in Italy, the effect of civic associations might be diminished through other networks and the stronger politicization of underemployment and precariousness fields (Bassoli and Cinalli, 2014). Finally, Jasmine Lorenzini and Marco Giugni focused on role of welfare authorities in Geneva and Cologne. They were interested in uncovering whether interactions between long-term unemployed and public authorities influence their formers' propensity to participate in political protests. Their analyses showed that the extent and type of interactions play a much greater role than the provision of financial resources. In this sense, it is not the financial hardship, but the experiences of the bureaucracy's discretionary powers that have a mobilizing impact on young jobless.

Overall, these papers highlight that unemployment is not a uniform and objective reality impinging on the young adults' political beliefs and activities. On the one hand, unemployment is only relevant insofar as it is experienced as a 'category', 'token' or 'identity marker' that patterns the way young adults are treated by public authorities, the public, and their most immediate environment. On the other hand, the findings underline the importance of the respondents' web of social relations. Informal networks and social capital provided by civic associations is an important factor moulding young adults' political beliefs and practices.

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