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AUTHOR Allerbeck, Klaus R.
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ABSTRACT

Data presented from two studies support the hypothesis that normative expectations of youthful deviance are held mainly by those social classes for which youth as a social moratorium exists for some length of time. As youth is a class-dependent social arrangement, it should be expected that normative expectations be held mostly by members of the middle and upper classes of modern industrial societies; the expectation of youthful deviance and protest should be absent or weak in the working classes where youth is not extended and where the moratorium between biological maturity and social maturity is rather short and not supported by social institutions. The first of two small, nation-wide surveys in West Germany included asking the respondents to indicate in which areas youth should behave like adults and where they should behave differently. Answers indicated that the norm of youthful deviance is held by many. Items expressing these normative expectations included in a second survey were two different but related components of expectations of youthful deviance, idealism and radical criticism of existing social institutions. As predicted, support for these statements was related to social class and to age of respondent. (Author/KSM)

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POLITICS BETWEEN ECONOMY AND CULTURE
LA POLITIQUE ENTRE L'ECONOMIE ET LA CULTURE

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Commission

ESTABLISHMENTS AND COUNTERCULTURES : THE POLITICS OF THE GENERATION GAP

Georges LAVAU

Topic - Sujet

OPPOSITION AS CONFORMITY :
STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS OF YOUTH PROTEST

Klaus R. ALLERBECK
Harvard University

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Structural Conditions of Youth Protest

Klaus R. Allerbeck

Harvard University

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Theme I - Commission I.12
Establishments and countercultures:
the politics of the generation gap

The student rebellions and movements in many Western industrialized societies surprised social scientists as much as anybody else: they had not only not predicted such events; quite a few social scientists had, in addition, offered explanations why the absence of student movements was a necessary consequence of social structural developments (e.g. Habermas et al. 1961). The initial surprise did not last very long, and many social scientists soon used time-honored concepts such as age-dependence of political ideology and notions of generational conflict to explain the rise of student movements in the second half of the 1960's. Lewis Feuer's book on the "Conflict of Generations" (1969) is perhaps the most prominent example.

Sociologist Kingsley Davis (1940) explained the "extraordinary amount of parent-youth conflict" he perceived with "psychosocial differences between adolescents and adults". Adults are realistic, youth is idealistic. S.M.Lipset (1972) makes reference to Weber's two types of ethic and states that youth tends "to develop an ethic of 'absolute ends' rather than of 'responsibility'". This notion of youthful idealism is by no means recent. Aristotle stated that youth "have exalted notions, because they have not yet been humbled by life or learnt its necessary limitations ; ... their lives are regulated more by moral feeling than by reasoning."

This represents just a developmental stage: "There is a persistent tendency for the ideology of a person as he grows older to gravitate more and more toward the status quo ideology." (Davis 1940). While the number of quotations from social scientists could be considerably extended, it is questionable whether this notion of age-dependence of ideology is consistent with widely available data (Foner 1972), let alone

The availability of these somewhat older"explanations" of youthful deviance was clearly convenient in the absence of better theories of such simple nature. But as description of behavior of the younger age groups in the second half of the 1960's these"explanations" are definitely not accurate.

While students were indeed supporting the movements to a considerable extent, this is not universally true for non-students. In Germany, Kaase (1971) found very marked differences between students and non-student youth. Whereas early in 1968 36 % of all students had participated in at least one demonstration, only 5 % of the non-student youth reported the same. For the US, Converse et al.(1969 showed that among non-college youth there was overproportional support for presidential candidate George Wallace.

While such age-ideology theories fail to account for such facts, even more obvious is that they fail to explain why there was nothing comparable taking place in the 1950's and early 60's. As sociologists in many countries noted at that time, youth was definitely not active, not particularly critical of politics or the social order and by no means rebellious.

However, many sociologists considered this enormous amount of conformity among youth to be somehow deviating from the norms for appropriate youthful behavior. And they stated quite openly their disapproval of what was called the "silent generation" in the US, "skeptische Generation" in Germany and 3-M-Youth (mestiere, macchina, moglie) in Italy. Bertone and Alfassio-Grimaldi (1964) did not approve of the exclusive concern for occupation, cars and women they found among Italian youth; Musgrove (1964) expressed his fear that students "were becoming cautious old men" at age 20. Needless to say, this list could also be extended.

It is quite apparent that political age-difference theories are only in some periods supported by <u>some</u> facts. But if they seem unsupported we do not find many social scientists stating that those theories are wrong. Many blame their subjects instead for not conforming to the expectations of those theories.

The absence of a clear definition of youth in such writings on generational conflict is partly responsible for the lack of consistent empirical support for these explanations of generation gaps. The definition that is implicit in most of these works is that of youth as a particuàar age group. A definition of youth in terms of biological age does not identify any existing social group; to take a sase in point, the inclusion of a married 21 year old worker with a child in the same category with a single student of the same age who depends on his parents for support demonstrates the problems of a definition of youth that makes use of age only.

