

# Youth participation in today's politics politics essay



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When it comes to political affairs, everyone seems to have an opinion. No matter the religion, cultural background, level of education, or age, most individuals have their own unique take on the relationship between people and politics. Within most areas of the western world, politics has been viewed as the realm in which we attempt to make real some of our highest aspirations: our desire for political freedom, our longing for justice, our hope for peace and security (What is politics, 2012). However, when it comes down to the youths of the nation, there simply is a shortage of them occupied in the political realm. Undoubtedly, young people's relationship with contemporary politics is complex in nature (" Introduction: Youth and Politics 2003); however, the percentage of those involved is quite minor to those of their parents age-range. Ill-advisedly, the majority of North American youths do not participate in formal politics due to pre-conceived attitudes concerning the difference their vote will make. Not only that, but some may choose not to become engaged due to feelings of indifference or unintended ignorance regarding the subject matter. Lastly, specific key life factors are able to sway one's choice of choosing to exercise one's political right to cast their ballot.

As mentioned above, young adults' relationship with contemporary politics is not a simple one. Just as any other social trends, there are multiple factors as to why youths not only have low turnout rates at the polls, but little participation in formal politics as well. With that said, there is still one primary cause as to why it occurs; many believe their vote to be insignificant of making a difference. They often share the mentality that no matter who they vote for, their lives will remain the same (" The Politics of

Youthful Ant politics, 2010) . Through a study conducted by Stats Canada shortly before the 2010 Canadian election, it was found that 59% of students said they were more cynical than two years before ( My Vote Doesn't Matter, 2012). Why? Many youths do not regard electoral politics as a potential arena for change, but as a corrupt swamp where change is unlikely to occur (My Vote Doesn't Matter, 2012). Furthermore, they typically felt a form of disconnection from the swirl of politics pertaining to the world around them, and believed it to be trivial for them to get involved on the grounds of “ change”. Correspondingly, this polluted outlook on formal politics has been the main cause to prevalent stereotype of disengaged and apolitical young people. Gloomily, many predict that if ways are not found to spark the youths interest and involvement, implications will occur; more will simply turning away. Trends have shown that the general rate of those who vote from ages 18-24, drop as the years go by (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Consequences of a low turnout rate of a certain group (the youths) could cause social concerns, calling for urgent interventions to ensure the sustainability of democratic politics. Undoubtedly, these trends have display that an increasing amount of North American youths have taken up the unhealthy social trend of not actively participating in politics. Believing their vote not to hold any sort of tangible significance, contributes heavily to the accumulation of young adults that hold a cynical view of the political system.

As mentioned above, whilst low political contribution may stem from the ones mentality, it may also originate from feelings of intimidation, or lack of education of the political system. One simple reason as to why this may be, is the fact that conventional politicians do not attempt to win the votes of

young people, simply because there are less of them relative to other population groups (Engaging Youth in Politics: Debating Democracy's Future, 2011). There have been various periods in both U. S. and Canadian history where education has taken the back seat to other issues. When this occurs, education no longer remains a priority, and the youth suffers for it (Youth and Political Participation, 2011). Most commonly, candidates of political election announce they desire the support of young adults; yet, for the most part, political campaigns are more interested in persuading the people who are already voters than in encouraging the youth to cast their first ballot (Reasons Young People Don't Vote, 2008). This is what produces ground for misguidance, disinterest, or intimidation for politics as those 18-24 are just activating their sense of political identity. In order to address this problem, politicians, policy makers, and parents must work together in order to entice them into involvement of the political realm, in hopes of broadening their political knowledge. Many nations have taken to tactics of making politics to appear 'cool' in order to seduce the youth of their nation. Unquestionably, politics should be entrenched as a basis, for the sake of the democratic integrity of one's nation. Feelings of intimidation, or ignorance should not be a reason as to why an increasing amount of North American youths have yet to cast their first vote.

In conjunction with education, socioeconomic status is the third prime factor in low voter turnout among youths. Research finds that young people who come from families with higher levels of socioeconomic status tend to talk about politics more regularly, vote more frequently, and become more generally engaged (Social Change and Political Engagement Among Young

People, 2010) . Young people from less privileged backgrounds participate less, and therefore are generally less engaged (Social Change and Political Engagement Among Young People, 2010) It is these types of personal characteristics that function to alter one's chance of turnout; not to mention changes in mobility, and family life. These personal features of one's life, has the potential to influence who gets involved, and who does not. For example, many non-voters cited a busy schedule as a reason for not voting, particularly among 25- to 34-year-olds (who are more likely to be in the early stages of parenthood) (Factors Associated with Voting, 2012).

