



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 12(1) 2019: 22-42
DOI: 10.1285/i20356609v12i1p22

Published in March 15, 2019

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

DEMOCRATS ON THE STREETS. DRIVERS OF STUDENT PROTEST PARTICIPATION IN ROMANIA

Toma Burean

University of Babes-Bolyai

ABSTRACT: Since 2011, protests in post-communist Romania have changed their goals. Protesters claim to guard fundamental values of democracy such as the rule of law and fair representation and to rise against institutions crippled by corruption. In similar fashion to the 1989 revolution and the early 1990s protests, students have assumed an active role in these events. They took to the streets in Bucharest, Cluj, Iași and Timișoara, the country's four largest cities, and elsewhere. Over the same period, social media has proven essential for the gathering of information, for coordinating collective action and expressing the young protesters' identity.

Yet recent research (Bădescu and Sum 2018) canvasses a gloomy picture of Romanian youth, said to have an eroded democratic profile. This situation is not unique. In Hungary, age and the display of authoritarian attitudes are inversely related, unlike in Poland (Fesnic 2015). Eastern Europeans might have finally rejected the remnants of the previous regime, yet the new generation is eager to embrace values that are not necessarily democratic. Value change trends bring out new interpretations to the way the transition to democracy unfolds in Eastern Europe.

This paper addresses this contrast by discovering the combination of attitudes that drives youth to protest. With the help of a student survey conducted in 2017, it is shown that protest engagement is positively linked to the pro-democratic and diversity-embracing attitudes of students.

KEYWORDS: Students mobilisation, value change, democratic transition, Eastern Europe, Romania

CORRESPONDING AUTHORS: Toma Burean , burean@fspac.ro

1. Introduction

The article investigates the extent to which, in one of Europe's most materialist societies, post-materialism contributes, with the additive support of social media, to offline participation in political protests. The factors associated with protest behavior are scrutinized with the help of a 2017 survey of students sampled from four of the largest university centers in Romania. Interestingly, conventional and unconventional established forms of participation practices are rare and seem to be replaced by new forms of social-media-assisted participation.

On 5 February 2017, 500,000 individuals protested in the cities of Bucharest, Cluj, Sibiu and Timișoara against a Grindeanu government ordinance that decriminalized some corrupt acts and helped politicians to elude ongoing corruption investigations. The event was the peak of a round of mass protests that lasted throughout the better part of February. The protesters were remarkably peaceful. After each protest, in the evening, some of them cleaned the Victoria square, the epicenter of the mass demonstrations, situated right in front of the government's main headquarters in Bucharest. These protests were catalogued as the largest since the 1989 demonstrations that led to the fall of the Ceaușescu regime. The nationwide spread of the protest, even in cities that traditionally supported the PSD (Partidul Social Democrat, the Social Democratic Party), the main governmental political party, surprised the national media. The international press noted the size of the protest and its symbolic components, such as the coordinated turning on of phone flashlights and the orchestrated display of a large national flag and of the EU flag. On social networking sites, the Romanian Diaspora expressed their support and in several European capitals they protested in front of the Romanian embassies. Many Facebook pages were created to communicate the organizational aspects of the protests as well as to upload online media content, while, at the same time, the establishment mass media remained silent. The #Rezist hashtag was placed as an overlay by many of those who expressed solidarity with the protesters and became the logo symbolizing the social movement against the Grindeanu government's Ordinance 13.

Overall, the Internet was a key factor in people's mobilization. Many Facebook pages and blogs reported on the protests and individuals posted pictures and short movies from the areas where the events were taking place.

