

A Study of Youth Political Participation in Poland and Romania

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DECLARATION

I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis. All translations are my own.

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ABSTRACT

Although perceived changes in political participation patterns amongst young people in recent years have attracted much academic research in established democracies this remains an understudied area in the newer post-communist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. In established democracies, researchers have shown that although many young people are increasingly shunning traditional forms of political involvement, such as voting and political party membership, instead they are turning to more direct methods such as volunteering and protest. Despite evidence that young people in newer democracies may also have low levels of electoral participation and party membership, there is little understanding of whether this is due to communist legacies of forced participation, economic and social hardship or indeed reflects trends in established democracies. As active political participation plays a vital role in the improvement of the quality of democracy, this represents an important gap in our knowledge.

The aim of this thesis is to start to address this by analysing the logics behind youth political participation in two contrasting newer democracies, Poland and Romania. To do this, I employ a multi-method comparative approach which combines qualitative findings of fieldwork and quantitative data on electoral turnout. The thesis assesses electoral participation, party membership and involvement in informal forms of participation such as volunteering and protest. It finds that many young people in post-communist democracies choose to opt out of traditional forms of political participation because, as in established democracies, they feel alienated from formal political agents. However, this exit from formal methods of participation is not generally coupled with active participation in informal forms of involvement. The thesis concludes that despite sharing some important characteristics with young people in established democracies, legacies of communism and the rapid nature of post-communist political and socioeconomic transformation continue to negatively influence youth political participation in Poland and Romania.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Youth Political Participation in Context

The observation that people in established democracies are appearing to shun traditional methods of political participation, such as voting and party membership has attracted a great deal of recent scholarly attention (Putnam 1993, 2000, Norris 2002, Mair and Van Biezen 2001, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002, 2005, Stoker 2006). This perceived shift away from these formal types of political involvement is deemed to be particularly acute in the case of young people who are often seen to be apathetic about or alienated from formal political processes (Putnam 2000, Norris 2002, 2003, Henn et al. 2002, 2005, Marsh et al. 2007, Sloam 2007). Indeed this has led some observers to identify the political disengagement of young people as a key element in the so-called ‘crisis’ of modern day liberal democracy (Russell 2005).

The importance of active citizen participation in politics for the building of strong democracy has also been the focal point of much debate amongst scholars and policy makers focusing on the newer democracies of post-communist Eastern Europe. Here emphasis has often been on explaining the remarkably low rates of formal and informal political involvement amongst the population as a whole (Rose and Munro 2003, Van Biezen 2003, Millard 2004, Howard 2003). However, in these countries also, youth appear to be generally the least likely to vote or join a political party (Szczerbiak 2001, Fieldhouse et al. 2007, Rotariu and Comşa 2002).

Despite this, political participation of young people as a specific group in post-communist countries has attracted scarcely any in-depth academic study. Understanding of the interactions between political agents, institutions and young people in these countries remains extremely limited. Given that the social and political experiences of present day youth in post-communist countries vary importantly from those of the older generations who grew up during the communist regimes, and that current political engagement habits will likely influence the nature of political involvement chosen by future generations, this represents a serious gap in our knowledge. This is information

which is required for the drawing up of viable initiatives to encourage greater youth political engagement in these countries in the future.

The central aim of this thesis is to begin to address this issue and through a comparative case study provide a detailed outline of the nature of youth political participation and non-participation in two contrasting post-communist countries, Poland and Romania. By further comparing these findings to those of existing studies in established democracies I seek to identify important similarities and differences. Despite the low levels of youth political involvement in these countries this thesis intentionally focuses on both participation and non-participation. This is based on the contention that to understand the wider issue of political disengagement it is also necessary to study the characteristics and motivations of those who choose to participate.

The central question underpinning this thesis is; how do the reasons behind the political participation patterns of young people in newer post-communist democracies compare to those behind youth political engagement in established democracies? More specifically it asks to what degree the political participation patterns of the current generation of young people in Poland and Romania, the first generation to have no personal experience under communism, are influenced by legacies of the communist past or whether significant parallels can now be drawn between the political participation habits of these young people and those in established democracies.

1.1a Outline of Chapters in the Thesis

This first chapter sets out the main definitions employed in this thesis. The first section outlines and explains why I have chosen a broad interpretation of the activities which constitute political participation and analyses the importance of active political engagement for strengthening democratic quality, especially in newer democracies. The subsequent section presents the main explanations for youth political participation patterns identified in research in established democracies and assesses specific post-communist factors which could be expected to have a continuing influence over youth political engagement in newer democracies in Eastern Europe.

In chapter two I first set out the methodological basis for the study. In particular, I detail and explain the logics behind the paired country comparison of Poland and Romania and present the sub-national units studied within these countries. These are used to formulate a set of comparative hypotheses which are tested throughout the thesis. Second, I explain the rationale behind the multi-method approach taken, and detail the qualitative and quantitative research methods employed in the study.

The subsequent three chapters present and analyse the core research in the thesis. In each, I focus on a specific form of political involvement. Chapter three employs qualitative and quantitative data to build up a model for youth electoral participation and non-participation in Poland and Romania. Chapter four focuses on youth party membership and using qualitative data and party materials analyses the logics behind participation in each country. Chapter five then employs descriptive statistics and qualitative data to outline and analyse youth political participation and non-participation in informal forms (volunteering and protest activities).

In chapter six, I bring together the main findings of the thesis and assess the wider implications of these for understanding youth political participation and non-participation in newer East European democracies. I also question what this means for the future improvement in the quality of democracy in Poland and Romania.

1.2 What is Political Participation?

Although the study of political participation plays a central role in many political science studies, the meaning of the concept itself is disputed. To explain how political participation is understood in this study and which activities I have chosen to include under this heading, I therefore first give an outline of how scholars have interpreted and modified this concept over time and briefly review the main debates on which activities should be recognised as political participation. I then present the interpretation I choose to adopt.

Although voter turnout remains the activity most readily associated with the study of political participation, the variety of acts undertaken by citizens to influence politics is actually much more diverse and can include, for example, party activism, signing a

petition, attending a demonstration, contacting an official or wearing a campaign badge. Faced with such a wide range of potential activities, various significant attempts have been made by researchers to categorise these.

The classic typology used in the seminal studies of participation by Verba and Nie (1972) and Barnes and Kaase (1979) distinguished between conventional and unconventional participation. This categorised activities conducted through official channels such as voting or party activism as conventional and others, organised outside such channels such as demonstrating or occupying a building, as unconventional. However, the continued relevance of this distinction has been questioned by more recent studies of political involvement in established democracies. For instance, Norris (2003) argues that, in recent decades, the ways that citizens choose to interact with politics have changed significantly. These changes, she claims, are evident in the **repertoires** (types of participation), **agencies** (the organisations through which citizens participate) and the **targets** (who or what the participant aims to influence) of political participation.

For Norris and others (Verba et al. 1995, Van Deth 2001, Van Deth et al. 2007) this has meant that the distinction between conventional and unconventional participation has become increasingly blurred. In the past unconventional participation was seen to be activity undertaken by a rebellious few against actions by the state. Yet nowadays protest activities such as boycotting and demonstrating have become much more widespread (Tarrow 1998, Putnam 2000) and have a much larger range of potential targets which may include local businesses and international organisations as well as seeking to influence public opinion and behaviour (Norris 2002, 2003). At the same time, the agencies of participation have also become much more diverse. New technology, in particular, offers opportunities for communication and organisation which were unavailable a few decades ago.

These fundamental changes in the ways in which citizens engage politically mean that providing a universal definition as to which activities constitute political participation and which fall outside this has become increasingly problematic. This is particularly the case when scholars attempt to draw a line between activities which belong in political society and ones which fall under civil society.

Notions of the 'political' sphere within which participation takes place have also required rethinking. In their study of democratic consolidation, Linz and Stepan (1996, p.8), make a clear distinction between political society which constitutes the '*core institutions*' of '*political parties, elections, electoral rules, political leadership, interparty alliances, and legislatures*' and economic and civil society. According to this rigid distinction, only those activities which are overtly 'political', in that they are plainly directed towards influencing state policy, would fall under the heading of political society. However as discussed above, many activities in which citizens engage are not directly related to political parties or elections but may still aim to influence political decision-making. These 'overlaps' between political and civil society have been recognised to different degrees by scholars (Potter et al. 1997, Millard 1999). Howard (2003. pp.32-38), for example, distinguishes between political and civil society based on both the character of the actors and aims of various organisations. He argues that political society is mainly made up of elite actors and institutions while civil society is the '*realm of ordinary citizens*' and that although civil society organisations may also seek political influence, unlike those in political society their main goal is not to gain political power. Despite this, he does nonetheless acknowledge a '*small but significant overlap*' between the two groups. Thus, although he places organisations such as youth groups and community groups firmly within civil society, political parties, political interest groups and NGOs can be found in both civil and political society.

Although such a distinction between civil and political society may be useful for studies of civil society, it has less value for political participation research. This is because attempting to delineate political society and civil society effectively excludes many activities from being seen as forms of political participation by placing them under the heading of civil society. For instance, under this distinction, many contrasting organisations can be grouped together as civil society organisations. Environmental movements are one example of this problem. The contrast between large scale environmental organisations which act against government policies to expand airports or develop nuclear power and a local group which aims to clean up a village pond is striking. In the first example, it is likely that the group's aims to change state policy may mean that some of its participants come from other more formal organisations and could even include members of political parties. In comparison, the second group's activities may not aim to alter state policy but here also the participants may constitute

local politicians or members of other local organisations. This is an inherent difficulty in specifying activities as belonging to civil society as opposed to political society and in turn excluding them from being considered as political participation activities¹.

For this reason, I choose to employ a broader interpretation of political participation which takes into account the fundamental changes in the repertoires of political engagement and how this relates to the participation patterns of young people. Thus, I intentionally avoid categorisation of activities as conventional or unconventional or as part of political or civil society. Instead, an activity is included as political participation if it aims to engender some type of political or behavioural change, is focused towards the public domain and is voluntary. This includes the traditional forms of political engagement, such as electoral participation and party membership but it is also broad enough to include a wide range of informal forms of participation such as activity in contentious politics² and voluntary organisations.

In employing such an inclusive interpretation, my intention is to reach a fuller comprehension of how and why young people in Poland and Romania are involved or abstain from political engagement. Given the lack of current research on this issue, deliberately excluding activities on the grounds of being unconventional or part of civil society could seriously limit understanding of the interrelated influences and logics behind youth political participation patterns in these countries.

1.3 Why does Political Participation Matter?

Political participation is an important component of any democracy and the nature and amount of citizen political involvement can impact significantly on levels of democratic quality.

¹ For a concise assessment of the problems in defining the boundaries of civil society see Kopecký (2003).

² Here I employ the definition of contentious politics given by Tarrow (1998, p.2), '*Contentious politics occurs when ordinary people, often in league with more influential citizens, join forces in confrontations with elites, authorities, and opponents*'. This I take to include activities such as demonstrating, petitioning and boycotting.

1.3a Political Participation and Democratic Theory

From the time of the city states in ancient Greece, the role citizen participation should play in a democracy has been the subject of intense debate (Behrouzi 2006, Held 2006). For some, models of direct democracy, as practised in the Greek cities, were seen as the ideal³. These advocated the need for full participation of citizens in public decision-making. For others, a more restrictive model was preferred in which citizen participation was deemed less important than the need for a strong state which could enforce the law⁴.

Since the start of the twentieth century, however, the prevailing model of democracy in the West has been of liberal democracy. Underpinning this model are the ideals of individual liberty, citizen's rights and the free market. Yet, within the liberal democracy model, views on the optimum amount and substance of citizen participation continue to vary greatly.

At one extreme, minimalist or procedural theories of democracy argue that citizen involvement in politics should be limited to electoral participation (Schumpeter 1976). Having chosen their representatives, citizens should then leave them to their job of decision-making without further interference. Elections would therefore act as the sole guard against corrupt or bad leadership. During the 1960s and 1970s this approach came under heavy criticism by theorists who stressed the need for an active citizenry both at and between elections to legitimise democratic decision-making (Pateman 1970). Unlike minimalist conceptions of democracy, which see ordinary citizens as unable to participate effectively in politics, advocates of participatory democracy stress the benefits of such involvement for both the participants and democratic accountability (Pateman 1970, Macpherson 1983)⁵. This was also the underlying logic of Barber's (1984) strong democracy in the 1980s where he argued that active citizen participation would ensure against 'thin' democracy, as championed by Schumpeter. Instead,

³ Direct democracy was first proposed in the Greek City States, was then central to the theories of Rousseau and renewed by Marx and Engels during the industrial revolution. See Held (2006) or Behrouzi (2006) for discussion of the works of these theorists.

⁴ See Held (2006) for a detailed analysis of these models where he explains the various restrictive democracy models favoured by Machiavelli and Montesquieu.

⁵ Participatory democracy is influenced by the theories of Rousseau and the notions of individual liberty advocated by J S Mill. See Held (2006) for discussion.

decisions made as a result of political talk and deliberation would strengthen links between citizens and elected representatives and help develop civic consciousness (Barber 1984, Tam 1998).

However, as populations have increased and diversified, the possibilities of implementing such a 'participatory society' appear increasingly unrealistic. Indeed, theories of participatory democracy also assume that citizens desire to participate. This is a notion which has been questioned most recently by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002, 2005), who argue that most citizens would prefer not to participate actively in politics. Instead many would opt for a 'stealth' democracy in which elected representatives make decisions on their behalf, leaving them free to pursue other activities. In a time of falling levels of formal political engagement in established democracies, this theory appears to correspond better with reality than participatory democracy. However, although the thesis is well supported by evidence that people are uninterested in and apathetic about politics, like earlier theories of minimalist democracy, 'stealth' democracy still fails to address the question of how to ensure elected representatives do not abuse their power. If citizens only participate at elections, it could mean extended time periods in which the activities of elected representatives are left unchecked. Thus, although Hibbing and Theiss Morse (2002, 2005) offer an interesting argument against the unrealistic demands of a participatory society, they do not convincingly challenge the underpinning reasons for encouraging active political participation (Bowler et al. 2003, Gamson 2003).

Deliberative democracy is a modernisation of the ideals proposed by advocates of participatory democracy in the 1960s and 1970s. It is a school of thought which has developed over the last few decades specifically in response to the perceived inadequacies of modern day liberal democracy (Behrouzi 2005, Held 2006). In particular, the increasing celebrity and professionalism surrounding party politics which is said to alienate citizens and detract from in-depth and serious political discussion. The need for a new type of political participation to address these issues is central to accounts of deliberative democracy. This is based on encouraging citizens to deliberate, discuss and argue about political issues in an informed manner (Fishkin 1991, Bohman 1998, Cooke 2000, Dryzek 2002). The emphasis of this approach on increasing the quality rather than the amount of participation is an important contrast with earlier

accounts of participatory democracy. However, opinions differ greatly amongst advocates of deliberative democracy about how to implement and assess the success of deliberation (Bohman 1996, Behrouzi 2005, Held 2006). Indeed, these concerns also underpin much of the general criticism levelled at deliberative democracy. Some argue that the demands it places on equality and rational agreement are unrealistic (Ryfe 2005, Stoker 2006). For example, Stoker (2006) agrees that deliberation amongst citizens can be valuable for increasing the quality of democratic decision-making but that its emphasis on formal techniques can also exclude many potential participants. Consequently, instead of improving access to participation, it potentially furthers inequality.

In response to this, Stoker (2006) proposes that informal deliberative techniques should form a part of a larger package of ways designed to improve interactions between political agents and citizens. He takes the arguments presented by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002, 2005) seriously and accepts their concerns that many citizens simply do not want to become politically involved. However, he does not agree that this means political participation cannot be made more attractive to citizens. His approach is therefore to suggest a 'politics for amateurs' which aims to initiate citizens into political engagement through methods to which they can relate. This is premised on the belief that active participation can be beneficial to democracy, yet it also demands less in terms of quantity of participation than older theories of participatory democracy and is more inclusive than many accounts of deliberative democracy. This strikes a convincing balance between participatory and minimalist theories of democracy which is more attuned to the characteristics of liberal democracies today.

1.3 a(i) Models of Democracy in Practice

In recent decades, the trend in governmental and non-governmental practice towards citizen participation has been to increasingly favour a participatory element over stricter minimalist approaches to democracy. Much of this is directly in response to the perceived fall in voter turnout and political party membership and is particularly prevalent in relation to youth political participation. Many initiatives to encourage greater youth political involvement are thus guided by this belief in the educative and

habit-forming nature of participation (International IDEA 1999, Electoral Commission Research Report 2002).

Academics, however, remain less convinced about the ability to encourage greater youth political participation through top-down initiatives engineered by governments and NGOs. For instance, a study by Ødegård (2007) of an initiative to promote youth political participation through local youth councils in Norway was found to have had mixed results. Although he found that those young people who did get involved in the councils became significantly more politically integrated, the ability of the project to involve otherwise non-politically participative youth was limited. These findings have also been mirrored in studies conducted in the USA on initiatives to encourage interest amongst young people in elections (Shea and Green 2006). This corresponds with the criticisms levelled by Stoker (2006) at formal schemes designed to increase participation in ways which are very demanding in terms of participants' resources. This means that the most likely to participate will be those who possess the requisite time and interest. In turn this does little to readdress the unequal balance as to who participates.

These questions surrounding the best ways to encourage and improve youth political participation are particularly relevant to the situation in the newer democracies of Eastern Europe. As young people are often the least politically participative age group in these countries (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998), many schemes which aim to increase participation have been started by NGOs over the last few years. However, these are mostly implemented in a top-down manner and often by international level organisations⁶. This means that these are also likely to be most accessible to young people who are already participative.

This is especially problematic in post-communist countries where the role of political participation in strengthening the current state of democracy remains a topic of debate. The process of democratisation since the fall of communism has meant that the institutional or procedural aspects of democracy are now securely in place. However,

⁶ See for instance the UNICEF and World Bank 2002 Report '*Youth in South Eastern Europe*', The International Youth Foundation 2005, '*What Works in Youth Engagement in the Balkans*' or Factory of Future Warsaw, World Bank and Council of Europe, 2007, '*Youth 4 Diversity*' Project.

the absence of widespread citizen involvement has called into question how ‘good’ this democracy is as regards accountability and representativeness of elected officials (Morlino 2004, Berg-Schlosser 2004).

1.3b Political Participation and Democratisation

The fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s meant an unprecedented number of countries simultaneously taking major steps to implement the institutions of liberal democracy. In turn this also sparked a renewal in the debate on the degree to which political participation is necessary for a functioning democracy (Huntington 1991, Linz and Stepan 1996). Although initial approaches by researchers mainly focused on determining the success of democratisation in each country by measuring the implementation of procedural or minimalist aspects of democracy such as free elections and institution building, it has become increasingly apparent that despite the existence of these basic democratic institutions the quality of democracy across these countries varies greatly (Huntington 1991, Wiarda 2002, Carothers 2002, Bunce 2003, Merkel and Croissant 2004)⁷. As a result, work concerned with assessing democratic consolidation on procedural grounds alone has come under criticism (Schedler 1998, Millard 2004, Berg-Schlosser 2004). The main point being that the emphasis consolidation places on outcome rather than process means it equates multi-party elections with democracy whilst largely ignoring the need for horizontal building of democracy through active citizen participation.

This is particularly problematic given the findings of numerous studies of citizen participation in newer democracies which find citizens to be notably disengaged not only from the formal types of political participation such as elections and political parties⁸, but also from informal forms such as protest politics (Ekiert and Kubik 1998, Vanhuyse 2004) and involvement in interest groups (Mudde 2003, Howard 2003). Therefore although procedural democracy may have been achieved, there exist obvious weaknesses in accountability and representativeness of elected officials (Merkel 2004). This has prompted theorists to rethink the relationship between political participation

⁷ Although the main focus of studies of democratic consolidation has been on procedural aspects of democracy, this has been expanded at times to include other more substantive aspects (Linz and Stepan 1996). However, this approach has been criticised for lack of clarity and confusion of the issues involved (see Collier and Levitsky 1997 and Schedler 1998).

⁸ For electoral participation see Tworzecki (2003), Rose and Munro (2003), Millard (2004). For party activism see Szczerbiak (2001), Toole (2003), Van Biezen (2003).

and democratisation and to start to assess the quality of democracy in a country based on a much larger range of possible criteria than those offered by the literature on democratic consolidation. Thus, unlike consolidation, the study of democratic quality is primarily concerned with the processes of democratisation rather than its outcome (Croissant and Merkel 2004, Svetlozar 2005). Generally studies of democratic quality look not only at whether institutions of democracy exist but also at how effectively these operate to ensure accountability, encourage participation and to progressively improve social, economic and political equality (Morlino 2004, Svetlozar 2005)⁹.

Within the expanded criteria used by democratic quality, active political participation by citizens is often seen as an important measurement of a 'good democracy' (Croissant and Merkel 2004, Faundez 2005, Svetlozar 2005). This is exemplified by the definition of democratic quality given by Diamond and Morlino (2004 pp.23-24). They state:

*'democratic quality is high when we in fact observe **extensive citizen participation** not only through voting but in the life of political parties and civil society organisations, in the discussion of public policy issues, in communicating with and demanding accountability from elected representatives, in monitoring official conduct and in direct engagement with public issues at the local level'*

By stressing the importance of a variety of horizontal links between citizens and elected representatives, it is plain that this approach goes beyond the stricter procedural based indicators used by many accounts of democratic consolidation and moves some steps towards the stance taken by advocates of participatory democracy. However, despite this wider scope, democratic quality has been primarily used by scholars to draw up typologies of different categories of democracy (Berg-Schlosser 2004, Merkel 2004). This has mainly been done by using quantitative based indicators which remain much better suited to measuring the degree to which a country has implemented procedural democracy rather than assessing the more complex nature of links between citizens and government. As a result, many of these studies tell us little about the relationship

⁹ Morlino (2004) distinguishes three groups of factors which should be considered in assessing the level of democratic quality in a given country. These are procedure, content and outcome. Procedure includes the existence of the rule of law and assesses accountability. Content includes whether policy progresses the rights of freedom and equality. Outcome assesses how well policy responds to the needs of citizens. For a detailed discussion of Democratic Quality see Svetlozar (2005).

between political participation and the processes of democratisation. In particular, by relying on data which measures the quantity of political engagement in a given country compared to a multinational scale, these studies lack the capacity to give detailed information about country and age specific political participation patterns and how these are influenced by and impact upon the processes of democratisation.

Understanding how and why young people participate or abstain from politics is particularly relevant for strengthening the quality of democracy in the future. Studies in established democracies have found that the political interests of young people often differ significantly from those of older people and that the failure of governments to acknowledge their interests can lead to feelings of alienation and exclusion (Kimberlee 2002, Henn et al. 2005, Fahmy 2006). This could represent a breakdown in the correspondence between citizens and policy makers and also questions the long-term responsiveness of policy to citizens needs. These are key factors for improving democratic quality (Morlino 2004, Svetlozar 2005). In newer democracies, young people often appear even more uninvolved in politics than youth in established democracies (Roberts and Jung 1995, Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, Roberts 2003). This reflects the low level of citizen participation in post-communist populations as a whole but it is unclear whether the reasons for disengagement stem from the fundamental social, economic and political changes caused by democratisation or whether they also compare with trends in youth participation found in established democracies. This is a question which must be addressed in order for policy makers to respond to the needs of young people in newer democracies and thus to improve the quality of democracy for future generations.

1.4 Youth Political Participation – A Special Case?

As young people have been found to participate in politics in differing ways to older people, the specific theoretical and methodological challenges raised by this finding have generated a distinct sub-literature. This mainly focuses on the questions of youth abstention from formal types of political participation and identifying alternative modes of youth political engagement.

1.4a Explanations for Patterns of Youth Political (Dis)engagement in Established Democracies

Studies of political participation in established democracies have long found that age acts as an important factor in explaining the likelihood of an individual being politically involved. Thus, being young or very old is most associated with a lower likelihood of turning out to vote or joining a political party (Verba and Nie 1972, Dalton 1996, Franklin 2004, Henn et al. 2002, 2005, Sloam 2007, Fieldhouse et al. 2007, Russell 2005, Cross and Young 2008). In recent decades the gap between young voters and older has apparently widened in many established democracies (Wattenberg 2002, Franklin 2004, Fieldhouse et al. 2007)¹⁰. Additionally, studies of political party membership have found youth membership to have decreased sharply over the last few decades in various countries including Canada (Cross and Young 2008), Belgium (Hooghe et al. 2004) and the UK (Whiteley and Seyd 2006). In contrast, however, studies have suggested a greater propensity for young people to participate in informal forms of political involvement such as demonstrating and volunteering than older generations (Roker et al. 1999, Youniss et al. 2002, Shea and Green 2006, Quintelier 2007). That age matters for political participation is therefore indisputable, however it has proven much more complex to reach consensus on the roots to these patterns.

Traditional explanations for lower turnout and party membership amongst young people focus on **life-cycle factors**. These dictate that young people face a number of so-called ‘start-up’ problems such as finding employment, housing and starting a family which mean that they have less time and interest in becoming involved in politics than older cohorts (Verba and Nie 1972, Norris 2003, Kimberlee 2002, Fahmy 2006, Quintelier 2007). They may also be more mobile than older people and this prevents them from becoming integrated in a particular community. Other theorists have also stressed the feelings of powerlessness which shortages of money and being at the bottom of the job market can engender (Shea and Green 2007). The argument follows that as young people age and these initial problems are resolved, then they will be more likely to participate. This is because the resources available to them in terms of money,

¹⁰ However as Wattenberg (2002, p. 85) reports this gap may vary considerably from one country to another. He found Japan to have the largest gap between youngest and oldest cohorts at 37 points. This was closely followed by the USA and Switzerland at 31 points and 30 points respectively. Yet, the gap was only 8 points in Spain and 6 points in the Netherlands.

education, time and interest will be greater. This explanation can therefore be used to account for a curvilinear pattern in voter turnout and party membership where participation peaks in middle age (Norris 2003).

Although studies continue to find evidence to support life-cycle explanations (Norris 2003, Blais et al. 2004), this rationale also suffers from some very significant weaknesses. The first of these is that it fails to account for the general decline in voter turnout and party membership in many established democracies across recent decades (Mair and Van Biezen 2001, Plutzer 2002, Hooghe et al. 2004, Franklin 2004). If indeed progressively greater numbers of people are failing to become engaged in traditional forms of political participation as they reach middle age, it signifies that life-cycle explanations alone are insufficient. In response, some observers have stressed that there are also important **generational factors** at stake (Lyons and Alexander 2000, Kimberlee 2002, Blais et al. 2004, Henn et al. 2005). This dictates that socio-demographic and political changes over time influence participation of generations or cohorts differently.

Important changes in socio-demographics across established democracies have meant that the boundary between where youth ends and adulthood begins has become increasingly blurred. Traditionally, adulthood coincided with leaving education, commencement of employment and starting of a family. Today, people often stay in education longer, face greater uncertainties in employment, start families later and are more mobile. It is argued that these factors delay adulthood and in turn mean that the changes in political participation expected by life-cycle effects, are also delayed or do not happen at all (Kimberlee 2002, Quintelier 2007)¹¹. However, researchers have found the most persuasive explanations for the decline in political involvement are due to the changing relationship between political agents and citizens (Kimberlee 2002, Blais et al. 2004, Henn et al. 2005, Quintelier 2007). Particularly, they emphasise the increasing professionalisation and top-down nature of modern politics which has weakened links between citizens and politicians, rendering parties and politicians ever more remote from and irrelevant to the everyday lives of citizens.

¹¹ One important socio-demographic change across established democracies has been the rise in level of educational attainment. In a time where political participation levels are declining, this appears to contradict the usual correlation between education levels and political engagement. However, studies have found that education acts as a stronger indicator of political engagement for the youngest cohorts than older, suggesting that lesser educated young people are even less likely to be politically involved than in the past (Lyons and Alexander 2000, Blais et al. 2004).

It is argued that this altered political culture has particularly impacted upon the political participation of young people (Kimberlee 2002, Blais et al. 2004, Henn et al. 2005). For instance, in their study of four generations of voters across seven elections in Canada¹², Blais et al. (2004) found that although life-cycle effects still partly account for the low propensity of young people to vote, more compelling was the way in which political cultural changes have made young people less likely to pay attention to politics and to feel a moral obligation to vote. This finding is supported by studies in the UK (Kimberlee 2002, Henn et al. 2005, Sloam 2007) which argue that as links between political agents and citizens have weakened, young voters have become specifically marginalised. Kimberlee (2002) contends that not only are the concerns of young people largely ignored by politicians and political parties but also the power of youth wings have weakened. This decreases the possibilities for youth representation in parties. In addition, as parties have become more professional and rely less on the support of grass roots members, campaigning for support has become mainly targeted at those groups most likely to give support, namely middle-aged and older voters. This argument was endorsed by the findings of Henn et al.'s (2005, p.574) survey of 705 first-time voters in the UK. They found that the most persuasive reasons for non-participation were due to changes in political culture and concluded that many of their respondents found politicians '*unrepresentative and unresponsive to the needs of young people*'.

As well as accounting for low rates of participation in traditional forms of political participation such as voting and party activism, changes in political culture have also been cited as a reason for the increased engagement by young people in informal forms of participation (Norris 2002, 2003, Kimberlee 2002, Shea and Green 2006, Quintelier 2007, Sloam 2007). Young people are said to have developed a different set of political values from older generations which make them more receptive to more informal types of participation including single-issue politics, social movement activity and volunteering.

The findings of these recent studies represent an important shift of emphasis in the debate on youth political participation in established democracies. Although they accept

¹² Blais et al. (2004) distinguish 4 generations or cohorts in their study. These are the Pre-Baby Boomers (born before 1945), the Baby Boomers (born 1945-1959), the Generation born in the 1960s (or Generation X) and the Generation born in the 1970s.

that life-cycle effects can still account, in part, for the lower propensity of young people to engage in traditional forms of participation, they also find that changes in political culture have significantly altered the way in which the youngest cohorts relate to politics. Thus they argue that young people are not necessarily apathetic or uninterested in politics but that instead they are alienated from formal politics. As a result, it has become common to frame explanations for low rates of youth political participation as an **apathy versus alienation** argument (O'Toole et al. 2003, Henn et al. 2005, Sloam 2007, Quintelier 2007).

1.4b Don't care or don't like? Apathy versus Alienation

Recent studies in established democracies have stressed that there is a continuing mismatch between popular discourse and qualitative academic research on the disengagement of youth from politics (Wattenberg 2002, Kimberlee 2002). They give examples of how youth apathy about politics is blamed by the media and politicians for the declining rates of participation. In contrast, they show that qualitative academic studies which investigate how young people actually feel about politics find young people to be interested in political issues but alienated from formal politics. However, such a bipolar approach could also be misleading.

The first difficulty with this approach is that it allows little space for coexistence of apathy and alienation whereby young people may exhibit characteristics of political apathy together with those of political exclusion. Another problem with this argument arises when it is applied to understanding motivations behind young people becoming involved in informal forms of political participation. By understanding non-participative young people as being 'turned-off' from formal political agents as a result of feelings of alienation and exclusion rather than apathy, it can appear logical to conclude that these young people are instead becoming involved in alternative forms of participation which they find more inclusive and relevant to their everyday lives (Quintelier 2007). However, this is a bold claim.

Even if involvement in informal forms of political participation has increased amongst youth in established democracies, the causal link between this and alienation from formal political agents remains largely untested. Indeed, the young people who are

engaged in such informal forms of participation often form a small, particularly active group and may have become involved for a large variety of different reasons of which dissatisfaction with political agents is only one (Shea and Green 2006). As such, this group could be seen to represent the minority of young people in any society who will be predisposed to become involved in public activity rather than the largely inactive majority. Therefore, in any study of youth political participation, there is a need for very careful assessment of both participants and non-participants in order to unpack the complex web of influences and motivations behind engagement and abstention.

1.4c Explaining Youth Political (Dis)engagement in Newer Democracies

That young people in the newer democracies of Eastern Europe are even less politically participative than their counterparts in established democracies has caused alarm amongst international and NGO observers. There is particular concern that this disengagement appears not only to comprise the formal types of participation such as voting and party activism but also extends to involvement in informal forms of participation (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, Civitas Foundation 2002, UNICEF and the World Bank 2003). However, these very low levels of youth participation are also set against a background of notably low rates of political involvement across post-communist societies as a whole where voter turnout levels have generally fallen since the first free elections of the early 1990s, party membership numbers remain weak and widespread activity in protest and voluntary organisations appears lacking¹³. As a result the question of whether the patterns of youth political participation in newer democracies are a product of specifically post-communist factors or those affecting young people in established democracies or indeed a mixture of both is a timely one.

1.4c(i) Existing Study on Youth Political Participation in Newer Democracies

The academic literature on political participation patterns in newer democracies is mainly concerned with trends in the population as a whole with little regard for different age groups. Nonetheless, the explanations offered by such research can be used as a starting point for more detailed analysis of youth participation patterns.

¹³ See Section 1.3b.

Explanations for widespread political disengagement in newer democracies often focus on the large-scale alterations to politics, economics and society brought on as a result of the transformation to democracy from communism. In particular, citizen disappointment with free-market reforms, perceived political instability and corruption are said to have led to disillusionment with politicians and decision-makers (Rose and Munro 2003, Tworzecki 2003, Howard 2003). Equally, the experience of authoritarian, one-party systems during communism is thought to have contributed to a continued distrust and fear of politicians and political parties. The combination of these two major factors has meant that not only are many people ‘turned off’ from voting and party activism, but that they also have little interest in entering the public sphere through protesting or volunteering (Howard 2003, Vanhuysse 2003). The specific relevance of these two sets of factors in explaining youth political participation patterns deserves greater analysis.

1.4c(ii) A Post-Communist ‘Period’ Effect?

The vast changes in politics, economics and society after 1989 in the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe can be seen as constituting a **period effect**. Norris (2003, p. 9) defines a period effect as a *‘particular major historical event which had a decisive impact upon all citizens in a society at one point’*. Established democracies have experienced period effects too, such as the political and societal changes exemplified by the aftermath of the economic depression of the 1920s and the mass student protests of the 1960s. However these have not had the same universal impact on the entire population as caused by the end of communism and transformation to democracy in Eastern Europe. In particular, democratisation in post-communist countries has meant the development largely from scratch of the institutions required for voluntary political participation by citizens, namely a multi-party system, free elections and civil society organisations. This represents a reversal of the way in which these developed in established democracies in the 19th century, where parties and other organisations were created as an answer to societal needs and demands rather than a top-down, elite centred response to the requirements of procedural democracy (Rose and Shin 2001, Van Biezen 2003).

This ‘democratisation backwards’ (Rose and Shin 2001) has seen political parties in newer democracies largely characterised by a small, urban-based elite leadership which

has little need or interest in mobilising mass membership (Szczurbiak 2001). Equally civil society organisations, although prolific in the first stages of post-communism typically lack a grass-roots membership base (Mendelson and Glenn 2002, Kopecký 2003). In turn, this lack of everyday political participation is also deemed to have had an adverse effect on electoral participation, where citizens often identify a separation between their private lives and public institutions and do not feel that their involvement can make much difference (Rose and Munro 2003).

That these fundamental changes in political, economic and social life have impacted importantly on political participation patterns of post-communist citizens is thus clear. However, less is understood about whether and how these changes have influenced political involvement patterns of age groups differently. This is a question which is largely ignored by existing study on post-communist youth which tends to be either outdated or focused primarily on economic and social changes rather than detailing and understanding youth political involvement.

Much existing published research on youth political participation in the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe dates from the first phase of post-communism (Roberts and Jung 1995, Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998). Due to their involvement in the collapse of communism, it appears the behaviour of youth was initially seen as a test case for how democratic political participation would develop in these countries. However, as time passed, and young people were not showing signs of mass mobilisation, the interest in their participation habits seems also to have ebbed.

Given the rapid nature of social, economic and political changes in newer democracies, studies conducted in the early period of post-communism can offer little information on the specific behaviour patterns of young people in these countries in the early 21st century. Especially, given that the political socialisation of the present young cohort has taken place within the context of Europeanisation rather than communism and early democratic transition. In particular, up-to-date information is required on whether trends identified in youth political participation in established democracies are also visible in newer democracies and, if so, how these patterns and influences compare.

Secondly those academic studies which do exist on young people in post-communist countries have tended to focus primarily on the economic and social situation of youth and to a lesser extent on how they participate politically (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, Roberts 2003, Roman 2003)¹⁴. This is not to say that the economic and social situation of young people is unimportant for the understanding of their political involvement and indeed the findings of this research are very valuable for political science-oriented research. Specifically, recent study has found that young people occupy a unique position as regards economic and social life in post-communist countries which means that they are often the best and worst placed in society to take advantage of opportunities (Blokker and Dallago 2008). Young people often face a greater degree of economic insecurity than other age groups but at the same time they are also frequently better situated to take advantage of employment and business opportunities as many have greater flexibility and are better educated¹⁵ than older people. This complex situation could therefore also be expected to be reflected in the political participation patterns of young people in these countries. On the one hand, the social and economic insecurities they face may leave them with fewer resources, like time and money, to participate in politics in comparison with older age groups. On the other hand, their relative flexibility and higher education levels could also conceivably have the opposite effect on their availability and motivation to engage politically.

1.4c(iii) A Legacy of Communist Experience?

