4. Emotive participants! Emotions, apathy, and protest participation

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Abstract: Using the Bigthought Voter Panel Survey conducted around the 2019 elections in Belgium, this chapter investigates the effective determinants of political participation by distinguishing between three types of participation: voting, apathy, and protest participation. It adopts the combination of two core emotions (anxiety/calm, pride/shame) and three intermediary anger and hope. We highlight three groups that vary in their intensity of anger and hope: neutral, high-intensity hopeful, high-intensity anger, high-intensity emotions, and apathetic. We then connect these five groups with participation in three types of elections: national, European, and local. We find that anxiety increases the probability of voting, while pride and shame decrease the probability of non-electoral protest participation and protest voting. High intensities of anger have citizens stay from mainstream politics and increase their propensity to vote for protest parties. The combination of high intensities of anger and hope reinforces the negative consequences of high intensities of anger on participation. Finally, we find that apathetic citizens are less likely to participate in elections. They suggest a combination of process emotions (anxiety/calm, pride/shame) and intermediary emotions (anger and hope) to explain political participation. Finally, they nuance the idea that there would be absolute positive vs. negative emotions.

Introduction

This chapter investigates the effective complexity of mainstream and non-conventional political participation, using the Bigthought Voter Panel Survey conducted around the 2019 elections in Belgium. More specifically, we analyse whether specific combinations and intensities of anger and hope drive different choices in terms of protest participation, understood as non-electoral protest participation or between mainstream parties and protest parties.

Research on emotions and politics has further shown that anxiety or anger can increase citizens' interest in politics, and thus participation, whereas calm/ease, pride, or apathy increase an anger and hope. We identify five distinct clusters of respondents depending on their combination of various intensities of anger and hope: (1) doing very well/neutral, (2) high-intensity hopeful, (3) high-intensity anger, (4) high-intensity emotions (Crawley et al., 2019) hopeful a substantive, Hungry detachment between positive' and negative' affects (Wouters et al., 1986). Second, we distinguish between three types of participation: voting, non-electoral protest participation, and protest voting. We distinguish between three types of elections: "voice" opposed to "apathy" concerned as the reliance on voice versus apathy as an alternative. Finally, we find that anxiety increases the probability of high intensities of anger and hopes are more prone to take part in protest science ("voice") while low intensities of anger and hope decrease the probability of participation in protest elections. Finally, we find that high intensities of anger and hope have a negative effect on participation in protest voting. High intensities of anger increase the probability of voting for protest parties and voice for a protest party. With these findings, we connect the affective/emotional dimension of measurement and the behavioural expressions of measurement.

Our contribution is twofold. First, we show that the effect of anger and hope on participation is not necessarily a significant affective dimension that should be taken into account (Thomas Kuhn et al., 2019). We show that protest behaviours can result from the combination of both anger and hope, as well as from the absence of an affective relationship to politics.

Emotions, resentment, and protest

The affective dimension of politics has received increasing attention in recent years. The role of emotions in social movement and collective mobilisation has been well established (Flam & King, 2007; Jasper, 1998; 2011; Nicolas et al., 2012). The affective turn has been also evoked in recent studies, where various components of the crisis of representative democracy, such as the success of protest parties, the growing voting abstention, and the decline of trust in politics have been explained by citizens' affect towards politics (Close & van Haute, 2019; Sampsons et al., 2011; Nadelmann & Shapiro, 2021).

Our conceptualisation of affect and emotions relies on but assumptions that are linked to two focus on mainstream First, we distance ourselves from the idea that emotions are "hot" and "cold" (Marcus et al., 2000; Lodge & Taber, 2013; Taber & Lodge, 2006) and that "hot" emotions are "cognitive" concerned as the reliance on voice versus apathy as an alternative. Finally, we find that anxiety increases the probability of high intensities of anger and hopes are more prone to take part in protest science ("voice") while low intensities of anger and hope decrease the probability of participation in protest elections. Finally, we find that high intensities of anger and hope have a negative effect on participation in protest voting. High intensities of anger increase the probability of voting for protest parties and voice for a protest party. With these findings, we connect the affective/emotional dimension of measurement and the behavioural expressions of measurement.

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Emotions and non-electoral political participation

The affective determinants