The January-February 2017 events reflected people's frustrations with corruption and the state of Romanian democracy. Remarkably, the younger generation made up a sizable segment of the protesters alongside the middle-age, baby-boom generation born since Ceausescu's 1966 abortion ban. Romanians are disconnected from the polit-

ical class (Pridham 2007, 1), have a declining interest in voting, low party membership and low social capital (Tufis 2014; Burean and Barbus 2016; Newton 2001). These features are characteristic to the political apathy present in all Eastern European societies since the transition to democracy and Romania, as the studies cited above show, is no exception (Karp and Milazzo 2015). This being said, access to internet paved the way for a change in participation by bringing about new modes of engagement and bridging politicians to citizens by offering an opportunity for faster communication of opinions and events (Ekstrom and Sehata 2016; Cantijoch, Cuts and Gibson 2015; Margolis 2007). Romania's new generation shifted its values from materialist to post-materialist, as did other societies (Pavlovic 2016). The increase of material security that this country has experienced since the 2007 EU accession enabled the young to invest more resources in quality-of-life concerns (Nikolova and Nikolaev 2016). These processes led to the creation of a segment of the Romanian society that is young, affluent, and keener to participate in protest (Abaseaca and Pleyers 2019; Ciobanu and Light 2017; Mercea 2016; Stan and Vance 2015). The internet is their favorite medium of communication, participation, and mobilization. Issues pertaining to post-materialist concerns feature on the agenda put forward by political blogs, Facebook pages, and influencers on YouTube.

The next section will detail the political context in which the protests were embedded, followed by a review of the state of the art in protest and post-materialism research. Subsequently, the section on data analysis will test the article's key hypotheses, while the article's final part offers a brief discussion of the results and sums up the conclusions.

2. Political Context

In Hungary, the young vote for authoritarian political groups, while Polish youth choose more democratic alternatives (Feşnic 2015). The difference is attributed to political preferences and the attitudes of civic education teachers. Todosijevic and Enyedi (2008, 768) claim that the political features of the authoritarian personality depend on context and ideology. Specifically, authoritarianism is to be found among those who support right-wing ideologies. Present-day Romania is characterized by a partial alternation of center-left and center-right party blocks. The party system is dominated by the Social Democratic Party (PSD), but it has proved open to innovative governing formulae and subject to frequent changes in the composition of the government.

Symbolically, the political left in Romania is still associated with the former communist party, while the right is perceived as anti-communist. On the other hand, the terms 'left' and 'right' are not commonly used by either Romanian citizens or political parties. Both the dominant right- and the left-wing parties have a Christian-nationalist orientation. That said, the 2004 parliamentary elections resulted in the marginalization of the hyper-nationalistic political parties. They have never made a comeback, a phenomenon that remains unique in the region. One may speculate that the nationalist agenda was captured by the main establishment political parties, the PSD and the center-right PNL (Partidul Național Liberal, the National Liberal Party). Until 2012, economic issues were politically dominant in Romania. Subsequently, cultural issues have taken a prominent position on the political agenda, at least judging by parties' electoral messages.

Starting in early 2011, a series of protests emerged in many of the country's cities. They targeted various issues ranging from international topics – such as copyright policies, the IMF's harsh austerity policies, or environmental issues – to concerns about the state of democracy and corruption (Abaseaca and Pleyers 2019; Burean and Badescu 2014). These manifestations were followed in 2015 by the so-called Colectiv protests, named after a club in Bucharest which burned down during a rock concert. The many resulting casualties were blamed on the authorities' lack of vigilance regarding fire safety protocols. This eventually triggered the resignation of PSD prime minister Victor Ponta and a change in the factions heading of his party. The #Rezist protest of February 2017 started as a result of the intention of the newly appointed Grindeanu government to decriminalize certain acts of corruption. It succeeded in postponing the adoption of a set of laws that would have set back years of anti-corruption policies (Lovell 2005).

The Romanian party system is less polarized than, for example, Hungary's. The right views the left as anti-democratic, nationalist, and profoundly corrupt. The left views the right as loyal to outside forces. There is no dominant ideology, but rather a competition between different worldviews that stress corruption or the question of which party is more democratic. The PSD claims that corruption investigations are used as a partisan tool for political attacks. The current opposition, consisting of the PNL and other center-right parties, sees these investigations as a necessary means to stem corruption, among others in public spending. Since 2017, new, anti-establishment political parties have emerged. They have blamed both the PNL and the PSD for corruption, as politicians from both the latter parties were investigated and prosecuted by the National Anticorruption Department (DNA, Departamentul Național Anticorupție). At the same time, since 2012 a modest rise in political participation has been noted in Romania (Popp-Eleches and Tucker 2013), signaling that the passivity of the Romanian elec-

torate may be coming to an end. The changes in participation are spearheaded by the young, especially by students, who engage more frequently in acts of political participation (Burean and Bădescu 2014). Concurrently, the variety of topics on which protests emerge indicates that citizens are starting to address post-materialist concerns that include the quality of democratic life and the national decision-making process (Rammelt 2018).