The second main argument commonly used to account for the lack in active political participation in post-communist countries is based on the role of communist political-cultural legacies. These mainly stress that attitudes shaped by experiences under communism have a continuing negative influence on political participation today (Smolar 1997, Kunovich 2000, Rose and Shin 2001, Howard 2003, Tworzecki 2003).

The first aspect of this is the role that official political participation had under communist regimes. Although these were effectively one-party states, there was

¹⁴ In contrast to academic studies, youth issues in newer democracies have attracted considerable attention from both international and national NGOs working in the area (For examples see footnote 6). Although the information contained in such reports is very useful, they often cover a very wide scope of youth social, political and economic issues and thus cannot offer the rigorous academic analysis which is required if we are to reach a more detailed understanding of youth political participation patterns.

¹⁵ See section 2.2d(ii)

pretence of democracy which was perpetuated by the holding of uncompetitive elections and the existence of a vast array of communist-led social organisations. However, participation in these elections and organisations was often a result of coercion. The result of this was that the communist regime sought to permeate many aspects of citizens' lives, both public and private. Scholars have since identified this prolonged period of compulsory political participation as an important factor in the choice to abstain from political involvement during post-communism arguing that this experience has not only left citizens distrustful of public institutions and civil society organisations but has also meant that many have opted to retract into their own private networks of friends and family (Smolar 1997, Kunovich 2000, Rose and Shin, 2001, Howard 2003). Further, as Tworzecki (2003) points out, the realisation that after the fall of communism political participation had become a voluntary activity was coupled with another realisation that voluntary abstention was also now possible, a choice which many citizens therefore chose to embrace.

The role of communist legacies in influencing political participation patterns in Eastern European countries is convincing. However there is reason to believe that the importance of this factor will vary depending on age group. Particularly, it is necessary to consider this argument very carefully when analysing youth political participation. Indeed, scholars have emphasised that generational replacement may be one of the only ways in which the influences of communist legacies on political participation can lessen (Sztompka 1996, Howard 2003). This is based on the argument that until the majority of the population is made up of citizens who are young enough to have been socialised entirely under democratic regimes, experiences under communism will inevitably have a continuing influence on political involvement (Sztompka 1996). However, Howard (2003) is also careful to stress that generational replacement is a slow and complex process and although young people may have had no direct involvement in communist structures, they will likely be influenced by those who did, namely parents and teachers. Thus the patterns of political participation behaviour induced by the communist structures may endure and reproduce themselves for some time.

However, the lack of in-depth study into youth political participation in post-communist countries means that there is little understanding of the role communist legacies may play in influencing youth political participation. Indeed Howard (2003)

has specifically emphasised the need for such specific youth-oriented studies, stressing that given rapidly changing circumstances in these countries, this research should be ongoing in order to pinpoint new trends in youth political participation. Of particular interest is the first completely ‘post-communist generation’, namely those young people who are too young to have had any political socialisation through communist structures such as youth organisations. The unique position of this group in post-communist societies means that their political engagement patterns represent a vital resource for analysing the interaction of the enduring influences of communism and post-communist political changes as well as the possible convergence of political participation trends with those observed in established democracies. This age group is the subject of this thesis and their distinctive position in post-communist societies therefore merits further discussion.

1.4c(iv) A Framework for the Political Participation Patterns of the New Post-Communist Cohort

The empirical focus of this study is the political participation patterns of young people between the ages of 16 and 25 in Poland and Romania. As even the eldest of this group were too young at the time of the fall of communism to have had any personal experience of communist political socialisation through youth organisations and communist backed media, and as they are the first to have benefited from the wider opportunities offered by an enlarged European Union, in many ways these young people can be said to make up the first ‘true’ post-communist generation. This places them in a unique position which differentiates them from the older generations in post-communist countries, however at the same time it does not mean that they necessarily share the characteristics of their counterparts in established democracies. Particularly, although they did not experience communism first-hand, they have been politically socialised in a time of great political, economic and social flux where attitudes towards political participation inherited from the communist era coexist with political and socioeconomic insecurities brought on by post-communist transformation. This means that it is very difficult to predict how this young generation will participate politically and how the contrasting influences from older generations and from more general Europe-wide trends in youth political involvement have impacted on their participation patterns.

Thus, in order to address the question of how this post-communist generation in Poland and Romania participate in politics and how this compares to older generations and to the political involvement of young people in established democracies, I employ a framework based on the theoretical constructs of exit, voice and loyalty drawn up by Hirschman (1970). These concepts can provide a useful way of approaching comparative based research into youth political participation.

Hirschman's framework is particularly apt for this study because of its ability to combine economic and sociological approaches to understanding political institutions and individual choice to participate politically or abstain from involvement. Although the framework itself derives from economics, Hirschman does not demand the strict application of a purely rational choice approach to understanding individual participation (Dowding et al. 2000, Pfaff 2006). That is, where individual decisions to participate or abstain are based on a cost-benefit calculation where benefits of participation must outweigh any costs incurred (Shepsle 1989, Koelble 1995). As a result, this approach argues that those individuals who choose to participate politically do so because involvement is judged to be in their self-interest (Olson 1971)¹⁶. This method of understanding participation however has a number of shortcomings (Shepsle 1989, Koelble 1995). One of these is that the rational choice approach does not allow for the possibility that individual decisions may also be influenced by the society around them (Granovetter 1985, Shepsle 1989). This contrasts starkly with the views of some sociologists who contend that wider cultural and societal trends are key to understanding individual behaviour. Indeed, some argue that an individual cannot make a rational decision, as the degree of 'embeddedness' in wider society means that, despite an appearance of rationality, decisions are actually determined for us (Granovetter 1985). However, by dismissing the possibility for rational choice entirely, this approach has also attracted critics (Hall and Taylor 1996 p.21) who claim that this concentration on the macro-level over simplifies the relationship between individuals and the society around them.

¹⁶ Olson's (1971) study provided a response to the so-called 'paradox of participation', namely why rational individuals should choose to participate in collective action which is aimed towards the collective good. He argued that individuals will only participate in collective action when they consider that this participation will offer them some 'selective incentives'. Otherwise, they will simply choose to 'free-ride' meaning that they will allow others to do the work and they will merely take advantage of the collective goods gained. For a detailed overview of the relationship between rational choice and political participation see Whiteley (1995).

More recently, scholars have attempted to find a balance between these economic and sociological standpoints. For instance, Koeble (1995) provides an overview of how studies increasingly combine aspects of these two approaches to further understanding of relationships between institutions and individuals. Importantly, instead of arguing that individual choice is ‘determined’ by society and rejecting rational choice altogether, they contend that individual rational decisions are rather ‘influenced’ by society. Shepsle (1989) also acknowledges the ways in which the rational choice approach can benefit from borrowing elements of the behaviouralist sociological approach. In particular, he argues that understanding the political context surrounding institutions is vital to explaining how individuals come to make decisions on participation. Thus political institutions may initially be created by the rational choices of individuals but are then shaped and modified by wider societal trends and contexts.

Hirschman’s framework can also be seen to compromise between the economic and sociological models. Indeed, although his original thesis was based on explaining differing individual reactions to a decline in product quality, it has proven to have a much wider scope in comparative politics (Dowding et al. 2000). Originally, exit could be understood as the decision not to buy a product or to leave an organisation, voice was to complain or protest against a change in product quality or organisational strategy and feelings of loyalty to a product or organisation were thought to diminish the likelihood of exit and increase the possibility of voice (Hirschman 1970). In this form, the link to economics is relatively clear, as individual decisions to exit or to use voice appear as an outcome of rational decision making. However, over time, as the framework has been applied to various political events, the influence of society, structure and culture over these decisions has become clearer.

One example of this is given by Hirschman (1993) himself who used his framework to analyse the events which led to the breakdown of communism in Eastern Germany (GDR) in 1989. Here he acknowledged that the specific historical and structural differences between Eastern Germany and its communist neighbours (Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary) meant that the possibilities for exit and voice differed. In particular, he highlighted the greater ability for people in Eastern Germany to exit the country physically through emigration. However, it was also this possibility to exit

which challenged his previous conceptions for the relationship between exit and voice. Whereas the original thesis suggested that this was an inverse relationship, where possibilities for exit would be likely to decrease the likelihood for voice, the protests at the end of communism in Eastern Germany meant that exit and voice were both present at the same time.

This relationship was explored further by Pfaff (2006) in his detailed, multi-method approach to analysing the collapse of Eastern Germany. He showed that possibilities to exit through emigration served, in this case, to trigger voice within the country. Although voice generally has higher costs than exit, meaning it is often the least attractive option, Pfaff (2006) found that the specific social and political contexts were crucial to understanding why exit and voice worked in a complimentary manner in the East German case. Importantly, he illustrated how the strong social networks within Eastern Germany were essential to both initiate and sustain protest. Thus, even though exit possibilities meant many people who could have been instrumental in exercising voice left the country, these strong social networks survived. By placing emphasis on networks, Pfaff (2006) effectively borrows from social movement literature which is based in sociology to help explain and expand Hirschman's originally economic-based framework.

This ability for the expansion of Hirschman's framework into one which combines both economic and sociological approaches to understanding individual decisions to participate politically makes it particularly appropriate for this study which analyses three distinct forms of youth political participation. Each of these, electoral participation, party membership and involvement in informal modes of political participation such as social movements, draw from separate literatures which have different approaches to understanding involvement. Whereas electoral participation has often been understood in terms of rational choice, the literature on social movements derives mainly from sociology. By employing a broad framework such as exit, voice and loyalty, my aim is to be able to combine the findings from each of these approaches in order to reach a greater understanding of youth political participation in Poland and Romania. More precisely I seek to use the framework to identify possible trade-offs between the different forms of participation and to compare this with existing study in established democracies.

My interpretation of exit, voice and loyalty and how these apply to the question of youth political involvement is as follows; **Exit** refers to the choice made by a young person to not only abstain from involvement in the traditional forms of political participation, voting and party membership, but to also opt out of informal forms such as volunteering and contentious politics. **Voice** refers to the choice made by a young person, to become involved in political actions which have as their aim changing current policy or public opinion. This is most likely to take the form of involvement in informal modes of participation, and in particular in protest activities, but could also be evident in the choice to participate in elections. **Loyalty** refers to the choice made by a young person to engage in traditional forms of political participation, particularly by becoming a member of a political party¹⁷.

If the exit, voice, loyalty framework is applied to the recent findings of studies of youth participation in established democracies, we find that although party membership and voter turnout has been seen to decrease, this does not necessarily mean that young people are exiting political life altogether. Indeed, as outlined in Section 1.4a, some studies contend that instead of opting out of political involvement completely, young people may be showing a greater interest and participation in voice, through alternative modes of participation such as volunteering and contentious politics. This suggests that there may be a trade-off between loyalty, exit and voice, where young people have increasingly weaker ties with traditional political agents and processes. In turn this increases their likelihood of exit from political participation altogether or alternatively to exercise voice against traditional politics. It also suggests that exit and voice, as was suggested by Hirschman (1993) and Pfaff (2006) in their studies of Eastern Germany, can coexist.

In newer democracies however, as shown in Section 1.3b, studies have found older generations to have very low levels of voter turnout, party membership and also forms

¹⁷ It could, however, be expected that different people would demonstrate varying types of loyalty, depending on the political and social context. For instance, loyalty to a political party could differ depending on the form of selective incentives made available to members (Pfaff 2006). If members are loyal because of access to material benefits they are less likely to retain this loyalty and indeed try and reform from within than members who are loyal due to expressive concerns such as ideological or policy-seeking beliefs. This is analysed further in Chapter four, section 4.5.

which use voice. Indeed, these countries are characterised by what appears to be widespread exit from all forms of political involvement. If this also extends to young people, this suggests that the trade-offs between exit, voice and loyalty in post-communist countries may differ significantly from those found in established democracies. To determine whether this is the case and to analyse the reasons behind individual decisions to participate politically or to abstain, it is necessary to assess how different social and political contexts influence individual level rational decision-making.

1.5 Conclusions

This chapter has presented the main definitions and questions which underpin the research contained in this thesis. In particular, I have shown that the employment of a wide definition of political participation is necessary in order to attempt to reach an understanding of the interrelations and connections between different modes of political involvement. This is especially relevant to the question of youth political participation as young people have been found to have a different conception of politics from older generations and appear to show greater interest in informal forms of participation than in traditional methods. Equally, such an inclusive definition is also necessary to explore political participation patterns in newer democracies, where the existence of active citizen participation is particularly vital to the improvement in the quality of democracy. Young people play an important role in ensuring this for the future, and given the lack of existing study on youth political participation and non-participation in newer East European democracies this is an issue which urgently needs to be addressed. Particularly, we need to understand whether the political participation patterns of the young post-communist generation continue to follow those of older generations in these countries or whether there is evidence that these are also beginning to reflect more general trends in youth political involvement in established democracies. In order to address this question, I presented the framework of exit, voice and loyalty within which the research in this thesis is analysed.

CHAPTER TWO – A MULTI-METHOD COMPARATIVE APPROACH

2.1 Introduction

As explained in chapter one, the research questions of this thesis focus on the comparison between the extent and nature of youth political participation in established democracies and newer democracies. To address these questions, I chose to compare youth political engagement across two contrasting Eastern European post-communist countries and to use the findings of this study as a basis for comparison with existing studies in newer democracies. In order to further contextualise these findings and to control for local level variation, I also conducted a series of sub-national comparisons in each country which were selected on the basis of political and social make up.

Following existing studies of youth political participation in established democracies, I chose to employ a multi-method approach in my research design. This meant that although the main focus was on qualitative methods, quantitative methods were also used, when appropriate, to strengthen and provide standardisation when comparing findings across differing countries. The first part of this chapter sets out and explains my choice of paired country comparison and sub-national units within Poland and Romania. The following section then presents a rationale for the multi-method approach taken and details the various qualitative and quantitative methods used in the research.

2.2 The Comparative Approach

2.2a. Why a Paired Country Comparison?

I chose to conduct a paired country comparison for this study because of the clear advantages such an approach offers over both large ‘N’ studies and single country studies. This is appropriate for the study of youth political participation which remains a relatively under-researched area in newer democracies. First, in comparison to a large ‘N’ study which attempts to categorise and research many contrasting countries, a

paired country comparison allows more intensive study into the case countries under scrutiny. In this way, it can help to avoid the ‘conceptual stretching’ which is often seen as a danger in large ‘N’ studies (Sartori 1970, Landman 2004). Second, as explained in section 2.3, this is especially relevant for the study of youth political participation where the findings of large ‘N’ studies risk being compromised as they fail to take into account the different ways in which young people conceive of politics.

Equally, a paired country comparison offers distinct advantages over a single country case study. Instead of focusing on ‘thick description’ of one national case, it allows for observations to be tested across contrasting political, economic and social contexts and therefore is able to generate more robust general conclusions (Hague et al. 1992). Thus, by holding the dependent variable (youth political participation) constant and comparing it across two contrasting post-communist countries, the study seeks to unpack the various factors which impact youth political engagement. In particular, this approach allows us to distinguish the influence of specific post-communist factors on youth political engagement and to question the extent to which findings on youth political participation in Poland and Romania resemble those in established democracies. Given the current lack of in-depth study into this subject in post-communist countries and that existing research is mainly made up of large ‘N’ studies (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, Riordan et al. 1995, Roberts 2003) or single-country studies (Machacek 2001, Roberts and Jung 1995), a paired country comparison offers a different and useful perspective.

2.2b Why Poland and Romania?

To address the research goals of this study, it was necessary to choose two post-communist countries in Eastern Europe which contrasted importantly on several independent variables which underpin the logics behind political participation. This would allow for both an in-depth study of youth political participation in these countries and for a revealing comparison with findings of existing studies in established democracies. For this reason, I chose Poland and Romania on the basis that these countries are representatives of the ‘most-different’ cases within the post-communist region (Przeworski and Teune 1970). On the surface Poland and Romania do appear to share some obvious similarities. Geographically they are the largest of the post-

communist states in Eastern Europe, have large agrarian populations and both comprise a number of distinct historical regions. However, despite these similarities, contrasting communist experiences and present socioeconomic and political contexts mean that Poland and Romania vary considerably in terms of socioeconomic resources and political opportunity structures. These are differences, which could be expected to have important influences on the level and forms of youth political participation in each country. Thus, by firstly comparing findings across these countries and secondly by comparing these with findings of existing studies in established democracies, it will be possible to first identify common factors which influence youth political participation in newer Eastern European democracies and second to assess how this compares with the situation in established democracies.

Poland and Romania can be considered ‘most-different’ cases within post-communist Eastern Europe on the basis of two main sets of independent variables. These are communist experience and the political opportunity structures and resources embodied in their post-communist political and socioeconomic contexts. These variables have potentially important consequences for youth political participation in each country. In the following sections, I detail these factors and explain why they are significant for an assessment of youth political engagement.

2.2c Communist Experience

Although outwardly the communist systems which developed across Eastern European countries after the Second World War appeared alike, they actually differed significantly across the region. This was reflected in the degree of control exercised over society, the way in which people interacted with the one-party state and ultimately in the style of transition to democracy (Kitschelt 1995, Linz and Stepan 1996). These differences are made clear when we contrast the communist experiences of Poland and Romania.

Kitschelt (1995) distinguishes this variance as being between National Consensus Communism (Poland) and Patrimonial Communism (Romania). National Consensus Communism relates to the fact that throughout Poland’s experience with Communism, state-society relations in Poland were characterised by attempts by the regime to

appease the ever more demanding and well mobilised population (Kubiak 1999). This was the case from after 1956 when the Polish communist elite succeeded in separating itself from total Soviet control and embarked on a move towards 'national socialism'. In practice this meant some concessions were granted to the population in return for basic compliance with the communist party. However, despite these allowances, the Polish communist elite continued to fail to satisfy or suppress the population who by the 1980s had become a mass, organised dissident force. The famous trade union, Solidarity, was the culmination of this dissidence¹⁸. Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 263) state that by the early 1980s Solidarity '*possessed hegemony in civil society*' and that only military strength and the spectre of the Soviet Union allowed for the communist party to maintain control.

Such was the degree of Polish social mobilisation, that, unlike in other Eastern European cases, in Poland the communist regime arguably fell short of becoming totalitarian and instead can be described as 'authoritarian' (Linz and Stepan 1997). As such the divided communist elite had produced a set of political opportunity structures¹⁹ which were seized by the opposition and used in order to form organised dissidence (Gamson and Meyer 1996, Tarrow 1998). The outcome of this was a negotiated settlement between the communist elite and the dissidents which then culminated in semi-free elections of 1989.

In contrast, Kitschelt (1995) describes the Romanian situation as having been one of 'Patrimonial Communism' while others speak of it as a 'sultanistic' regime (Linz and Stepan 1997). Unlike in Poland, the Romanian regime was one which thrived on '*hierarchical chains of personal dependence between leaders and entourage*' (Kitschelt 1995, p.453), allowing little room for opposition within the elite and severely repressing the general population thus preventing any degree of independent social mobilisation. Particularly from the early 1970s, Ceauşescu, the increasingly autocratic Romanian President, exhibited a '*Stalinist obsession*' (Datculescu 1999, p. 100) towards mass industrialisation and centralisation of the economy. This tyrannical regime almost

¹⁸ By 1981, its membership reflected all strata of society including workers, intellectuals, students and church members and counted some 10 million members (Castle and Taras 2002, p. 56) although this fell considerably after Solidarity was forced underground by Martial Law in 1981 (see Holzer 1991).

¹⁹ Here I employ the notion of political opportunity structures to refer to the various possibilities which a division in elite control can offer or be seen to offer potential activists (see Tarrow 1998 for a full discussion of political opportunities).

completely controlled society through a strong secret police (Deletant 1995) and party members often enjoyed a privileged existence at the expense of Romanian citizens. Indeed, Hall (2004, 216) states that political culture in Romania by the 1980s was characterised by *'fear, suspicion....avoidance, withdrawal'* and that the totalitarian nature of the regime had atomised society so much that it became dependent on hidden informal networks which did not join together in any organised form of dissidence²⁰.

The revolution which then ousted Ceauşescu differed considerably from the negotiated transition in Poland. It was characterised by violence and a mobilisation of people which was supported by a shallow organisational network (Tismăneanu 2004). Indeed in retrospect it has been tarred with the image of being more of a coup by former communist party elites than a spontaneous mobilisation of civil society (Stan 1997, Pridham 2001, Tismăneanu 2004).

2.2c(i) Youth and Communist Experience

These differences between the communist experiences in Poland and Romania are also evident in the extent to which youth was controlled by the communist regime and the involvement of young people in organised dissidence. It is necessary to consider both these types of political participation of young people during communism as they may have left important legacies for the youth of today.

2.2c(ii) Communist Youth Organisations

The consequences of communist era forced participation for post-communist political involvement across newer democracies have been well documented. Studies have shown high levels of distrust of political parties and politicians, low levels of voter turnout and a reluctance to get involved in informal forms of participation such as volunteering (Szczerbiak 2001, Norris 2002, Howard 2003, Van Biezen 2003, Kopecký 2006) These general findings are therefore also likely to apply to youth in Poland and

²⁰ In comparison to Poland there were only two known independent movements in Romania by 1989, whereas in Poland there were 60 (Linz and Stepan 1996, p. 352). On top of this Romania was the only country in Eastern Europe where there was not even 'one full-blown samizdat publication' recorded (Linz and Stepan 1996, p.353).

Romania, yet it is also important to consider whether the contrasting Communist regime styles have also had a lasting impact on the ways in which young people in each country interact with politics. In particular, whether the differences between the Communist youth organisations in terms of membership, coercion and incentives in the 1980s have had a lasting legacy for the political participation of youth of today in formal types of participation such as parties and elections.

Officially youth under all Central and East European communist systems was strictly organised into specific ideologically motivated groupings. Young people were seen as *'the builders of the bright communist society'* (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, p.68). This ideological control over youth was embodied in the official state youth organizations (in Poland this was called The Union of Socialist Polish Youth, and in Romania, The Union of Communist Youth). In each country, this organisation had sub-groupings based on age, ranging from a very young age to the most senior group which incorporated young people from around the age of 15 to 30 (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, p.68, Cioflanca 2006).

The purpose of this formal organisation of youth by the Communist state was twofold. It was meant to indoctrinate young people into the system and train them to become the next socialist leaders as well as providing the Party with the means to monitor young people's activities (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, pp. 68-71, Paczkowski 2003 pp.227-228). The general incentives to become members of these organisations were significant. They provided facilities such as sports centres, swimming pools and travel opportunities (Machacek 2001, p.287) as well as securing access to higher education or as *'a stepping-stone to a political career, and therefore social mobility'* (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, p.73)²¹.

The membership of these groups varied across time and country. In Poland the Union of Polish Youth had more than one million members in 1949, and this had increased to two million by 1955. Paczkowski (2003, p.227) states that this constituted half of all young workers and sixty percent of secondary school pupils. In 1979 the numbers had risen again to almost three million (Magner 2005, p.57). However, in the period 1982-1988

²¹ See also Riordan (1995 pp.81-95).

membership fell to around one and a half million (Magner 2005, p.57) and less than five percent of students belonged to the communist student associations (Paczkowski, 2003, p. 473). In contrast, the membership of the Romanian Union of Communist Youth continued to grow over time, from around two million members in 1960 to around four million by the end of the 1980s. By this time it was one of the most influential mass organisations in the country and constituted around ninety-eight percent of school students in their ninth grade by 1988. Membership of the Union for older school pupils was automatic and compulsory. The consequences for dissidence within the Union were severe for both the members and their family and regular purges of members were carried out (Cioflanca 2006).

Thus, the differences between the National Consensus version of Communism as seen in Poland and Patrimonial Communism as experienced in Romania, were also present to a degree in the formal Communist Youth Organisations. The totalitarian nature of Romanian political institutions meant that by the 1980s young people were largely coerced into joining the Union of Communist Youth and deviance from this was severely punished (Cioflanca 2006). In such a patrimonial state, the Union could also provide its members with benefits such as jobs. By the 1980s in Poland, divisions within the communist regime meant that organisations such as the Union of Polish Youth were losing the power to control their members. Equally, the incentives the Union could offer its members were increasingly unimportant as political opportunities to challenge the system were seen to be opening up. As a result membership fell dramatically.

These differing communist experiences provided contrasting legacies for post-1989 youth. In Poland, where the Communist youth organisation had already lost much of its membership and control by the 1980s, its collapse arguably left less of a 'vacuum' in terms of providing structure and educational and social goods for young people than was the case in Romania (Riordan 1995, Roberts and Jung 1995, Machacek 2001).

2.2c(iii) Youth and Dissidence

During the 1980s in Poland, independent youth organisations which contradicted official communist ideology began to appear. These took the form of ecology groups

and student groups, Freedom and Peace, the ‘flying university’ and the Independent Students Association being some of the most well-known (Gliński 1994, Ramet 1995, Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998). These produced a number of *Samizdat* publications and some worked directly with Solidarity and were involved in the Round Table discussions at the fall of the regime (Ramet 1995, Rose–Ackerman 2005). Youth therefore can be seen as having played an important and central part in the fall of communism in Poland. Despite the fact that the present cohort of young people in Poland have no direct experience of communism or anti-communist dissidence, the significant involvement of youth in successful protest movements at the end of communism may still have an important legacy for the participation of youth today. This is because cultural traditions of political protest in a given country can continue to have a central role in the perceived opening of political opportunities to participate in the future (Gamson and Meyer 1996). In particular, scholars have highlighted the possibility that repertoires and experiences of contentious politics are likely to diffuse across cohorts, meaning that new cohorts will be more equipped to recognise political opportunities to participate when a contentious issue arises (Meyer and Tarrow 1997, McAdam 1999).

In Romania, although young people were a large feature of the mass demonstrations in December 1989, this dissidence was not supported by a deep organisational structure and was confined to the large cities (Tismăneanu 2004). Unlike in Poland, the Communist regime was able to effectively suppress alternative organisations until the very end of its existence and the absence of obvious divisions within the communist elite meant that in comparison to Poland, political opportunities for dissent were largely lacking²². The capture of political power by the National Salvation Front (NSF), a political group of Communist Party insiders formed in the last days of Communism which then orchestrated the trial and execution of Ceauşescu, has also left a difficult legacy (Gallagher 2005). This new regime inherited the structure and organisation of the Communist Party making it a considerably stronger force than any other potential political opposition. In the first democratic elections held in May 1990 the NSF therefore easily obtained a majority over opposition parties. However many of those who had been involved in the dissidence in 1989 were disappointed with this continuation of the same regime under a different name. Sporadic protest therefore

²² See Tarrow (1998, p.79) for a discussion of how divided elites can help provide dissidents with opportunities and resources to participate.

continued, however the political opportunities for longer term protest were suppressed in June 1990 when student demonstrations against the new government were violently crushed by miners from Jiu Valley (Vasi 2004, Gallagher 2005).

These legacies of youth involvement in dissidence could be expected to have a potentially different effect on youth political participation to that in Poland. Two elements are important to this. First, the deeper organisational structure of dissidence in Poland could be expected to have left the population with a greater pool of resources such as networks and political experience to organise than in Romania. Second, the success of the Polish dissident movement continues to offer an example to today's young people of how peaceful political participation can have far reaching results. In Romania, the capture of political power by former communists and the following violent suppression of dissidence is likely to have acted as a constraint on future political opportunities to participate in protest movements (Gamson and Meyer 1996, Tarrow 1998).

This leads to the first comparative hypothesis (H1) to be tested in this study concerning the contrasting impacts on youth political participation by the legacies of differing communist experiences: the involvement of young people in organised and successful dissidence in Poland at the end of Communism would be expected to mean that Polish youth would be (H1.1) more likely to become more intensively involved in informal forms of participation such as protest today. In Romania, it is hypothesised (H1.2) the shallow organisational basis of dissidence during communism and violent suppression of political dissent in the early period of post-communism is likely to have the opposite effect on today's youth.

2.2d. Post-Communist Political Opportunity Structures and Resources

The second set of variables on which Poland and Romania differ significantly are post-communist political and socioeconomic contexts. These are particularly relevant for political participation of youth in these countries today. In the following section, I set out and explain the main contrasting factors between Poland and Romania.

2.2d(i) Political Contexts

Two interrelated factors highlight the differences between post-communist political contexts in Poland and Romania. These are decentralisation of administrative and political power and the development of contrasting party systems. Both of these could be expected to be significant in explaining the logics behind formal youth political participation.

a. Decentralisation

Over recent decades, the process of administrative and political decentralisation in established democracies, that is granting greater powers to local authorities, has often been seen as an important method of trying to increase citizen participation in politics (Barber 1984, Parry 1992, Oxhorn 2004, Saito 2008). The logic behind this is that by allowing people to have a say in local level decision-making they would become more inclined to participate as they would have more personal interest in the issues involved. In turn, this would make local decision-makers more responsive to the needs of citizens and increase accountability (Barber 1984, Saito 2008).

Decentralisation has also been a feature of recent youth policy in many established European democracies (Schillemans and Bouverne-De Bie 2005). This means devolving responsibility and finance for local youth policy to local authorities with the aim of making young people more participative at community level. Despite debate as to the extent which decentralisation can increase political participation and accountability of decision-makers, it is seen as a method of enhancing opportunities for young people to participate in political processes by connecting them more directly to political agents (Schillemans and Bouverne-De Bie 2005).

In post-communist Eastern European countries, unlike in established democracies, policies of administrative and political decentralisation have not evolved gradually over a period of time. Instead, these were initiated by the majority of governments in the area soon after the fall of communism, often on the advice of Western observers and in particular to prepare for European Union accession (Białasiewicz 2002). This was a

radical approach as it meant the complete restructuring of the existing centralised decision-making structure.

During Communism, administrative and political centralisation meant the countries of Eastern Europe were effectively run in a top-down manner with the central government taking all decisions. Even though on the surface it appeared there was a system of local government in fact this was a ‘democratic façade’ in which local electoral candidates were appointed by the central party (Bird et al. 1996, Swianiewicz 2003). This left a deep distrust of local decision-makers amongst citizens as they often saw them as simply ‘puppets’ for the centralised regime (Regulski 2003). In turn, this has meant that encouraging post-communist political participation at local level has also faced similar difficulties as at national level, namely overcoming a large degree of distrust in political agents and a lack of experience of participating in civil society (Vetter and Kersting 2003, Regulski 2003). As a result, although structurally decentralisation has been implemented to varying degrees across post-communist countries, citizen participation in local decision-making remains generally limited (Regulski 2003). However, the provision for decentralisation of political processes does also vary importantly between countries. For this reason, we could hypothesise that in those countries where there is greater de facto decentralisation the potential for greater levels of youth political participation would be higher than in the countries which remain mainly centralised.

Table 2.1: Units of Local Government in Poland and Romania

Level of Local Government	POLAND	ROMANIA
1 st level	Voivodship (województwo) 16 of these since 1999	County (judet) 41 and Bucharest municipality
2 nd level	County (powiat) 308 rural and 65 urban counties	Municipality (urban) or Commune (rural) circa. 2600
3 rd level	Municipality (urban) or Commune (rural) (gmina) circa. 2500	

(Source: Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) and Romanian National Statistical Institute (INSSE))

Poland and Romania are examples of two post-communist countries which have had considerably different approaches to decentralisation. Poland rapidly implemented radical administrative reform after 1989 whereas Romania remains a largely centralised,

unitary state (Swianiewicz 2003). This contrast can be seen by examining the restructuring of local government in each country. In 1990 Poland reinstated local self government by creating over 2000 *gminas* (communes) which granted a large degree of autonomy to the municipal authorities. In 1998 sixteen *voivods* (regions) were also created which have elected regional governments in order to streamline regional policy. This has resulted in a three tier system of local government (see Table 2.1). In contrast to Poland's rapid route to implementation of decentralisation reform, progress in Romania has been considerably more protracted. In the early 1990s some reform was implemented concerning local finances and a two tier local government system was created (see Table 2.1). However, according to observers there is still no definite legal provision which states the functions and responsibilities of different actors at the county and municipal levels of government (Roper and Fesnic 2002, Nations in Transit 2006).

Studies in Poland have suggested that decentralisation has meant more favourable opportunities for participation in local politics across the country and in particular for young people. For instance, the Nations in Transit Report (2007) on Poland stated,

'For many young people, self-government has been a means to learn about and participate in politics and governance'.

The implication here is that the greater independence and power of local authorities has opened up opportunities for young people to become more involved at local level. This suggestion is supported by evidence given by Swianiewicz (2002) who found that councillors in Polish municipal governments tend to be much younger than those in national government.

In Romania, the lack of clear political and administrative decentralisation has also had implications for youth policy and participation at local level. In particular, it means that provisions for encouraging active participation are frequently disjointed and weakly supported by authorities at national or local level (Helsingius 2001). A Council of Europe trial to improve local level participation in one Romanian town, which included the implementation of a local youth council, was however successful at increasing levels of youth political involvement (Greer 2006). This suggests that where

opportunities are created for participation at local level, possibilities for youth political participation also increase.

As such, given the comprehensive measures to decentralise political and administrative structures in Poland, it can be hypothesised (H2.1) that this has created a basis from which youth political participation at local level can potentially develop. The existence of these more favourable opportunities could be expected to have opened up possibilities for young people to participate effectively. In Romania, the more fragmented and incomplete approach to decentralisation means it could be expected (H2.2) that opportunities for youth political participation at local level are less favourable than in Poland.

b. Party systems

A party system is a way of describing how parties compete in a given country, how they interact with government and how open the system is to new parties (Lewis 2006). It is therefore generally recognised that the type of party system which develops in a democracy can have an important influence on the quality of democracy to emerge in that country (Kitschelt 1995, Mair 1997, Kitschelt et al. 1999, Lewis 2006). In particular, different party systems can offer opportunities for citizens to engage in politics or alternatively create barriers to political involvement (Gamson and Meyer 2006).

In established democracies, party systems are normally described as having varying degrees of institutionalisation in wider society (Mair 1997, Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). In many, the long term existence of a few main political parties, which have a recognisable electoral base in society, is seen to illustrate the stability of the party system. Mainwaring and Torcal (2006) describe this stability as being crucial to how citizens view the legitimacy of political parties and in turn this can act to strengthen programmatic²³ or ideological links between parties and voters. Such linkages mean that parties have to appeal to supporters through promises of detailed policy or ideological commitments (Kitschelt et al. 1999). As a result the opportunities for political

²³ A programmatic party is characterised by its focus on attracting electoral support through detailed policy rather than populism or clientelism (Innes 2002, Jasiewicz 2008).

participation in a mainly programmatic party system are seen as generally fair and balanced, where each citizen is more or less equal in terms of possibilities to participate (Caciagli 2006). This helps create a system where there are not only vertical links between party and citizen, but it can also encourage horizontal links to form between citizens who work together to lobby and improve on the policy commitments offered by parties (Putnam 1993, Caciagli 2006).

In less well-established democracies, as in the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe, the development of political parties, and therefore party systems, after 1990 largely constituted a reversal of the historical pattern of party development in established democracies (Van Biezen 2003, Lewis 2006). In many cases, this meant the creation of top-down, elite driven parties which have weak membership and organisational structure. Typically, this lack of social embeddedness and institutionalisation has meant that, from the start, parties could not depend on specific groups of voters for electoral support (Kopecký 1995, Innes 2002). As a result, during the 1990s, in many post-communist countries, the political environment was characterised by high levels of electoral volatility and low levels of party effectiveness and stability (Grzymała- Busse 2003, Van Biezen 2003, Lewis 2006). In general, this lack of institutionalisation has made these countries particularly vulnerable to clientelistic²⁴ and populist²⁵ political practices.

In contrast to programmatic linkages between party and citizen, clientelism is based on a system of short term exchange, where a citizen (the client) pledges electoral support in return for some type of selective benefit from the party (the patron) such as money, jobs or power (Kopecký and Scherlis 2008). This has significant implications for opportunities for political participation. Instead of forcing parties to develop policy for the long-term and therefore improve legitimacy and accountability, clientelism is premised on vertical links between citizen and party where some citizens have greater

²⁴ The academic literature is often confused as to the difference between patronage and clientelism. In this study I follow the definition given by Kopecký and Scherlis (2008) who define clientelism as an exchange between parties and clients whereby a range of goods are exchanged for electoral support.

²⁵ Here I employ the definition of populism given by Mudde (2004, p.543); *'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people'*.

opportunities for participation than others (Stokes 2007). In addition, in such a system there is little incentive for citizens to create horizontal linkages which can help to strengthen the quality of democracy offered by parties²⁶. Instead, clientelism often has the effect that many citizens, who are not interested in becoming involved in such relationships, will withdraw from wider societal participation, in order to concentrate on private concerns (Caciagli 2006).

However, despite the general lack of institutionalisation, the development of party systems in post-communist countries has been far from uniform and important contrasts which have significant implications for political participation have emerged (Kitschelt 1995, Kitschelt et al. 1999, Innes 2002, Lewis 2006). Poland and Romania are examples of post-communist countries which have, over the relatively short period of transition from communism, developed quite different party systems. This is due to a combination of historical factors such as the type of communist regime and the nature of post-communist political and economic restructuring (Kitschelt et al. 1999)²⁷.

In Poland, the party system today is made up of a mixture of mainly programmatic parties, with a tendency towards populism in others (Grzymała-Busse 2002, Jasiewicz 2008). Romania, in contrast, exhibits a party system which is dominated by charismatic and clientelistic parties (Gallagher 2005, Ionița 2005, Uslander 2008)²⁸. This could be expected to have an important influence on youth political participation in each country.