Correspondingly, only 36% of single parents of children less than 5 years of age voted, compared to 60% of couples with children (Factors Associated with Voting, 2012). Thus displaying that certain personal characteristics contribute to whether or not one is likely to vote. As a result, one can see that once certain key factors came into play, it can easily affect one's participation (or lack thereof) among young adults, contributing overall to their low involvement rate.

While it has been established that youth generally do not get as involved in the political realms as those senior to them in years, some argue that there may be exceptions to the rule. During times of crisis such as the Vietnam War, and the economic crash of 2008, fresh ideas have been seized in order to bring about change (Reasons Young People Don't Vote, 2008). Throughout the 2008 electoral election in the United States, youth played a significant role in the campaign to elect Barack Obama as the 44th president. Through activism, electoral campaigns, and other relevant means, the youths of America seemed to band together in order to make a difference in their

country. Youth turnout in the 2008 election was ranked as one of the highest ever reported (Youth Vote in 2008 Election, 2009). Nevertheless, while this all may be true, the youth turnout had still been lower than that of those over 30. In fact, statistics showed that although more 18-29 year olds than ever may have come out to the polls, only 50% of them voted while 66% of those over 30 came out (Youth Vote in 2008 Election, 2009). Hence, while this may have been the highest response young voters have ever had, the fact still remains that only half of those eligible to vote got up to do so. This demonstrates that even when politically stirred, youth participation did rise, but still did not reach up to those senior them. Therefore, although some youths of North America may seek to get actively involved in the dynamics of politics when politically motivated, a significant amount of them generally do not; even when their attention has been caught. The reason for this is, indisputably, voting is habit-formed. When young people learn the voting process; they are more likely to do so (Youth Voting, 2012).. If individuals have been motivated to get to the polls once, they are more likely to return (Youth Voting, 2012). This reasoning may shed some light as to why many chose not to vote in the 2008 election. Becoming engaged in the political process, and choosing the right to vote is simply an activity that many youths have not learnt the importance of.

While some claim that youth's get involved when politically stimulated, others claim that young adults have already given their contribution to politics through their use of new information and communications technologies. These devices, (known as Web 2. 0) have the power to connect people in new and innovative ways through enabling and promoting different

forms of engagement ( Digital Media Shapes Youth Participation in Politics, 2013). This new innovation that the youth have made prevalent among their generation has made political action easier, faster, and more universal. In addition to this, it has changed political participation, mobilization, and political campaigns. In this manner, many argue that a plethora of youthful participation becomes visible and clearly political. Within this paradigm, many argue that young people create and reshape new forms of politics that they simply have not recognized yet. However the question remains, what percentage of young people actually use the various forms of web 2.0 in order to get their political voice across to friends and family? While politicians and policy makers may use these resources in order to reach a younger audience, the young people themselves generally do not use such means of technology in order to put forth their political opinion. As a result, young people have not contributed to the political sphere through new technologies, but have instead introduced new ideas, and innovations to promote various forms of engagement. With that said, politicians are the intellects that have used the web as a source that traditional politics has never seen the likes of before.

In truth, young adults have made some promising contributions to the political world; however, compared to those senior them, they simply have not participated as heavily or frequently. Voting is the pillar of democracy, yet far too little people vote in relation to the population. Whether it be for reason such as personal attitudes held toward politics, lack of education over the subject matter, or personal features of one's life, the youth of North America are simply not as engaged as their parents were at their age.

Clearly, politics deals with messy and complicated situations, it therefore requires for all of its members to participate in order for it to run smoother, through the voice of the people. Justifiably, new voters need assistance discovering their voting options, and understanding the impact of elections concerning the issues they care most about. Voting is the cornerstone of democracy, and should therefore be regarded in such esteem. Politicians, policy makers, and parents must work together to fathom just how to work the young minds of the nation, in order for them to see the importance it holds in western society. Only then will changes occur. Overall, voting is a right that shapes the world we live in; it allows one to speculate how the world would be a different place if everyone participated.

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