This study links post-materialism to various forms of political participation, in order to elaborate on a theory of the relationship between a democratic mindset and unconventional political participation. This article reveals that post-materialism is a catalyst of protest participation which is a key ingredient of the political profile characterized by Pippa Norris (1999) as the 'critical citizen'. In the Romanian case, this profile triggers rejection of institutions that stand for traditional values, such as the Church, and the embrace or acceptance of diversity. Additionally, these attitudes translate into unconventional political participation.

There are two hypotheses that follow two popular models of protest participation: cognitive mobilization and the critical citizen. Cognitive mobilization suggests that high support for post-materialist values is related to democratic attitudes, while the critical citizen model predicts that being apathetic and not adhering to conventional forms of participation (such as joining parties or voting) trigger unconventional forms of political participation. The student survey applied in 2017 in Romania enables an evaluation of these models.

3. Political Participation

The typical socio-demographic profile of the politically engaged individual is that of an educated, male, high-income earner (Brady et al. 1995; Zaller 1992). Political participation is dependent on education, income, spare time, political knowledge and civic skills (Brady et al. 1995). Brady (1999) defines participation as an 'action by ordinary citizens directed towards influencing some political outcomes'. This definition is less restrictive than Verba and Nie's (1972, 2), who circumscribe it to the influence on the selection of government personnel and/or their actions. This article uses Brady's definition. The former includes a much larger menu of reasons for political participation. It is, therefore, adequate for the inclusion of the large variety of reasons that motivate people to engage in protest participation.

Research abounds in repertoires of political participation. Some of the most popular forms include institutional versus extra-institutional (Verba and Nie 1972), convention-

al versus non-conventional (Barnes and Kaase 1979), influencing the selection of political office versus influencing decision-making (Verba and Nie 1972), legal versus illegal (Schmidtchen and Uhlinger 1983, referenced in Sabucedo and Arce 1991, 94), formal versus informal (Zipp and Smith 1979), online versus offline (Vissers and Stolle 2014), and slacktivist versus meaningful participation (Christensen 2011). These categories are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, the frequent use of a form of participation eventually makes it less informal or conventional. It is precisely the case of political protest participation. Compared to early 2000s, in Romania, protest participation has become a more frequently used tool of engagement. By the end of the 2000s, the number of protests had increased significantly (GDELT 2015; International Labor Organization 2018, 59).

The disappointment with democracy experienced by the youth of the late 20th century has been extensively documented (Clarke 2004; Levine 2007; Preiss and Brunner 2013; Utter 2011). Its outcomes become salient regarding voting and trust in institutions. Disillusionment with the democratic regime is as old as its existence. Compared to older or middle-aged adults, the young are particularly apathetic and disinterested in its functioning and its performance.

A different perspective argues that youth involvement has actually changed shape and increased (Norris 1999; Teocharis 2011; Loader 2007). The young adopt alternative mechanisms of engagement, not accurately captured by what is traditionally knitted in the fabric of political participation. Forms that are less institutionalized have mushroomed. By challenging 'the established democratic aristocratic' involvement, the young have been missed by the sieve of surveys focusing on democratic participation and support. One explanation for this change is attributed to cognitive mobilization. Modernization researchers discovered that, due to economic development and greater access to education, the young have accumulated knowledge and competencies sufficient for a critical evaluation of the state. Inglehart (1990) boldly claimed that once everyday materialistic economic concerns are set aside, humans develop quality-of-life related frames of evaluation. Post-materialism, the set of values nurturing the quality of life, is closely linked to involvement in social movements, protests and other forms of collective action (Van Deth and Scarborough 1995). Therefore, social capital did not decline, it just changed its shape.