In Poland, although the first period of post-communism was characterised by a very large degree of party volatility and government instability (Millard 2008), there are now signs that the party system has begun to stabilise (Szczerbiak 2007). However, this initial period of instability coupled with hard hitting economic and social reform has been cited as a reason for wide-spread abstention of Polish citizens from political participation (Rose and Munro 2003, Tworzecki 2003). Nonetheless, the emergence of

²⁶ Putnam's (1993) comparative study of social capital in northern and southern regions of Italy showed the influence that differing party systems can have on civic life. He illustrated that in the more economically and politically progressive north, civic life and societal trust were significantly more developed than in the south where clientelistic practices persist.

²⁷ In Poland, the post-communist period has seen a relatively comprehensive programme of economic and political restructuring (Millard 1999, Castle and Taras 2002, Rose-Ackermann 2005) while in Romania the legacy of the patrimonial communist regime style is evident in the gradual and inconsistent programme of economic and political post-communist reform (Tismăneanu 2004, Bacon 2004).

²⁸ I outline how individual political parties fit into this in Chapter Four, section 4.2.

mainly programmatic parties does mean that citizens have generally equal opportunities for political participation in Poland. This is because, as in many established democracies, parties are unable to offer individuals selective incentives in return for involvement. Yet, given the top-down development of parties in Poland, which generally lack a grass-roots support base, it could be expected that the opportunities for political involvement will be still less favourable than in established democracies where linkages between citizens and parties have developed over a far greater time period. This could be expected to be particularly relevant for young people in Poland who not only lack experience of political participation because of their position in the life-cycle, but also lack models of political participation in their parent's generation. This means that they are unlikely to easily recognise the opportunities for political participation.

In Romania, the situation contrasts importantly with that of Poland. Failures to restructure the economy, reform political process and to decentralise power have left political parties with the ability to access resources which then they can offer to members and supporters in return for electoral support (Gross and Tismăneanu 2005, Kitschelt 2007). This is particularly the case at local level where local politicians are often also in control of local media and business, meaning they have disproportionate access to local resources (Roper 2002). As many Romanian people remain marginalised and poor, they can be attracted by the short term incentives which politicians and parties can offer (Stokes 2007). This means that opportunities for political participation could be expected to be less equal than in Poland. However, some studies in Romania have also illustrated that the perception of corruption and clientelism in political life is likely to be as damaging to political participation as actual corruption (Bădescu 2007, Uslander 2008). This is because it fosters very low levels of societal trust and means citizens are less likely to get involved in civic activities. In turn, for those who are not interested in participating politically to gain selective incentives, the clientelistic party system is likely to act as a barrier to political engagement (Stokes 2007). In Romania, where Bădescu (2007) reported that the proportion of Romanian people who felt that corruption was the greatest problem which had faced the country in the past four years was considerably higher than that in other post-communist countries²⁹, the perceptions

²⁹ He presented the results of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems for 2006/2007 which found that 38% of Romanian respondents felt corruption was the greatest problem to have faced society over four years compared to only 2% of Polish respondents.

of clientelism could be expected to have particularly important consequences for political participation.

This is especially the case for young people who have no personal experience of political participation and so therefore gain their understanding and perceptions of politics from older generations. Where older generations perceive the party system to be corrupt, clientelistic and illegitimate, we could also expect that young people will lack trust and confidence in political processes. This could make them reluctant to become participative in political activities.

This leads me to my third hypothesis. In Poland (H3.1) it is hypothesised that the more programmatic nature of the party system could be expected to mean that favourable and equal opportunities exist for youth political participation, similarly to in established democracies. However, it could also be expected that given the relative newness of party system stability and a lack of experience of political participation, these opportunities may not be widely recognised by young people. In Romania, in contrast, it is hypothesised (H3.2) that the clientelistic party system could be expected to 'block' opportunities for fair and equal youth political participation. While the possibility of gaining selective incentives could be expected to attract some young people to participate, for others this would serve to effectively exclude them from political participation by intensifying feelings of alienation from political agents and creating real or perceived 'blockages' in participation channels.

2.2d(ii) Socioeconomic Contexts

Studies of various forms of political participation have often shown a correlation between socioeconomic level and political participation (Verba and Nie 1972, McCarthy and Zald 1977, Barnes and Kaase 1979) where people with higher levels of income and education will be more likely to participate than people with lower levels. This is because these factors provide a person with resources (time, money and skills) to participate. It is now generally recognised that these socioeconomic resources can only partly explain the reasons behind participation. Indeed, they must be considered alongside factors such as political opportunities (Leighley 1995, Tarrow 1998). Nonetheless, this does not diminish the important role that resources can play.

Table 2.2: GDP and Unemployment in Poland and Romania 2006

	POLAND	ROMANIA	EU27 average
GDP per capita (PPS in Euro)	12 400	8 800	23 500
Unemployment Rate (% of total labour force)	13.8	8.2	7.3

(Source: Eurostat Yearbook 2008. PPS: Purchasing Power Standards)

Economic reform in post-communist countries has generally had to address the difficulties created by failing communist era industry and outdated infrastructure. This has led to higher levels of unemployment and economic insecurity. However, the nature of this has varied across the region. In Poland, a series of hard hitting economic policies known as ‘shock therapy’ were implemented in the early 1990s which aimed to stabilise the currency, attract foreign investment and limit budget deficits. Despite criticism at the time, these have since been credited with increasing privatisation deals and encouraging foreign trade (Castle and Taras 2002). The short term consequences, however, were severe. It meant closure for many loss-making sectors of heavy industry and unemployment increased dramatically as a result (Orenstein 2001). Although unemployment remains high (see Table 2.2), especially in rural areas, the restructuring of state owned industry has meant an effective depoliticisation of this sector and foreign investment has helped to ensure a fast growing economy throughout the 2000s.

Economically, Romania has fared worse than Poland since the fall of communism. Indeed Tismăneanu (2004, p. 30) describes the situation in Romania after the fall of Ceausescu as ‘catastrophic’. This was due not only to the problems inherited by all former communist countries such as the shortage economy, overemployment and low productivity but also because in the 1980s, unlike the other countries, Ceaușescu had actually strengthened centralisation of the economy in a bid to pay back Romania’s overwhelming foreign debt (Bacon 2004). During the 1990s, various reforms were initiated but none were fully completed and as a result many loss making state industries continued to function and privatisation was slow (Stan 1997, Bacon 2004). Foreign investors were also deterred by the poor political image and lack of economic reform (Pridham 2001). Bacon (2004) notes an improvement in the economy and in attracting foreign investors since 2000 but economically Romania still lags behind some

other post-communist states. The GDP per capita of Romania (see Table 2.2) remains one of the lowest in the European Union and although the unemployment figures appear low in comparison to Poland and the EU27 average, this masks the continuing overemployment of people in loss making state run industry.

Table 2.3: Youth Unemployment and Educational Attainment in Poland and Romania 2007

	POLAND		ROMANIA		EU 27 average	
	Under 25 years	Over 25 years	Under 25 years	Over 25 years	Under 25 years	Over 25 years
Unemployment Rate (% of labour force)	29.8	11.7	21.4	5.7	17.2	7
Educational Attainment (%)	91.1	84.8	76	73.1	77.4	69.3

(Sources: Eurostat News Release 2007 ‘*Young Europeans through Statistics*’ and Eurostat Yearbook 2008. Unemployment rate is 2006 and is measured from 15 years upwards. Level of educational attainment refers to the percentage of people who have completed at least upper secondary school. It is measured from 20 years upwards).

The economic and social problems facing post-communist countries have been seen to impact youth particularly severely (Machacek 2001). This is because young people, having a lack of experience, are often the most vulnerable to changes in the labour force. The impact of this in creating a ‘generational gap’ between age groups in Poland and Romania can be seen by looking at figures on youth unemployment. Table 2.3 shows that the level of youth unemployment in both countries is considerably higher than that of older age groups, and this gap is more pronounced than for the European Union average. These labour problems facing the young have also led to significant temporary migration of young people abroad to find work (Baláz et al. 2004, Open Society Foundation Romania 2006). In both countries the combination of these factors could be expected to depress rates of youth political participation, as young people often lack economic and time resources. In turn, the severity of this problem could help to explain lower rates of youth political engagement in Poland and Romania than in established democracies.

However, in comparison to the high levels of unemployment for young people in both Poland and Romania, the educational levels contrast importantly. Table 2.3 shows that

the educational level in all countries is higher for the youngest age group than for older people. However, the rate of youth educational attainment is particularly striking for Poland which at over 90% is significantly higher than in Romania and the average across the twenty-seven members of the European Union. This suggests that young people in Poland may have greater potential resources in terms of skills to participate than their counterparts in Romania. This leads to the fourth hypothesis (H4). Although high levels of youth unemployment could be expected to depress youth political participation in both countries, given the higher rate of educational attainment and GDP per capita, it could be expected that youth political participation patterns in Poland (H4.1) would reflect this higher level of resources. In particular this could mean that it would be easier for young Poles to recognise political opportunities to participate in elections, parties and informal methods of participation. In Romania (H4.2), lower levels of resources, both economic and educational would be expected to have the opposite outcome.

2.2e. Sub-National Control Comparisons

In order to further contextualise the paired comparison between Poland and Romania and control for local variation, I chose to conduct my field research at the level of sub-national units in Poland and Romania. Sub-national comparison has several significant advantages over national level comparisons. The first is that by taking the comparison down to sub-national level, it is possible to limit the ‘whole-nation bias’ often associated with national level comparisons (Snyder 2001). Comparisons which are done at country level necessarily use national level and aggregate information, which, whilst useful for across country comparison can also distort results due to regional disparities in terms of socioeconomics, civic traditions and political make-up within each country. This problem of ‘*many variables, small number of cases*’ (Lijphart 1971, p. 685) is therefore a common one for paired country comparisons (Guy Peters 1998). By choosing to conduct research at sub-national level, the number of potential variables can be reduced. However, for this to be effective, the sub-national units chosen must exhibit contrasting political, economic and social features.

A sub-national level comparison is particularly useful for this study of youth political participation in Poland and Romania. This is because, within both these countries, there exist a number of distinctly different geographical areas which contrast importantly in

terms of socioeconomics and politics. Since the fall of Communism, the differences between these regions have again become evident with some regions ‘winning’ or ‘losing’ from the transition to democracy. Some have become very attractive to outside investment and have successfully restructured existing industry whilst other areas have remained largely agricultural or have suffered devastating industrial decline. Added to this, pre-communist legacies of democratic experience, economic success and political culture have meant that in both countries some areas have proven better prepared for democratisation than others (Weltrowska 2002, Bădescu and Sum 2005).

The importance of the sub-national context for research into youth has already been recognised by some studies in Poland and Romania (Roberts 1995, Bădescu and Sum 2005)³⁰. However, as these have largely focused on issues facing young people in general rather than how they participate politically, they present limited analysis into this subject. Nonetheless, the findings they do offer show some important similarities and differences across the countries but suggest that the similarities across the countries may be more significant than the differences. For this reason sub-national comparison is used in this study as a control strategy. While significant difference between localities is not predicted, by also conducting research at sub-national level we can have greater confidence in our findings than would a study based on national level data alone. For these reasons, where I do not find significant difference between the national and local level data, the data used throughout the thesis is national level. However, in the instances where I find important sub-national contrasts, I indicate this by citing the relevant local level data.

In this study, I have chosen three sub-national units in each country which contrast in terms of political, economic and social make up. As Polish and Romanian administrative units differ as regards size and population, I do not attempt to directly compare the sub-national units across the two countries.

³⁰ Roberts (1995) sociological study of Polish youth employed three contrasting sub-national cases: Suwałki, Katowice and Gdansk. He found youth in Suwałki faced the worst prospects in terms of employment and education but found that they had similar levels of political interest to youth in Katowice. Bădescu and Sum (2005) studied social capital in Romania based on age and locality. Their study hypothesised greater levels of social capital would be found in Transylvania. This was found to be true for older people but they found little difference in levels of trust amongst youth across the country. See also the British Council 2004 report ‘Being Young in Romania’ which found a uniform low level of political participation and interest amongst youth across different Romanian localities.

2.2e(i) Sub-National Units in Poland

The units chosen for comparison in Poland are all at the Powiat (county) level of local government. Each of these is a part of a larger voivodship and each consists of a number of gmina (communes)³¹. There exist both urban and rural counties and most towns are considered urban counties but each is also surrounded by a rural county. These units of local government were reintroduced in Poland in 1999 and are governed by a city council (urban) or a county council (rural). City and County councils are responsible for employment, secondary education and civil protection. Local elections were first held in 1990 and are now held every four years. Local representatives on county and municipal level councils are elected directly by citizens as are the mayors who head the municipal councils. County heads are elected indirectly by the county councils who as stated are elected directly. Provincial marshals head the voivodships and these are elected by the regional assemblies.

Figure 2.1: Map of Poland with localities marked.



(Source: Embassy of Poland in the UK)

³¹ Except Warsaw County which is divided into 18 boroughs known as dzielnica.

The three localities considered in this study are all urban counties. They consist of the capital city, Warsaw, Bielsko-Biała, (marked **1** on Figure 2.1) a town in the South west of the country, and Chełm (marked **2** on Figure 2.1), a town in the East of Poland.

Table 2.4: Polish Population and Labour Force Statistics by Locality 2007

	Bielsko-Biała county	Chełm county	Warsaw county	Poland Total
Total Population	175690	67782	1706624	38115641
0-15 years %	15	15	12	17
16-24 years %	13	16	17	14
25-29 years %	9	8	9	8
30-59 years %	43	44	39	42
60 + years %	20	17	23	19
Unemployment rate %	<i>5.2</i>	<i>17.5</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>12.8</i>
% employed in agriculture	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>17</i>
% employed in industry	<i>45</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>28</i>
% employed in services	<i>54</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>55</i>

(Source: Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) 2007)

Table 2.4 shows the population by age group for each county and lists the unemployment figures and percentages of workers employed in agriculture, industry and services. The age groups 16-24 and 25-29 are highlighted to illustrate the numbers of young people in each county. From the table we can see that the variation in this regard between counties is insignificant. However the unemployment rates differ considerably with the highest level recorded in Chełm and the lowest in Warsaw. The following section details the individual localities.

1. Warsaw

Political complexion of County Council: Since 2006 the Mayor is Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz (Civic Platform) – Council is majority Civic Platform (PO).

The city of Warsaw is the capital of Poland and the city with the largest population. In comparison with the rest of the country, Warsaw attracts greater amounts of foreign investment, has considerably lower unemployment rates (see Table 2.5) and is the seat of the national government and the headquarters of national political parties. It is the commercial and political centre of the country. It also has a large student population and many young people migrate from other areas of Poland to Warsaw in order to study or to find work (Dzierżanowski and Pleśniak 2005). Taken together, it would be expected that the high level of social and economic development, proximity to the national centres of political power and a large number of students would mean political participation amongst young people in Warsaw would be higher than in other areas of the country. This is because of the access to resources required to participate and also the greater number of potential political opportunities offered by living in the political and economic centre of the country.

2. Bielsko-Biała

Political Complexion of County Council: Since 2002 the Mayor is Jacek Krywult (Independent). Council majority coalition Civic Platform (PO) and Independent.

Main Industries: Automobile industry (Fiat Auto Poland), textile industry, chemical industry.

Higher Education Institutes: University of Bielsko-Biala (circa. 10,000 students).

Bielsko-Biała urban county lies in the Silesian voivodship and since the 19th century it has been a highly industrialised town. Today Bielsko-Biała is considered to be part of a ‘winning region’ in Poland in terms of socioeconomic development (Weltrowska 2002, p.50). It has been attractive to foreign capital and has a high level of development of higher education. The unemployment rate is significantly lower than the national average. Most of the workforce is employed in industry and services (see Table 2.4). This high level of socioeconomic development could be expected to mean that young people would have greater resources to participate politically than in other less economically developed areas of the country.

3. Chełm

Political Complexion of County Council: Since 2006 Mayor is Agata Fisz (Own election committee -member of Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)). Council is coalition of major parties and independent committees – no overall majority)

Main industries: Cement industry, Furniture makers (Meblotap), Dairy industry (Biomelk)

Higher Education Institutes: Branch of the Lublin University Medical Faculty, Teacher Training College.

Chełm is in the Lublin voivodship. Unemployment remains higher than the national average at 17.5% (see Table 2.4). Since 1989 eastern Poland has attracted little foreign investment and inefficient, over staffed industry and farming has left it with great social and economic problems. However, Chełm has links with the Ukraine and as a border town between the EU and the Ukraine has attracted a significant amount in EU funds. Nonetheless, the general lack of socioeconomic development in Chełm, could be expected to have a negative influence on youth political participation in this locality.

1.e (ii) Sub-National Units in Romania

Figure 2.2: Map of Romania



(Source: Embassy of Romania in UK)

In Romania, the units of comparison are at municipality level and comprise the capital, Bucharest, Oradea (marked 1 on Figure 2.2) in the North West and Alexandria (marked 2 on Figure 2.2) in the South. However as figures are only available at county level, I use these to compare population and labour force statistics. Each county has a mayor and a local council. The mayor is directly elected. However, the mayor lacks clear constitutional authority and is at risk of manipulation by the party dominated local councils (Roper 2002, Nations in Transit 2006). In addition county prefects who are not elected but rather chosen by the central government are responsible for checking the decisions made by local government bodies. Yet, due to unclear legal provisions they lack accountability and can theoretically approve biased decisions without recourse. The prefect also has the right to appoint local council secretaries and these effectively constitute a direct link from central government to local councils meaning de facto subordination of local decisions to the central government. Local elections are held every four years.

Table 2.5: Romanian Population and Labour Force Statistics by Locality 2006

	Bihor County	Teleorman County	Bucharest Municipality	Total Romania
Total Population	59 4982	41 7183	19 31236	21584365
0-14 years %	16	14	11	11
15-24 years %	15	13	14	15
25-34 years %	16	13	18	16
35-54 years %	28	25	31	28
55+ years %	25	35	26	30
Unemployment rate %	2.7	8.2	2.2	7.3
% employed in agriculture	2	9	1	30
% employed in industry	42	35	18	25
% employed in services	56	56	81	45

(Source: Romanian National Statistical Institute (INSSE) 2006)

Table 2.5 presents figures on population and labour force in each of the three localities. The age groups 15-24 and 25-34 are highlighted to illustrate the numbers of young people in each county. We can see that although variations are not pronounced, the population in Oradea and Bucharest is slightly younger than in Teleorman. The unemployment rate differs significantly across localities, being highest in Teleorman and lowest in Bucharest and Bihor. The following section details the individual localities.

1. Bucharest

Political complexion: Since 2008 Mayor is Sorin Oprescu (Independent). Council run by coalition of National Liberal Party (PNL) and New Generation Party- Christian Democratic (PNGCD).

Bucharest is the capital of Romania, and is also the commercial and political centre of the country. The unemployment rate is significantly lower than the Romanian average (see Table 2.7) and there is a large population of students. Similarly to Warsaw, this economic and social make up could be expected to mean youth political participation will be greater in Bucharest than in other areas of Romania.

2. Oradea

Political Complexion of Town Council: Since 2008 Mayor is Ilie Bolojan (National Liberal Party (PNL)). Council is led by coalition between the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR).

Main Industries: Aluminum industry, mechanical industry, chemical industry, textile industry.

Higher Education Institutes: University of Oradea (circa. 35,000 students).

Oradea is situated in Transylvania and is a border town with Hungary. In comparison with many areas in Romania, since communism, Bihor county has profited from industrial restructuring and significant foreign investment. The unemployment rate is significantly lower than the national average (see Table 2.5). Since 1989, the political complexion in Oradea has been characterised by support for reform oriented parties (Lăzăroiu 2000, Turnock 2000) and the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania. This reflects the ethnic make up of the town which has a high population of ethnic Hungarians³². This high level of economic and social resources, young population and ethnic diversity could be expected to mean young people in Oradea would be more likely to participate politically than in less economically developed areas of Romania.

3. Alexandria

Political Complexion of Town Council: Since 2008 mayor is Victor Drăgușin (Social Democratic Party (PSD)). Council majority run Social Democratic Party (PSD).

Main Industries: Roll bearing industry, mechanical component industry, food and beverages industry.

Higher Education Institutes: Branch of the Bucharest based Spiru Haret University.

Teleorman county is situated in the Southern region of Muntenia and is close to the Bulgarian border. The county is economically less developed than Bihor County and Bucharest. The unemployment rate is above the national average (see Table 2.5) and a

³² According to the 2002 census ethnic Hungarians make up around 28% of the population in Oradea.

recent report by the Open Society Foundation in Romania (2006) suggests that the economic and social problems have meant that a significant number of the population, many young, have temporarily migrated abroad to seek work. The Social Democratic Party continues to have a stronghold in this area (Lăzăroiu 2000, Turnock 2000). These factors could be expected to impact on the level of youth political participation in Alexandria, as young people would have fewer resources to participate than in other more economically developed areas of the country.

2.3. A Multi-Method Analysis

I chose to conduct this study into youth political participation in Poland and Romania by employing a multi-method approach. Thus, my research design is based mainly on qualitative methods but, when appropriate, combines these with quantitative methods. I detail the particular methods chosen in Section 2.3b below, but first Section 2.3a outlines the benefits of such an approach and explains why it is especially relevant to the study of youth political participation.

2.3a. The Strengths of a Multi-Method Approach

Multi-method analysis aims to move away from the traditional qualitative versus quantitative methods paradigm and instead to recognise how these different methods can be combined to complement one another and to generate confident, well-rounded research findings (Cappoccia and Freedman 2006, Bergman 2008). Quantitative methods are invaluable in making sense of large data sets and therefore for comparison across many different situations. However, such analysis often lacks contextualisation and therefore is unable to explain confidently divergence in results. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, are necessarily restricted to analysis of a small number of variables. However, this concentration on a small number of cases means that the researcher is able to suggest convincing reasons for particular findings based on context.

Although similar studies of youth political participation in newer democracies employing the multi-method approach are scarce, research undertaken in established democracies suggest that a multi-method research design is particularly appropriate for this topic.

2.3a(i) Multi-Method Approaches Applied to Youth Political Participation

Studies of youth political participation in established democracies have frequently noted that there is often a mismatch between how researchers and young people understand politics (Henn et al. 2002, O'Toole et al. 2003, Henn et al. 2005, Sloam 2007). They contend that young people in particular are likely to associate politics with politicians and parties, rather than wider political issues which may affect them. As young people tend to hold negative views of such formal political agents, closed-ended survey questions which ask them about interest, participation and trust in politics are also liable to be answered in negative terms as a consequence. This in turn can lead to a misrepresentation of how young people actually conceive of politics.

Whereas responses to direct questions may lead researchers to conclude that young people are apathetic towards and uninterested in politics, an approach which discusses politics in more general issue-based terms and relates this to young people's own experiences and opinions can offer significantly different results. For instance, the results of Henn et al.'s (2002) mixed qualitative and quantitative study of British young people between 18 and 24 years showed that although survey responses indicated that the young people were overwhelmingly disenchanted with formal party politics, when asked in detail in focus groups about issues which concerned them, they were knowledgeable and opinionated about local political decisions concerning education and the environment.

The merits of a multi-method approach to understanding youth political participation were also recognised by Sloam (2007) in his study of British young people. He illustrated that qualitative methods such as focus groups and interviews allowed young people to speak about politics in their own language and to explain and discuss why so many young people answered survey questions on political interest and participation negatively. In this way, he argued a multi-method approach allows for a 'three-dimensional analysis' of youth political engagement which is lacking in a purely qualitative or quantitative approach. For similar reasons, multi-method approaches have also been used in the study of participation in post-communist states, one successful example being Howard's (2003) comparative study of civil society in post-communist East Germany and Russia. In this study he combined quantitative and qualitative

research methods in order to illustrate the reasons for the widespread lack of participation in civil society within these countries. He analysed large data sets to firstly build up a picture of how the participation habits of people in post-communist Europe compared to those in established democracies. He then contextualised these findings through a series of interviews with people in East Germany and Russia.

2.3b Research Design

The research design I chose for the present study was governed by the logic of the research questions posed in chapter one. I considered the characteristics of each type of political participation to be studied (electoral participation, party activism and involvement in informal forms) separately. For instance, as electoral participation is the most widespread type of participation, findings based on interviews with a small number of voters or non-voters would likely fail to generate general theories for the wider population. Instead, a multi-method approach which employs standardised large 'N' surveys combined with focus group discussion at local level would allow a more detailed and representative picture of voters and non-voters in a particular country.

In contrast, party membership and engagement in informal forms of participation are more nuanced types of political involvement which constitute a far smaller number of people. Individual participation in these activities will likely differ in terms of frequency and degree of involvement. This means that it is particularly important in these cases to understand how young people conceive of the political, their experiences of involvement and how they perceive the opportunities available to them. In this case, by concentrating on the findings of large scale surveys we may be misled by the negative responses given by young people concerning political interest and trust into thinking that they are more disengaged from politics than is actually the case. Instead, interpretive methods such as focus groups and interviews with young activists are necessary to add depth and context to existing quantitative findings. The following sections outline the data, research techniques and fieldwork undertaken in this study.

2.3b(i) Focus-Groups with Non – or Less- Politically Active Young People

To gain in-depth data on how young people in Poland and Romania conceive of politics and political participation I opted to undertake a series of focus groups³³ with non- or less- politically active young people. The choice of focus groups as opposed to interviews was made on the basis of the explorative power of such a method. Particularly, the discussion produced by the interaction between respondents in focus groups has been recognised as an effective way to produce data which can elicit important insights into complex topics (Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006). As existing studies in established democracies have found that young people often conceive of politics in a unique manner, my objective was to discover whether this was also the case for Polish and Romanian young people. Interviews of individual non-active young people would therefore, have lacked the possibility for discussion and argumentation between peers. This interaction between respondents can also, however, be the greatest weakness in this method as it can generate discussion which misrepresents individual respondent's true feelings (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). One way to reduce the possibility of this occurring is to carefully select respondents based on a set of pre-determined criteria.

In total, I conducted 10 focus groups (5 in Poland and 5 in Romania). Each of these consisted of 5-8 respondents and lasted between 1 and 2 hours. They were conducted in English, with the exception of one in Alexandria, Romania which was conducted mostly in Romanian.

I selected focus group respondents on the basis of age and location. In each location, I aimed to set up two focus groups³⁴. One for school age respondents (16-19) and another for older respondents (20-25). This was based on the reasoning that people are more likely to feel comfortable discussing matters with people of similar age and experience (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). The school-aged groups were selected by contacting local groups which had links with schools in the area. In practice, this mostly meant that I was put in contact with a teacher in the school who was willing to help select suitable

³³ Details of these can be found in Appendix A.

³⁴ In Poland I conducted two in Bielsko-Biała, two in Chełm and one in Warsaw. In Romania I conducted two in Oradea, two in Alexandria and one in Bucharest.

students for the discussion. The discussion would then take place within school time, in the school library, or some other vacant room.

For the older groups, I again contacted organisations with links to young people and also colleges and universities. In most cases, an individual within these organisations would then help me to select the respondents. This meant that the discussions took place in a variety of settings, in college classrooms, large quiet cafes or in town halls.

This method of sampling necessarily meant that the respondents were generally biased towards having higher levels of education. However, this bias was mitigated by analysing the discussions produced in the focus groups in combination with secondary sources such as survey results and media reports. I use the data generated by the focus group discussions throughout the thesis and particularly to analyse the reasons for abstention from elections in chapter three and non-participation in informal forms of political involvement in chapter five.

2.3b(ii) Semi-Structured Interviews

I also conducted 30 semi-structured interviews³⁵ with activists in Poland and Romania (12 in Poland and 18 in Romania). I defined activists as youth party members or leaders and young people involved in informal forms of participation such as social movements or voluntary groups. In addition, I also carried out six semi-structured interviews (2 in Poland and 4 in Romania) with academics and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) workers interested in the issues surrounding youth participation.

These interviews were conducted face-to-face or in some instances by email exchange. Face-to-face interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 2 and a half hours. Email exchanges took the forms of written answers to a set of open-ended questions. Interviews were mainly conducted in English, as most of my interviewees were proficient and comfortable speaking in English. However, if they preferred they answered questions in their own language as my knowledge of Polish and Romanian meant I was able to

³⁵ Details of these can be found in Appendix B.

understand the responses and check my comprehension through further questions. Immediately, after each interview, I wrote a detailed set of field notes.

Although these interviews were conducted within a broad framework of questions on influences and experiences of youth activism, they were designed in order to allow the interviewee to expand on and explain matters which were of interest to them. This was particularly important given that their experiences could not necessarily be predicted from existing research (Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006).

Interviewees were picked on the basis of purposive sampling (Patton 2002, Ritchie and Lewis 2003) which means that they were selected according to a set of specific demographic, political and geographical criteria. Thus, my sample included only those political activists, volunteers or protestors who were under the age of 30 years³⁶, were active politically and were based in one of the sub-national localities chosen.

I accessed these interviewees through a range of techniques which included contacting headquarters of political parties and specific youth members by email, phone or personal visit. I then used a snowballing technique in order to contact more members of parties. Interviewees involved in volunteer groups were mostly accessed through contacting national and locally based NGOs.

As for the focus groups, the way in which this sample was collected evidently means that the sample was probably biased towards those young people who have greater resources to participate, and who are most active. In line with much qualitative research, it also means that more general inferences cannot necessarily be made from the findings of such a small number of interviews. However, as the objective of these interviews was to explore the motivations and experiences of young activists in Poland and Romania, this method of sampling did not detract from these findings. In addition, to counteract this bias, these findings are triangulated with reference to a selection of secondary resources such as party documentation and press reports on young activists. This data is primarily employed to assess the logics behind political party membership in chapter

³⁶ With the exception of the mayor of Chełm in Poland who was 32 years.

four. I also use this data in chapter five to analyse youth participation in informal forms of political engagement.

2.3b(iii) Quantitative Methods

Throughout the thesis I employ the results of the European Social Survey (ESS) 2006 to produce descriptive statistics relevant to comparative youth political participation. The ESS 2006 is also the basis for logistical regression analysis to determine the relative strength of various independent variables which may influence youth electoral participation in Poland and Romania. The European Social Survey is a large scale European-wide survey which tests political, social and cultural attitudes of citizens from the age of 15 in European countries. The 2006 round is the third round of the survey and is the first round in which Romania has been included. The results of the ESS are freely available from the internet. As the ESS is a standardised set of data with a high percentage of response, its results can be reasonably used to generate more general predictions for the wider population. However, following existing studies in established democracies which have found large ‘N’ studies to sometimes give misleading information on young people’s attitudes towards politics (See section 2.3a(i)), I use qualitative findings from focus groups to put the ESS results into context and to help explain any deviations which occur across countries.

2.4 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined and explained the major methodological choices made in this study. The first part detailed the comparative approach taken, particularly with reference to the advantages of a paired country comparison which uses sub-national units to contextualise national level findings. The factors which make Poland and Romania an especially valid choice for such research were explained. As these countries differ significantly within the newer democracies of Eastern Europe in terms of communist experience and post-communist political and socioeconomic contexts, a comparison between them aims to show how youth political participation patterns in each country compare to other each other and to existing findings in established democracies.

The second part of the chapter concentrated on the multi-method approach taken to the research design. It explained that although the study is biased towards qualitative methods, it also uses quantitative methods where appropriate to deepen and complement the qualitative findings. Using existing studies in established democracies as examples, I showed how this approach was particularly relevant for a study of youth political participation as young people generally conceive of the political in a different way from older people. By triangulating these research findings, the objective is to build up a convincing and detailed picture of youth political participation in Poland and Romania and how this compares to the situation in established democracies.

In the following chapters, I apply this methodology to present and analyse data on three forms of youth political participation in Poland and Romania, voting, political party membership and informal forms of political involvement.

CHAPTER THREE – ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

3.1 Introduction

The central aim of this chapter is to explore the individual level determinants of youth voter turnout in Poland and Romania in order to build up an understanding of why some young people choose to vote and others to abstain and how this compares with findings of studies in established democracies. As discussed in chapter one, electoral participation remains the most widespread form of traditional democratic political participation. However, it is also a form of political involvement which is necessarily episodic, as elections occur generally only every few years. This means that it demands less in terms of resources such as time and money to participate than other forms. As such it is a low-intensity form of political participation which is likely to engage far greater numbers of people than other more costly activities such as party membership. Building up an understanding of who votes and who abstains in a given country is therefore vital in addressing the broader question of youth political participation.

Studies of electoral turnout in established democracies have often shown that a range of different factors are important in determining who votes and who abstains at an election. These factors include individual, institutional and election-specific determinants (Gray and Caul 2000, Fox Piven and Cloward 2000, Franklin 2004, Fieldhouse et al. 2007). Although institutional and election-specific factors have proven important in determining aggregate turnout numbers, my focus in this chapter is on the logics behind the choice to vote or to abstain. Therefore I limit my research to understanding the relative strength of individual level determinants³⁷.

Age has traditionally been found to be a persuasive individual level determinant in explaining voter turnout, where young people have often been associated with lower levels of turnout which was traditionally explained as being due to their place in the

³⁷ Poland and Romania have similar electoral systems which mean differences between them are minimal. After the fall of communism, the electoral systems adopted by Poland and Romania were, as in most Central and East European countries, chosen in order to foster high voter turnout. Thus, in both countries the electoral systems have elements of proportional representation and voting takes place on a Sunday (Rose and Munro 2003, Birch 2003).

life-cycle (Kimberlee 2002, Denver 2006, Quintelier 2007)³⁸. However, in recent decades, research in established democracies has pointed to an increasing decline in youth voter turnout for which life-cycle explanations alone cannot account (Wattenberg 2002, Electoral Commission 2002, O'Toole et al. 2003, Quintelier 2007). Although traditional determinants such as socioeconomic level and involvement in organisations which act to mobilise people to vote, such as churches and trade unions, also continue to be linked to a higher propensity for a young person to vote, the most persuasive reasons for the recent increases in youth abstention in established democracies are based on young people's political interest and attitudes towards political agents (International IDEA 1999, O'Toole et al. 2003, Kimberlee 2002, Edwards 2007, Quintelier 2007). This argument contends that changes in political culture have meant that young people feel increasingly alienated and distant from the political system and unrepresented by politicians and political parties. A result of this is that they choose to 'exit' traditional forms of political participation such as voting.

In newer democracies, studies have generally shown particularly high levels of voter abstention across all age groups in elections since the early period of post-communism (Tworzecki 2003, Rose and Munro 2003, Millard 2004), although some have also noted the particularly high levels of young abstainers (Tworzecki 2003, Sum and Bădescu 2005). However, these studies have generally been concerned with understanding institutional determinants rather than individual level factors³⁹. Equally, a concentration on explaining trends within the whole voting public rather than that of different age groups means that there is little specific information on why young people choose to vote or to abstain at elections (Kostadinova 2003, Millard 2004, Rotariu and Comşa 2004, Czeńnik 2007). This is an important omission as awareness of these individual level choices and how they compare to those of older age groups and those of young people in established democracies is critical to building up an understanding of how young people in newer democracies participate politically.

In this chapter I employ a multi-method comparative approach to analyse the individual determinants of young voters and non-voters in Poland and Romania. As the aim of my

³⁸ For a discussion of life-cycle explanations see chapter one, section 1.4a.

³⁹ Although a recent study by Bernhagen and Marsh (2007) found that the individual level determinants of electoral turnout in newer democracies were similar to those in established democracies.

analysis is to build up a detailed picture of the determinants of voting and non-voting amongst young people, analysis of quantitative data alone cannot allow for the ‘thick’ description required. Instead I first employ qualitative data from focus groups to identify and assess how different individual level variables are likely to influence youth electoral participation and non-participation. Having built up this model of youth electoral participation and non-participation, I then use logistic regression analysis on the European Social Survey (ESS) 2006 data for Poland and Romania to help identify and unpack the various reasons behind the choice to vote or abstain for different age groups. By conducting such analysis on a large and representative population sample as offered by the ESS, I am able to test the relative strength of the hypotheses generated from my analysis of qualitative data.

The general comparative hypotheses set out in chapter two which are tested in this chapter are H2, H3 and H4:

H2: Differing levels of decentralisation in Poland and Romania could be expected to mean that in Poland (H2.1) young people would be more interested in and participate more in local elections than in Romania (H2.2) where decision-making remains largely centralised.

H3. In Poland (H3.1) the more programmatic nature of the party system could be expected to mean that the reasons behind youth electoral participation and non-participation would more closely resemble those in established democracies than in Romania. In Romania (H3.2) the clientelistic party system could be expected to mean that while selective incentives could mobilise some young people to participate, for others this would serve to effectively exclude them from political participation by intensifying feelings of alienation from political agents and creating real or perceived ‘blockages’ in participation channels.

H4. In Poland (H4.1) higher levels of socioeconomic resources would be expected to heighten participation of young people in elections. In Romania (H4.2) low levels of socioeconomic resources would be expected to depress levels of youth electoral participation.

The first section of the chapter sets out the electoral context in Poland and Romania, detailing actual and reported turnout figures to estimate the extent to which young people in both countries vote or abstain at elections. Section two employs the findings from my qualitative research to build up a model for explaining the individual level determinants which could be expected to impact on youth voting and abstention in Poland and Romania. Subsequently, section three employs logistic regression analysis of European Social Survey (ESS) 2006 data to test this model.

