

The Impact of Social Media on the Political Identification of Generation Z

Addison Cates
Lindenwood University

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to determine the impact that social media plays in young voters political identification. Today, children have access to politics through multiple social media platforms. While this could be a good way for children to grow into mature, individualistic adults, it could also expose them to aspects of politics they may not yet understand. Generation Z is the first adolescent generation to navigate social media as a source of political knowledge. It has been previously found that, yes, people usually follow in their parents' footsteps when it comes to politics. However, with the recent surge of politics in social media, people can have easy access to all political identifications. By re-modeling past studies, we can see if parents still have a hold on their children's political opinions, or if that grip has loosened. This study is conducted by a self-report style of data collection and focuses on the impact social media has on the choice of political identification.

References

Dunkel, C.S., & Decker, M. (2012). Using identity style and parental identification to predict political orientation. *Current Psychology: Research and Reviews*, 31(1), 65-78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/e566962012-380>

Ojeda, C., & Hatemi, P.K. (2015). Accounting for the child in the transmission of party identification. *American Sociological Review*, 80(6), 1150-1174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122415606101>

Literature

A study I found by Ojeda and Hatemi (2015), proposes an alternative transmission of party identification from parents to their children. It is commonly believed that parents lead the learning process of politics for their children, meaning, children are passive recipients. However, this study proposes children as active agents in their political socialization (Ojeda & Hatemi, 2015). The researchers in this study created a model called perception and adoption. The first step of their model of transmission is perception. This means that relevant and accessible information can be perceived if the person is able to recognize it and understand it. When applying this to parent and child transmission of political affiliation it means that even if the parent is providing political knowledge for their child, it will only be accepted if the child can detect and understand it (Ojeda & Hatemi, 2015). The next step is adoption. During adoption the child decides whether to adopt their parents' political affiliation or not (Ojeda & Hatemi, 2015). The final part of the perception and adoption model is social milieu. Social milieu are outside factors that could affect the child.

Research Question/Hypothesis

Research Question: Do parents or social media have a greater influence on the political identification of Generation Z.

Hypothesis: If Generation Z follows politics on social media, they are less likely to follow parent political identification.

Conclusion/Discussion

This type of research is pertinent to our political future. Having an understanding about how and where Generation Z, along with generations to come, obtain political knowledge can better prepare young adults to be more active, responsible citizens. Again, having access to a wide array of political viewpoints can promote individualism and free-thinking, however, young children being exposed to certain aspect of politics can potentially be detrimental.