4. Values, democracy and protest

Values are important. A recent study (Henn et al. 2018) revealed that post-materialism accounts for both institutionalized and non-institutional forms of political action. Democratic malaise or deficit is defined rather in terms of a change in attitudes, such as disillusionment and distrust (Norris 1999; Whiteley 2012). Finally, social cleavage politics disappeared in most European democracies, to be replaced by value cleavage politics and by absenteeism (Knutsen 2004; Goldberg 2019).

On the other hand, on June 23 2016, UK citizens voted to exit the European Union. Some of the main predictors for Brexit, at the time, were socio-demographic factors such as unemployment and low education, signaling that the vote may be an outcome of a cultural backlash (Becker et al. 2017) in which traditional values played an important part. It seems that a certain socio-economic background is associated with a set of values that reject the ideas and norms which the European Union symbolizes. Similar research results are coming from the United States. Recent studies reveal that the 2016 vote for Trump is an outcome not of the struggle for limited resources but of status threat. The people who feel left behind economically share values that are related to the perception of discrimination of whites and the favoring of minorities and to the economic threat posed by China (Reny et al. forthcoming; Mutz 2018).

There are three main explanations of the impact of values. The first one, coming from cognitive mobilization, argues that, due to the increased availability of information, thinking in terms of issues and policies has started to become prevalent. At the same time, the waning of cleavage politics in Western Europe has led to the rise of predictors that refer to the salience, ownership, or polarization effect of an issue.

In Eastern Europe, the lack of cleavage-based politics creates a fertile ground for the use of values in the evaluation of politicians. Poland and Hungary share nationalist values that are the main topics on which coalitions and political parties in these two countries compete (Kitschelt et al. 1999; Kitschelt 1990). In Romania, the protests in 2012 through 2018 signal an increased societal preoccupation with the quality of democracy or a sense of moral worth and self-esteem that is in conflict with tolerant attitudes towards corruption.

Currently, value change is more intensely studied than value stability. The changes concern the shift from old values that encompass hierarchical relations and obedience to new values that emphasize decentralization, self-expression, and the willingness to get involved in decisions that touch people's lives. These affect attitudes towards work, lifestyles, and ultimately the role of citizens in society, which is the focus of this paper.

This article examines the relationship between post-materialist values and protest participation. The hypothesis emerging from the above discussion is that there is a positive relationship between post-materialism and political protest participation (H1).

5. Data and Methodology

Case selection

There are not many studies on the effect of values on political participation in Romania, despite the country's inclusion in the World Values Surveys and the European Values Surveys. Romania has gone through institutional changes and has developed particularly since its joining the European Union in 2007. It is the European country with the highest GDP growth rate in the third quarter of 2018 (Melenciuc 2018) and, over the last several years, it has been afflicted by events and issues that polarized society. Civil society has played an important role in mobilizing citizens and has remained largely uninfluenced by political parties, as is the case in, for example, Greece (Teocharis 2011). Like other Eastern Europeans, Romanian citizens have low trust in institutions (Eurobarometer 2017), with only 10% trusting parties and 15% trusting the Parliament in 2018 (European Commission).

Since Romania joined the EU, the values of Romanians have changed. Trust in the European Union dropped from 68% in 2007 to 52% in 2018. Trust in immigrants outside the EU declined from 47% in 2014 to 32% in 2018. According to the Eurobarometer (European Commission), trust in religious institutions decreased from 77% in 2007 to 61% 2017, and rose again to 66% in 2018 (CURS 2018). Romanians are materialistic. Inglehart and Welzel (2005, 61, fig. 2.3a) point out that, from 1990 to 2005, the value change for Romanians and Bulgarians from survival to self-expression is negative, thus in the opposite direction to the majority of European Union countries and at odds with the predictions of the modernization thesis.