3.2 The Electoral Context

3.2a. Actual Turnout in Poland and Romania

Table 3.1: Elections in Poland 2000-2007

Date	Type of Election	Turnout (%) of Electorate
2000	Presidential	61.1
2001	Parliamentary	46.2
2002	Local	44.2
2004	European Parliamentary	20.4
2005	Presidential	51
2005	Parliamentary	40.6
2006	Local	46
2007	Parliamentary	53.9

(Source: Polish National Electoral Commission (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza))

Table 3.2: Elections in Romania 2000-2007

Date	Type of Election	Turnout (%) of Electorate
2000	Presidential	56.6
2000	Parliamentary	65.3
2000	Local	50
2004	Presidential	54.8
2004	Parliamentary	58.5
2004	Local	54
2007	European Parliamentary	29.5
2008	Parliamentary	39.3

(Source: Romanian Central Electoral Bureau (Biroul Electoral Central))

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 present the actual turnout figures for parliamentary, presidential, European and local elections in Poland and Romania since 2000. In each the turnout is calculated as a percentage of the total electorate rather than of the voting age population. From these figures it is possible to identify certain features. In both countries there appears to be a downward trend in turnout for parliamentary elections apart from in the Polish parliamentary election of 2007 which had a turnout of 53.9% and is therefore notably higher than in 2001 and 2005. Second, in both countries the turnout for the European parliamentary election is very low (20.4% in Poland and 29.5% in Romania). This follows the trend across Europe for European elections which are generally regarded as ‘second-rate’ elections by voter turnout analysts (Franklin 2004, Schmitt 2005). The third point worth noting is that although turnout for national elections appears to show a generally downward trend, turnout actually increased slightly in the time period for local elections (from 44.2 % to 46% in Poland and from 50% to 54% in Romania).

3.2b Turnout by Locality in Poland and Romania

In both Poland and Romania, turnout has been found to vary depending on region. In Poland studies have shown that turnout is generally higher in urban areas and in the more economically developed regions in the West of the country (Millard 1999). In Romania, the situation is rather more complicated. Some studies (Rotariu and Comşa 2004) have suggested that turnout is greater in rural areas than urban but this is also

believed to be partly linked to support for the Social Democratic Party (PSD) which derives mainly from rural and less economically developed areas. The developed nature of the local level organisational structure of the Social Democrats in these areas is such that they are thought to be able to mobilise people to turn out and vote (Kostadinova 2003)⁴⁰. Indeed, the PSD has also been accused of vote-buying tactics such as offering benefits to people in economically deprived areas in return for votes (Downs and Miller 2006).

3.2b(i) Poland

Table 3.3: Turnout in the Polish Sub-National Case Study Localities

Election	Turnout %			
	<i>Warsaw</i>	<i>Bielsko-Biala</i>	<i>Chełm</i>	<i>Polish Average</i>
2005 Parliamentary	56.1	44.4	38.4	40.6
2007 Parliamentary	74	58.8	46.2	53.9

(Source: Polish National Electoral Commission (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza))

Table 3.3 presents the actual turnout figures for the three Polish sub-national case study localities, Warsaw, Bielsko-Biała and Chełm. It shows that turnout in both the 2005 and 2007 parliamentary elections was highest in Warsaw and lowest in Chełm. This corresponds with existing study and suggests that the higher level of socioeconomic resources in Warsaw and Bielsko-Biała may be one factor influencing voter turnout.

⁴⁰ The reasons for the local level penetration of this political party and the consequences for youth political participation are discussed in chapter four section 4.3b(iv).

3.2b(ii) Romania

Table 3.4: Turnout in the Romanian Sub-National Case Study Localities

Election	Turnout%			
	<i>Bucharest</i>	<i>Bihor County (Oradea)</i>	<i>Teleorman County (Alexandria)</i>	<i>Romanian Average</i>
2004 Parliamentary	51.3	54.5	66.3	57.1
2008 Parliamentary	30.4	44	52.7	39.3

(Note: The results for both elections represent the turnout at 21.00 on the Election Day.

Source: Romanian Central Electoral Bureau (Biroul Electoral Central)

Table 3.4 presents the turnout figures for the 2004 and 2008 parliamentary elections in the three case study localities in Romania. We can see that the lowest rate of turnout in both elections was recorded in Bucharest and that the highest was in Teleorman county where Alexandria is situated. These findings appear to contradict the hypothesis that areas with higher levels of socioeconomic resources will also have higher levels of turnout. This is a very interesting finding and suggests that other factors such as the attraction of selective incentives to voters in poorer areas may be a factor in predicting turnout. It is also significant that Teleorman remains a Social Democratic Party (PSD) stronghold (See chapter two) and this may have an impact on the mobilisation of voters in the region.

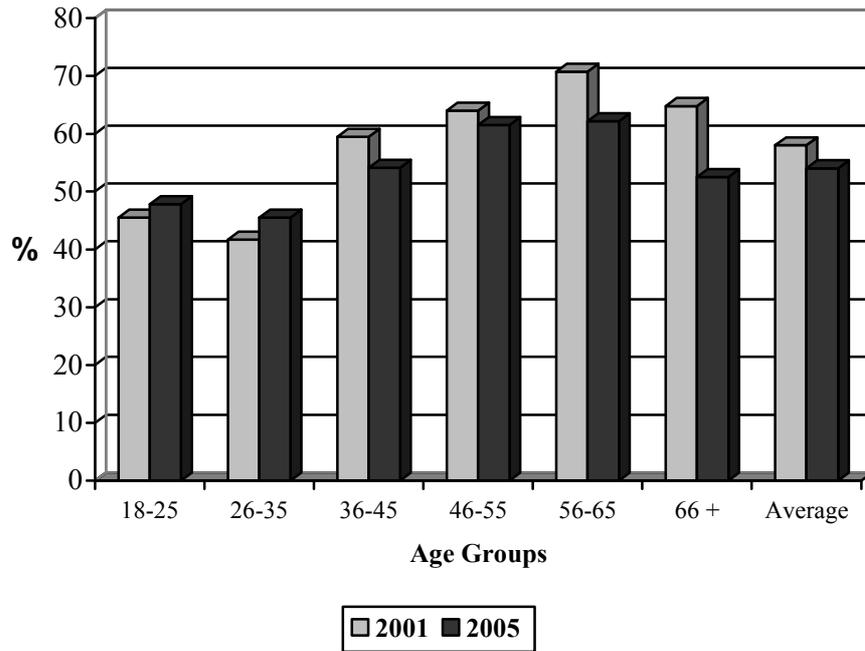
3.2c Voting by Age Group

To understand the differences between age groups and voting in Poland and Romania it is necessary to separate turnout figures into age groups. However, this is not straightforward as actual turnout figures are only available for the electorate as a whole. Therefore to assess the differences between age groups we must turn to reported voting figures as given in large scale surveys. As the figures given by such surveys are liable to be higher than actual voting figures they must be interpreted with caution (McDonald and Popkin 2001). In the case of Poland, I employ data from the Polish National Election Studies of 2001 and 2005 and in Romania I use the European Social Survey

2006 results coupled with Rotariu and Comşa’s (2004) findings for the 2004 elections to give a comparative overview of turnout for different age groups.

3.2c(i) Poland

Figure 3.1: Reported Turnout (%) by Age Group in Two Polish Elections (2001, 2005)



(Source: Polish National Election Surveys 2001 (N= 1783) and 2005 (N= 1197)).

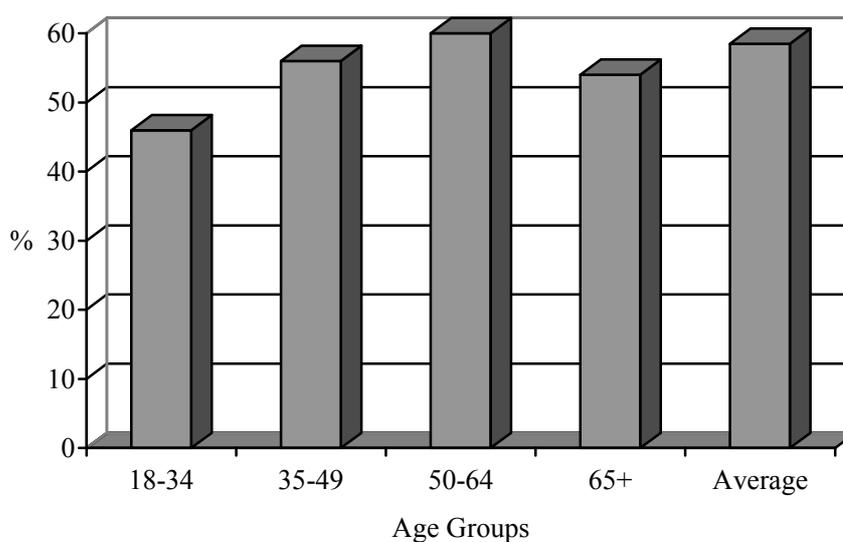
Figure 3.1 presents the reported turnout data by age group for the 2001 and 2005 Polish parliamentary elections. As expected the reported turnout is higher than the actual figures for each election. However as the degree of error between the two sets of figures (11.4 points difference for 2001 and 13.4 points difference for 2005) is relatively low the trends shown in Figure 3.1 can be taken to accurately reflect the differences between age categories.

The reported turnout by age group shows that in both elections the two youngest age groups (18-25 years and 26-35 years) had the lowest turnout by a considerable margin. For each election, turnout peaks in mid-age (between 46 and 65 years) and then falls again for the over 66 years age bracket. These findings are both consistent with studies on voter participation in established democracies and studies on post-communist turnout

(Lijphart 1997, Kimberlee 2002, Geys 2006, Birch 2003, Fieldhouse et al.2007⁴¹). However, the latest election in Poland may contradict this trend as although the Electoral Survey for the 2007 elections has not yet been published, estimates put turnout for the youngest age group at this election over 50% which is strikingly high in comparison to previous elections and would place youth turnout at similar levels to older age groups⁴². This suggests a significant change in the voting behaviour of young people. However this could be overstated as the nature of the 2007 election as a close contest between two contrasting main parties (the Law and Justice Party (PiS) and Civic Platform (PO)) is likely to have had a positive effect on voter turnout (Franklin 2004).

3.2c(ii) Romania

Figure 3.2: Reported Turnout (%) by Age Group in the 2004 Romanian Parliamentary Election

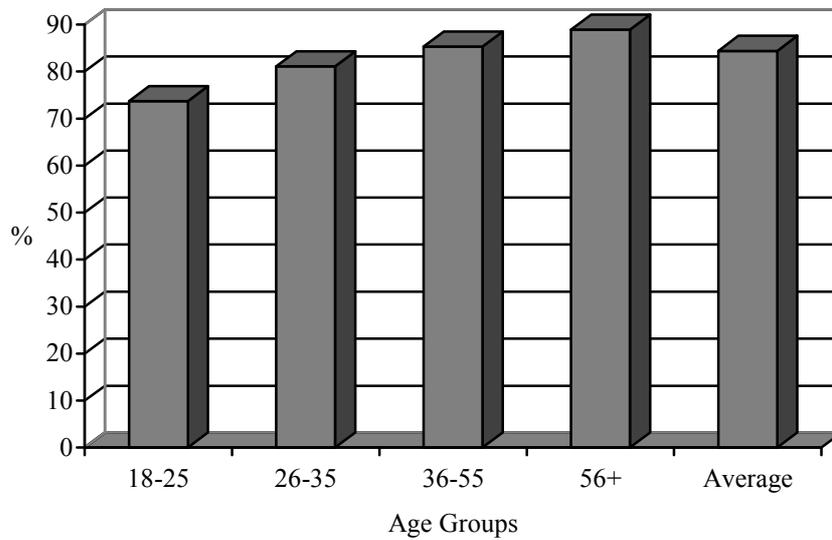


(Source: Rotariu and Comşa (2004))

⁴¹ In their analysis of the European Social Survey 2002-2003, Fieldhouse et al. (2007) found that whereas average turnout across 22 European countries for elections between 1999 and 2002 was 70%, this fell to 51% for the 18-24 years age group.

⁴² A report by Interia.pl/Fakty (22/10/07) based on exit polls gave the turnout figures as follows: 18-24 52.4%, 25-39 51.5%, 40-59 56.6%, over 60 years 45.1%.

Figure 3.3: Reported Turnout (%) by Age Group in 2004 Romanian Parliamentary Election (ESS 2006)



(Source: European Social Survey 2006 Romania (N=1844))

As there are no systematic national electoral surveys published in Romania, the information in Figure 3.2 for turnout by age group is based on the analysis of an exit poll of the 2004 elections conducted by Rotariu and Comşa (2004) and published in their book. This shows the same trends as observed in Poland. Namely, the age groups with the least turnout are the youngest (18-34) and the oldest (over 65). However, as this data uses larger age groups than in the present study, Figure 3.3 illustrates the reported turnout by age group for the 2004 elections as given by respondents in the European Social Survey (ESS) in 2006. Although caution must be exerted in interpreting these results as a considerable time lapse of two years exists between the elections and the survey (Norris 2002, Fieldhouse et al. 2007)⁴³, a similar trend in voting turnout by age can again be observed.

This section has shown that in both Poland and Romania, young people generally abstain from voting in greater numbers than older age groups. As general turnout levels across the population are commonly lower in these newer democracies than in established ones, this means that voter turnout for the youngest age group may be even lower than that found in established democracies. Based on the estimations given by

⁴³ It has been suggested that respondents are more likely to forget or exaggerate their participation in elections when the time between the elections and the survey is larger. See also Belli et al. (1999).

reported voting turnout, it appears that as many as 50-70% of young people in Poland and Romania are choosing to abstain at elections⁴⁴.

3.3 Building a Model for Youth Electoral Participation and Non-Participation in Poland and Romania

To understand the reasons behind this large-scale youth abstention in Poland and Romania and to assess how these compare to existing studies on young people in established democracies, it is necessary to unpack various individual level factors which may help determine why some young people vote and why some abstain. In the following section, I consider three interrelated groups of individual level factors which could be expected to have an influence on the propensity of young people in Poland and Romania to vote or to abstain at elections. The choice of these factors is based on findings of the large existing literature on voter turnout and abstention in both established and newer democracies and from my own qualitative research in Poland and Romania. The factors considered are socioeconomic factors, especially education level, political interest and trust and existing involvement in social and political activities.

3.3a Socioeconomic Factors

The access to resources such as money, time and skills has often been found to positively predict voter turnout in established democracies (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, Lipset 1981, Jackman 1987, Blais and Dobryznaska 1998, Norris 2002). We could therefore hypothesise that the lower levels of socioeconomic resources of young people in Poland and Romania in comparison to established democracies would impact on their likelihood of voting. However, this could also vary depending on country and locality. As such, higher levels of national economic development and educational attainment of young people in Poland than in Romania⁴⁵ could be expected to mean that young people in Poland would have greater resources with which to vote. Equally, a similar finding could be expected of different localities within each country. It should be noted however that the turnout figures in Romania appear to contradict this trend, as turnout is often greater in those areas which are less economically developed such as Alexandria (see

⁴⁴ This is calculated based on the error between reported voting figures and actual voting figures.

⁴⁵ See chapter two section 2.2d(ii).

section 3.2b(ii)). This suggests that socioeconomic factors may have a less important role in explaining turnout and abstention in Romania than in Poland.

3.3a(i) The Importance of Educational Level in Predicting Youth Turnout

In established democracies the strength of education level as a predictor of voting has been found to vary from country to country⁴⁶. One apparent paradox of education and voter turnout is that as education levels have been seen to rise across established democracies, turnout has fallen. This is particularly puzzling in the case of the youngest cohort as education is now largely more accessible for them than it was for older age groups. However within this, studies have also suggested that education level has strengthened as a predictor of voter turnout for young people in comparison with older cohorts (Lyons and Alexander 2000, Blais et al. 2004). This suggests that voting is increasingly becoming a pastime for an educated elite of young people, meaning that more marginalised young people are becoming even more unlikely to participate. In addition, some studies suggest that the type of education available may also play an important role in encouraging young people to vote. Particularly, it has been proposed that specific civic education classes may increase a person's awareness of civic duty and political issues thus making them more likely to vote (Campbell 2006). However, this remains an area of controversy and studies have been unable to show a consistently direct relationship between access to civic education and the likelihood of turning out to vote (Stoker 2006, Shea and Green 2006).

There is no general consensus on whether education level is an important factor in determining turnout in post-communist countries. Some studies of turnout have found that education level is relatively important (Norris 2002, Markowski and Tucker 2005, Rotariu and Comşa 2004⁴⁷) whereas others stress that socioeconomic characteristics cannot effectively explain turnout (Millard 1999). However, as in established democracies access amongst young people to education has increased over recent

⁴⁶ Studies in the USA have consistently found that this is an important factor (Verba and Nie 1972, Powell 1986, Fox Piven and Cloward 2000) but studies have found that education tends to have less influence in European countries (Powell 1986, Topf 1995, Norris 2002, Wattenberg 2002).

⁴⁷ They found that for the MMT/INSOMAR exit poll on the Romanian elections of 2004 there was a 10% difference between reported turnout of respondents who had a very low level of education and those who had attained a level of higher education.

decades⁴⁸. In addition, it has also been argued that young people in post-communist countries contrast importantly with youth in established democracies in regard to learning about civic duty and democratic political participation (Youniss et al. 2002). This is based on the contention that the lack of experience in democratic political participation of older cohorts means that young people do not benefit from the political socialisation of their parents and teachers in the same way as in established democracies⁴⁹. In turn, this could mean that school based learning about voting may hold more importance in newer democracies in encouraging young people to vote (Torney-Purta 2002). However, studies have shown that access to education which stresses civic duty and knowledge also varies across countries and localities within these countries (Torney-Purta 2002). Particularly, unbalanced educational reform and unequal distribution of educational resources has meant poorer, rural young people are particularly disadvantaged in terms of educational provision (Polyzoi et al. 2003).

An international study of civic education during the 1990s and early 21st century found significant differences between the level of civic knowledge and teaching of civic education in general in Poland and Romania (Torney-Purta 2002). In particular, it found that 14 year olds in Poland had civic knowledge which was above the international average and that teachers in Poland were committed to integrating civic education as part of the general curriculum. In contrast, in Romania, young people had civic knowledge which was lower than the international average and there was little commitment to integrated teaching of civic education in the curriculum. Response from my focus groups in both countries partly supported these findings. In Poland, although respondents generally felt that there could be more discussion of political issues and civic duties in schools, they expressed the belief that formal education was vital in encouraging young people to vote. This view was summed up by one respondent,

⁴⁸ As a result the percentage of young people in both countries completing at least secondary level education is higher amongst 20-24 year olds than older age groups. In Poland 91% of 20-24 year olds compared to 85% of 25 years and above. In Romania 76% of 20-24 year olds compared to 73% of over 25 years (Eurostat News Release 44/2007).

⁴⁹ Youniss et al (2002, p.123) explain this in the following way, '*In the former socialist bloc nations, the switch to democracy has put the older generation on par with the younger generation as learners of a new system*'.

'Education is the most important in making people vote here because there is no tradition of voting so people don't have the example of their family voting and so they have to learn about it at school' (m, 18, Warsaw)

In Romania, respondents generally felt that there was a complete lack of civic education in schools and that they were positively discouraged from discussion of politics and democracy. For example, one stated,

The problem is that older teachers don't want us to discuss politics' (f, 17 Oradea)

Another explained,

'All we hear about the communist regime is what we hear in school and naturally in a democratic country what they teach us is that ok communism was bad, they couldn't do this, they couldn't do this and during communism they used to teach kids that democracy was bad because they can't do this, they can't do this and communism, is good. We don't discuss why things are good or bad' (f, 18 Alexandria)

On the basis of these findings, it is hypothesised that education level would have a greater significance in Poland than Romania in determining youth voter turnout, where the lack of teaching about democracy and civic duty in schools may mean that even those with higher levels of education have less access to the resources associated with political participation.

3.3b Political Interest and Trust: Alienation and/or Apathy?

The second set of factors which constitute various attitudes towards politics is particularly relevant to assessing the reasons behind youth electoral participation and abstention in Poland and Romania. In established democracies the degree to which someone states their political interest and trust has been correlated with the likelihood of them turning out to vote (Almond and Verba 1963, Parry et al. 1992, Norris 2002,

Kimberlee 2002)⁵⁰. However, studies have also shown that these concepts may be interpreted differently by young people meaning that the reasons behind increasing rates of youth abstention at elections are often misread as political apathy rather than political alienation (O'Toole et al. 2003, Henn et al. 2005). This view of a politically apathetic youth has also been supported by media reports on young people in established democracies whose abstention at elections is often framed as a product of a youth culture which encourages political and social apathy and consumerism (Wattenberg 2002, Kimberlee 2002)⁵¹. However, qualitative studies of youth political participation have found that this image of young people as uninterested in and uncaring about politics is due to their interpretation of politics as referring to political agents, such as politicians and parties, rather than to wider political and social issues. Indeed, young people have often been found to have a high degree of interest in wider political issues and to be supportive of democracy and elections (Electoral Commission 2002, Henn et al. 2005, Phelps 2005, Vaizey 2005). Their feelings of alienation from political agents however, tend to be deep-rooted and have a detrimental influence on their belief that by voting they can influence change in policy.

In newer democracies, the way in which young people conceive of politics is likely also to be framed by the way in which political agents are viewed particularly negatively across all age groups. High level corruption scandals, economic hardship and unfulfilled promises are often cited as reasons for the low level of confidence many post-communist citizens have in politicians and parties and are seen as a persuasive reason for high levels of electoral abstention (Mischler and Rose 2001, Rose and Munro 2003). This means that it is very difficult to determine whether the reasons for young people in newer democracies choosing to abstain at elections is due to specific post-communist factors or reflects a more general trend amongst youth as found in established democracies.

To address this, in this section, I combine survey data on political attitudes of Polish and Romanian young people with qualitative data to assess how their conception of politics

⁵⁰ Although studies have found levels of trust to be positively linked to the likelihood of voting, different studies have found that the strength of this relationship varies (Parry et. al. 1992, Putnam 1993, 2000, Norris 2002)

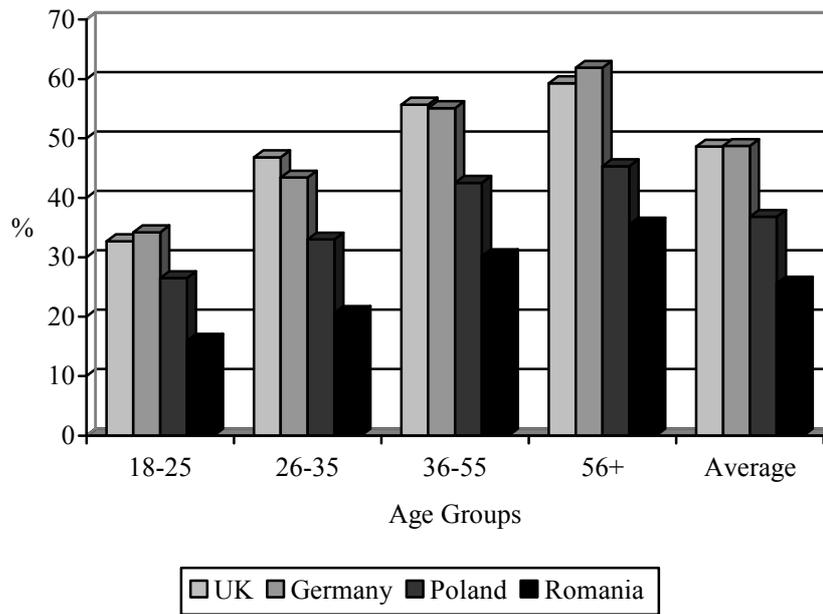
⁵¹ Kimberlee (2002, p.87) explains that youth culture is often seen by the media as '*problematic, inferior and even detrimental to the good of society*'.

compares to that of young people in established democracies. Building an understanding of whether young people in these countries are also alienated from political agents but interested in wider political issues is vital to understanding the reasons behind the choice to vote or to abstain at elections. However, it could be expected that the political attitudes of young people in Poland and Romania could also differ from one another as a result of contrasting party systems and decentralisation (See chapter two). As such, we could expect that young people in Romania may exhibit a greater degree of separation from political agents and processes than their counterparts in Poland.

3.3b(i) How do Polish and Romanian Young People Conceive of Politics?

To test how young people in Poland and Romania conceive of politics, I first asked focus groups respondents to describe what they understood by the term 'politics'. Their answers in both countries revealed that they invariably associated politics with political agents rather than wider political issues which affected their daily lives. The answers they gave were generally scathing of political agents and particularly politicians. A typical example of how this question was interpreted was given by the answers of focus group respondents in a high school in Oradea, Romania where they said that politics meant, '*thieves*', '*corrupt people*' and '*scandals*'. The majority of respondents in both countries stated that they were uninterested in politics.

Figure 3.4: Interest in Politics by Country and Age Group



(Source: European Social Survey 2006: UK (N= 2386), Germany (N=2915), Poland (N=1720), Romania (N=2139) where % represents number of respondents saying they are quite or very interested in politics)

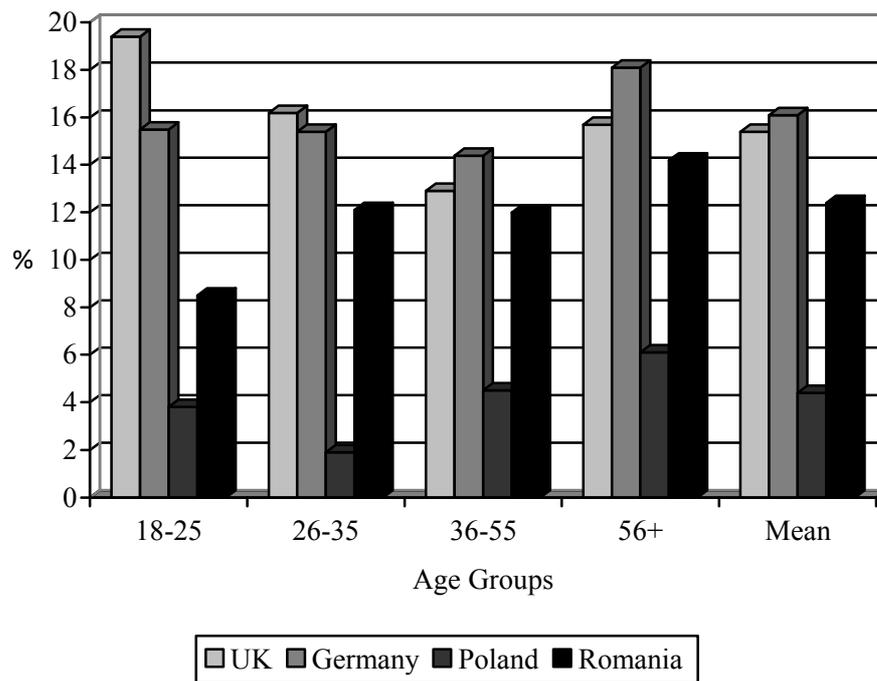
This lack of stated political interest is supported by the European Social Survey (ESS) 2006 data which appears to show that young people in Poland and Romania are particularly uninterested in politics (see Figure 3.4). Indeed, according to this data, Polish and Romanian young people are even less interested in politics than young people in the UK and Germany. However, it should be noted that the gap between the youngest age group and older age group of those who say they are quite or very interested in politics is narrower (around 20%) in the newer democracies than in the established democracies (around 30%). This suggests that the lack of interest in politics amongst young people in Poland and Romania may also be a product of a more general separation between society and political agents in post-communist countries (Howard 2003, Dilema Veche 2003⁵²) rather than a reflection of the way young people specifically conceive of politics as has been found in established democracies. Nonetheless, this finding of very low levels of interest in politics amongst young people also supports findings of national level studies in Poland and Romania⁵³ and as such it is important to assess whether this is due to negative views of political agents or whether it

⁵² This special report in Dilema Veche nr.553 (2003) (Divorțul de Politică) encompasses a number of articles on the separation between politics and citizens in Romania.

⁵³ See for example the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) (2003) Report on Polish Youth and the British Council/Gallup (2004) Report: Being Young in Romania.

also reflects a wider apathy about political and social issues and a low confidence in democratic institutions. To address this we should first evaluate the degree to which young people in Poland and Romania are distrusting of political agents before assessing how this compares with their views on wider political issues and democratic institutions.

Figure 3.5: Trust in Politicians by Country and Age Group



(Source: European Social Survey 2006: UK (N= 2386), Germany (N= 2915), Poland (N= 1548), Romania (N= 1844) where % represents the number of respondents who have a moderate to high level of trust in politicians)

Figure 3.5 illustrates the levels of trust in politicians by age group and country. Again, we can see that the levels are consistently lower in Poland and Romania for all age groups than in the UK and Germany⁵⁴. In particular, the level of trust for politicians in the lowest age group in Poland and Romania is strikingly low in comparison to that in established democracies and again suggests that post-communist factors may also play a significant role in how young people relate to politics. The reasons given by focus group respondents for their low levels of trust and confidence in politicians, however, were

⁵⁴ This supports findings by Rose and Munro (2003).

similar to findings of studies in established democracies and mainly focus on the self-interest of politicians. In Poland, one respondent stated,

'politicians cannot be trusted because they are not interested in people, they are only interested in themselves' (f,18 Chełm)

Similarly another explained,

'I don't know of anyone who has gone into politics to help the Polish society, they are all in it for their own gain, for ways to make money and get rich'
(m, 25 Bielsko-Biała)

These views support the findings of the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) study on Youth in Poland (2003) which found that 80% of respondents felt that political parties existed for the personal benefit of politicians and that only 5% felt that politicians represented the interests of their electorate.

In the Romanian focus groups, the views expressed about politicians also centred on the self-interest of politicians. For example, one respondent said,

'The politicians think only for themselves and not for the rest of the country and that is why this country has financial problems' (f, 17, Alexandria)

Again, this supports the findings of existing studies in Romania. For instance, a survey carried out by a sociologist⁵⁵ at the University in Oradea on 523 school pupils between the ages of 15 and 19 found that 63% of respondents felt that political leaders care little about the opinions of ordinary people and 89% felt that politicians rapidly forget about the needs of the people who elected them.

However, these very low levels of confidence and trust in politicians varied slightly with respect to local level politicians. In Poland, the views on whether national or local

⁵⁵ This survey was carried out by Dr. Adrian Hatos in Oradea in June 2006. Dr. Hatos kindly sent me the data set.

level politicians were more trustworthy were mixed. In Chełm, respondents were generally more positive about local politicians. One stated,

‘Local is better because they understand what happens in Chełm, they can do something for us here. Those people in Warsaw only care about big cities and they don’t know the problems in Chełm’ (m, 18 Chełm)

However in Warsaw and Bielsko-Biała the views were less positive. In Warsaw, respondents generally said that they had a similar level of trust in local as in national politicians and in Bielsko-Biała some respondents felt that local politicians were even more self-interested than national ones. For instance, one respondent explained,

‘I don’t see local politics as any better than national – perhaps even worse. In the local council they all say that they are in different parties but it makes no difference. Behind closed doors they are friends who help one another and drink vodka at each other’s houses. They get advantages, they are always the first to know when something will be sold or some kind of opportunity comes up and they buy buildings before they are on the market under a someone else’s name and they get it much cheaper’ (m, 25 Bielsko-Biała)

These mixed views give little support to the hypothesis that decentralisation in Poland has made young people feel any more involved in or trustworthy of politics at local level. Indeed, the response from Romanian focus group participants suggested similarly mixed views on the relative trustworthiness of local politicians as compared to national. In most cases, respondents were equally negative about local politicians and national, however some showed a greater level of confidence in local politicians.

For instance, one explained,

‘Local politicians can represent our interests better than national. The mayor as the head of the town is better than the president for us because he knows the town better’ (f,18 Oradea)

Overall however, the views of young people in both countries show a very low level of trust and confidence in political agents. This suggests that this may also influence how much they feel interested in politics. To analyse this further it is now necessary to question whether this low level of interest and confidence also extends to wider political and social issues and democratic institutions.

3.3b(ii) Interest in Wider Political and Social Issues

In Poland and Romania, as in established democracies (Wattenberg 2002) young people are often framed by the media as being apathetic about and uninterested in political and social issues and instead motivated by consumerism and self-interest⁵⁶. However, in established democracies this image of young people has been found to be flawed. To test whether this could also be valid for young people in Poland and Romania I asked focus group participants to state what they felt were important issues for young people in their countries. This generally provoked an informed and passionate discussion on a broad range of wider political and social issues. In Poland, the main issues raised were with regard to youth unemployment, low wages, and temporary migration abroad to find work. In Romania, the main topics were similar but also focused on the mismatch between state education and skills required for finding a job as well as the issue of corruption in universities and colleges. To understand the relationship between these issues and how they conceive of politicians I asked them how they felt politicians dealt with these problems. The answers suggested that they generally felt politicians were uninterested in the problems of young people. In Poland one respondent stated,

'They (politicians) just don't care about these things – they do nothing about trying to get young people to come back to Poland for example' (m, 24 Bielsko-Biała)

In Romania, response was even more negative. For instance, one respondent answered,

⁵⁶ Examples include a Polish newspaper article (Karoń and Kowalczyk 2007) which stated that *'young people do not show the slightest interest in the state of the social institutions which are part of a democracy'* and then continued on to argue that young people felt voting was not for them but rather for a *'weird group of political party supporters, disgruntled older relatives, old men and the popularised old grandmother (babcia) who goes to vote to protect her pension'*. Also in Romania, a similar image is often promoted by the media. An article in the daily newspaper, *Adevărul* (Marin 2007) states, *'It is easy to identify the new members of the electorate who were born in 1989. You can find them in the park with a beer in their hand, on roller skates or in fast food restaurants'*.

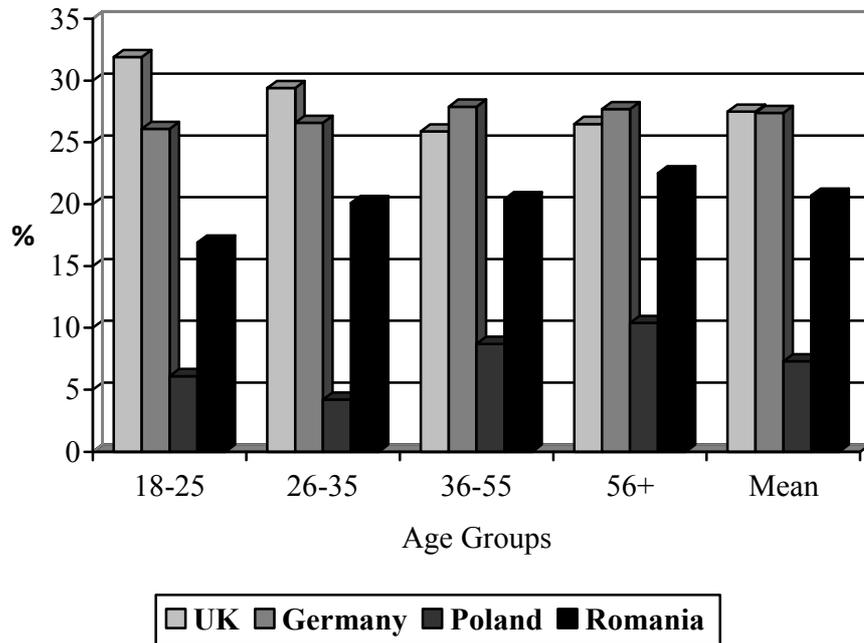
'There are still a lot of really old people in politics with old ideas from the communist era. They don't want to do anything to change things for young people – they want it to stay how it is because it is good for them' (f, 18 Oradea)

These views contrast importantly with the image of an apathetic and uninterested youth. Indeed, they illustrate similar findings to that of studies in established democracies which find young people to feel unrepresented and misunderstood by political agents (O'Toole et al. 2003, Henn et al. 2005). As such, this provides support for the hypothesis that young people in Poland and Romania are largely alienated from political agents rather than apathetic about wider political and social issues.

3.3b(iii) Support for Democratic Institutions

In established democracies, studies have found that although young people are distrustful of political agents, they have more confidence in the democratic process and institutions. This is seen to add important support to the argument that young people are largely alienated from political agents rather than politically apathetic (Henn et al. 2005). However, in newer democracies, studies have found that all age groups are likely to have higher levels of distrust in democratic institutions such as parliaments than in established democracies (Linz and Stepan 1996, Mischler and Rose 2001). Similar findings have been found with regard to satisfaction in democracy (Rose-Ackermann 2005). This has been explained by a disappointment with post-communist democratic reform and economic hardship (Howard 2003, Barnes 2004).