There is a good deal of consensus among sociologists of youth that their subject should be defined as xkm including those individuàls who have reached biological maturity but have not yet xm attained social maturity, that is these who have not yet taken adult roles though they are physically capable of doing so. "In distinction from children and adults, the 'young' can be defined as those who with puberty have reached biological sexual maturity but have bot yet, through marriage or entry into a profession, assumed those rights and duties whereby responsible participation in the fundamental processes of society is made both possible and mandatory" (Neidhardt 1970).

The duration of this "psychological moratorium" (Erikson 1970) differs between and within societies; it depends mainly on the length of education and training required for the occupation or profession an individual plans to enter. Whether this psychological moratorium can take place for an individual, and for how long, depends to a considerable degree on an individual's position in the class structure. "Youth is made up disproportionately of those who aspire to the upper and middle professional strata. Since these themselves are drawn to a disproportionate extent from upper and middle stratum families, it can be said ... that youth is , to an admittedly decreasing but still considerable degree, an institution which enables middle and upper strata of society to replenish their ranks from their own

offspring" (Neidhardt .0). .4.

If generation-gap-interpretations such as Davis' (1940) or Lipset's (1972) were revised to make use of a sociological instead of a quasibiological definition of youth , they would be consistent with those data collected in the second half of the 1960's showing the rather impressive within-generation-differences we mentioned. Such interpretations would then try to explain the behavior of youth as a "generation unit" in the sense of Mannheim (1928) within their generation. Still, such interpretations would not be consistent with "silent generations" within which no activist generation units could be recognized. A further revision of such interpretations is required.

We suggest that the "psychosocial differences" between adolescents and adults are not representing a necessary developmental process. Instead, if these differences exist, these indicate that adolescents are conforming to normative expectations of youthful behavior, expectations which include idealism, lack of restraints and prudence, and rebelliousness. Lipset (1972) points out that the saying "He who is not a radical at twenty does not have a heart; he who still is one at forty does not have a head" which exists in many cultures (and as "Young people sometimes get rebellious ideas, but as they grow upthey ought to get over them and settle down" is part of the California F-Scale [Adorno et al. 1950]) in addition to a conservative labelling of radicalism as unintelligent "denotes a social expectation that young people should be radicals, that the older generation believes that youthful people should be radicals, that the older generation believes agrees that youthful radicalism is praiseworthy behavior" (1972:19-20). Instead of reifying norm-conformity as developmental stage it seems appropriate to suggest that these norms be subjected to inquiry and that the conditions under which conformity occurs be specified. While theories postulating youthful deviance should be gracefully retired as theories, some of their elements may be worth preserving.

Inaccurate as descriptions of social reality, these formulations seem to express prescriptions for the behavior of youth. As youth is a class-dependent social arrangement, we should expect such normative expectations to be held mostly by members of the middle and upper classes of modern industrial societies; the expectation of youthful deviance and protest should be absent or weak in the working classes where youth is not extended and where the "moratorium" between biological maturity and social maturity is rather short and not supported by social institutions.

This hypothesis which is deducted from a re-interpretation of generational conflict theories : seen in the context of the sociology of youth was tested using data from two small, but nationwide surveys in West Germany, conducted in 1972 and 1973 (Allerbeck, Kaase and Klingemann, 1973). The 1972 survey included a question designed to tap such normative expectations held be a cross section of the population by asking the respondents to indicate in which areas youth should behave like adults and where they should behave differently.

The answers to this open-ended question indicate that the norm of youthful deviance is indeed held by many. There is considerable variation, however, with regard to where such deviance is appropriate. While quite a few respondents do mention politics, radicalism, idealism and general political and social criticism, many respondents consider only areas such as leisure, sports, sexual behavior, clothing etc. as appropriate for the expression of youth deviance.

To test the hypothesis, responses were coded whether political and/or social criticism was mentioned or not.

A cross-tabulation of this dichotomous variable against education within age groups is presented in Table 1. The data conform the hypothesis; youthful deviance such as political and social criticism

is much more frequent among middle and upper class respondents; the strength of the relationship is indicated by Yule's Q which takes values of .52 in the younger and .56 in the older group. It is worth noting that while the same relationship of education and expectation of deviance is found in both age groups the frequency of this expectation differs; younger respondents mention political and social criticism more frequently than their elders, within the same social class.

Table 1

	Young (16-21)			Older (35 - 50)		
	Working class	Middle class		Working class	Middle class	
criticism mentioned	25 %	52 %		14 %	36 %	
not mentioned	75 %	48 %		86 %	64 %	
	100 %	100 %	(N=51)	100 %	100 %	(N=54)

While the proportion expecting youth to be critical in the political and ideological sphere in the middle class is considerable, the proportion spontaneously expressing this in response to an open-ended question represents only a minority - though sizeable - of the older middle class respondents. This proportion, of course, need not be identical to the proportion of those who would tend to agree with such normative expectations when confronted with explicit formulations of such expectations.

To explore this passive approval of such norms - without necessarily active expression and use -, items expressing these normative expectations were included in a small nationwide 1973 survey in West Germany. Items were choosen to express two different, but related components of expectations of youthful deviance in the political and ideological sphere: idealism (and lack of prudence) which implies the occasional disregarding of existing rules in the pursuit of higher

goals, and radical criticism of existing social arrangements. To measure support for these concepts, the following two items were included in the survey:

a) "If young people occasionally go too far in their protest and possibly violate laws, this is only quite natural."

b) "Youth should always radically question the present state of affairs".