Although political trust among students is as low as in the rest of the population, their trust in church experienced a more abrupt decline from 62% in 2012 to 29% in 2017. In 2012, the proportion of students that would not allow a demonstration of homosexuals in their city was 68%; in 2017, the percentage of students that would prohibit gay marriages was 41%. Within the same time period, the number of students who declared they had participated in protests rose from 13% to 39%.

It is especially the young who are likelier to display post-materialist attitudes (Sloam and Henn 2019), and post-materialist youngsters are likelier to be disaffected and to

take part in protests (Henn et al. 2017; Teocharis 2011). Post-materialist values are also what drove student radicalism in the 1960s (Francis et al. 2002). The combination of materialist attitudes and distrust in institutions, on the one hand, and the increase in protest participation, on the other, makes Romania and its students an ideal case to study the effect of values as a contributor to political activism measured through protest engagement.

Methods and sampling

This study evaluates the protest participation, values and post-materialism of students with a survey designed to replicate other large-scale surveys, such as the European Values Survey, the Eurobarometer, and a 2012 national student survey conducted in Romania (Burean and Bădescu 2014). However, this survey dwelled on different political and social preferences as well as on the often neglected dimensions of online participation. The concerns with using the European Values Survey, the Eurobarometer, and other national surveys in Romania are twofold. Firstly, the number of young people in these surveys is very low. For example, Teocharis (2011, 209) notes that the 2007 WVS included only 220 individuals aged 15 to 29, while the Eurobarometer surveyed but 222 within the same age group. A national post-electoral survey done in 2014 in Romania revealed that the sample included 53 students and 300 individuals aged 18 to 34. The 2017 survey that we conducted, however, included 1,659 students from four major university centers where 60% of the students in Romania go to study: Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Oradea, and Timișoara. The sampling method was stratified and random, following the proportion of students registered by the Ministry of Education. According to the registers made available by the Ministry, 47% of the students were studying at the time in a field of the social sciences or humanities.

Sampling in four major university centers implies, however, that one might miss students from smaller university centers who might have a different set of attitudes. Additionally, students from university centers in Moldova, one of the country's three major historical regions, were not included. This being said, indirect evidence alleviates these concerns with respect to representativeness. A 2014 study (Sandu et al. 2014) on the young population in Romania showed no statistically significant differences among youngsters in urban and rural areas with respect to protest behavior and to political interest. Furthermore, the young in Moldova displayed more political interest and more engagement in political discussion than their counterparts from the other historical regions (Sandu et al. 2014). Still, one should exercise caution in interpreting the results of

the survey. They might be biased towards more post-materialist and pro-diversity preferences (Mihai 2017).

Most of the questionnaires were completed during class, with student volunteers in charge of dissemination, as in Burean and Bădescu (2014). The survey was only rarely applied by a professor in class. Finally, some questionnaires were disseminated in hallways so as to counteract a possible bias coming from students who attend classes and who might have a different value system from those who skip frequently.

The target group of students was selected with an eye to their relevant contribution to the protests and a lack of evidence regarding the political preferences and participatory practices of the Romanian youth. On the one hand, there is some evidence of students in the main university centers contributing to the organization of protests. In February 2017, students organized protests in their university cities and some travelled to Bucharest to join the large-scale demonstration in Victoria square (Stiridecluj.ro 2017; Telegrafonline 2017). On the other, students are Internet and social media users: 90% of the students in the survey use the Internet a few hours a day and 93% of them are daily Facebook users. Surveys that tap into political participation rarely include measurements of online political activism, making it difficult to scrutinize levels of engagement. Researchers observed that the 18 to 26 age group appears to be the least interested and involved in politics, pointing out that the source of this result lies with inadequate political activism indicators (Hooghe 2004).

Measures of Political Protest and Values

This subsection details the indicators of online political engagement. The question pertaining to protest activities specifically asked individuals to report if there was at least one participation in the January-February 2017 protests.