Figure 3.6: Trust in Country's Parliament by Country and Age Group



(Source: European Social Survey 2006: UK (N= 2386), Germany (N= 2915), Poland (N= 1548), Romania (N= 1844) where % represents the number of respondents who said they had a moderate to high level of trust in the country's parliament)

The figures on levels of trust in the country's parliament shown in Figure 3.6 appear to support these earlier findings. Although the parliament is an enduring democratic institution, according to these survey results, the levels of trust in the newer democracies, particularly Poland, for all age groups are lower than in the UK and Germany. Also, unlike in the established democracies the youngest age groups in Poland and Romania seem to have significantly lower levels of trust than the older age groups. When compared to the level of trust of young people in Poland and Romania in politicians (see Figure 3.5) they do appear to have slightly higher levels of trust in the parliament. However, the difference is not significant. Given their lack of experience of communism, the youngest age group are unlikely to feel the same degree of disappointment with the transformation to democracy as older age groups. However their socialisation in a time of great political, economic and social change could also help to explain the contrast between them and young people in established democracies. Despite these survey-based findings on trust in democratic institutions, many respondents in focus groups in both Poland and Romania appeared more supportive of democratic processes. For instance, in Poland, one focus group respondent stated,

'Democracy is much better than anything else but the problem is the politicians' (m, 23, Bielsko-Biala)

In Romania also respondents made this separation between political agents and democracy as a system. For instance, one explained,

'Democracy is good, politicians in Romania are not' (f, 17, Alexandria)

Although, this only represents the views of a small sample, it does suggest that there are groups of young people in both countries who feel that although political agents are untrustworthy and self-interested, this does not negate the worth of democracy as a system. Coupled with the finding that young people do not appear apathetic about political and social issues, this suggests that the conception of politics amongst young Poles and Romanians may be closer to that of their counterparts in established democracies than at first appears.

3.3b(iv) Implications for Electoral Participation and Non-Participation

If young people in Poland and Romania are indeed largely alienated from political agents rather than apathetic about wider political issues and democratic institutions, then what is the likely effect of this on their decision of whether to vote or abstain at an election? Studies in established democracies have suggested that alienation from political agents has made young people likely to choose to 'exit' from traditional forms of political involvement such as voting as they feel that their participation would make no difference (Kimberlee 2002, Henn et al. 2005, Sloam 2007). However, the support for the democratic process also suggests that there is potential for young people who are alienated from political agents to recognise the worth in turning out to vote. My qualitative research found that in Poland and Romania there is support for both of these possibilities.

3.3b(v) *The Alienated Abstainers*

In focus groups in both countries two common reasons were given for not voting at elections. These were the belief that one vote could make no difference to the outcome of an election and that there was no valid choice between candidates.

a. My Vote Makes no Difference

In focus groups in both countries, examples of typical statements made by non-voters were as follows:

'Even if I vote it doesn't count – it can't change anything' (f, 17 Chełm)

'One vote makes no difference to anything' (f, 18, Oradea)

Evidently, taken by themselves, these opinions appear to correspond with the so-called paradox of voting, where it is argued that a rational being, understanding that the individual benefits of voting are outweighed by the costs incurred, would choose to abstain (Downs 1957, Geys 2006). However, it is important to understand why these young non-voters feel this way. When questioned further, these respondents showed that non-voting was a component of a more general feeling that they lacked influence in decisions made by politicians and institutions. For instance, in Poland the respondent quoted above (f, 17 Chełm) continued on to say,

'politicians say one thing to get people to vote for them but when they are in power they don't need to stick to these promises and no one can do anything'

Similarly, the Romanian respondent (f, 18 Oradea) argued,

'some people- like my parents- think it is important to vote because they feel like they are doing something to change the country but I don't feel so personally involved, nothing I do can make all that much difference'

These feelings of lack of personal political efficacy are also supported by survey evidence in both countries. In Poland, the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) (2003) study on youth asked young people if they agreed with the statement ‘During elections voters can influence the outcome of the election’ and only 29% of respondents said they definitely agreed. In Romania, a National Youth Authority Survey (2007)⁵⁷ asked the degree to which respondents felt they had influence over decisions made by political institutions and 72 % said they had little influence.

In established democracies it has also been argued that young people express feelings of low political efficacy and that this can manifest as voluntary abstention at elections (Henn et al. 2005). However, it appears that the basis for these feelings may vary importantly from established democracies to newer post-communist ones. Particularly, the response of young people in Poland and Romania also corresponds to the feelings of separation from politics which have been also found consistently in older age groups in these countries (Rose and Munro 2003). Although the youngest age groups in post-communist countries have little or no personal experience of communism, the perceived split between citizens and the state which has endured throughout the first decades of post-communism has undoubtedly had an influence on the degree to which young people believe in their ability to influence public decision-making. However, recent studies in Poland suggest that although very many young people do not feel that they can influence what happens in the country, the numbers are less than those for older age groups. A Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) survey⁵⁸ in 2008 found that 60% of 18-24 year olds and 54% of 25-34 year olds felt that they had no personal influence compared to 69% of 35-54 year olds and 82% of 55-64 year olds. It may be that this change indicates a slight move within the Polish young generation from the influence that communism has had on the relationship between older age groups and political institutions, nonetheless it is too soon to suggest that will lead to much greater belief in political efficacy amongst young people in the future.

Therefore, it appears that the finding of very low levels of political efficacy amongst young non-voters in Poland and Romania may stem from a combination of two

⁵⁷ This survey had 3072 respondents between the ages of 14 and 35 years.

⁵⁸ Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej January 2008 – ‘Czy Obywatele mają Wpływ na Sprawy Publiczne?’ (Do citizens have influence over public matters?).

differing influences. Firstly, their socialisation during post-communism and secondly a wider phenomenon of low levels of political efficacy which are also found amongst youth in established democracies.

b. There is no Choice between Candidates

The second common factor in the views expressed by young non-voters in both Poland and Romania was that they felt there was a lack of ‘good’ candidates standing in elections. For instance, in Poland, one respondent said,

‘There is really no choice of people to vote for- they are all the same’ (m, 18, Chełm)

In Romania, respondents were even more adamant about this lack of choice. In Alexandria one stated,

‘It’s easy to vote but it’s impossible to choose between the candidates. They are all bad’ (m, 24 Alexandria)

These sentiments were also reiterated by respondents in Oradea. One explained,

‘There is not much point in voting for anyone really and certainly not for small parties. None of our parties are really trustworthy. If you do vote it is like choosing the lesser evil’ (f, 17 Oradea)

Another added,

‘If we are going to vote we need options and I don’t know, I don’t want to give any of them my vote’ (m, 18 Oradea)

This perceived lack of worthy candidates in elections appears to correspond to the feeling that political agents do not represent the needs of young people (see section 3.3bi) and again corresponds to similar views expressed by young people in established democracies (O’Toole et al. 2003).

3.3b(vi) *The Alienated Voters*

Another group of young people in my focus groups in Poland and Romania who also appeared alienated from political agents did not see this as a reason to ‘exit’ from voting altogether. Indeed, their support of elections and democracy was such that it appeared to override their feelings of alienation. For instance, one respondent in Poland said,

‘I will always vote, it doesn’t matter how bad the politicians get. The only way to have a say in a democracy is by voting even if the politicians are corrupt and stealing from the people’ (m, 19 Warsaw)

Similarly, in Romania one respondent stated,

‘I will vote even if there are only bad choices, I can’t complain otherwise and you must do it if you live in a democracy’ (f, 18 Oradea)

Although this seems to be a positive indication that some young people will vote regardless of their mistrust of and low levels of confidence in political agents, the strength of this can be overstated. As has been found in established democracies, it is possible that this confidence in the underlying democratic value of elections is linked with higher levels of education and socioeconomic resources (Henn et al. 2005). Indeed, this is supported by survey results in Poland where the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) (2003) study of youth found that support for democracy was considerably greater amongst those young people who had a higher level of education and came from a wealthier family. As such, this group of ‘alienated voters’ may only represent a very small minority of youth in each country. Equally, although these young people may initially express such support for elections, there is no guarantee that this will endure if they continue to feel unrepresented by and alienated from political agents.

These findings suggest that the relationship between young people’s levels of political interest and trust and the likelihood of voting is more problematic than at first appears. Indeed, it seems that young Poles and Romanians, like their counterparts in established democracies, conceive of politics as relating to political agents whom they often regard negatively. Unlike in established democracies, it appears that this conception of politics

is also strongly related to a more general post-communist set of attitudes towards politics. Nonetheless, this does not mean that young people in Poland and Romania are necessarily uninterested in wider political and social issues and unsupportive of democratic process. Indeed, similar to findings in established democracies, it appears that many young people in both countries feel alienated from political agents. This alienation often manifests as abstention at elections as they feel low levels of political efficacy and that political agents are uninterested in and unrepresentative of their needs. However, my qualitative research also suggests that there is another group of young people who despite feelings of alienation, choose to vote on the basis of their support for democracy and elections. As such, we could expect that although young people who profess greater interest in politics and trust in political agents may be more likely to vote, such a finding does not necessarily indicate that the choice to abstain at an election can be explained by political apathy.

3.3c Existing Social and Political Involvement

The final set of variables relates to existing involvement in political or social activities. Studies have shown that people who are already involved in social or political networks are also more likely to vote (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, Norris 2002, Wattenberg 2002, Denver 2006). This is based on the contention that these people are more able to recognise political opportunities which exist and therefore feel that their vote matters. In this study I look at the role of different types of existing social and political participation which are particularly relevant for the study of young people and electoral involvement in Poland and Romania. These are the possible trade-offs between informal modes of political involvement and electoral participation and the link between church attendance and turning out to vote.

3.3c(i) Involvement in Informal Modes of Political Participation.

As discussed in chapter one, the general decrease in electoral turnout in established democracies has promoted debate on whether people are ‘exiting’ traditional forms of participation in favour of more direct, informal forms such as volunteering in non-governmental organisations and engaging in more spontaneous protest actions (Inglehart 1997, Norris 2002). This question has been seen to be particularly relevant to

young people who appear to be the age group most likely to feel both alienated from formal political processes and agents and to be interested in informal forms of participation (Galston 2001, Kimberlee 2002, Shea and Green 2006, Sloam 2007). However, the nature of the relationship between informal participation and voting is still uncertain. It is only recently that studies have begun to explore in detail the possible trade-offs between volunteering, protest and voting (Ball 2005, Van der Meer and Van Ingen 2009)⁵⁹.

The role that informal youth participation plays in acting as an alternative or an addition to voting is even less explored in newer democracies. As discussed in chapter one, involvement in informal modes of political participation has been found to be generally at a very low level in post-communist countries (Ekiert and Kubik 1998, Mudde 2003, Howard 2003, Vanhuysse 2004). However, studies in Poland and Romania have found differing results in relation to participation of young people. In Poland, although general rates of volunteering in non-governmental organisations are generally considerably lower than those in established democracies, the youngest age group has been found to be slightly more participative than older age groups (Gumkowska and Herbst 2006). In contrast, in Romania studies suggest young people are no more participative in these forms of participation than older age groups (British Council/Gallup 2004). The reasons behind these low levels of youth involvement in informal forms of participation in Poland and Romania, and the potentially changing nature of this in Poland are the focus of chapter five. In this chapter however, the question is whether those young people who do participate in these activities are more or less likely to turn out and vote.

In my qualitative research in Poland and Romania I found mixed views on whether activity in informal forms of political and civic participation encouraged or discouraged young people to turn out and vote. In Poland, one interviewee (m, 18, Bielsko-Biała) who had taken part in demonstrations and petitions against the appointment of the right-wing education minister, Roman Giertych, in 2006, explained that this activity had made him more informed about politics and had made him more determined to exercise

⁵⁹ Studies have suggested that the type of informal participation may be important in determining the relationship with voting. For instance, Van Der Meer and Van Ingen (2009) argue that where civic volunteering may act as an alternative to traditional forms of political participation, volunteering in a cause-oriented organisation may have a positive relationship with voting. For more discussion of this see chapter five, section 5.2.

his right to vote as a result⁶⁰. However another respondent in Chełm (f, 18) who volunteered in hospitals and raised money through organisations for poor children suggested that this participation had made her more unlikely to turn out and vote. She explained that she volunteered because,

'politicians don't care about these people, they only care about themselves'

She added that her voluntary work had made her angrier about the way in which politicians behaved and that as she saw all politicians as uncaring, voting at an election would make little difference. This view suggests that, as some studies in established democracies have also found (Ball 2005, Van der Meer and Van Ingen 2009), involvement in civic volunteering may act as an alternative to electoral participation.

In Romania, views expressed by young people who had participated in a variety of different informal modes of participation suggested that, as in Poland, the type of participation mattered for the relationship with voting. Again, civic participation, such as charitable or leisure based volunteering, appeared to be undertaken as an alternative to voting and traditional participation. However the views expressed by young people involved in cause-oriented volunteering suggested that their involvement had made them more likely to vote. For example one respondent (f, 18 Oradea) who volunteered for an environmental organisation said that she would definitely vote as she felt she now knew what should happen locally and by voting there would be a possibility of changing something. This was also the view of a volunteer (f, 22 Bucharest) for the Pro-Democracy Association. She explained that her participation in activities which promoted transparency and accountability in politics in Romania had made her very sure of the necessity to vote and that now even if she did not support any of the parties, she believed that voting could make a difference.

The views in both countries suggest that, as has been found in established democracies, different types of informal participation may have varying relationships with the likelihood of voting. This means that activity which has a political or policy changing purpose such as protest or involvement in cause-oriented organisations may indeed have

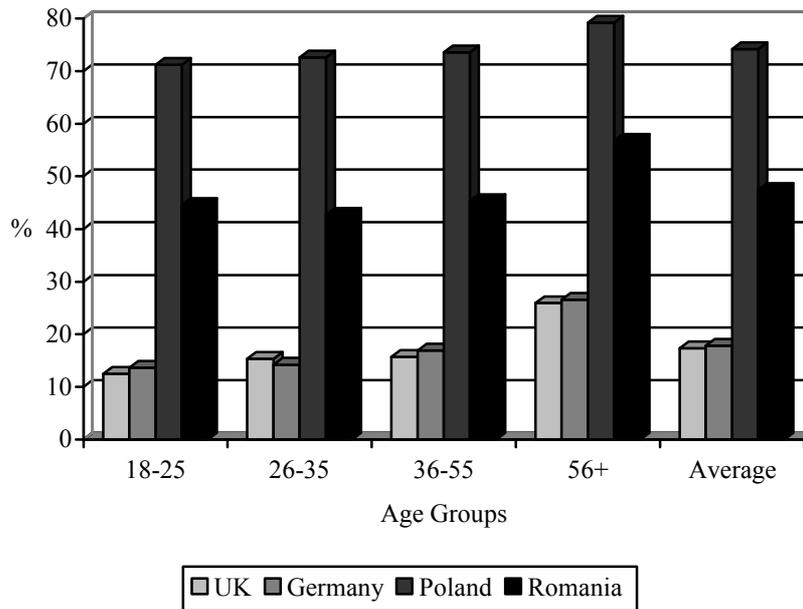
⁶⁰ See chapter five, section 5.3d for a discussion of these protests.

a positive link with wider political interest and voting. In contrast, civic volunteering appears to act as an alternative to electoral participation. It can therefore be hypothesised that involvement in protest activities and volunteering in interest and activist organisations would be positively related to voting in both countries, whereas civic volunteering would be negatively linked to voting.

3.3c(ii) Religious Attendance

Traditionally, church attendance was seen as strongly and positively linked to electoral participation in established democracies (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, Verba et al. 1995, Norris 2002). This was because it meant access to social networks which could encourage voting and also it has been linked to increasing feelings of civic duty. In many established democracies, though, a rise in secularisation and ageing in church congregations over recent decades is said to have resulted in a fall in the strength of church attendance as predicting likelihood to vote (Fox Piven and Cloward 2000, Norris 2002). In many cases, the decrease in religious attendance has been strongest amongst young people and it follows that the strength of the church to mobilise young voters would be even less than for older groups (Norris 2002).

Figure 3.7: Frequent Religious Attendance (%) by Age Group and Country



(Source: European Social Survey 2006: UK (N=2386), Germany (N=2915), Poland (N=1720), Romania (N=2139) where frequent religious attendance ranges from at least once a month to once a day)

In Poland and Romania, there is reason to suggest that church attendance may have a greater role in predicting youth electoral participation and non-participation than in established democracies. As Figure 3.7 shows, the religious attendance levels for all age groups in both countries, including the youngest are considerably higher than in the UK and Germany. Indeed, this is particularly the case for Poland, where over 70% of 18-24 year olds proclaim to attend church at least once a month. However, it could also be expected that church attendance may have a contrasting influence in mobilising people to vote in Poland and Romania. This is because the Catholic Church in Poland and the Romanian Orthodox Church play quite different roles within the respective societies.

In Poland the Catholic Church has played a large role in shaping the post-communist political situation of the country (Millard 1999). Partly this is due to the role of the church in the overthrow of communism and the fact that Polish national identity continues to be very closely associated with Catholicism. The Catholic Church in Poland is also supported by a vast network of national and local level catholic organisations which often, in the absence of other non-governmental organisations, play a significant role in community based activities (Magner 2005). There is therefore frequently an important connection between church attendance and involvement in

wider church-based social networks. Existing studies on voter turnout in Poland have found that church attendance is an important predictor of voting⁶¹. However, there is an absence of study on whether this varies across age groups.

The considerable recent debate in Poland surrounding whether the relationship between young people and the church is changing⁶² suggests that linkages between voting and religious attendance should also be scrutinised carefully. Particularly, the very visible outpouring of grief by the youngest generation after the death of the Polish pope, John Paul II in 2005, gave rise to intense discussion as to whether these young people could be said to have formed a specific cohort known as ‘Generation JP2’. Although it has been questioned whether this cohort actually exists or whether it is merely a media construct, the intense debate has meant that the religious beliefs and behaviour of young Poles has come under considerable scrutiny. Whereas before the death of the pope, falling church attendance amongst young people was thought to indicate increasing secularisation, the emergence of the so-called JP2 generation has forced observers to rethink (Sowa 2007, Podgorska 2008). Indeed one of the common explanations is that young Poles are not becoming less religious but that they are choosing to manifest this in less formal and less networked ways. Therefore, even if young people continue to attend church, this is often in a more ad hoc manner than older generations and they may not be as involved in the social networks and organisations which were traditionally connected with high levels of church attendance⁶³. Amongst focus group respondents there was support for the argument that involvement in social networks fostered by the church had weakened for some young people. In particular, it was said that those young people who had left the countryside to find work in larger cities, were less likely to attend church regularly and to get involved in church-based social networks. One respondent explained,

⁶¹ Czeński (2007) found that people who practised religion were more likely to vote in both the 2001 and 2005 elections in Poland.

⁶² For instance see the report in *Polityka* (Podgorska 2008) which cites a number of studies conducted in various parts of Poland which have found that the religious habits and beliefs of some young Poles are changing.

⁶³ Sowa (2007) reported that the numbers of people involved in catholic movements and organisations was falling and this was particularly the case amongst young people. He stated that young people did not relate to the traditional and formal style of these organisations, which were mostly made up of activists over the age of 50 years. See also the Public Opinion Research Centre (2003) report on Polish youth which found that only 3% of young respondents were involved in catholic organisations of any kind.

‘Young people who come to a city often go to church less because they have other things to do and in a big city, unlike in the village, the priest doesn’t know if you come to church or not’ (m, 19 Warsaw)

Another respondent in Bielsko-Biala (m, 25) argued that he did not choose to get involved in church organisations and activities because he felt that that he could be religious without such participation. If indeed, as the literature and these views suggest, some young poles are separating church attendance and religious expression from the more formal social networks and organisations surrounding the Catholic Church it seems reasonable to expect that the social pressures to vote engendered by these social networks will also weaken. Nonetheless as shown by the figures in Figure 3.7 the number of young Poles still attending church frequently remains very high in comparison to established democracies and as such religious involvement could be expected to have a continuing role in mobilising young people to vote.

Similar to the Polish Catholic Church, the Romanian Orthodox church is also closely linked to national identity. In contrast though, its role throughout communism was tainted with submission and conformism to the communist party (Ramet 2004). Despite this, however, it has also had some involvement in post-communist politics and it continues to claim a relatively large number of followers (Stan and Turcescu 2007). Due to this more problematic position in Romanian society, the church’s role as a mobilising agent for electoral turnout remains unclear. Unlike Poland, it does not retain a support mechanism of national and local organisations which could be expected to be instrumental in encouraging people to participate in elections. However, as Figure 3.7 illustrates, the number of young people in Romania who attend church frequently appears still considerably higher than that in the UK and Germany. As such, it is important to consider the potential role of religious attendance in mobilising young Romanians to vote.

3.4 Testing the Model of Youth Electoral Participation in Poland and Romania

Having set out in Section 3.3 the individual level variables which could be expected to have an influence on predicting whether a young person in Poland and Romania will choose to vote or abstain at an election, this section will now test this model using logistic regression analysis. As explained in the introduction to this chapter, logistic regression analysis can help to identify and unpack the various reasons behind the choice of whether to vote or abstain. Particularly, it allows us to assess the relative strength of individual variables to predict the likelihood of voting and therefore to test various hypotheses. Whereas qualitative data can contextualise and enrich understanding of electoral participation and non-participation, the analysis is necessarily limited to a small population sample. Logistic regression analysis, on the other hand, can offer a higher degree of validity as it based on a much larger and more representative data set.

The data set used here is the European Social Survey (ESS) 2006 for Poland and Romania. As the survey samples populations from the age of 15 upwards I adjusted the sample accordingly to represent only those who were 18 and thus eligible to vote at the time of the last election in each country. Furthermore, as there was a gap between the time of the last election (1 year in Poland and 2 years in Romania) and the survey, I also adjusted the age groups to reflect this. Thus, in Poland, the 18 year olds actually represent those respondents who were 19 at the time of the survey and in Romania those who were 20 at the time of the survey. To test for differences between the countries and also between the different age groups in each country, I conducted one analysis on the whole population sample in each country and then separate analyses on four different age categories which are 18-25 years, 26-35 years, 36-55 years and 56 years and above. This means that the N varies across the groups and is smallest for the youngest age group. As a result, this must be taken into account in analysing and comparing the results.

I employ logistic regression instead of linear regression as the dependent variable (voted in the last election) is dichotomous (Foster et al. 2006). The dependent variable for each analysis is voting at the last election and this is measured on a two point scale where No=0 and Yes=1. The independent variables are categorical or continuous and have

been tested for multicollinearity where none of the correlation coefficients were found to be above medium strength (Pallant 2007)⁶⁴. A table of the descriptives of the independent variables and tables for Pearson's r bivariate correlations of the independent variables for both countries can be found in Appendices C and D.

⁶⁴ Where a medium strength of correlation is considered $r = .30$ to $.49$

3.4a Comparison between Poland and Romania

Figure 3.8: Logistic Regression Analysis for Whole Population Sample in Poland and Romania

Variables	POLAND				ROMANIA			
	<i>All</i>	<i>Warsaw</i>	<i>Silesia</i>	<i>Lubelskie</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Bucharest</i>	<i>North-West</i>	<i>Muntenia</i>
Male	.14 (.12) *	.14 (.12) *	.14 (.12) *	.14 (.12) *	.25 (.14) *	.24 (.14) *	.26 (.14) *	.24 (.14) *
High School Education ⁶⁵	.31 (.13) **	.30 (.13) **	.31 (.13) **	.31 (.13) **	.30 (.16) *	.29 (.16) *	.34 (.16) **	.30 (.16) *
High level of household income	.14 (.10) *	.14 (.10) *	.15 (.10) *	.14 (.10) *	.06 (.08) *	.03 (.08)	.06 (.08) *	.06 (.08) *
Volunteer in NGO	.03 (.08)	.03 (.08)	.03 (.08)	.03 (.08)	.02 (.07)	.03 (.07)	.02 (.07)	.02 (.07)
Actively Religious	.36 (.05) ***	.37 (.05) ***	.037 (.05) ***	.036 (.05) ***	.07 (.05) *	.07 (.05) *	.09 (.05) *	.08 (.05) *
Signed Petition in last 12 mths	.30 (.30) *	.29 (.30) *	.29 (.30) *	.30 (.30) *	.37 (.39) *	.37 (.40) *	.34 (.40) *	.35 (.40) *
Trusts Politicians	.06 (.03) **	.06 (.03) **	.06 (.03) **	.06 (.03) **	.09 (.03) ***	.09 (.03) ***	.08 (.03) **	.09 (.03) ***
Interested In Politics	.51 (.08) ***	.51 (.08) ***	.51 (.08) ***	.51 (.08) ***	.40 (.09) ***	.41 (.09) ***	.39 (.09) ***	.39 (.09) ***
Feels close to a Political Party	.81 (.16) ***	.81 (.16) ***	.82 (.16) ***	.81 (.16) ***	1.71 (.22) ***	1.70 (.22) ***	1.73 (.22) ***	1.72 (.22) ***
Lives in Capital	–	.28 (.18) *	–	–	–	-.68 (.20) ***	–	–
Lives in Area 1	–	–	.21 (.17) *	–	–	–	-.64 (.19) ***	–
Lives in Area 2	–	–	–	-.03 (.25)	–	–	–	.33 (.20) *
Constant	1.09 (.33) ***	1.14 (.34) ***	1.04 (.34) ***	1.09 (.33) ***	.33 (.36) *	.45 (.36) *	.41 (.36) *	.26 (.36) *
Nagelkerke R ²	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.15	0.16	0.16	0.15
N	1550	1550	1550	1550	1844	1844	1844	1844

(Note: The table lists unstandardised logistic regression coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis, with voted at the last national election as the dependent variable. *p<0.5, **p<0.05, ***p<0.005

Source: European Social Survey 2006 for Poland and Romania).

⁶⁵ High School education includes anyone who is attending or has completed high school. This is to make sure the youngest age group are included.

Figure 3.8 presents the results of the logistic regression analysis for the whole population samples of Poland and Romania. In each, I entered three sets of independent variables based on socioeconomics, existing social and political participation and political attitudes and values. In addition, to test the strength of locality, I also ran the analyses with dummy variables based on whether or not someone lived in the three different localities studied in each country⁶⁶. The R² value is relatively low in each country meaning that the model explains less than 20% of the variance in each case. However, as the model tests only individual level and not election-specific variables this low level of variance could be expected and reflects similar findings in existing studies conducted in Poland and Romania⁶⁷.

It is evident from the analysis that the most significant predictors of the likelihood to vote in each country are based on attitudes towards politics and political agents, namely trust in politicians, interest in politics and feeling close to a particular political party. The main contrasts between the countries are based on religious attendance and locality. In Poland, as hypothesised in section 3.3c(ii), the frequency of religious attendance is a strong predictor of turnout suggesting that the social networks and links between society and church continue to have a significant influence on turnout behaviour. In addition, living in Warsaw or Silesia has a positive, albeit weak, influence on turnout, whereas living in the less economically developed Lubelskie (in the East) has a negative relationship with turnout. However this is also very weak. In each locality, educational level and household income level have a similar influence on turnout, suggesting that individual level socioeconomic resources may be more important for determining the decision to vote regardless of locality. In Romania, as turnout figures suggested would be the case (see section 3.2b(ii)), locality appears to have an opposite effect on turnout decisions. Living in Bucharest or the North West has a negative influence on turnout,

⁶⁶ In each case, the localities represented are regions and the capital city. In Poland Bielsko-Biala is in the larger region of Silesia and Chelm is in the larger region of Lubelskie. In Romania, Oradea is in the North-West Region and Alexandria in the region of Muntenia. These are the units employed in the ESS 2006 and could not be broken down further. In the analyses of different age groups, I use only the dummy variable of living in the capital.

⁶⁷ In Cześniak's (2007, p. 136) study of the 2001 and 2005 Polish elections, he found that socioeconomic variables (including religiosity) only explained 14% of the variance in each election. A study of this for all countries in post-communist Europe reduced this variance to 10%. In Romania, Rotariu and Comşa's (2004, p.92) study of the 2004 Romanian elections found that a logistic regression model based on individual level variables explained 27% of the variance. The strength of this could be explained by the more specific election-specific nature of the variables used, which were not included in the ESS 2006 survey.

whereas living in Muntenia is positively related to turnout⁶⁸. In comparison to Poland, education level appears to have less of a positive relationship with the decision of whether to vote. This suggests that other factors such as the strength of party networks at local level may also have an influence on mobilising people to vote in Romania.

⁶⁸ This supports the findings in Rotariu and Comşa's (2004, p. 92) study which found living in Muntenia to have a positive relationship with turnout.

3.4b. Comparison of Age Groups in Poland

Figure 3.9: Logistic Regression Analysis for Different Age Groups in Poland

Variables	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-55 years	56 and above
Male	.10 (.31)	.63 (.30) **	.09 (.21)	.04 (.25)
High School Education	1.14 (.31) ***	.25 (.30) *	.13 (.22) *	.21 (.18) *
High level of household income	.04 (.25)	.30 (.27) *	.29 (.17) *	.21 (.18) *
Volunteer in NGO	.01 (.18)	.34 (.23) *	.06 (.14)	.03 (.18)
Actively Religious	.29 (.13) **	.48 (.13) ***	.39 (.09) ***	.34 (.10) ***
Signed Petition in last 12 mths.	.56 (.55) *	.94 (.68) *	.51 (.54) *	.21 (.93)
<i>Trusts Politicians</i>	.05 (.08) *	.01 (.08)	.19 (.06) ***	.03 (.06)
<i>Interested in Politics</i>	.66 (.22) ***	.54 (.20) **	.28 (.15) **	.61 (.15) ***
<i>Feels close to a political party</i>	1.09 (.43) **	.73 (.39) **	.57 (.26) **	.89 (.30) ***
Lives in Warsaw	1.05 (0.51) **	0.40 (0.40) *	.17 (.31)	.07 (.32)
Constant	1.95 (.81) **	1.35 (.89) *	.43 (.58) *	.88 (.65) *
Nagelkerke R ²	0.25	0.22	0.15	0.21
N	265	267	578	440

(Note: The table lists unstandardised logistic regression coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis, with voted at the last national election as the dependent variable. *p<0.5, **p<0.05, ***p<0.005

Source: European Social Survey 2006 for Poland).

Although according to the logistic regression analyses of different age groups in Poland the differences across age groups are not pronounced (Figure 3.9), a number of points

about the youngest age group should be noted. Namely that education level and living in Warsaw are more significant as predictors of turnout for this age group than for older cohorts and that religious attendance appears as a less strong predictor of turnout than for other age groups. That living in Warsaw and education level are more significant for the youngest age group could mean that the gap between those who vote (urbanised, educated) and those who abstain (less educated, rural) in Poland may be becoming wider for the younger generation. If this indicates an increasing elitism in electoral participation in Poland, this could have very important consequences for the future representativeness of elected officials. However, the finding that education has a stronger significance for the youngest age group could also support the hypothesis that the type of education is important in mobilising young people to vote. As such, the significance of education could be a product of advancements in the teaching about democratic political participation in schools (see section 3.3a(i)). The lower significance of religious attendance for the youngest age group supports the hypothesis that although the involvement in church networks continues to have a strong influence on the decision to vote in Poland, this may be weaker for younger people who are more mobile and less attached to a parish church and religious group (see section 3.3c(ii)).

As hypothesised in section 3.3c(i), involvement in cause-oriented informal participation such as petitioning has a positive, if weak, relationship with the likelihood of voting. However, this does not vary across age groups. Volunteering has no relationship with the likelihood of voting for any age group. This may be because the interpretation of volunteering varies significantly depending on the question and the respondent. It could also be a reflection of the low levels of informal participation in Poland across all age groups. The role of volunteering in youth political participation is assessed further in chapter five.

3.4c. Comparison of Age Groups in Romania

Figure 3.10: Logistic Regression Analysis for different Age Groups in Romania

Variables	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-55 years	56 and above
Male	.35 (.34) *	.73 (.31) **	.28 (.25) *	.28 (.30) *
High School Education	.31 (.51) *	.23 (.47)	.07 (.31)	.31 (.30) *
High Level of Household Income	.33 (.20) *	.18 (.17) *	.11 (.14) *	.07 (.18)
Volunteer in NGO	.03 (.21)	.06 (.16)	.05 (.13)	.19 (.11) *
Actively Religious	.01 (.12)	.24 (.12) *	.14 (.09) *	.09 (.09) *
Signed Petition in last 12 mths.	.26 (.85)	.62 (1.17)	–	.98 (.56) *
Trusts Politicians	.07 (.08) *	.04 (.07) *	.10 (.06) *	.14 (.06) *
Interested in Politics	.17 (.22) *	.39 (.22) *	.44 (.15) ***	.46 (.17) **
Feels close to a political party	2.35 (.78) ***	2.14 (.55) ***	1.42 (.33) ***	1.42 (.41) ***
Lives in Bucharest	-.46 (.45) *	-.96 (.50) **	-.47 (.36) *	-.80 (.42) **
Constant	1.12 (.98) *	.04 (.81)	.32 (.64)	1.27 (.80) *
Nagelkerke R ²	0.17	0.22	0.18	0.16
N	213	338	661	632

Note: The table lists unstandardised logistic regression coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis, with voted at the last national election as the dependent variable. *p<0.5, **p<0.05, ***p<0.005

Source: European Social Survey 2006 for Romania.

Figure 3.10 presents the results of the logistic regression analyses for the different age groups in Romania. In comparison to Poland, the model appears less able to explain the variance for all age groups. Indeed, there are also few differences across the age groups, with only closeness to a political party proving a strongly significant predictor for all ages. The results for the youngest age group suggest that education level may be more significant in predicting turnout than for other age groups, yet this is weak and is also the case for the oldest group. This may support the qualitative data which suggests

education in many schools in Romania does not teach young people about politics in a wider sense and the importance of voting (see section 3.3a(i)). The particularly weak significance of interest in politics for the youngest age group suggests that even for the small minority of Romanian young people who state they are interested in politics, this may not be enough to mobilise them to vote. If this were the case, it would suggest that, as hypothesised, the alienation amongst young people from political agents in Romania may even be more intense than in Poland. However, to establish this, in-depth research of youth electoral participation over a series of elections would be required.

As in Poland, the analysis tells us little about the relationship between informal participation and likelihood of voting. Indeed, in the Romanian case, both petitioning and volunteering appear to have no relationship with the propensity to turnout.

3.5 Conclusions

The main aim of this chapter was to explore the individual level determinants of youth electoral participation and non-participation in Poland and Romania, to reach an understanding of the reasons behind these choices and how these compare to findings of studies in established democracies. The first part of the chapter employed actual and reported electoral turnout figures for Poland and Romania and showed that youth abstention in both countries is a serious problem of a scale apparently greater than that in established democracies. In the following section I employed descriptive statistics and qualitative data to build up a model of the individual level determinants of youth electoral participation and non-participation in Poland and Romania. The strength of these determinants in assessing the reasons behind the choice of young people to vote or to abstain at elections was then tested by using logical regression analysis models for different age groups in Poland and Romania. The chapter made a number of key findings.

First, both qualitative and quantitative findings suggest that there are important general similarities between the individual determinants of youth electoral participation and non-participation in newer and established democracies. In particular, young people in both situations appear to have similar conceptions of politics, where despite deep-rooted distrust and alienation from political agents, they are often interested in wider political

issues and have a strong support for democracy. This alienation from political agents often manifests in a choice to 'exit' from electoral participation. However, my findings also suggest that in the newer democracies there is also a group of young people who in spite of this alienation, will vote as a result of their support for elections and the democratic process.

Yet, despite these general similarities, there appears a less pronounced difference between the individual determinants of electoral turnout between age groups in newer democracies. Indeed the degree of separation and alienation from political agents and the electoral process seems to be considerably greater for all ages in the newer democracies than found in the established democracies. This suggests that post-communist factors such as rapid political and socioeconomic change continue to influence the choice of young people in Poland and Romania to vote or to abstain at elections.

This study also highlighted some important differences between Poland and Romania. First, as hypothesised, socioeconomic factors do appear to matter more in Poland than in Romania. However, the findings of my analysis suggest that this may not be in the same way as first predicted. Indeed, it appears that instead of generally increasing numbers of young voters in Poland, higher levels of individual resources may be creating a widening gap between a select elite of educated, urbanised young people who participate and those with lower levels of resources who opt to abstain. The quantitative findings suggest that this gap may be wider for the young cohort than for older. In Romania, the findings suggest that socioeconomic resources have a less direct relationship with youth voter turnout and abstention than in Poland. Instead of a positive relationship with youth voter turnout as hypothesised, living in the capital city or the economically developed North West of Romania is negatively correlated with the decision to turn out and vote. In turn, this suggests that other factors such as local level penetration and organisation of political parties may also be influential in determining youth political participation. This is analysed further in chapter four.

Second, my findings supported the continued role of the social networks behind the Catholic Church in Poland in determining individual voter turnout. Although the significance of this appears to have diminished slightly in respect of the youngest

cohort, it retains a very important role in the mobilisation of young people to vote. This underlines a need for greater systematic analysis of the interactions between church attendance and youth political participation in Poland which is beyond the possibilities of the present study.

Finally, my findings present little evidence of a relationship between informal participation and voting for young people in the newer democracies. Indeed, it remains unclear as to whether informal participation represents an alternative form of political involvement for young people who are alienated from political agents or whether the people who participate in these forms are also those most likely to vote. These questions are explored in greater detail in chapter five.

CHAPTER FOUR – YOUTH POLITICAL PARTY MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the role of political parties in Poland and Romania in the broader question of youth political participation and elaborates and tests comparative hypotheses outlined in chapter two. Unlike electoral participation, due to the greater demands placed on resources of members, party membership is an activity which generally involves only a small number of people in a given country (Mair and Van Biezen 2001, Whiteley and Seyd 2002, Seyd and Whiteley 2004, Heider 2006). Within this small group of participants, it is probable that the degree of effort and time members will dedicate to party activities will vary, however a significant group of these will likely be high-intensity participants who spend a considerable amount of time and energy on party involvement (Whiteley and Seyd 2002). As such, it could be expected that the motivations to become involved in a party may differ importantly from those of voters. This chapter outlines the political opportunity structures for youth party membership in Poland and Romania, how parties are organised and explores the motivations of the young people who choose this mode of political participation. By doing this I aim to highlight important similarities and differences between Poland and Romania and between newer and established democracies.