As predicted, support for these statements is related to social class. Whereas 37 % of the respondents with only primary school education approve the first item, 68 % of the respondents with higher education express approval. The percentage of the less educated who disapprove is almost twice as large (62 %) as the percentage disaaproving among those with higher education (32 %). Within both groups agreement with this item is higher than the percentage actively using (or: spontaneously mentioning) these concepts, as measured by responses to the open-ended question in the 1972 study.

The second item (b) is less popular than the first; the proportion agreeing is similar to the proportion mentioning political and social criticism in response to the open-ended question in 1972. 25 % of the less educated and 37 % of the more educated agree with the item.

The meaning of these items for the two age groups included in the study (16-21 and 35-50) is different, of course. For older respondents, these items represent valid indicators of normative xepectations toward a group of which they are not members. For younger respondents these items are statements about the behavior of a group to which they belong. While the perception of what is expected of them is relevant to explain how such expectations are translated into behavior and while it is interesting whether the perception of these expectations also differs between social classes, we have no available indicators of such perceptions which would allow us to answer those questions now.

Accordingly, tables 2 and 3 give a breakdown of responses to both items by education for the older group (ages 35 to 50) only. For both items, the relationships are very strong indeed, Yule's Q being .8 and 1.0 respectively.

Table 2

Agreement with item (a) ("young people go to far") by education among respondents of ages 35 to 50

	Less Educated	More Educated	
Agree	15 %	62 %	
Disagree	85 %	38 %	
	100 %	100 %	Q = .8
	(13)	(21)	

Table 3

Agreement with item b ("youth should radically question...") by education among older respondents

	Less Educated	More Educated	
Agree	0 %	38 %	
Disagree	100 %	62 %	
	100 %	100 %	Q = 1.0
	(12)	(21)	

The data presented in these dables give support to the hypothesis that normative expectations of youthful deviance are held mainly by those social classes for which youth as a social moratorium exists for some length of time.

The number of respondents is admittedly small, as the data were gathered on the occasion of a pilot study, the sample size being just a fraction of a normal survey. Is it possible that the results were obtained by chance ? This is not likely, if we use significance tests to answer the question (in spite of the fact that the data were not gathered from a probability sample). Both tables are, as a χ^2-test (with Yates' correction) indicates, significant ($p < .025$ and $p < .05$).

To the extent that young people are exposed to normative expectations which demand criticism, idealism and rebelliousness from them, their support of and participation in movements for social change that are perceived as youth movements represents not only not necessarily deviant behavior, but conforming behavior. This is not entirely surprising from a perspective that views social movements and protest not as something deviant and alien to an integrated social system, but sees social movements and protest as taking place within a given society; the political institutions or the public, in turn, make this quite apparent when they express their disapproval of the means (e.g., violence) of protest rather than arguing that the goals are deviant or evil (see Turner 1969). This is reflected in public opinion as well when attitudes toward a given movement are distributed along a continuum from support to disapproval rather than takin the form of clear-cut dichotomies. This continuity has been shown for the case of modern student movements by Allerbeck (1973); Converse and Pierce (1970) report a similar finding with respect to French mass attitudes to the May and June 1968 unrest.

Does the "norm-conformity of youth protest" explain actual youth movements ? It is clearly not sufficient as an explanation; as I have argued elsewhere (1973), the intentions of the actors have to be taken into account for an explanation of social movements; in addition, the nature of the cleavages has to be such that the demands cannot easily be channeled into the system of political representation. The normative expectation of youth protest does facilitate youth participation in protests movements, however, as it is making participation more acceptable to those with whom young people interact and who may not be favorably oriented toward either goals or means of the protest. The normative expectation of deviance reduces the social costs of protest; it is insufficient as motivation of protest.

In addition to contributing to an explanation of youth movements, these normative [illegible]ations explain a number of empirical findings such as the increase of support

for student movements (and, in France, the May 1968 revolt) with increasing education and the preference of more educated young Europeans for post-materialistic (or idealistic) rather than materialistic goals of public policy (Inglehart 1971).

As demonstrated, normative expectations of youth protest are held mainly by the middle and upper classes (for which youth is a social reality). It is not surprising that these classes express more support for student movements than the working class. After all, student movements conform to middle class expectations of youth behavior, not to working class expectations. There is no need to explain this with a mystic change in the relations of social stratification and political ideology such that the supporters of social change to the left are now suddenly located in the upper classes.

The value changes that Inglehart (1971) assumes to have taken place in Europe (on the basis of cross-sectional data) may not be real. The post-materialistic value choices (of Free Speech and Political Participation over Fighting Inflation and Law and Order) of middle and upper class European youth represent perhaps nothing but a reflection of the expectation of youthful idealism which is at least as ancient as Aristotle, conformity with norms expressed time and again rather than profound changes in value orientations in the second half of the twentieth century.

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