Measuring values in terms of preferences with respect to issues is constraining. Values have an emotional, cognitive, and behavioral component. They are not dissimilar from attitudes, yet they bear more, as they can be closer to the ego of a person and are less amenable to change (Aronson et al. 2017). Values are attitudes with a strong emotional component. The post-materialist scale used in the survey targeted the personal priorities of individuals in relation to the ways in which a country should develop. It is an often-used shortened version of the 12-indicator measure of post-materialism in the World Values Survey (Teocharis 2011). The respondents prioritized four governmental policies. These are: maintaining order in the nation (ORDER), giving the people more say in important government decisions (SAY), fighting rising prices (PRICES), and protecting freedom of speech (SPEECH). Respondents had to choose their first and

second priority. The combination of answers yielded four categories of materialists (1), rather materialists (2), rather post-materialists (3), and post-materialists (4) (Table 1).

Table 1: The coding of post-materialism

		First Priority			
		ORDER	SAY	PRICES	SPEECH
Second Priority	ORDER	-	3	1	3
	SAY	2	-	2	4
	PRICES	1	3	-	3
	SPEECH	2	4	2	-

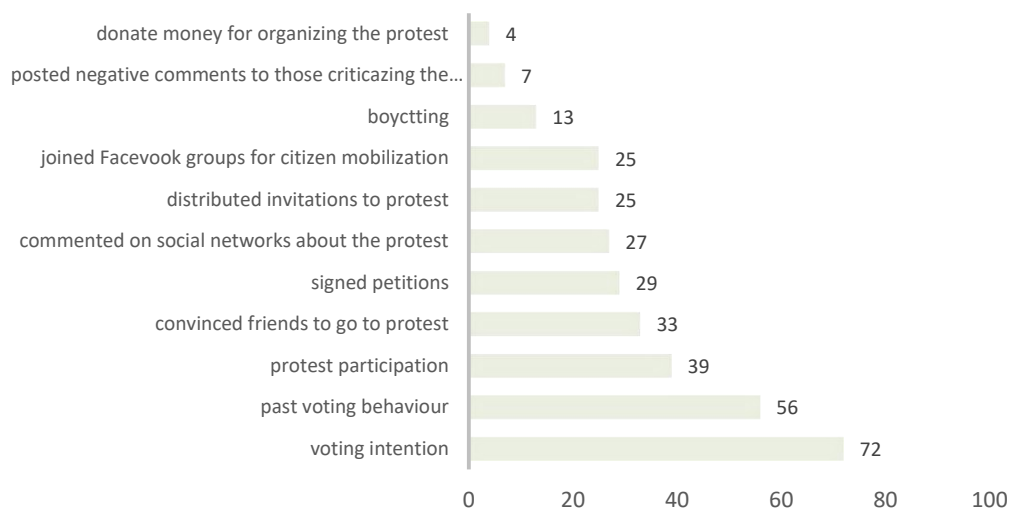
Online participation is viewed as an important predictor for protest engagement (Mercea 2014) and a source of political collective action among students and other individuals (Corigall-Brown 2012; Maher and Earl 2017). The participation index by Verba and Nie (1972) and the types of online participation used by Quintellier (2012) and Jung and Zuniga (2011) helped in the construction of the questionnaire. Following Kushin and Yamamoto (2010, 611), the online activities included were categorized into: information-seeking, interactive, and self-expressive. Online participation was confined to placing the #Rezist hashtag on the profile picture and joining Facebook protest groups. The answers were dichotomous, indicating presence or absence of an activity. Distrust represents an ingredient of protest engagement, so its introduction into the statistical model seems necessary (Norris 1999). Institutional trust is composed of 14 survey items (with a Cronbach's alpha of .876).

Using the open-source Factor program (Lorenzo-Seva and Ferrando 2013), specifically a combination of polychoric correlation matrices and principal component analysis, we obtained two relevant dimensions of trust (eigenvalues of 2.36 and 1.28) with two components for each dimension, with a correlation above .600. These are trust placed in government, parliament, church, and in the National Anti-Corruption Agency (DNA); they scored above a random distribution of correlations.