Young people have been organised by political parties in established democracies into youth organisations or youth wings from around the start of the 20th century (Russell 2005, Poguntke 2006). In the 1960s and 1970s, when parties acted more like ‘mass parties’, youth wings could offer their members access to benefits such as jobs and social activities, whilst the involvement of young people was seen as essential to ensuring party longevity (Abrams and Little 1965, Hooghe et al. 2004, Russell 2005, Cross and Young 2008). However, as the structure and nature of parties has changed, youth wings have also experienced significant alterations. Reports show that youth wing membership numbers in some established democracies have fallen, sometimes dramatically, over recent decades (Hooghe et al. 2004, Russell 2005, Cross and Young

2008)⁶⁹. Studies have shown this to be a consequence of not only organisational changes in parties themselves but also a product of social trends leading to the increasing disillusionment with political agents amongst young people (Henn et al. 2005, Sloam 2007).

As highlighted in previous chapters, the overwhelmingly critical views of many young people in Poland and Romania towards formal political agents resemble those found in studies in established democracies (International IDEA 1999, Kimberlee 2002, O'Toole et al. 2003, Edwards 2007, Quintelier 2007). Particularly, both survey results and focus group response have found a significant proportion of youth in these countries to feel that politicians are self-serving and uninterested in their electorates⁷⁰ and that political parties are unrepresentative of their needs and concerns⁷¹.

Despite shrinking membership and related changes in the nature of activities of many party youth wings across established democracies coupled with increased societal distrust towards parties, most European political parties continue to support ancillary youth organisations. This is because they retain a number of important functions for the party. These include acting as a recruitment source for future politicians (Recchi 1999, Hooghe et al. 2004), offering legitimacy for the party and providing a labour force for party activities (Scarrow 1996). Young members therefore are still seen as providing a vital link between the party and wider society.

Equally in newer democracies, the majority of political parties which emerged after the fall of communism also developed affiliated youth wings as part of their structure. However, unlike in established democracies where ancillary organisations originally emerged to fulfil needs of particular groups in society, post-communist youth wings were immediately faced with questions about their purpose and function (Lewis 2000, Szczerbiak 2001). Nonetheless, in spite of electoral volatility and party instability,

⁶⁹ Hooghe et al. (2004) found that Belgian youth wings have typically lost at least half their members since the 1980s. Similar decreases have been found in Canada (Cross and Young 2008) and in the UK (Russell 2005).

⁷⁰ See chapter three, section 3.3b for a discussion of how young people in Poland and Romania conceive of politics and how this compares to findings of studies in established democracies.

⁷¹ In Poland a Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) (2003) survey found that only 5% of respondents felt political parties represent the interests of the electorate and in Romania a National Youth Authority (ANT) (2007) survey found that 64% of respondents felt that no party represented their needs at present.

youth wings in post-communist countries have largely persevered. Despite this, there is a notable lack of study of youth organisations and youth party membership in newer democracies. Very little is known about the size of these organisations, their structure, the motivations of their members and significantly the type of participation opportunities they can offer to young people. This represents an important gap in our knowledge of youth political participation in newer democracies.

Studies in established democracies have shown that youth party activism is still the main route into formal politics for many people (Recchi 1999, Hooghe et al. 2004, Russell 2005, Cross and Young 2008). This means that, arguably, current youth party membership can be seen to represent the future face of formal politics in a particular country (Hooghe et al. 2004). This information is especially valuable in newer democracies where the communist experience has led to markedly weak links between parties and society. Given that improvement in the quality of democracy partly depends on strengthening such links (Randall and Svâsand 2002, Innes 2002), understanding how young people are involved in formal party politics is vital.

4.1a Contrasting Party Systems and Hypotheses

As discussed in chapter two, section 2.2d(i)b, since the fall of communism Poland and Romania have developed quite different party systems. Due to radical economic and social reform and effective administrative decentralisation, the prevailing Polish party system, although still relatively volatile, is generally programmatic. In contrast, continued state interference in the economy together with a lack of administrative decentralisation reform has left the Romanian party system particularly susceptible to clientelistic practices especially at local level where business, media and politics are often linked through a series of clientelistic relationships. In chapter two, section 2.2d(i), I presented two hypotheses generated from the different post-communist political contexts in Poland and Romania which are tested in this chapter. First, I hypothesised (H.2) that different degrees of decentralisation reform would have a contrasting impact on youth political participation. In Poland, (H2.1) it is hypothesised that more radical decentralisation and more effective depoliticisation of local politics would mean that the interest and involvement of young people in local politics may be more intense than in national level parties as they could feel that their involvement

would have more of an impact on local decision making. In Romania (H2.2) it is hypothesised that continued centralisation of administration would mean that young people have similar levels of interest and engagement in local as in national level party participation.

In addition, a related hypothesis (H3) expected that the contrasting post-communist party systems which have developed in each country would mean that the reasons behind youth participation in political parties in Poland and Romania would differ. It is hypothesised that the mainly programmatic party system in Poland (H3.1) would mean that opportunities to participate in parties were generally fair and equal. However, it could be expected that youth party membership would have little to offer young people who were not sufficiently ideologically motivated or policy-seeking to join a party. Those who do get involved could therefore be expected to have similar motivations to young people in established democracies, namely pursuing a political career or satisfying ideological or policy-seeking needs. In Romania (H3.2), in contrast, it is hypothesised that the clientelistic party system could attract young people to party membership by offering members selective incentives such as jobs or social benefits. However, it could also repel those young people who are ideologically motivated or policy-seeking by 'blocking' political opportunities to participate. This is because opportunities to participate are unequal and based on short-term exchange between party and individual. In turn, this serves to alienate many people who perceive political agents to be illegitimate and unaccountable.

This chapter is made up of five main sections. The first gives an overview of the policies and background to the main political parties in Poland and Romania. Sections two to four then provide information on membership levels, organisational structures, and main activities of members in youth wings in Poland and Romania. The final section employs qualitative data to assess the individual motivations behind joining a political party and analyses the power of youth sections within parties. It focuses specifically on incentives for building a political career, social and other selective benefits and opportunities to satisfy policy-seeking and ideological motivations.

4.2 Overview of Party Developments in Poland and Romania

4.2a The Polish Political Context

During the 1990s, the Polish party system was one of the most volatile of the new Eastern European democracies and was characterised by a large number of competing parties and short-lived governments⁷². However, by 2000, this had started to stabilise⁷³, allowing for the emergence of clearer party families. In 2001, the left-wing communist successor party, the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) won a substantial majority in the parliamentary elections. They were in power until 2005, when after a number of high profile corruption scandals and a fall in popularity, they were heavily defeated in the parliamentary elections by the two main centre-right parties, Law and Justice (PiS) and Civic Platform (PO). Failing to form a coalition with PO, PiS then went on to govern in coalition with two smaller parties, the populist agrarian based, Self-Defence and the radical, nationalist, League of Polish Families (LPR). Faced with increasing public criticism and political opposition together with a loss of majority in parliament, PiS called snap parliamentary elections in 2007. This signalled the defeat of PiS, in favour of a PO led government which now governs in coalition with the Polish People's Party (PSL) under the premiership of Donald Tusk.

Below, to explain how the six main parties which have featured most prominently in Polish politics since 2000 compare in terms of policy and characteristics, I have divided them into three main party family groupings.

4.2a(i) Regime Successor Parties

Two current parties in Poland have roots in the former communist party. These are the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and The Polish People's Party (PSL). The SLD first held office in 1993 in alliance with PSL and again in 2001 as a single, unitary party in coalition with the smaller Labour Union (UP). Although it was believed at first that

⁷² By 1998 there had been three presidents and nine prime ministers in office in Poland (Millard, 1999 p.14).

⁷³ This stabilisation, although gradual, has been noted by various studies. For instance, Zielinski et al (2005, p. 377) report that in 1991, the parliamentary elections were contested by 48 parties, of which 46 were new. In 1997 of 25 contesting parties, 5 were new. By 2001, the number of contesting parties had fallen to 14, of which 4 were new.

Communist successor parties in post-communist democracies would have to gain support through populism or rely on communist-era nostalgia, the Polish SLD has surprised observers by exhibiting characteristics which are more programmatic than populist (Grzymała-Busse 2002, Jasiewicz 2008). To some, the electoral success of this party was seen as proof that SLD had managed to break connections with its past and to draw up a more moderate and credible centre-left programme responding to economic and social difficulties of the time (Grzymała-Busse 2002). However in 2005, after the heavy electoral defeat by Civic Platform (PO) and Law and Justice (PiS) the party was forced to reform once more. This time the old leadership was replaced with young, European oriented politicians⁷⁴ and an electoral coalition was formed in 2006 with several other left-wing and centrist parties. Nonetheless in the 2007 elections, the coalition only gained 13% of the vote and was later dissolved.

The Polish People's Party (PSL) acted as a satellite party during communism in Poland when it was known as The United Peasant Party (ZSL). After the fall of communism it retained its rural, agrarian identity and continues to gain the majority of its support from the countryside (Szczurbiak 2001b). It governed in coalition with the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) from 2001 until 2003 and since 2007 is again in government in coalition with Civic Platform (PO). Again, like the SLD, it has largely avoided populism and instead focused on developing policies for regional, agricultural and economic development (Jasiewicz 2008).

4.2a (ii) Centre-Right Post-Solidarity Parties

In the most recent period of Polish post-communism the two main parties on the political scene have been the liberal Civic Platform (PO) and the conservative-nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) founded by the Kaczyński twin brothers, who shortly after the 2005 elections took both the presidential and prime ministerial posts. Both of these originate in the Solidarity movement, which won the first partially-free elections after the Round Table agreements in 1989 and derive more directly from the post-Solidarity coalition, Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS). AWS formed as a coalition of

⁷⁴ In 2005, Wojciech Olejniczak was elected the leader of SLD. He was succeeded by Grzegorz Napieralski in 2008. Both men were born in 1974 and Olejniczak was the first leader of SLD to have not been a former member of the Polish United Worker's Party.

more than thirty parties in 1996 and held office from 1997 until 2001 (Grzybowski and Mikuli 2004). By 2000, AWS had started to break up and by 2001 Civic Platform (PO) and Law and Justice (PiS) had formed as separate parties.

Civic Platform (PO), currently the main governing party after election victory in 2007 is characterised by its support for economic liberalism and European integration. Civic Platform (PO), more than any other party in Poland, appears to fit most comfortably under the heading of a programmatic or technocratic party, which has detailed policy and largely avoids populism (Innes 2002, Jasiewicz 2008).

From 2005 until 2007, Law and Justice (PiS) governed in coalition with the smaller, radical parties, Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families (LPR). Their policies were largely focused on elimination of corruption, which they saw as a product of the communist past, and promotion of the values of Catholicism. To achieve these goals, PiS chose a number of highly controversial tactics. These included the rooting out of communist informers from public life and collaboration with Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, the leader of the radical catholic radio station, Radio Maryja (Puhl 2006). The way in which PiS separated ‘the pure people’ from the ‘corrupt elite’ during their time in government, corresponds well with the definition of populism (Jasiewicz 2008)⁷⁵.

4.2a (iii) Radical Parties

Two small, radical parties have played a significant role in the Polish political scene since 2000. However since the 2007 elections, when they both failed to gain the 5% threshold required to enter parliament, they have declined in popularity. The first of these is the agrarian based Self-Defence which first entered parliament after the 2001 elections. Although it formed part of the governing coalition with Law and Justice (PiS) after 2005, in the 2007 elections Self-Defence failed to gain the 5% threshold for representation in parliament and its popularity has since declined. The party is dominated by the personality cult of its leader, Andrzej Lepper (Wysocka 2007, Millard

⁷⁵ As stated in chapter two, populism can be defined in the following way, ‘an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people’ (Mudde (2004, p.543)).

2006). His main stance is populist, eurosceptical, economically conservative and focuses on the purging of corruption from public life (Krok-Paszowska 2003).

The League of Polish Families (LPR) is also a radical party which uses populism as a method of gaining support. However, it is also highly nationalistic and in particular strongly emphasises the role of the Catholic Church in Polish national identity (Repa 2006, Kość 2006). The party's main stance is that the values of the Polish Nation are under attack by the state and by European integration. Like Self-Defence it first entered parliament in 2001 and also joined the governing coalition with Law and Justice (PiS) from 2005 to 2007. In the 2007 elections it failed to gain any seats, gaining less than the 5% threshold.

4.2b. The Romanian Political Context

In contrast to Poland, the Romanian post-communist political system was much more stable during the 1990s with a lower rate of new party emergence. However, the early period was largely dominated by the Social Democratic Party (PSD)⁷⁶. This situation was arguably only seriously challenged after the 2004 parliamentary elections when the Justice and Truth Alliance (DA), made up of the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Democratic Party (PD), replaced the PSD in office (Gross and Tismăneanu 2005). This allowed for a partial opening of the political system and the emergence of more balanced competition between party blocs of left and right. However, the government formed in 2004 between the DA, the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) and the small Humanist Party (PUR) faced continuous instability. In 2006, the PUR which had since become the Conservative Party (PC) left the government and in 2007 due to escalating tensions between the Democratic Party (PD) and the National Liberal Party (PNL), the Justice and Truth Alliance (DA) collapsed. This meant the National Liberal Party (PNL) formed a government with Hungarian minority party the UDMR, forcing the other half of the DA, the Democratic Party (PD) from office. PD

⁷⁶ The PSD has had its current name since 2001. Its post-communist origin is in the hard line break off faction of the National Salvation Front (FSN) which formed the Democratic National Salvation Front (FDSN) under the leadership of Iliescu in 1992. For an overview see Gallagher (2005).

then merged with the splinter party the Liberal Democratic Party (PLD) to form the Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L) in 2007⁷⁷.

The 2008 parliamentary elections were won by PD-L by a very narrow margin⁷⁸ over the alliance made up of the Social Democrats (PSD) and the Conservative Party (PC), although no party won a majority in parliament. The greatest loser in the elections was the radical, nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM) which, for the first time since the 1992 parliamentary elections, failed to gain any parliamentary seats.

The six main parties in Romania can be roughly divided into four loose party families. These I explain below.

*4.2b(i) Regime Successor Party*⁷⁹

After the defeat of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) in the 2004 elections the party, like the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) in Poland, sought to reform itself in order to try and break away from its communist roots and a corrupt image. Similarly to its Polish equivalent in the same period, PSD appeared to do this through replacement of the old leadership by younger, more reform oriented leaders⁸⁰. However, this transformation was partial and PSD has continued to be split between factions, some which call for modernisation of the party and others which continue to resist change (Gross and Tismăneanu 2005, Gussi 2008)⁸¹. These divisions over the direction which the Social Democratic Party (PSD) should take have often meant that the party lacks a coherent programme. In addition, although changes have been implemented since the early phase of post-communism, unlike the Polish SLD, PSD continues to be accused of clientelistic

⁷⁷ This new party was sponsored by the president, Traian Băsescu, whose public battles with the leader of PNL and then Prime-Minister Călin Popescu Tăriceanu were instrumental in the collapse of the Justice and Truth Alliance in 2007. Following an unsuccessful attempt by the PNL and PSD to impeach the president in 2007, Basescu's supporters in the PNL formed the break away party, the Liberal Democratic Party (PLD) which joined the Democratic Party (PD) in December 2007 to form the Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L). For a full discussion see Maxfield (2008).

⁷⁸ PD-L won one more seat in the Chamber of Deputies and two more seats in the Senate than the PSD and PC alliance, however the alliance won 33.09% of the vote compared to 32.36% won by PD-L (Biroul Electoral Central).

⁷⁹ This is a very loose term in the Romanian context as several other parties including the centre-right Democratic Party (PD) were also formed from the remnants of the National Salvation Front (FSN).

⁸⁰ In 2005 Mircea Geoană was elected leader of PSD. He was 47 years old and replaced Ion Iliescu as leader. This election of a reformist, younger leader was seen by many as a turning point for the PSD (Gussi 2008).

⁸¹ Gussi (2008) describes the internal problems of PSD from the time of the election of Geoană as leader.

practices especially in local government where so-called PSD local ‘barons’ control local politics, business and media (Ionița 2005).

4.2b(ii) Centre-Right Parties

Three parties on the current Romanian political scene can be grouped together as loosely constituting the Romanian centre-right. This is a loose term as the ideological basis of many Romanian parties remains unsure and changeable (Gross and Tismăneanu 2004, Gallagher 2005, Maxfield 2008). Nonetheless, the Liberal Democratic Party (PD-L), the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Conservative party (PC) all self-identify as parties of the centre-right⁸² and share some common features such as a pro-democratic discourse which is opposed to the left and especially to communism (Szczzerbiak and Hanley 2006, Maxfield 2008). Although political rivals, the two main centre-right parties, PD-L and PNL appear to converge on broad policy issues defining the right including anti-communism, economic liberalism and further European integration. However, the programmes of both parties have been overshadowed by the emphasis their leaders placed on populist appeals and personality clashes between the prime minister (2004-2008) and president of PNL, Călin Popescu- Tăriceanu and the Romanian president, Traian Băsescu (Ruse 2007).

Arguably the party with the most changeable programme in Romanian politics is the Conservative Party (PC). It is a party which is dominated by the personality and power of its leader, Dan Voiculescu⁸³. Once seen as a left-wing party under the title Humanist party (Stan 2005), it now professes to support conservative ideals.

4.2b(iii) Radical Party

Since the fall of communism, radical nationalist political discourse aimed mainly at the Hungarian minority, Roma and Jews has helped maintain extremist political parties such as the Greater Romania Party (PRM) in Romania (Gallagher 2005, Mudde 2005).

⁸² From the party websites. PD-L states it is a ‘strong Centre-right political force’. PNL states it is ‘the only authentic party of the Right and the only party to represent liberalism in Romania’.

⁸³ Voiculescu has a vast personal wealth built up as a result of his media empire in Romania which is now owned by his daughter. He has also faced accusations of large scale corruption and has admitted collaborating with the Romanian Communist Secret Service, the Securitate (Gallagher 2005).

The PRM is characterised by its controversial and outspoken leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor. Although PRM enjoyed moderate electoral success in the 1990s, its popularity peaked in the 2000 elections when it gained sufficient parliamentary seats to make it the second largest party. In the first round of the 2000 Presidential elections, Tudor won over 28% of the votes, placing him in second place⁸⁴. However, since this success, the popularity of PRM has weakened and the party has faced problems of infighting and identity. In the 2008 parliamentary elections, for the first time since the early 1990s it failed to gain the 5% threshold required to enter parliament.

4.2b (iv) Hungarian Alliance

The sizeable Hungarian minority⁸⁵ in Romania is politically represented by an alliance of parties and organisations which are collectively known as the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR). This alliance first entered the Romanian parliament after the 1996 elections as a coalition partner of the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR). Between 2004 and 2008 it governed once more in coalition with the Democratic Alliance (DA). Since the 2008 elections it has been in opposition. The Union has been active in ensuring greater representation of the ethnic Hungarian minority in the fields of education, self-government and use of the Hungarian language (Brusis 2003, Karnoouh 2004).

⁸⁴ He then lost to Ion Iliescu in the Second Round.

⁸⁵ The Hungarian minority makes up approximately 20% of the population in the western Romanian region of Transylvania and is concentrated in the counties of Harghita, Mureş and Arad amongst others (Brusis 2003).

4.3. Youth Party Membership in Poland and Romania

4.3a. How Many Young Party Members in Poland and Romania?

4.3a(i) Problems of Measurement and Contrast with Established Democracies

One way of measuring the extent to which young people participate in political parties is to compare membership numbers across countries and parties⁸⁶. However, this can be problematic as accurate party membership numbers are often difficult to obtain and trust. This is because of poor record taking, exaggeration by party spokespeople or the provision of contradictory figures (Mair and Van Biezen 2001, Seyd and Whiteley 2004, Heider 2006). Studies in established democracies have found that in the case of youth wings, these problems of data collection are often compounded (Hooghe et al. 2004, Cross and Young 2008). This is partly because of the higher rates of membership turnover. By the time members reach the upper age limit of the youth wing, many members will either have progressed to the main party or left the party (Hooghe et al. 2004). Nonetheless, in the absence of alternative sources of data, these crude membership numbers can provide a useful estimate of party strength.

To date, Mair and Van Biezen's (2001) study of party membership in twenty European countries over two decades (1980-2000) remains the most comprehensive study of aggregate party membership (Seyd and Whiteley 2004). By calculating the percentage of the electorate who are party members in each country, they were able to compare and contrast membership levels across countries and to track a general European wide decline in party activism. Such comprehensive comparative study of youth wing membership across countries has not been conducted and information available is often patchy and restricted to one country (Hooghe et al. 2004, Cross and Young 2008).

⁸⁶ A member is usually someone who has signed a declaration to agree with the party aims and rules and has paid a subscription. The age conditions of youth wing membership in Poland and Romania vary slightly from party to party but formal membership generally starts at 18 (although in some parties younger members are accepted as long as they are approved by the organisation) and ends at 30. This is the same in both countries.

In the absence of actual party data for youth membership from across European countries, the European Social Survey (ESS) 2006 can be used to give an overview of how Poland and Romania compare with the established democracies.

Table 4.1: Political Party Membership by Percentage and Age group in Four Countries

MEMBER OF A POLITICAL PARTY (% by age group)	Under 25 years	26-35 years	36 -55 years	Over 56 years	Total
UK	1.3	1.2	2	4.3	2.6
GERMANY	1.9	1.7	4	6	4.2
POLAND	0.5	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.1
ROMANIA	2.8	6.2	9.1	4.3	5.9

(Source: European Social Survey Round 3 (2006) UK (N=2386), Germany (N=2892), Poland (N= 1710), Romania (N=2099))

Table 4.1 shows party membership by age group and country. Several important observations can be made. First, notwithstanding the possibility of respondent exaggeration towards political activity in the survey (Brehm 1993), the findings indicate that Polish party membership for all age groups is consistently less than in the other three countries. This corresponds with the findings of Mair and Van Biezen's (2001) study which found Poland to have the least membership as a percentage of the electorate of the twenty European countries studied. However, according to the European Social Survey 2006 data the total party membership in Romania is actually larger than that found in the two established democracies. Romania was not one of the twenty countries studied by Mair and Van Biezen (2001) but a total of 5.9% membership would place Romania very high in their late 1990s rankings⁸⁷.

Second, from the table the two youngest age groups (under 25 years and 26-35 years) in both Germany and the UK appear markedly less likely to join a political party than older age groups. This corresponds with the patterns in party membership found in other studies of established democracies (Whiteley and Seyd 2002, Seyd and Whiteley 2004, Hooghe et al 2004, Russell 2005). The findings for Poland and Romania, however, are less clear. In both these countries the figures suggest that the difference between the younger and older age groups is less pronounced, with the 26-35 year group in Poland

⁸⁷ This would place Romania roughly at seventh place, between Switzerland and Sweden. This is higher than all other newer democracies (Mair and Van Biezen 2001, p. 9).

actually participating marginally more than other age groups. This suggests that generational differences in the post-communist countries may not be as pronounced as in established democracies. These two observations deserve greater analysis.

4.3a(ii) Party Membership Levels in Poland and Romania

To further examine these observations made from the European Social Survey 2006 data, I now present party membership data for main parties and youth wings in Poland and Romania collected during my fieldwork in 2006/2007. As the aim of this study is not to identify trends in youth party membership over time but rather to build up a picture of youth membership in Poland and Romania in 2006/2007, the data collected represents, as closely as possible, the state of youth membership at this time.

I collected data on membership figures for parties and youth wings in Poland and Romania through a combination of different methods including interviews with party members, by visiting party headquarters and asking officials and from party documents either handed to me or found on the internet. Evidently, the way in which the data was collected coupled with inconsistencies⁸⁸ and poor record taking by some parties means that the findings must be interpreted with some caution. Nonetheless, they do provide an empirically based estimate of the levels of youth party membership in Poland and Romania.

⁸⁸ For example I was told that there were 200 members of The Greater Romania Youth Organisation in Sector 5 Bucharest whereas the party documentation states there are 41 members.

Table 4.2: Party and Youth Organisation Membership in Absolute and Relative Terms: Poland and Romania

	Total party membership	Members as % of total electorate	Youth Wing membership	Youth wing members as % of total population 15-34 years
POLAND	Circa. 218820	0.7	Circa. 28000	0.2
ROMANIA	Circa. 1403420	7.6	Circa. 115000	1.6

(**Poland:** Total electorate 2007: 30615471 (Polish Election Bureau), total population 15-34 years: 12042831 (Rocznik Demograficzny 2007 (Polish Demographic Year Book 2007)). **Romania:** Total electorate 2004: 18449676 (Romanian Election Bureau), total population 15-34 years: 6810192 (Anuarul statistic al Romaniei 2005 (Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2005))

Table 4.2 shows total party membership numbers for the six main parties in each country and totals for the youth organisations of these parties. The main party figures are then shown as an estimated ratio to the whole electorate. In the case of youth wings, the ratio is youth membership to the total population between the ages of 15-34 years⁸⁹. The total population figures are used here because many youth wings accept members from the age of 16 whilst the voting age is 18 and so figures based on the electorate would necessarily exclude the youngest of these.

The figures in Table 4.2 correspond to the general pattern observed in the ESS 2006 (Table 4.1). That is a very low total party membership to electorate ratio for Poland (0.7%) and a notably higher ratio for Romania (7.6%)⁹⁰. Here too the same general pattern is confirmed, namely remarkably low youth membership in Poland (0.2%) compared with a considerably higher level in Romania (1.6%). Given that the ESS 2006 figures for Germany and the UK are also likely to be overestimated, this means that the youth rate of membership at 1.6% in Romania would still appear to at least equal the rates in these established democracies. If this is indeed the case, it poses a number of important questions about the type of participation opportunities political parties offer young people in Poland and Romania. Particularly, what is it about youth parties in Romania which makes them more attractive to young people?

⁸⁹ In both the Polish and Romanian National statistics, age groups for population are broken down into groups which start 15- 17 years so starting from 16 would prove impossible.

⁹⁰ That the actual figures given in Table 4.2 are lower than those calculated from the ESS 2006 data could be explained by respondent exaggeration as is often found in large scale surveys (Brehm 1993).

4.3b. Youth Wings in Poland and Romania – Structure and Membership

To address the questions posed above, it is necessary to consider the size and organisational structure of the youth wings in Poland and Romania. As in established European democracies, the majority of the main political parties in Poland and Romania support ancillary youth organisations.

4.3b(i) Structure

Table 4.3: Political Parties and Youth Wings in Poland

Name of Main Party	Youth Wing
Platforma Obywatelska (PO) – Civic Platform	Stowarzyszenie ‘Młodzi Demokraci’ (‘S’MD) – Young Democrats
Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) – Law and Justice	Forum Młodych PiS (FMPiS) – PiS Youth Forum
Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD) – Democratic Left Alliance	Federacja Młodych Socjaldemokratów (FMS)- Federation of Young Social Democrats
Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL) – Polish People’s Party	Forum Młodych Ludowców (FML) – People’s Party Youth Forum
Samoobrona – Self-Defence	Ogólnopolska Młodzieżowa Organizacja Samoobrony (OMOS)- Youth Organisation of Self-Defence
Liga Polskich Rodzin (LPR) – League of Polish Families	Młodzież Wszechpolska (MW) – All-Polish Youth ⁹¹

⁹¹The link between LPR and MW is not straightforward. MW was (re)created in 1989 by the former leader of LPR, Roman Giertych as an organisation to promote nationalism and Catholicism amongst youth. However in the last couple of years Giertych distanced LPR from MW as MW became increasingly associated with neo-Nazism. This led to a ‘velvet divorce’ between the two in December 2006 (Szacki 2006) and in October 2007 a pledge by the new leadership of LPR to disband MW (Gazeta Wyborcza 26/10/07).

Table 4.4: Political Parties and Youth Wings in Romania

Name of Main Party	Youth Wing
Partidul Național Liberal (PNL) – National Liberal Party	Tineretul Național Liberal (TNL)- National Liberal Youth
Partidul Democrat (PD) – Democratic Party ⁹²	Partidul Democrat- Organizația de Tineret (PD-OT)- Democratic Party Youth Organisation
Partidul Social Democrat (PSD) – Social Democratic Party	Tineretul Social Democrat (TSD)- Social Democratic Youth
Partidul Conservator (PC) – Conservative Party	Ofensiva Tinerilor ⁹³ - Youth Offensive
Partidul România Mare (PRM) – Greater Romania Party	Organizația de Tineret România Mare (OTRM)- Greater Romania Youth Organisation
Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România (UDMR) – Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania ⁹⁴	Federation of Hungarian Youth organisations in Romania

The names of the main parties in Poland and Romania and the youth wings they support are set out in tables 4.3 and 4.4. In both countries youth wings mirror the national structure of main parties. In Poland, therefore, all the youth wings allow for several tiers of organisation where the national level organisation based in Warsaw⁹⁵ is supported by either two or three tiers of local level organisation⁹⁶. To set up a local level organisation, each party demands a certain number of initial members. This varies slightly from party to party but in each is fairly low⁹⁷. The statutes for youth wings in Romania also set out a hierarchical structure of national level organisation based in Bucharest⁹⁸ and then two or three lower levels⁹⁹.

⁹² Although the Democratic Party (PD) is now part of the Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L), as this merger happened after my fieldwork in 2006/2007, in this study I refer to the Democratic Party (PD) and its youth wing (OTPD).

⁹³ This is not an actual youth wing – PC is the only major party in Romania without a youth wing.

⁹⁴ UDMR is not actually a political party in the strict sense but an alliance of several different parties. Its various youth organisations are organised under the main Federation of Hungarian Youth Organisations in Romania.

⁹⁵ Warsaw is also divided into 18 different districts which theoretically can also host local level youth wings

⁹⁶ ‘S’MD, FMS, FMPiS and MW have three levels of organisation (national, voivodship and province (powiat)). FML and OMOS have four levels (national, voivodship, province (powiat) and commune (gmina)).

⁹⁷ For example FMS and FML require 5 members to set up a province (powiat) level organisation and MW requires 10 members.

⁹⁸ Bucharest is treated separately as each of its six sectors behaves as a local level organisation and Bucharest municipality as a county (judet).

⁹⁹ OT-PD, TNL, PSD and PC all have three levels of organisation (local, county (judet), national). OTRM has four levels (basic, territorial, judete and national). UDMR does not have a stated structure for its youth organisations.

4.3b(ii) Membership

Table 4.5: Party Membership 2006/2007 (Total and Youth) in Poland by Party

POLITICAL PARTY	Membership of total party	Membership of youth wing	Estimated % of youth members in party total
Civic Platform (PO): Young Democrats ('S'MD)	Circa. 33920	Circa. 8000	Around 24%
Law and Justice (PiS): Youth Forum (FMPiS)	Circa. 16900	Circa. 2500	Around 15%
Democratic Left Alliance (SLD): Federation of Young Social Democrats	Circa. 72000	2000-6000	3%-8%
Polish People's Party (PSL): People's Party Youth Forum (FML)	Circa. 60000	10000-12000	17%-20%
Self-Defence: Youth Organisation of Self-Defence (OMOS)	Circa. 30000 ¹⁰⁰	Unknown	Unknown
League of Polish Families (LPR): All-Polish Youth (MW)	Circa. 6000	Circa. 3000 ¹⁰¹	N/A

(Sources: party materials, interviews with party representatives, National media)

¹⁰⁰ This is a very large estimate given the membership rates for other parties and the limited local implementation of Samoobrona across Poland (Szczerbiak 2001a). As such this estimate should be interpreted with caution.

¹⁰¹ From the magazine Polityka (Rybak (2005)).

Table 4.6: Party Membership 2006/2007 (Total and Youth) in Romania by Party

POLITICAL PARTY	Membership of total party	Membership of youth wing	Estimated % of youth members in party total
Social Democratic Party(PSD): Social Democratic Youth (TSD)	309714	75000	Around 12%
Democratic Party(PD): Democratic Party Youth Organisation (PD-OT)	165000 ¹⁰²	Circa. 10000	Around 6%
National Liberal Party(PNL): National Liberal Youth (TNL)	250000	Circa. 10000	Around 12%
Greater Romania Party(PRM): Greater Romania Youth Organisation (OTRM)	83392	Circa. 20000	Around 23%
Conservative Party(PC)	95314	N/A	N/A
Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania(UDMR)	Circa. 500000	N/A	Up to 25% ¹⁰³

(Sources: party interviews, party materials, internet resources, Soare (2004))

Tables 4.5 and 4.6 show the membership figures collected for each of the six main parties and youth wings in both countries. They also give an estimate of the percentage of youth members which make up the total party membership. Although these figures cannot represent more than a rough estimate of the state of youth party membership in Poland and Romania, some important points should be noted.

¹⁰² When the Democratic Party (PD) merged with the Liberal Democrats (PLD) in December 2007 to form the Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L) the membership of the party increased significantly, probably by around 60,000 (see for example, Maxfield (2008) who reports that the Liberal Democrats (PLD) had 66,872 members in March 2007).

¹⁰³ According to Ardelean (2005) in a Report on Youth and Media in Romania. I do not have any figures of actual membership to verify this.

4.3b (iii) Comparisons with Established Democracies

In both countries the percentage of youth members in each party appears rather high in comparison to findings of studies in established democracies. For example, Hooghe et al. (2004) found that although youth membership had peaked at up to 18% for three Flemish parties' youth wings in Belgium in the 1970s, it had since fallen into single figures¹⁰⁴. Similarly, in their studies of British political parties, Seyd and Whiteley (1992) and Whiteley et al. (1994, 2006) found youth membership to be 12% in the Labour Party but only 5% in the Conservatives and 7% in the Liberal Democrats. This corresponds to the ESS 2006 results (see Table 4.1) which showed there to be a less clear generational divide in party membership between the younger and older age cohorts in the newer democracies than in the established ones. That the difference between cohorts is less pronounced could be explained by a combination of communist legacies and post-communist political volatility which have been found to mean older people in newer democracies are less partisan and inclined to join political parties compared to their counterparts in established democracies¹⁰⁵. Yet the higher percentages of party membership amongst young people, even in the context of markedly low overall party membership (as in Poland), also indicate that the logics behind youth party membership in newer democracies may contrast importantly with that in established democracies. It can be hypothesised from this that youth wings in newer democracies may offer a different set of incentives and opportunities to young people than in established democracies. This is explored further in section 4.5 of this chapter.

4.3b (iv) Comparisons across Party Families

The second point to note from Tables 4.5 and 4.6 regards common findings across the families of parties (see Section 4.2) in each country. Generally, in both countries, the membership numbers of the regime successor parties are greater than those of the centre-right parties. In Romania this is also reflected in the size of the youth wing of Social Democratic Party (TSD) which claims a significantly larger membership base than the other youth wings. That the regime successor parties are larger and denser in

¹⁰⁴ Hooghe et al. (2004) found that in 2003, the Flemish parties they studied had 4.9%, 2.8% and 1.2% of youth as members of the main party.

¹⁰⁵ See chapter one, section 1.4c.

terms of membership can be explained though the more developed nature of their regional and party organisational infrastructure inherited from communist times (Szczerbiak 2001a, Soos et al. 2002, Linek and Pecháček 2007). Even now this is reflected in the number of local level branches (Szczerbiak 2001a).

In the Polish case, the extent of this local penetration of the main party is more prominently reflected in the membership of the youth wing of the Polish People's Party (PSL, FML) than that of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD, FMS). This can be explained by a number of factors. First, as mentioned in Section 4.2, SLD necessarily had to undergo an intensive renewal of its policies and structures in the early post-communist period. This restructuring led to breakages in links between the party and local level organisations and between the main party and its ancillary organisations. The result was a move away from dense local level organisation and a shift in membership to a mainly urban base (Grzymała-Busse 2002). This is also reflected in the membership of the youth wing which is concentrated in Warsaw and in the cities of the North and West such as Szczecin, Gdansk and Wrocław. The Polish People's Party (PSL, FML) on the other hand, has been able to maintain its extensive local networks in rural areas of Poland and supports branches of PSL and FML both at regional (powiat) and commune (gmina) level¹⁰⁶ (Szczerbiak 2001a, Grzymała-Busse 2002). This is partly due to the party's continuing strong roots in rural communities where it is still seen as a party which protects the interests of farmers and those in the countryside. This is reflected in the membership of FML, where a 2007 survey of young party members found that one of the five main reasons for joining the youth wing was because they were 'from the countryside or involved in agriculture'¹⁰⁷.

In Romania, the regime successor party, the Social Democratic Party (PSD, TSD) has not experienced the same degree of restructuring at local level as the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) in Poland (Grzymała-Busse 2002). As a result, PSD still has an extensive network of local offices across the country and is particularly strong in the South and East. (Soos et al. 2002, Soare 2004). In comparison to its Polish equivalent,

¹⁰⁶ The local organisation of FML is concentrated in the Central and Eastern regions of Poland and although organisations exist on paper in the Western regions, they have far fewer members (from interview with FML representative).

¹⁰⁷ This survey was carried out by FML in 2007.

the youth wing of PSD remains an integral and important part of the main party¹⁰⁸ and as such local level branches are mainly also found where the main party is organised. As PSD inherited many of the former communist party offices across the country, this means that the youth wing also often benefits from centrally located, well equipped offices and meeting rooms.

The parties in both countries which either originated in the early post-communist coalitions (Civic Platform (PO, 'S'MD) and Law and Justice (PiS, FMPiS) in Poland and the Democratic Party (PD, PD-OT) in Romania) or were historic parties reactivated after 1989 (National Liberal Party (PNL, TNL) in Romania¹⁰⁹) are generally organised in a less dense fashion across the countries. The development of these parties from urban based elites meant that the costly building up of local level membership organisations was not generally seen as a priority (Lewis 2000). This is particularly visible in the case of Law and Justice (PiS, FMPiS) in Poland where the small number of young members are heavily concentrated in the large cities. Civic Platform (PO, 'S'MD) is also urban based but in addition has a denser local organisation in the North and West of Poland. In Romania, the Democratic Party (PD, PD-OT) and the National Liberal Party (PNL, TNL) are both more developed on a local basis than the Polish parties but generally their local penetration is less widespread than that of the Social Democratic Party (PSD, TSD).

The radical parties in both Poland and Romania have relatively small membership numbers, however it is notable that the youth wings associated with League of Polish Families (LPR, MW) in Poland and the Greater Romania Party (PRM, OTRM) in Romania claim a proportionally larger membership compared to other parties (see Tables 4.5 and 4.6). Although the often closed nature of these parties makes it more difficult to obtain information on their de facto organisation, anecdotal evidence suggests that the local level organisation is actually relatively weak and urban based.

¹⁰⁸ The different relationships of the youth wings with main parties is discussed in greater detail in section 4.5b.

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion of these historic parties see Siani-Davies (2005).

4.3c Sub-National Representation of Youth Wings

In the absence of comparable nationwide data on youth wing local level organisation in Poland and Romania, case studies of how individual youth wings operate in the six different localities studied adds support to anecdotal evidence presented above. This information was gathered through interviews with young local party activists and, where applicable, visits to the local party offices.

4.3c(i) Poland

Table 4.7: Youth Wings in Three Polish Case Study Localities

YOUTH WING	WARSAW	BIELSKO-BIALA	CHELM
Young Democrats ('S'MD)	Exists at district level but meets regularly as one group at central office.	Small group (15 members), share office with parliamentarian.	No organisation. Closest is in Lublin
Youth Forum Law and Justice (FMPiS)	No district level organisation, meets weekly as one group in the parliament.	Small organisation not separate from main party.	No organisation
Federation of Young Social Democrats (FMS)	143 members on the books, district organisations exist but are very small (5 to 30 members). Meet as one group in central Warsaw.	Small group (20-30) which meets regularly.	No organisation
People's Party Youth Forum (FML)	Around 500 members including suburban districts. Small groups meet weekly, meet as one group yearly	Small organisation	Small organisation
Youth Organisation of Self-Defence (OMOS)	Meet in central Warsaw	No organisation	No organisation
All-Polish Youth (MW)	Warsaw level group meet at central offices.	Voivodship level in Katowice	Small branch in Chełm established in 2005

Table 4.7 shows the extent of local organisation of youth wings across the three localities in Poland. It confirms that most youth wings have a weak level of local penetration. This is particularly evident in the case of Chełm where there are only small branches of the far right, nationalist All-Polish Youth (MW) and The People's Party Youth Forum (FML). According to anecdotal evidence the branch of MW has since stopped functioning. Young people who wish to become politically active in Chełm must otherwise either travel to Lublin (one hour away) for the youth wing or join the main party. In Bielsko-Biała, the organisation and membership of youth wings is also very limited. If they do exist, they are generally based at the local offices of parliamentarians and have no permanent staff. It is not therefore generally obvious to outsiders that the local party and youth wing are also based there. Even in Warsaw, due to small membership numbers, youth wings tend not to operate at district level, instead meeting as one group. This can prove exclusionary, as in the case of the Law and Justice Youth Forum (FMPiS) which meets inside the parliament. Effectively, this means that most young people in Warsaw who wish to join FMPiS have to join the local branch of the main party instead.

4.3c. (ii) Romania

Table 4.8: Youth Wings in Three Romanian Case Study Localities

YOUTH WING	BUCHAREST	ORADEA	ALEXANDRIA
Democratic Party Youth Organisation (OTPD)	Branches in all 6 sectors. Has own central office.	Moderate membership (circa. 150), meets regularly	Membership of around 500, has regular meetings
National Liberal Youth (TNL)	Branches in all 6 sectors.	Moderate membership, meets regularly	Membership of around 15, has regular meetings
Social Democratic Youth (TSD)	Branches in all 6 sectors. Has own central office.	Significant membership in Bihor county (circa.1500), meets regularly	Significant membership (at least several hundred), has regular meetings
Conservative Party (PC)	Part of Main party	Part of main party	Part of main party
Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)		Several youth organisations exist	N/A
Greater Romania Youth Organisation (OTRM)	Branches in all 6 sectors which meet regularly. Membership of sector 5 around 500. Has own central office.	Small Organisation exists	Small Organisation exists

Table 4.8 represents the state of youth wings in the three localities studied in Romania. The contrast with the Polish situation is striking. Unlike in Poland, and consistent with the aggregate national data on membership numbers presented earlier in this chapter, youth wings of most parties are represented in both of the smaller localities as well as at sector level in Bucharest. In particular, the membership of the youth wing of the Social Democratic Party (PSD, TSD), and of the centre-right Democratic Party, (PD, OTPD), is significant in all three localities. This confirms the strength of the organisational inheritance of PSD (TSD) from the communist party. In order to compete with PSD, other Romanian parties such as PD have also had to build up significant local level organisation which is reflected in the membership of its youth wing in all three localities. Although their offices are not always as centrally located as PSD, they usually comprise a large number of offices and meeting rooms and it is frequently possible to locate youth wing leaders and members there, even if visiting unannounced.

Thus in Romania, due to parties having large, well-marked buildings, youth wings enjoy a far greater visibility at local level than in Poland, perhaps facilitating recruitment.

4.4 Who are Young Party Members and What Do they Do?

Although an assessment of membership levels and local level organisation gives an overview of the youth wings in Poland and Romania, it tells us little about the individual characteristics of members and what they actually do in the party. As party membership is generally a high cost activity, studies in established democracies have also found that members often have high levels of resources (Scarrow 1996, Whiteley et al. 1994, 2006). Studies of young party members in established democracies have found that high levels of educational resources and access to political networks through family are particularly important in predicting who will choose to join a party at a young age (Recchi 1999, Cross and Young 2008). The first part of this section assesses whether this is also applicable to young members in Poland and Romania.

Another characteristic of party membership emphasised by studies in established democracies is how levels of activity differs between members (Whiteley and Seyd 2002, Cross and Young 2004, Whiteley et al. 2006, Heider 2006). Research has shown that members in fact vary greatly in terms of how active they are in a party. This is measured by looking at the types of activities in which party members are involved. The second part of this section therefore looks at the activities of young party members in Poland and Romania and compares these between countries and with studies in established democracies.

4.4a Educational Resources

In established democracies recent studies have suggested that educational levels may have become more important in determining youth party membership than was the case for older members (Recchi 1999, Cross and Young 2008). In Canada, for instance, a postal survey amongst Canadian party members between the ages of 18 and 25 found that 7 out of 10 respondents were currently students and out of the remainder 8 out of 10 respondents had post-secondary education (Cross and Young 2008). In the UK, Whiteley et al. (1994, 2006) have found that the political party with the lowest average

age of members, the Liberal Democrats, also has the highest numbers of members of the three main parties who have obtained a university degree¹¹⁰.

Unfortunately, these rather tentative findings are not supported by any comprehensive comparative evidence of education levels of party members across different countries. However, that a higher level of education has become more important for young party members would correspond with the changes in parties across established democracies in recent decades. Particularly the shift from grass-roots style membership to a more professionalised, elite group of members could be expected to mean that those with higher levels of education would be better positioned to become involved (Leighley 1995).

If this is the case, we could hypothesise that the top-down nature of many post-communist parties would also attract young members with high levels of educational resources. This is because the urban, elite nature of parties would mean that it was much easier for young people already involved in education or finished education to access formal political networks. However, this may differ depending on country and party. Thus, the development of many Polish parties as urban based, elite organisations would suggest that here educational resources may be particularly important¹¹¹. The exception to this could be the Polish People's Party (PSL), which has a more rural grass-roots membership (Szczerbiak 2001b). In Romania, the local level penetration of many parties could mean that education is less significant. It could be hypothesised that this would be particularly the case for the regime successor party, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) which has a comparatively developed grass-roots membership structure. In the absence of large-scale survey data on young party members in Poland and Romania, an assessment of educational resources of members must be made through media reports, interview response and anecdotal evidence.

In Poland, media reports suggest that young party members generally have high levels of educational resources. For instance, an article published in the magazine *Polityka* in

¹¹⁰ The average age of a Conservative member in the UK was found to be 62 years while over half of all members were over 66 (Whiteley et al. 1994). The average age of a Liberal Democrat member is 59 years and 36% are over 66 years (Whiteley et al. 2006).

¹¹¹ This would also mirror findings of Raciborski's (2007) study of government members in Poland which found that most cabinet ministers were highly educated.

2005 (Rybak 2005) states that many young party members are studying or have studied for courses such as political science, law or economics. This was also supported by the comments made in interviews with party members, who themselves were generally highly educated (see Appendix B). Even in the mainly rural based youth wing of the Polish People's Party (PSL, FML), having a higher level of education was seen as a necessary qualification for many young activists. Young members I spoke to emphasised that they felt politics was for 'professional and educated people'. Particularly, one member of FML stated that he felt it was necessary for young people involved in politics to have been formally educated in the theory of democracy and to understand how a democracy can develop.

In Romania, this was also a sentiment expressed by young members, many of whom were also highly educated. Indeed, the need to portray politics as a place for professional and educated young people, was also summed up by a 2007 slogan of the Cluj-Napoca branch of the Democratic Youth Party Organisation (OTPD), *'It's time for youth, it's time for professionals'*¹¹². A member of the Social Democratic Youth (PSD, TSD) in Oradea reiterated this image. He said,

'old people have the experience, but the young ones have the knowledge about democracy, know languages and have travelled'.

If, as this evidence suggests, young party activists in both Poland and Romania are indeed generally highly educated, one reason may be the structure of the youth wings themselves. Many of these youth organisations are concentrated in the urban centres and in particular in those places where there are a lot of students. This is most evident in Poland if we compare the organisational penetration of youth wings in the three localities studied. In Chełm, which has a very small number of students, there are also very few if any active youth organisations. Again in Bielsko-Biała, the youth wings are small, one reason perhaps being that the university in the town mainly focuses on technical subjects, rather than politics, law and economics. The importance of a connection with university was emphasised by members of the Federation of Young Social Democrats (SLD, FMS) in Warsaw who stated that they would not have known

¹¹² From the Party Website. In Romanian, *'e timpul tinerilor, e timpul profesioniștilor'*.

how to join the party if they had not met people involved with the party at their place of study.

In Romania, although youth organisations have generally greater local level penetration than in Poland, members also identified a connection between the place of study and joining the youth wing. In Oradea, a member of the Democratic Party Youth Organisation (PD, OTPD) said that although both student and youth organisations existed within the main party in the town, in reality the youth organisation was mainly made up of students. This corresponds with the findings of Russell (2005, p. 567) who looked at the structure of the youth organisation in the Liberal Democrats in the UK. He found that despite the name of the youth wing 'Liberal Democrats Youth and Students (LDYS), it was mainly an organisation for *'students, would- be students, and recently graduated students'*.

Educational level appears therefore to be important for young party activists in Poland and Romania. This is a similar finding to that of studies in established democracies and suggests that the increased elitism and professionalisation of parties is particularly evident in the youth organisations of parties in both established and newer democracies.

4.4b Access to Political Networks through Family

A link to political activism through family members has been found to be an important characteristic of young party members in studies in established democracies. In the 1960s, Abrams and Little (1965) found that four out of five young political activists in the UK came from families with a history of political activism. More recently, this finding has been replicated by Recchi (1999) in his study of Italian youth activists and Cross and Young (2008) in their research on Canadian young party members. There are a number of probable reasons for this. Having a family member already in a party means greater access to knowledge about the party, how it works, how to join and what it does. It also provides access to ready made networks of other members which also makes it less daunting to join.

As for educational resources, it is probable that as party membership shrinks and parties become more exclusive, access to political networks through family members may also

increase in importance. Indeed, Cross and Young's (2008, p. 354) study of Canadian young party members found that over half of the party members under 25 years were recruited through family connections compared to only eight percent of older members. In this case, the generational contrast is striking. It suggests that the role of these networks may have also strengthened as a result of the increased cynicism and dismissal of formal political participation by young people in general. In this way, family connections not only provide young people with an insight into political activism but also may be vital in counteracting the prevailing negative attitude of young people in established democracies towards formal political agents.

There is reason to believe that these family connections may also be important factors in political activism of young people in post-communist countries. Certainly, in both Poland and Romania, there are high profile examples of young politicians who have family connections with political activism¹¹³. In my interviews with young party members in both countries, the importance of such connections in facilitating young people to become party members was repeatedly confirmed. However, there appeared a marked contrast in the way in which these connections were viewed across different parties.

A family connection appeared particularly relevant in those parties which stress tradition and national values such as the youth wing of the Polish People's Party (FML). Here a recent party survey (2007) had revealed forty percent of youth wing members to have a family member already in the party. Similar emphasis on the importance of family ties was also made by a spokesperson for the youth wing of the Greater Romania Party (OTRM), who stated that many members of the youth wing were following family tradition. In these parties, family connections appeared to be lauded, even encouraged, as part of the attraction of the party. They were seen as offering legitimacy and tradition in party systems which generally lacked such continuity and stability.

In the youth wings of other parties which either wished to be seen as having broken with the past such as the regime successor parties, Democratic Left Alliance (SLD,

¹¹³ In Poland, Jarosław Wałęsa, son of the famous Solidarity leader and former president, Lech Wałęsa, was elected to the parliament in 2005 as a deputy for Civic Platform (PO) at the age of 29 (Olczyk 2005). In Romania, Elena Băsescu, daughter of the current president, Traian Băsescu, was elected General Secretary of the youth wing of the Democratic Party (OTPD) in 2008 (Ziua Online 2008).

FMS) in Poland and the Social Democratic Party (PSD, TSD) in Romania, or those which emphasised individualism, economic liberalism and Europeanisation such as Civic Platform (PO, 'S'MD) in Poland and the Democratic Party (PD, OTPD) in Romania, family connections evidently existed but were not seen as an attraction for the party. Indeed, a family member being involved in politics was stated as a secondary reason for party activism amongst many of these members. For example, members of both the youth wings of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD, FMS) in Poland and the Social Democratic Party (PSD, TSD) in Romania said that although some members did have family connections, many joined primarily because of a friend already in the party. In these cases members appeared to be downplaying the importance of family membership. Indeed, although they were keen to stress that many members initially joined because of a friend already in the party, they appeared more reluctant to speak about family connections.

This appears to be a direct attempt by the members of the youth wings of the regime successor parties in both countries to counteract the negative perception of young party members promoted by the media and which is also prevalent amongst the young people generally in both countries. A common popular image in Romania of young party members is as 'puppets' of older politicians (Lazescu 2005)¹¹⁴, young people who cannot think for themselves but who are controlled by older members in return for support. To acknowledge or encourage the existence of family connections and access to networks of older politicians would therefore go against the image of independence and professionalism which many of these young members wish to promote.

4.4c What Do Members Do?

Evidently in any political party there are a number of different 'types' of members. Particularly, observers often identify between 'active' and 'inactive' party members (Whiteley and Seyd 2002, Cross and Young 2004, Heider 2006, Whiteley et al. 2006). The activity of the most 'inactive' members may only amount to paying an annual subscription fee or attending an occasional meeting, while an 'active' member may attend regular meetings, campaign rigorously at elections or even stand as a candidate

¹¹⁴ See for example the article by Dutulescu and Sutu (2007) in the daily newspaper, Cotidianul which reports on how Ion Iliescu and Adrian Năstase have made the young politician, Victor Ponta, their puppet.

themselves. In their studies of party membership in the UK, Whiteley et al (2006) have found that the majority of members are generally 'inactive' where only one in ten members spends more than 10 hours on party activities per month.

Such comprehensive studies of the activities of party members have not been conducted into youth party activists in established democracies. However, some studies on youth party activism suggest that the type of activities current members are involved in may differ substantially from those of young members in the past. In his overview of UK youth wings, Russell (2005) argues that the Young Conservatives have changed from being an organisation known for its dances and social activities in the 1950s to offering the main party a small but controlled group of 'foot-soldiers' during election campaigns nowadays. This element of control over activities by the main party also seems a feature of other youth wings in established democracies today. Youth organisations which in the past were known for their radical activities have now often been effectively subjugated to the main party¹¹⁵.

In Poland and Romania, as in established democracies, official party expectations for activity of regular members and youth members are generally set very low. Some youth wing statutes state they expect 'regular' participation from members¹¹⁶ (although they do not define regular) while others simply demand monthly payment of the membership dues¹¹⁷. Evidently, in the absence of comprehensive survey data on youth party members establishing how 'active' members are is particularly subjective. Indeed, when I asked youth party members in both countries to estimate the numbers of 'active' members in their organisations, the figures varied from around fifty percent down to around seventeen percent¹¹⁸. However, it was suggested that this number may vary dramatically around election time when, as in established democracies (Cross and Young 2004, Whiteley et al. 2006), young members become more active.

¹¹⁵ Some examples include the youth wing of the UK Labour Party (Russell 2005) and the Belgian Christian Democrats (Hooghe et al. 2004).

¹¹⁶ For example the youth wing of The Greater Romania Party (OTRM).

¹¹⁷ For example the Conservative Party in Romania (PC).

¹¹⁸ For instance, in Poland, a spokesperson from the youth wing of the Social Democratic Party (FMS) estimated that around 1000 of 6000 members were 'active'. In Romania, the leader of OTRM in Sector 5 Bucharest estimated that 100 out of his 200 members were 'active'.

There were a number of contrasts between the main activities undertaken between elections of youth party activists in Poland and Romania. Particularly, activities in Romania were generally more socially oriented and more visible to outsiders than in Poland. Although in both countries, youth wings follow a similar structure of regular (weekly or fortnightly) meetings and other activities such as debates and training days, the Romanian members emphasised the social activities involved¹¹⁹. In addition, they also generally spent more time on the streets of smaller places, dressed in colourful party clothing than their Polish counterparts. Only in Warsaw, did young members say that street activities were an important feature for them. For example, the Warsaw branch of the Federation of Young Social Democrats (FMS) listed a number of recent activities such as handing out condoms with the FMS logo on them to encourage safe sex and campaigning for people to donate organs. In Romania, these activities appeared to hold more importance, as even at local level street campaigns were a regular occurrence. Examples of activities included handing out roses on Women's day, collecting signatures of support for candidates, handing out flyers, picking up litter and doing charity work for children.

At election time, young party members in both countries explained that young people were especially active in the party's campaign. In Poland, an example of what this entailed was given by a member of People's Party Youth Forum (FML) who explained how at elections young members of the party were busy '*night and day*' helping out with the campaign. A member of the Federation of Young Social Democrats (FMS) said that they did the '*groundwork*' for the election campaign which meant organising meetings and events and handing out leaflets. In Romania, one member of the Social Democratic Youth (TSD) said that young members just had to accept that at election time they did the '*dirty work*' for the older candidates. This included handing out leaflets and accompanying the candidates to villages to speak to the electorate.

4.5 Motivations and Influence of Young Party Members

Based on existing research in established democracies, there are three main reasons why young people generally choose to get involved in party activism. These are joining the

¹¹⁹ The role these play as an incentive to join a party is assessed further in Section 4.5b.

party in order to build a career in politics, for social activities and for policy-seeking or ideological reasons (Recchi 1999, Hooghe et al. 2004, Russell 2005, Cross and Young 2008). Given the contrasting party systems in Poland and Romania, I hypothesised that political parties in Poland would be more likely to be seen to offer opportunities to young people who are motivated by ideological and policy-seeking concerns but would be less likely to offer selective incentives such as social activities or access to jobs. In Romania, youth wings may be able to offer a greater range of selective benefits to their members but the clientelistic nature of the party system may deter young people who are ideologically motivated or policy-seeking.

Within the individual countries, however, it is also possible that the type of opportunities which youth wings can offer their members could also vary depending on factors such as local level penetration and party family. Evidently, a larger party membership at local level could potentially offer members greater access to ‘club’ goods such as social networks, training activities and parties than could a small party based only in large cities. Equally, the opportunities radical, nationalist youth wings such as All-Polish Youth (MW) in Poland and the Greater Romania Youth Organisation (OTRM) in Romania offer their members should be assessed separately as these parties are premised on a strongly ideological basis.

4.5a Youth Wings as a Recruitment Channel and Training Ground for Party Elites

One of the main purposes of youth wings is to act as a recruitment base for future politicians (Scarrow 1996). Indeed, existing research has shown that in several established democracies youth wing activity acts as a particularly strong predictor of future political careerism (Recchi 1999, Hooghe et al. 2004, Russell 2005, Cross and Young 2008). For instance, Recchi (1999) found that the majority of Italian MPs had been members of youth wings and Hooghe et al. (2004) showed 41% of Belgian councillors to have started their political careers in party youth organisations. Evidently, comparative data on the recruitment role of youth wings is unavailable for post-communist countries as many current senior politicians were politically socialised under communism and recruited during the formative period of the party system after 1989. However, data suggests a similar trend is already emerging with reference to younger politicians.

This appears to be particularly the case in Romania, when in October 2007, 63% of parliamentarians under the age of 35 years were either active, or had been active in youth wings¹²⁰. The typical route for these young politicians was similar in all parties and generally consisted of moving up the ranks of the youth wing as local office holder, national office holder and then on to similar positions in the local, regional or national board of the main party.

In Poland, a similar line of progression was less clear and in comparison to Romania only around 37%¹²¹ of young parliamentarians in October 2007 had started their career in the youth wing. Of these just under half were those elected from the League of Polish Families (LPR), who were also all members of All-Polish Youth (MW). These politicians have since all lost their parliamentary seats. This means the overall figure may over represent the importance of youth wing membership for other parties. Instead of building their career through the youth wing, many parliamentarians had initially held positions in local self-government and in the local main party office¹²². However, this does not negate the relevance of youth wings in Poland for starting a political career. Indeed, it is likely that the main reason for the contrast with Romania is the lesser degree of local level organisation of youth wings in Poland, meaning that a politically ambitious young person is obliged instead to join the main party straight away.

4.5a(i) Building a Political Career as a Motivation to Join

In established democracies, studies have shown that the possibility of building up a political career acts as a strong motivator for young people to join a party (Recchi 1999). My research on young people in Poland and Romania found that while in Poland this was the case, in Romania this did not appear as important. In interviews with Polish young party members, I was told by a member of Law and Justice Youth Forum

¹²⁰ This is based on my own survey of the CVs of Romanian parliamentarians as found on the website of the Romanian Parliament (www.parlament.ro) in October 2007.

¹²¹ This is based on my own survey of the CVs of Polish parliamentarians in October 2007. The Polish Sejm website shows only the date of birth and occupation of Polish parliamentary deputies but most CVs of the younger deputies can be found on the internet through party websites.

¹²² Also see Dąbrowska and Zagner (2007) who state the typical career path for young politicians is through the youth wing, local council, work in a deputies office or work as a deputy's assistant.

(FMPiS) in Warsaw that the '*only reason to join a youth wing*' was to become a politician. This was a sentiment also expressed by a member of the Federation of Young Social Democrats (FMS) in Warsaw who argued that most people joined the party to pursue a political career.

In Romania, however, many of my interviewees saw building a career in politics as a secondary part of being in a youth wing. For instance, the leader of the Social Democratic Youth (TSD) in Oradea estimated that only around 10% of members joined with ambitions to become politicians. A member of the Greater Romania Youth Organisation (OTRM) in Bucharest also shared these views, stating that most members had no desire to go into formal politics at all.

There are a number of possible reasons for this difference between the views of Polish and Romanian respondents. One is that the Polish respondents were simply more willing to admit to their political ambitions than the Romanians. Indeed, the more elite and urban nature of Polish youth party membership may mean those who join are more able to envisage being successful in pursuing a political career as they have greater access to influential politicians in the main parties. This especially appeared to be the case for the members of Law and Justice Youth Forum (FMPiS) in Warsaw who regularly met with national level politicians inside the parliament where they held their meetings.

However, it may not be this straightforward. In both countries, members told me of dramatic increases and decreases in youth wing membership levels directly before and after elections depending on the success of parties in the polls or with voters. In Poland, for instance, the membership of the Federation of Young Social Democrats (FMS) decreased greatly from around 10,000 members nationwide in the period 2001-2004 to around 6000 after the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) was voted out of government in 2005. In Romania, similar trends were noted by party members¹²³. Members in Poland told me that these fluctuations were because young people perceived a change in governing party as an opportunity to gain political positions. In Romania, the reasoning

¹²³ For example, Social Democratic Youth (TSD) experienced a large decrease in members after the 2004 elections where the Social Democratic Party (PSD) was voted out of government. In contrast the Democratic Party Youth Organisation (OTPD) had a dramatic increase in membership in the run up to the 2004 elections when the Democratic Party (PD) was doing well in the polls.

given by members was significantly different. They said that unlike in Poland, it was not so much the case of perceiving opportunities for political positions but access to other jobs and influential networks. One member of the Social Democratic Youth (TSD) in Oradea explained how many of the ‘new’ members in a party had in fact simply migrated from one party to another. She said this was normal practice and followed the example of members in the main parties. Her own father, a local councillor, had moved his membership from the Social Democratic Party (PSD) to the National Liberal Party (PNL) after the 2004 elections. She said that for him, like many others, this was the only way in which he could continue to access the money from central authorities to spend on developing infrastructure in his town. Indeed, studies have also highlighted that this local level party migration is a relatively common place occurrence in Romania (Beers 2004). This can be explained through the clientelistic nature of the party system, which means that with political power comes important links to other influential networks such as media and business (Warner 1997, Ionița 2004).

These fluctuations in membership levels could be said to show a high degree of instrumentalism amongst young people in both countries. Evidently, these young people perceive political opportunities at election time to benefit from party membership, either for building a career or for other selective incentives. However, from these findings alone, it is not clear as to whether this is simply a perception or whether there is evidence that these opportunities actually exist. One way of assessing this is to look at the relative power and influence of young people within parties. First, by assessing how well they are represented in electoral lists and secondly questioning the influence youth wings have over decision-making in the main party.

4.5b Power and Influence of Youth in Parties

4.5b(i) Poland

There was a sense amongst the young party members interviewed in Poland that if someone was not prepared for the struggle to gain a political position then they would soon leave the party. For instance, a member of the Federation of Young Social Democrats (FMS) in Warsaw stated that people who worked out that a political career was not for them generally left the party after ‘*about three months*’. These experiences

afford us a very interesting insight into how the perceptions of opportunities to gain political positions through youth wing membership in Poland may diverge from reality. Indeed, this suggests that the current party system may in fact be more closed to young people than Raciborski (2007) found in his study of political recruitment for older politicians in two Polish governments. He argued that the lack of institutionalisation of the party system meant that positions in government were relatively open to people even at a low level in a party.

One way to look at this in more detail is to assess the representation of young people on party lists in parliamentary elections. The further up the list a candidate is placed, the more likely they are to be elected. Thus, the numbers alone of young people on party lists tell us little about the opportunities for representation. However when these are compared with the numbers who are actually elected, we can start to build up a picture of de facto representation of young people within a given party.

Table 4.9: Polish Candidates (cand.) and Elected Representatives (elec.) by Age Group and Party for the 2005 Parliamentary Elections

Age	Civic Platform (PO)			Law and Justice (PiS)			Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)			Polish People's Party (PSL)			Samoobrona			League of Polish Families (LPR)		
	Cand	Elec	Diff	Cand	Elec	Diff	Cand	Elec	Diff	Cand	Elec	Diff	Cand	Elec	Diff	Cand	Elec	Diff
20-29	13	3	-10	12	3	-8	16	2	-14	7	0	-7	12	2	-10	33	24	-9
30-39	22	14	-8	19	25	+6	14	15	+1	14	8	-6	16	14	-2	14	15	+1
40-49	38	43	+5	38	40	+2	24	18	-6	31	28	-3	29	31	+2	22	26	+4
50-59	24	36	+12	26	28	+2	38	56	+18	38	44	+6	32	46	+14	22	29	+7
60+	3	4	+1	5	4	-1	8	9	+1	10	20	+10	11	7	-4	9	6	-3
Totals	100	100		100	100		100	100		100	100		100	100		100	100	

(Note: Diff. is the difference between number of candidates on the list and the number elected for each age group. Source: Polish National Electoral Commission (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza))

Table 4.9 shows these figures for the 2005 parliamentary election in Poland. The final column shows the percentage difference between listed candidates and elected. By looking at the percentage of elected candidates for the age group 20-29 years, we can see that for all parties except the Polish People's Party (PSL) and the League of Polish Families (LPR), the representation of young members is very similar (at 2-3%). PSL has no elected 20-29 year olds but in contrast LPR has 24%. This suggests that opportunities in the 2005 elections for young people, with the exception of LPR, were relatively low. The high level for LPR could be explained through the exceptional nature of its success in these elections which was short lived. As such the success of this party was an example of the continued weakness of party system institutionalisation referred to by Raciborski (2007). For young members of All-Polish Youth (MW) and the League of Polish Families (LPR) it therefore meant an opening in opportunities for political progression. For the other parties, however, particularly those which have become more programmatic and stable like Civic Platform (PO) and the Polish People's Party (PSL), the de facto opportunities for young members to progress politically appear less.

To assess whether these figures offer an accurate overview of the representation of young people within parties, it is necessary to try and build up a picture of the linkages between the youth wings and the main parties.

Within the parties in Poland, there was a clear division between the larger, more widespread regime successor parties and the newer centre-right parties. In the former, the youth wings were more independent of the main party.

For instance, a member of the youth wing of PSL (FML) explained that although FML is part of PSL,

'the youth wing is independent of PSL, we criticise the party or not depending on the issue. Of course though we publicly support them and help them at election times'.

This separation was even more pronounced in the case of the Federation of Young Social Democrats (FMS) and the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). A member of FMS in Warsaw said that except for supporting the main party at election time and receiving

funding, the youth organisation and the party were not particularly connected. In addition, she pointed to a number of policy issues on which the youth wing and the main party publicly disagree¹²⁴. This rather difficult relationship could stem from the volatile history of FMS which has had to disband and reform in various ways as the main party has reinvented itself (see section 4.2a(i)). As a result of this continued reinvention, there are still pronounced divisions in the party between those who have more liberal, European oriented ideas and others who have a more traditional view of socialist ideas, often rooted in personal experiences of communism.

This division is most evident between the youth wing and the main party. At first this also appears paradoxical as the present leaders of SLD itself are also young (see section 4.2a(i)). It suggests that these young leaders may in fact act more as representatives of the party's desired youthful image rather than a reflection of its member's views or of the people within the party who hold the actual decision-making powers. This was also suggested by a member of FMS who highlighted a clear generational divide between the older members of the SLD and the younger ones. She said, *'the older ones are a bit afraid of the younger ones because they have travelled, know languages and so are a bit of a threat.'* In such a case, it would follow that it was in the main party's interests to only promote those young people who can be trusted to follow the party line and to keep de facto representation of the youth wing within the main party to a minimum. This has also been found in studies on parties in established democracies where party members who deviate too far from the party line begin to act as a liability for the party and therefore have to be marginalised (Scarrow 1996, Russell 2005).

In contrast to the communist successor parties, the youth wings of the centre-right parties appear to have a less problematic relationship with the main parties. This appears to be linked to the degree of independence the youth wing has from the main party. One member of the youth wing of Law and Justice (PiS, FMPiS) explained that the youth wing and the main party were not really very separate organisations and that after the leaders of FMPiS were elected into parliament in 2005, there remained little will to

¹²⁴ These included supporting the rights of the LGBT community and in particular the introduction of marriage between homosexual people which she explained caused varying degrees of outrage amongst members of SLD. Another issue mentioned was the fact that the youth wing had not supported the sending of Polish troops to Iraq by the SLD government of the time. See also Kuligowski (2007) on the differences of opinion between FMS and SLD.

promote the youth wing as an independent organisation. She suggested instead that young people could just join the main party. Similarly, a member of the Young Democrats ('S'MD) explained that the activities of the youth wing were strongly linked with those of the main party, Civic Platform (PO). In this case, it could be suggested that these parties would be more willing to support greater de facto representation of young people in the party and to promote them to higher posts. This is because the lack of independence granted to the youth wing means that its members could be seen as less of a threat than in the regime successor parties. This is partly supported by the figures in table 4.9 which show that in the Polish People's Party (PSL) and the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) fewer young people were elected than in the centre-right parties. However, this difference is not pronounced and other factors such as the make-up of the electorate and support base could also influence these figures.

4.5b(ii) Romania

In Romania, the views expressed about the difficulty in pursuing a political career were similar to those given by interviewees in Poland. For instance, one member of the Democratic Party Youth Organisation (OTPD) in Oradea gave the following overview of her experience.

'The party is very time consuming. At the beginning I had some dream of being a deputy or a senator but I didn't realise how difficult it was and I simply do not have the time with work and family etc.'

However, in contrast to Poland, there was also a sense amongst young members that parties were less closed to young people and that there were opportunities for young people to have significant leverage within parties. For instance, a member of Democratic Party Youth Organisation (OTPD) in Alexandria stated that she felt that young people in Romania still had a possibility to influence politics, unlike in established democracies where she saw the system was already closed to new people. One way of assessing the nature of this possible influence and comparing it to Poland, is to look at the representation of Romanian young members in party lists.

Table 4.10 : Romanian Candidates (cand.) and Elected Representatives (elec.) by Age Group (%) and Party for the 2004 Parliamentary Elections

	PNL-PD			PSD- PUR			PRM			UDMR		
Age	Cand	Elec	Diff	Cand	Elec	Diff	Cand	Elec	Diff	Cand	Elec	Diff
20-29	11	7	-4	12	4	-8	12	2	-10	37	5	-32
30-39	24	25	+1	22	22	0	22	25	+3	24	18	-6
40-49	39	38	-1	30	33	+3	24	15	-9	14	27	+13
50-59	23	25	+2	29	34	+5	30	33	+3	17	45	+28
60+	3	5	+2	7	7	0	12	25	+13	8	5	-3
Totals	100	100		100	100		100	100		100	100	

(**Note:** Diff is the difference between the number of candidates on the list and the number elected for each age group. **PNL-PD:** Democratic Party and National Liberal Party Alliance, **PSD-PUR:** Social Democratic Party and Conservative Party Alliance, **PRM:** Greater Romania Party, **UDMR:** Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania **Source:** Romanian Election Bureau 2004)

Table 4.10 sets out the candidate lists by age group for each of the main party groups¹²⁵ in the 2004 Romanian Parliamentary elections. The first observation which can be made is that compared to the results in Poland, the percentages of 20-29 year old candidates elected were generally higher. In the case of the Democratic Party and Liberal Party Alliance (PD-PNL) this age group represented 7% of the elected candidates. This contrast is more evident if we compare the 30-39 year age group in each country. Here only the Polish Law and Justice (PiS) and League of Polish Families (LPR) have percentages which are comparable to those of the Romanian parties. This suggests that the opportunities for representation and influence of young people in parties may be greater in Romania. Although the party system has not been as volatile as in Poland, the parties remain less programmatic and therefore more focused on short term gains. This may mean that the opportunities for young people to progress in these parties are left more open.

¹²⁵ The parties are not listed separately because PD and PNL competed as an alliance as did PSD-PUR.

In comparison with Poland, the youth wings of all parties appear to have greater influence over decisions made within the larger party. Often this is because the large membership of the youth wing means that if older politicians can gain the backing of young members, then they have a support base within the party. This is especially important when there are internal party power battles between older politicians (Lazescu 2005). In this case, different party factions may attempt to consolidate their positions within the party through endorsement by members. The youth wing therefore offers a ready-made supply for this support.

One consequence of this is the prominence youth wings appear to be granted within the main parties. This is most obvious at times such as the summer schools held by the youth wings, where prominent older politicians compete to ingratiate themselves with younger members. Evidently, this relationship has to be reciprocal. In return for their backing, specific young members are rapidly promoted through the party ranks (Lazescu 2005). The existence of such relationships was supported by a member of the Social Democratic Youth (TSD) in Oradea who explained,

'I don't care so much for a party position. I have been here (in the party) for 5 years now and don't have a position. There are others though who are here for 2 months and yes of course they have a position if they want one. It all just depends who you support'.

This suggests that in Romania, the sheer number of young members means that they cannot simply be ignored by the main parties and older politicians. Indeed, older politicians need them to reinforce their own power within the party. However, this representation within the party also comes at a cost. The prevalence of such reciprocal agreements between older politicians and young aspiring members suggests that the party is also able to effectively minimise representation of those young members who do not take part in such alliances. Indeed, the weak influence of young members in general decision-making within the party was stressed by a number of interviewees. For instance, one member of the Democratic Party Youth Organisation (OTPD) in Oradea explained that the main party *'rarely listen to the ideas of the youth wing'*. She said that although the youth wing had representatives on the main board of the party, they were seldom given an opportunity to speak. She explained,

‘There is a strange atmosphere at the moment. Young people often know more than the older ones but they are not trusted because they don’t have experience’.