Additional controls were the predisposition of young people to vote. The students who do not go to vote are more likely to come from lower income backgrounds, testing for Orum's (1974) concept of relative deprivation. Age was excluded as a predictor due to a lack of variation. The age group of students ranged from 18 to 27, with 82% having ages between 22 and 25. In terms of disciplinary affiliation, 56% of students were enrolled in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programs and the rest in the social sciences and humanities. According to the Romanian Ministry of Education, 53% of all Romanian students are studying in STEM programs. Traditionally,

students in the social sciences and humanities are seen as more likely to engage in protests (Habermas 1987; Travaglino 2016; Brooks 2016; Freeman and Johnson 1999). However, a more recent study (Crossley 2008) found no effect of academic discipline on students' political activism, though the sample was minuscule (n=25). Lastly, income was measured as the amount of money spent in a month, classified from low to high: 0 to 500 RON (approximately 105 €), 501 to 1000, 1001 to 3000, and 3001 RON or above.

Figure 1 – Students Political Participation in 2017



The survey included other forms of political participation such as joining organizations. However, the response rate and the declared membership in student organizations and political parties were low. Only 15% of the 441 who responded to this question declared that they were members in a political organization, and 63% of 651 responding students stated their membership in a student organization. Interestingly, students use the new, online forms of political participation. The relatively high percentage of past voting and intended voting behavior, on the other hand, might be influenced by social desirability (Belli et al. 1999).

Next, I compared the frequencies on post-materialism with a 2012 World Values Survey applied in Romania. The other categories of adults reported a higher percentage of materialism (Table 2) than their student counterparts.

Table 2: A Comparison of the level of materialism among students and the results of a World Values survey applied in Romania

	<i>2017 Student survey</i>	<i>2012 WVS survey</i>
Materialist	9.9%	30.9%
Rather Materialist	20.9%	36.1%
Rather Post Materialist	17.6%	24.4%
Post Materialist	13.1%	8.4%
NA	38.5%	0.2%

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the independent variables

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	χ
#Rezist overlay	1537	1.00	2.00	1.11	0.31	.672***
Joined a Facebook protest event page or group	1541	1.00	2.00	1.26	0.44	.683***
Distrust in government	1622	1.00	4.00	3.27	0.73	.157***
Distrust of Parliament	1619	1.00	4.00	3.28	0.72	.148**
Distrust of the church	1602	1.00	4.00	3.03	0.99	.186***
Distrust in the National Anticorruption Department	1622	1.00	4.00	2.43	0.90	-.237***
Voted	1576	1.00	2.00	1.56	0.49	.133*
Discipline	1659	1.00	2.00	1.43	0.49	.211***
Gender	1540	1.00	2.00	1.37	0.48	.112*
Income	1537	1.00	3.00	2.01	0.62	.134***
Post materialism	1020	1.00	4.00	2.55	0.99	.184***

χ = gamma value of association with protest participation (0 not participated, 1 participated)

The association of protest participation with the independent variables revealed statistically significant associations across all predictors. New forms of political participation are strongly associated with protest engagement. Socio demographics and voting (the most popular form of conventional participation) are weakly associated with protest. The finding confirms the suspicions raised by Norris (1999) and Hooghe (2004) that the political participation of the young may be best viewed through different

lenses than the classical, well documented, conventional and unconventional approaches.

7. Explaining protest participation

In order to disentangle the most important predictors for protest participation (a dichotomous variable), we used hierarchical logistic regressions. This method has the advantage of identifying the models and factors whose presence accounts for protest participation. The results of the logistic regression do not permit a comparison across factors. A semi-standardization technique employed by King (2007) allows for a comparison of the sizes of each factor relative to the other. Three theoretical models were tested. The first accounts for values subsumed to post-materialism and trust. The second model includes forms of political participation to control for their effect. Lastly, I added socio-demographics and school background as controls.

In the first model, post-materialist values increased the likelihood of protest participation. This finding held when additional controls on online and offline participation, socio-demographics, and discipline were introduced. The relationship between trust and political protest participation had a positive effect. Trust in the National Anti-Corruption Agency is associated with the presence of reported protest behavior. This result held in all three models. Distrust in church had a positive effect on protest participation. The effect dissipated once gender, income, and type of discipline were introduced.

Table 1. Predictors of Student Protest Participation in the #Rezist Demonstrations

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Post materialism	.050**	.054**	.057**
Distrust in Government	.047	.048	.050
Distrust in Parliament	.018	.013	.016
Distrust in Church	.043*	.051*	.037
Distrust in DNA	-.116***	-.085***	-.074**
Rezist overlay		.106***	.109***
Joined Facebook protest groups		.148***	.145***
Vote		-.011	.000
Discipline			.043*
Gender			.048*
Income			.035
Nagelkerke R square	.093	.245	.259

Dependent variable: protest participation * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$. Coefficients are standardized beta for logistic regression (King 2007).

Next, elements that portray political participation are bifurcated. Firstly, offline political participation had no bearing on political protest participation. Namely, voting had no effect in any of the three models. The survey included other forms of political participation but there were too few answers to permit the introduction of these variables into a model or to allow the building of an index of conventional political participation. Secondly, online political participation – focused on expressive acts such as symbolic signaling and joining protest groups and events – had a strong effect on active protest engagement. These were the strongest predictors and their impact increased when socio-demographics were introduced.

The third model showed that, contrary to Crossley (2008), non-STEM students are more likely to engage in protest activities, thus confirming several other research results. Finally, with 63% of the sample composed of females, male students were more likely to be engaged in demonstrations. Thus the profile of the student protester emerges: the contentious actors are predominantly male, study social sciences or humanities, have post-materialist attitudes, and trust the anti-corruption agency. They express their protester identity in the social media visually, by changing their profile picture, and by joining online protest groups.

8. Discussion and conclusions

The 2017 protest against Ordinance 13, called the #Rezist protests, covered much of Romania. In this research, the focus was on four cities that host large populations of students and Facebook users. The aim was to ascertain the degree to which post-materialism influences student political participation. Alongside other categories of protesters, students make up a large segment of demonstrators who display post-materialist values, engage in rather symbolic expressive acts such as using the #Rezist overlay on their Facebook profile picture, and join event pages. Secondly, political protest participation was the likelier behavior for social science and humanities students. This is a finding that supports a rather common assumption that universities with social science and humanities departments, whose goal is to raise and educate citizens, have more politically and socially assertive students.

These results have three implications. First, post-materialism made engagement in collective action more likely. A process that deserves an examination with longitudinal

data concerns protest behavior as a catalyst for the manifestation of post-materialist values. Often, these two attitudes, namely engaging in protest and post-materialism, are intertwined (Norris 1999) and they are not analyzed in terms of one reinforcing the other. Perhaps repeated participation to protests strengthens post-materialism or is a key ingredient in the build-up of a post-materialist profile.

Second, the results confirmed the salience of Facebook as an instrument for the expressiveness of the protester identity. Expressive acts can help the diffusion of information. Further investigation is needed to find out whether the expression of identity is linked to social media information spread.

Third, males enrolled in social science and humanities programs are more prone to engage collectively. They are more post-materialist, they engage in expressive acts on Facebook and shun traditional media. This finding calls into question the assertion that the type of college education does not elicit different political engagement activities (Crossley 2008).

Lastly, one needs to point out that this study offers only a cross-sectional snapshot of students in relation to a specific protest. Ideally, a panel study (Gil de Zuniga et al. 2014) and a survey applied among the protesters (similarly to Theocharis 2011) could provide more detailed information on how a set of values labelled as post-materialism can trigger political protest engagement with the essential help provided by the shifting patterns of information offered by the social media.

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AUTHOR'S INFORMATION:

Toma Burean, PhD (College of Political Science, Public Administration and Communication, Babes-Bolyai University, Minerilor 85, 400409, Cluj-Napoca, Romania) is Lecturer at the Political Science Department, Babes-Bolyai University. His academic interests include political participation, migrant political behavior, and political representation.