The apparently unequal representation of young people in parties in Romania supports the hypothesis that the clientelistic party system means that parties and politicians are often in a position to offer young people selective benefits in return for support. In Poland, it appears that the influence young members have in main parties differs depending on party family. However, the findings suggest that the path for young people to gain representation in the main party generally follows a clearer set of predefined steps than in Romania. This indicates that, as hypothesised, the more programmatic party system means that parties are less able to rely on selective benefits to gain support from young members.

4.5c Opportunities to Access Social and Other Incentives

As explained above, other incentives may also play a part in motivating young people to join political parties. These may take the form of ‘club’ goods like social activities offered by the party or they may be other kinds of selective benefits such as access to non-political jobs or networks.

The prevailing party system could be hypothesised to have an impact on which of these incentives can be offered to members. As hypothesised in chapter two, parties which make up a programmatic party system, as generally the case in Poland, are less likely to have access to incentives which they can pass on to their members. In contrast, parties in a clientelistic party system, like in Romania, will generally derive their support from a complex network of relationships where the political parties can offer members and supporters benefits in return.

Although the party system in a country could be expected to have an important influence over the practices of individual parties within it, access to certain ‘club’ goods and selective incentives such as social activities offered by parties may also be determined by the size and nature of different parties within a given country. Thus, a larger party with more developed local level organisation could be expected to be able

to offer its members more in the way of social activities than a small, urban based party. This was the case, for instance, for the large post-war Young Conservatives in the UK, who were renowned for the social occasions organised for members (Abrams and Little 1965, Holroyd-Doveton 1996, Russell 2005). In this case, we could hypothesise that the youth wings of parties in Romania would generally be better placed than those in Poland to offer their members access to social activities.

4.5c (i) Access to Social Activities in Poland and Romania

Based on interviews with young party members, the most socially active youth wings in Poland appeared to be the regime successor parties (SLD, PSL) and the youth wing of Civic Platform (PO, 'S'MD). The members of these parties mentioned socialising with other similar minded young people as one attraction of membership. However, even in these parties it was stressed that social activities were secondary to political goals and incentives. In the smaller, more urban based youth wing of Law and Justice Youth Forum (PiS, FMPiS), socialising with other members was a negligible part of party activity.

In contrast, in Romania, members of the youth wing of the Social Democratic Party (PSD, TSD) in particular stressed that social networks were a significant attraction of the youth wing. For instance, one member in Oradea emphasised, *'if you join a political party you meet new people and make new friends'*. She said that because of the party she has *'a friend in every county'* and added that there is *'not a city in this country where I wouldn't have a place to sleep'*. Even for the smaller parties such as the youth wing of the National Liberal Party (PNL, TNL) socialising appeared high on the agenda of youth activities in Romania. At a TNL meeting, members I spoke to stressed that the most important part of going to the meetings was *'for the drink with friends afterwards'*.

The importance of social activities was such for some members in Romania, that they were stated as the main reason for joining the party and as reasons for continuing with party activism even when they had no personal political ambitions. This was summed up by a member of the Democratic Party Youth Organisation (OTPD) in Alexandria who said,

'The reasons for being a member are many. There is nothing for young people to do here but if they come to the party they can meet people and have opportunities to travel also'

The importance of 'club' goods to young party members in Romania appears to mirror those offered by youth wings in the past in established democracies. In this way they offer a service to young people in places which lack other opportunities. However, this does not tell us about the influence of the clientelistic party system on youth party membership in Romania. Rather it shows that youth wings, through their size and local level penetration, are in a position to offer social opportunities to young people which otherwise would not exist.

4.5c (ii) Access to other Selective Benefits in Poland and Romania

To understand the impact of the different party systems on the motivations of young people to join political parties in Poland and Romania, we must try and assess whether membership offers perceived or real opportunities to access other selective benefits such as non-political jobs and networks. However, accurately measuring the existence of how these goods are offered to party members is extremely problematic as people are generally hesitant to divulge such information (Kopecký 2006, Uslaner 2008).

Therefore, in my interviews with party members in both countries, it was unsurprising that they did not directly provide information about selective incentives gained as a result of party membership. However, as the perception of the availability of these goods could be as persuasive a reason to join as the actual existence of such incentives, the opinions of non-members are also important. If access to selective incentives is seen as an opportunity provided by membership of youth wings by non members it is likely that this perception may also attract some members in the first place.

In Poland, focus group respondents did not see youth party membership as a way to gaining non-political jobs or power in other spheres outside politics. Indeed, several respondents stressed that youth party membership could actually be detrimental for prospects in gaining non-political jobs. One respondent in Bielsko-Biala (m,18) explained,

'you would have to be very sure you wanted to be involved in politics to join a party otherwise it could be a problem for work later'.

This was supported by another in Warsaw (m,17) who said,

'people have to leave politics if they get a job somewhere else because that is not a good connection'.

This therefore corresponds with the findings in Section 4.5a(i) that building a political career acts as a very important incentive for joining a youth wing in Poland and that those who decide that a political career is not for them generally leave the party. It also represents a significant contrast with the response from non-members in Romania.

In Romania, youth party activism was seen by many focus group respondents as a way to gain contacts with local business, media and also to get into fields such as diplomacy. One respondent in Oradea (f,17) summed up, *'young people join parties for money and connections mostly'*. Instead of membership being detrimental to job prospects as in Poland, it was seen as generally facilitating as another respondent stated (Oradea, m, 25),

'they join because they see some personal benefit in the long term, like a way to get a good job in business or something'.

Indeed, when probed, some young party members in Romania also spoke of the potentially beneficial links between politics, media and business. For instance, a member of Social Democratic Youth (TSD) in Alexandria said that he had found it much easier to get his job in the local media because he got to know the right people through politics. Also, a young member of the Conservative party (PC) in Bucharest explained that it was seen as the 'business' party¹²⁶ and through the party you were able to set up contacts with many influential business people. Members of National Liberal Youth (TNL) and Social Democratic Youth (TSD) in Bucharest both stated that being in

¹²⁶ This refers to the business dealings of the party's leader Dan Voiculescu. See footnote 79.

a party was seen as a good way to gain contacts for acquiring a job in diplomacy or international relations.

Although these findings do not provide conclusive evidence of selective benefits being offered to young party activists in Romania, they do suggest that the clientelistic party system may influence some of those who choose to join a party as they perceive that membership will open up these opportunities for them.

4.5d Ideological/Policy-Seeking Opportunities

One of the main incentives to join a particular party in established democracies is that the party is seen to represent the ideological views or policy beliefs held by that member (Cross 2004, Whiteley et al. 2006). The degree to which this matters as an incentive does however vary from party to party and members of parties with a strong nationalistic character will, for example, generally place ideological concerns higher than members of more middle of the road parties (Cross 2004). Over time, researchers of parties in established democracies have shown that party members often hold more radical ideological views than do their voters (Whiteley et al. 1994, Hooghe et al. 2004). This can mean that members with strong ideological motivations are seen as a liability within the party, especially as parties adopt a more 'catch-all' approach to attracting voters. This has been found to be particularly relevant for certain youth organisations in established democracies (Scarrow 1996, p.40). For instance, in their study of Belgian youth wings, Hooghe et al. (2004) cite the example of the youth wing of the Christian Democratic Party which during the 1970s took on a radical Flemish character which damaged relations between the main party and the French speaking communities in Flanders. Since then the youth wing has shrunk in size and lost its radical profile. Similar examples have also been cited in the UK and in Canada (Cross 2004, Russell 2005).

The role of ideology in party membership in the newer democracies of post-communist Europe is more difficult to qualify. This is partly because the ideological and policy

basis of many parties themselves is less clear¹²⁷. The degree to which voters can identify particular parties on a left/right scale has also been found to differ across the newer democracies¹²⁸. Given the more programmatic nature of parties in Poland, it is hypothesised that parties may hold more appeal for ideologically motivated and policy-seeking young people than in Romania. However, this also depends on whether political parties are perceived by young people as satisfactory platforms for their ideology or policies, or whether, as has been found in established democracies, they prefer to choose other organisations for this purpose instead. It is also expected that the clientelistic nature of the party system in Romania may in fact deter those young people who are ideologically motivated or policy-seeking from joining a party.

In general, youth wing members interviewed were more likely in Poland than in Romania to state that they joined a party for ideological or policy reasons. They were also, with some exceptions, able to set out where they felt their party fell on a left/right divide. As such, one member of the People's Party Youth Forum (FML) placed the Polish People's Party (PSL) as a centre-left party which supported the protection of the agricultural sector but also the free market¹²⁹. A member of the Federation of Young Social Democrats (FMS) said he joined a left wing party because he believed in social democratic ideas such as the separation of politics and the church. Similarly, a member of 'S'MD said she believed in the liberalisation of markets and positive Europeanisation which made Civic Platform (PO) a centre-right party. One exception was given by a member of Law and Justice Youth Forum (FMPiS) who said the party had no specific left/right ideology, but its policies were determined by Catholic values. However, she also stated that the party was in support of policies which would 'decommunise' political and public life. The views given here correspond to the mixture of various ideological cleavages in Polish parties and society which have been found by previous

¹²⁷ Particularly, studies have found that the traditional left/right classification of parties used in established democracies is often less relevant in newer democracies (Zarycki 2000). Indeed researchers of parties in post-communist countries have tended to divide voter preferences into cleavages based on other categories such as between regime successor parties and parties which developed out of dissident groups such as Solidarity in Poland (Zarycki 2000, Szczerbiak 2001, Raciborski 2007).

¹²⁸ In Poland, for instance, studies have found that, despite electoral and party volatility, Poles are generally familiar with the notions of left and right and can place individual parties under these headings, although the meanings they attach to these labels probably differs from those given by citizens in established democracies (Szczerbiak 2001). In contrast, Romanian voters have been found to be generally less familiar with the idea of a left/right ideological divide than people in all other post-communist countries except some former USSR states and Bulgaria (Rotariu and Comşa 2006).

¹²⁹ An internal study of FML members conducted in 2007 also found that the majority had joined because they supported the ideology and programme of the party.

studies. Thus, they refer to the divide between regime successor parties and 'new' parties formed after 1989 (Lewis 2000, Raciborski 2007) and a divide based on moral or religious grounds (Zarycki 2000).

In Romania, interviewees did not generally see ideology as an incentive to join a political party. Only the members of the youth wing of the Social Democratic Party (TSD) stated that they had joined a left wing party for social democratic ideals such as free healthcare and education for the underprivileged. Members of other parties rarely stated any ideological reasons for becoming involved in a particular party and instead of examples of policies or programme simply listed social activities or campaigns undertaken by the youth wing at local or national level. Indeed, members of the Conservative Party (PC) explicitly said that they had no idea of the ideology supported by the party and could not place it on a left/right axis or even compare the party's ideological basis to that of other parties.

4.5d(i) How Well do Parties satisfy Ideological Demands?

a. Poland

In Poland, members of youth wings appeared generally satisfied with the way in which their parties operated as a platform for their beliefs. However, this was less the case for some members of the youth wing of the regime successor party, Democratic Left Alliance (SLD, FMS) who felt that the policies of the main party were less radical than they would like. These differences in opinion can be partly explained by the independence of the youth wing from the main party (See Section 4.5b(i)).

b. Romania

In Romania, there was some evidence that for those who were ideologically motivated or policy-seeking, being in the party was more of struggle. Indeed, the views expressed by some youth wing members suggested a distinct separation between their ideological beliefs and what parties could offer them. An example of this was given by a member of the Social Democratic Youth (TSD) in Oradea. He explained,

'It can be disappointing, I can tell you. I have had moments that you get a kick in the ass then it is hard to continue but you have to if you really believe in a thing that actually doesn't exist in Romania in the parties. They don't have one idea, they don't care about it. For example liberals, democrats or social democrats they don't believe in such subjects most of them. Most of them where the power is where I want to go and that's something the new generation, the youth should start or try to change'.

Another who joined the Conservative Party (PC) in Bucharest was also disappointed by the lack of ideology and policy making in the party. He stated,

'The problem is quite a lot of those lazy guys are in a party because they see this guy in the city earns quite a lot of money through politics and maybe I could too.....they don't chose a party because it offers them something to believe in because all the parties are the same'

These views of young party members in Romania are very interesting for a number of reasons. First, the references they make to the lack of programme and ideology together with the suggestion that people join parties in order to make money and gain power implies that they see the prevailing party system as a barrier to developing parties along the lines of ideology and programme. This corresponds with the findings of other studies into clientelistic party systems, which have found that the clientelistic practices of parties are likely in the long term to alienate their supporters within the party and from the electorate¹³⁰. This is because they can only offer short term benefits to supporters. This puts them in an unstable situation because if the benefits then dry up many supporters will simply move to another party. As we saw in Section 4.5a(i), this party migration appears to be a prominent feature not only of main parties in Romania but also across youth wings. In turn, this means that parties necessarily attract many opportunists, after short term benefits, such as power or money.

¹³⁰ See Warner (1997) for an overview of studies conducted in post-authoritarian Brazil, Italy and Turkey.

4.5e. The Radical Nationalist Exception

Although the role of ideology generally contrasts importantly for youth members across Poland and Romania, the youth wings of parties which support a strong nationalist agenda constitute an exception. In both All-Polish Youth (MW) in Poland and the Greater Romania Youth Organisation (OTRM) in Romania, members cite traditionalism, nationalism and religion as incentives for joining the youth wing. Studies on extremism in Eastern Europe, have found that young people are often attracted to these groups (Minkenberg 2002, Kopecký 2003, Kurti 2003, Mudde 2005) for the reasons that they offer a definite ideological stance and use direct methods of activism. However, as both of these parties have now lost all seats in the national parliaments, the popularity of these youth wings is probably considerably less than portrayed in the media.

In particular, when these parties achieved some degree of electoral success in Poland and Romania, their ability to persist on ideological stance alone was questioned. In Poland, for instance the electoral success of the League of Polish Families in 2005 (LPR) intensified divisions between the main party and the youth wing. Although many LPR positions in the parliament were taken up by former members of MW¹³¹, there ensued an ideological battle between LPR who increasingly did not want to be associated with the extremism of MW¹³². On the side of MW, many members felt that LPR had become too liberal after being elected¹³³.

4.6 Conclusions

This chapter had two central aims. First, it aimed to outline the level and nature of youth party membership in Poland and Romania. Second, it endeavoured to analyse the logics behind this type of participation and to reach an understanding of how these compared between the two countries and with existing study in established democracies. The chapter tested two main comparative hypotheses. These centred on differing political

¹³¹ See section 4.5b(i).

¹³² See Footnote 87.

¹³³ In Romania also, internal divisions between the youth wing and the main party have also resulted in high profile disputes. One example of this was the resignation of the leader of the Greater Romania Youth Organisation (OTRM), Lia Olguța Vasilescu in 2007. She decided to join the Social Democratic Party (PSD) instead (See România Liberă (19th Dec. 2007), '*Lia Olguța Vasilescu pleacă de la PRM la PSD*').

opportunities offered for youth participation in parties created by administrative decentralisation reform and the prevailing party system. Therefore, I expected that in Poland, greater decentralisation and the development of a programmatic party system would mean more open channels for formal participation in parties. In Romania, I expected that the clientelistic party system would mean greater opportunities for parties to offer members selective benefits but that channels for participation on ideological or policy-seeking grounds would be 'blocked'. The findings of this chapter broadly support these hypotheses.

Youth party membership levels in Poland were found to be notably low in comparison to Romania and also to established democracies. The local level structure of youth wings was also largely undeveloped and most members were based in the large urban centres. As in established democracies, young members were generally highly educated and often have links to parties through family members. The incentives for young people in Poland to join parties were mainly based on building a political career. There was little evidence that young members joined for other selective benefits such as short-term access to power or money and social benefits were negligible. The power of young people within parties varied depending on party family, where the de facto representation of young people in the centre-right parties is higher than that in the regime successor parties. However, this also appears to stem from the higher degree of control which the centre-right parties exert over their youth wings. This suggests that the young people who climb party ranks are also often those which pose the party no threat. In addition, the de facto representation of young people in all parties was found to be relatively low in comparison to Romania, suggesting that only those young people who are determined to build a political career will be motivated to join and remain a member of a political party.

In Romania, the higher level of youth membership in parties was coupled with a greater local level penetration of youth wings across the country. This meant the resources of the members are more varied than in Poland, where young members generally constituted an urbanised elite of young people. I found a broader range of incentives for participation in parties in Romania. As hypothesised, members joined for social reasons and for other selective benefits. Yet, there was less emphasis on joining to build a political career. This appears paradoxical as the de facto representation of young people

in main parties was found to be higher than in Poland. However, influence of young people within parties was also often limited to acting as ‘puppets’ for older politicians and factions within the main party. This meant that channels for policy-seeking or ideological motivated participation were often ‘blocked’. This was reflected in the findings that few members joined for these reasons, and those who did were often disappointed. In turn this suggests that although parties in Romania are able to make use of clientelistic networks to offer young people selective incentives, this is only offered to those who will provide support for older politicians but will not challenge the status quo.

The findings of this chapter therefore suggest that youth political participation in formal modes of involvement in Poland and Romania are significantly influenced by the prevailing party systems in each country. This means that in Poland, the political opportunities to participate are more similar to in established democracies. However, these opportunities are often only recognised by young people who have high levels of resources and are particularly politically motivated. This appears to be a product of the top-down development of Polish post-communist political parties and in turn this suggests that this elitism in the party system will persevere. In Romania, the widespread clientelism in the party system ‘blocks’ the channels for formal youth political participation. However, this is often masked by the larger numbers of young people who join political parties for social reasons and selective benefits.

CHAPTER FIVE – INFORMAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

5.1 Introduction

In the two previous chapters, I assessed youth political participation in Poland and Romania in the two main traditional forms of political involvement, voting and party membership. However, as explained in chapter one, political participation is made up of a broad range of activities, of which traditional forms constitute only one part. To understand the reasons behind youth political participation patterns it is therefore also imperative to look at whether and how young people engage in informal modes of political involvement. In this chapter I focus on explaining and analysing two types of informal youth political participation in Poland and Romania, volunteering and involvement in single-issue protest activities such as demonstrating and petitioning.

As outlined in chapter one and reiterated in chapter three, recent studies in established democracies have found that while young people appear to have become less interested and participative in the traditional forms of political involvement, they have shown an increasing interest in informal forms of participation (Norris 2002, 2003, Kimberlee 2002, Shea and Green 2006, Quintelier 2007, Sloam 2007). Norris (2003) argues that as the range of repertoires (methods of participation) and agencies (organisations through which people participate) commonly used in political participation in established democracies has expanded, informal activities have become increasingly ‘normalised’¹³⁴. This has made them more accessible to a wider range of young people by reducing the individual ‘costs’ and resources required to participate. In turn, it has been suggested that informal forms of participation may act as an alternative to voting and party membership as they create a ‘voice’ for young people who feel alienated and unrepresented by formal political agents (Norris 2003). However, as already outlined in chapter three, this is a problematic assumption. Indeed, it is unclear whether there is such a trade-off between youth involvement in informal forms and engagement in traditional forms (Henn et al. 2005). It could be that the young people who are involved in all types of political participation make up a small politically active core of young

¹³⁴ For a discussion of the ‘normalisation’ of protest and protestors in established democracies see Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001).

people, whereas the majority remain inactive and have chosen to ‘exit’ political involvement altogether (Sloam 2007, Cross and Young 2008)¹³⁵. In this case, it would suggest that despite increased interest and participation in informal forms of participation, the gap between young people who participate politically and those who are inactive is actually widening (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001).

In newer democracies, such as Poland and Romania, this gap between politically active and inactive citizens may be even more pronounced as studies have found generally low levels of participation in informal forms of political involvement across all age groups (Smolar 1996, Ekiert and Kubik 1998, Mudde 2003, Howard 2003, Vanhuyse 2004, Rose-Ackerman 2005, Bernhagen and Marsh 2007). Several different factors have been cited to explain this. The most straightforward explanation is that lower levels of socioeconomic resources mean people have less time and money to get involved in informal forms of political participation in newer democracies (Lewis 1997, Bernhagen and Marsh 2007). However, this theory fails to account for the argument that people with fewer resources often have less to lose from involvement in informal activities and so theoretically would be more likely to seize external political opportunities to participate than those with resources (Tarrow 1998). To address this, more complex explanations focus on the constraints placed on participation by the legacy of ‘forced’ participation in voluntary activities during communism which mean people often continue to favour private family and friends networks over participation in the public sphere (Smolar 1996, Howard 2003, Mudde 2003). Other approaches cite the post-1989 institutionalisation of anti-communist movements such as Solidarity in Poland as having diffused political opportunities for protest (Tarrow 1998, Ost 2005, Della Porta and Diani 2006)¹³⁶.

However, the degree to which these factors influence the participation of the present young cohort in informal forms of political involvement in newer democracies remains unclear. As they had no direct experience of living through communism, the way in

¹³⁵ In his qualitative study of young activists (NGOs, political parties and informal forms) and non-active people in the UK, Sloam (2007) found that activists had a different conception of politics from that of non-activists and were likely to be involved in a large range of different activities whereas non-activists had ‘exited’ political participation in favour of civic volunteerism or inaction.

¹³⁶ As protest declines and movements become absorbed by elites the resources and opportunities to participate in protest activities also diminish and action becomes more costly for participants (Tarrow 1998, p. 89, Della Porta and Diani 2006, p.224).

which legacies from this time impact on their political participation patterns is likely to differ from that of older age groups. Indeed, one of the predictions made by scholars (Szompta 1996, Berglund et al. 2001, Howard 2003) studying participation in informal forms of political involvement in post-communist countries over the last two decades has been that over time and with generational replacement, the influence of these legacies will diminish and that participation patterns will start then to more closely relate to those in established democracies (Sztompka 1996, Howard 2003). The emergence of this new cohort of young people in Poland and Romania therefore offers us an invaluable opportunity to assess whether in their choices and attitudes towards participation in informal forms there is indeed evidence that these predictions are beginning to come to fruition.

5.1a Hypotheses Tested in Chapter Five

This chapter tests the following comparative hypotheses as set out in chapter two:

H1. Contrasting legacies of anti-communist dissidence and repression of dissidence are likely to have differing impacts on youth participation in informal forms today. In Poland (H1.1) the legacy of organised and peaceful dissidence is hypothesised to mean the existence of greater political opportunities to participate. In Romania (H1.2) lack of organised dissidence followed by post-communist violent repression of protest is likely to mean less political opportunities to participate, but that there may be potential for more radicalised and intense youth protest than in Poland.

H4. Higher socioeconomic levels in Poland could be expected to mean that young people have greater resources to participate in informal forms of participation. In Romania the opposite could be expected.

5.1b Chapter Outline

This chapter is separated into two main sections. The first analyses the participation of youth in Poland and Romania in non-governmental voluntary organisations. Here, I start by comparing and contrasting the nature of volunteering in these countries with that in established democracies and across different age groups within each country. I use this

to question the relationships between different types of volunteering (civic and cause-oriented) and youth political participation in general and to analyse the logics behind youth participation and non-participation in voluntary activities.

The second section assesses youth participation and non-participation in protest activities in Poland and Romania. First, I employ descriptive statistics and findings from qualitative research to outline how much and in what ways young people in these countries participate in protest activities. Then, by using focus group data and country-specific examples, I question how the logics behind youth protest participation and non-participation compare between Poland and Romania and with findings in established democracies.

5.2. Youth Participation in Voluntary Organisations

5.2a. What kind of Volunteering?

In their survey of political participation in America, Verba et al (1995) renewed the Tocquevillian idea of civic voluntarism which suggests a positive link between voluntary activity and political action. Social capital theory has built on this, arguing that involvement in voluntary organisations increases individual levels of trust and access to social networks which through processes of socialisation make people more likely to participate in traditional forms of political participation (Putnam 1993, 2000). However, recent studies have suggested that different types of volunteering have different relationships with political action (Van Deth et al. 2007, Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009). Indeed, civic volunteering, that is volunteering in church, community based or leisure organisations may actually represent an ‘exit’ from political involvement or have no relationship with traditional forms of political participation. In contrast, volunteer work in ‘cause oriented’ groups such as interest groups and activist groups may have a positive correlation with political involvement in other forms (Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009). Van Der Meer and Van Ingen (2009) argue that the logic behind this contrast stems from the goals of the voluntary organisation. This means that only participants in those organisations which aim to change political policy are likely to also be involved in other forms of political involvement. Voluntary organisations which are leisure oriented or community based generally focus on

providing a service and do not interact with formal politics. Thus they may provide an alternative to political participation rather than acting as a basis for political mobilisation.

This separation between different types of volunteering (civic-oriented and cause-oriented) is particularly important to consider when assessing youth political participation. This is because although various studies in established democracies have highlighted the heightened interest and participation of young people in both types of voluntary organisation in comparison to involvement in formal political participation, there is often a lack of systematic analysis of how these different types of volunteering relate to wider political participation (Jones 2000, Norris 2003, Fahmy 2006, Sloam 2007).

In newer democracies the effects of different types of volunteering on wider youth political participation are even less explored and such study is further complicated by some specific post-communist factors. Particularly a legacy of ‘forced’ voluntary activity during communism has left older people, especially, with very different connotations of volunteering from those in established democracies (Norris 2002, 2003, Howard 2003). This can either refer to the institutionalised volunteering in sports and youth clubs during communism or in some cases to military service¹³⁷. Volunteering in cause-oriented organisations which aim to change political policy through lobbying and other actions is therefore a relatively new concept in post-communist countries and the organisations which do exist have often been initiated and supported by western-based organisations (Mendelson and Glenn 2002). We could therefore hypothesise that levels of youth volunteering in cause-oriented organisations would be lower in Poland and Romania than in established democracies.

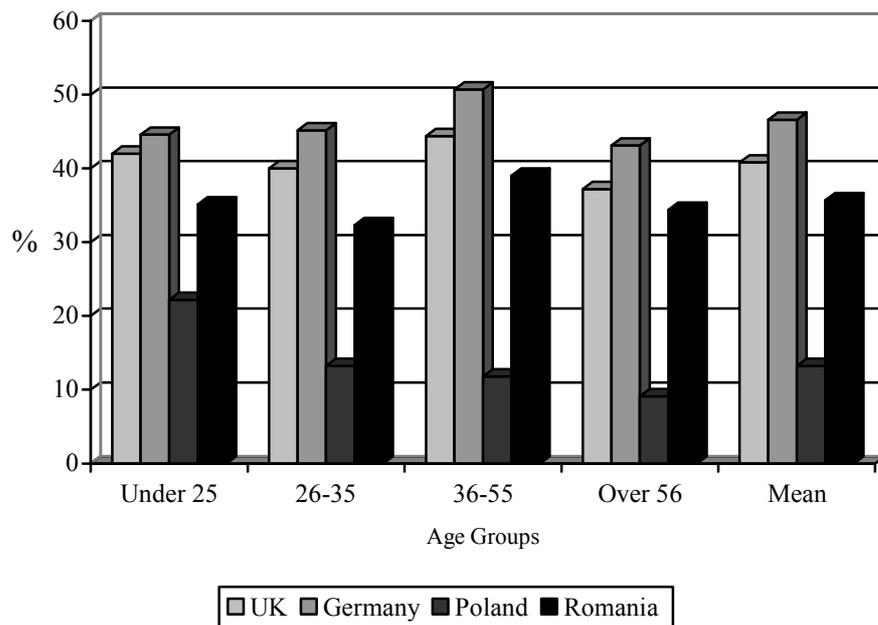
5.2b Comparing Youth Volunteering in Poland and Romania

In the following section I use descriptive statistics and national level surveys to outline levels of youth volunteering in Poland and Romania and to assess the nature of such participation. However, as interpretations of voluntary activity are likely to vary from

¹³⁷ See Musiała (2005) who explains that the different interpretations of the Polish word ‘wolontariusz’ acts as a barrier to developing the youth voluntary sector in Poland.

country to country and from person to person, this is difficult to measure (Newton 1999). This is made more problematic by the differences between involvement in informal and formal organisations where measuring involvement in formal organisations such as trade unions or church organisations is more straightforward than in informal and more ad hoc cause-oriented organisations such as environmental pressure groups. In addition, it is impossible to infer from survey results alone whether volunteering refers to participation in civic organisations or cause-oriented or a combination. These difficulties mean that response to survey questions which ask about volunteering should be interpreted with caution. Nonetheless they can provide us with a starting point for a general comparison of voluntary activity across different countries and age groups.

Figure 5.1: Involved in Voluntary Activities in the past 12 Months by Country and Age Group



(Source: European Social Survey 2006 UK: N=2386, Germany: N= 2915, Poland: N= 1720, Romania: N= 2139)

Figure 5.1 represents the response to the European Social Survey (ESS) 2006 question, ‘How often have you volunteered in the past 12 months?’ by country and age group. The positive response represents the percentage of those who stated they had volunteered regularly or occasionally during the past year. According to the figures, as

could be expected from findings of previous studies on newer democracies (Howard 2003, Tworzecki 2008), Poles and Romanians appear less likely to volunteer than respondents in the established democracies. This is particularly pronounced in the case of Poland and again this corresponds with existing study which has found Poles to be generally less involved in volunteering than other nationalities in Europe (Kolarska-Bobińska 2007, Tworzecki 2008). However, it can be noted that, in Poland, in contrast to the other countries represented, the percentages of people volunteering decreases with age with the youngest cohort the most likely to volunteer. This is an interesting finding and as such requires greater analysis.

5.2b (i) Poland

In Poland the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) (2003) report on youth found that most young volunteers were involved in sports organisations and church related groups, with only 1% of volunteers involved in other types of organisation. The findings of a report by the Polish Centre for Volunteering (Gumkowska and Herbst 2006) supported this and found that volunteers were mainly involved in organisations which help underprivileged people, religious organisations or local level groups such as the volunteer fire fighters.

Indeed, the most significant voluntary participation amongst young people in Poland appears to be in organisations linked to the Catholic Church. As explained in chapter three, the organisational strength of the Catholic Church associations in Poland is well documented, and is often attributed to the role the Church played in supporting anti-communist dissidence during the 1970s and 1980s. By the early 1990s, the church had established itself as the '*largest actor in the voluntary sector*' (Millard 1999, p.119, Herbert 2003). In addition, the importance of these Catholic organisations for young people may be growing. For instance, the largest Catholic charity, Caritas Polski which helps the poor and elderly, estimated that its number of young volunteers had doubled between 2004-2006 (Najfeld 2006¹³⁸). Certainly, the involvement of young people in charitable organisations connected to the church was confirmed by focus group

¹³⁸ However, this is also disputed by other studies which have suggested that the social organisations connected to the Catholic Church are becoming less attractive to young people (Sowa 2007). See chapter three section 3.3c(ii) for a discussion of young people and religious activity in Poland.

respondents, a number of whom had participated in fund raising and helping out at hospitals. As discussed in chapter three there was some evidence that these volunteers were choosing this type of activity as an alternative to formal political participation and that their involvement had actually made them feel even more alienated from political agents as they felt that politicians simply did not care for the poor and needy¹³⁹.

Youth participation in 'cause-oriented' organisations in Poland therefore appears very limited and according to the Polish Opinion Research Center (CBOS) (2003) Report constitutes less than one percent of those young people who volunteer. However despite this, studies suggest youth have a greater representation in interest groups and activist organisations than older cohorts (Gliński 1994, 2000 Klon/Jawor 2004). For instance, the Klon/Jawor (2004) report on NGOs in Poland found that 61% of volunteers in these organisations were less than 30 years old. This suggests that although youth participation in such organisations may be very low, it could be gradually increasing in comparison to older cohorts as the data in Figure 5.1 suggested.

In contrast to the views of those who were involved in civic volunteering, the young people I interviewed who volunteered in interest groups or activist organisations were generally also politically motivated. One example was given by one of the founders (f, 23 Warsaw) of Wybieram.pl¹⁴⁰ which is a Warsaw based organisation designed to mobilise young people to vote. She explained that although she felt that politicians and political parties were unrepresentative of young people and that they often did not listen to the needs of the electorate, that it was important that young people realised that voting in an election was a democratic duty. She stated that she was not interested in joining a political party or becoming a politician but that her work for Wybieram.pl had made her more convinced of the need to be interested in political issues. A similar sentiment was expressed by a focus group respondent in Warsaw (m, 17) who had become involved in the NGO, Centre for Citizenship Education¹⁴¹ which organises various events across Poland to get young people involved in civic participation and voting. He also said that this activity had made him more likely to vote and to follow

¹³⁹ See section 3.3c(i) of chapter three.

¹⁴⁰ This translates as 'I choose'. Wybieram.pl was founded before the 2005 elections and has gained a prominent public profile through TV adverts on MTV Polska, celebrity endorsement and road shows at summer music festivals.

¹⁴¹ In Polish: Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej which has its headquarters in Warsaw.

political issues, but again he did not envisage joining a party. These examples support the findings of studies in established democracies which have found that young people who are involved in organisations which have specific political or policy goals are likely to also be more interested and participative in political discussion and elections (Cross and Young 2008, Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009). However, although this suggests a link between voting and cause-oriented volunteering, as Cross and Young (2008) also found in their study of youth activists in Canada, volunteering does appear to act as an alternative rather than a supplement to party membership.

5.2b (ii) Romania

The European Social Survey (ESS) 2006 results for volunteering in Romania (see Figure 5.1) are more difficult to interpret as they seem to follow more closely the trends in the established democracies than in Poland¹⁴². As in the UK and Germany, volunteering seems to peak in middle age¹⁴³, however the percentage of people volunteering differs little across age groups. This is an interesting finding as it contrasts with Romanian national level studies which have found a much lower level of volunteering in Romania among the youngest cohorts. For instance, the National Youth Authority (ANT)¹⁴⁴ (2007) Report found that only 11% of young people between 14-35 years had ever volunteered and the British Council/Gallup (2004) Report on young people between the ages of 15-35 found that only 13% of respondents had worked in a voluntary organisation over the last 12 months. These discrepancies between the European Social Survey (ESS) 2006 results and national data may be due to different interpretations of what is meant by volunteering. Indeed, from national level studies (Arpad/Pro Democracy 2008¹⁴⁵) it appears that the main types of volunteering, as in Poland, are civic or leisure based rather than cause-oriented. A possibility for the high

¹⁴² The higher percentage of positive response for Romanians could be partly explained through the numbers of Romanians who are members of trade unions. The Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF) Report (2005) states that it has been estimated that up to a half of the working population in Romania is a member of a trade union, making this one of the highest trade union memberships in Europe.

¹⁴³ This corresponds to Norris's (2003) study of established democracies which found volunteering peaked in middle age creating a curvilinear effect which suggested that the likelihood of volunteering was linked to the position of someone in their life-cycle.

¹⁴⁴ Autoritatea Națională pentru Tineret.

¹⁴⁵ The Arpad/ Pro-Democracy (2008) report found that the most common types of voluntary organisation in Romania are connected with sports or culture (26% of the total), with only 5% concerned with environmental protection, 7% with Human Rights and 3% with religion.

level of positive response in the ESS 2006 would therefore be that respondents interpreted the question as including sports associations and cultural organisations. Studies of young people in Romania have also confirmed that most volunteering is civic or leisure oriented. For instance, the National Youth Authority (ANT) (2007) Report also found that the main types of volunteering for young people were in student and school organisations, sports associations and humanitarian organisations¹⁴⁶. Religious groups were less important as were ecological groups.

In focus groups, similarly to in Poland, Romanian respondents who took part in civic volunteering stressed that they chose this because they felt that it could make a difference to other people's lives and because they felt that political agents were uninterested. For instance, one respondent (f,18) in Oradea explained that she volunteered with an association which helped people by going into hospitals. She explained that her motivation was that the patients appreciated her work especially as no one in authority cared about them. She said that she felt voting could make no difference to the way politicians behave. This again suggests that civic volunteering could be seen as an 'exit' from political participation and in that instead of mobilising young volunteers to become more politically interested and involved, it may actually have the opposite effect.

In contrast, although the numbers of young Romanians involved in interest groups and activist organisations appears low, as in Poland, qualitative findings suggest a positive link between such activity and political interest and participation. For instance, one interviewee (f,18, Oradea) in Romania who took part in a local-level ecological organisation called Ecotop explained that her involvement in this group had made her realise that the activities of the organisation (demonstrations on Earth Day, cleaning up of local streams and attracting local press coverage) had two specific outcomes. One was that it had '*awakened*' local people to environmental issues and the second that local politicians had been forced to take some notice. She claimed as a result it had made her more aware of local political issues and more inclined to vote.

¹⁴⁶ The Arpad/Pro-Democracy (2008) report argues that the prevalence of sports and culture organisations in Romania is due to the popularity of these during communism which has persisted, aided by the infrastructure which they enjoy at local level.

Similarly, young volunteers in all three localities who were involved in the national level association Pro-Democrația (Pro-Democracy) which is concerned with increasing transparency in political life and monitoring of elections, also stressed that their involvement in this organisation had increased their political awareness and interest. One volunteer (f, 22 Bucharest) explained why she felt young people were particularly attracted to Pro-Democrația. She said that although it was structured like a political party, the attraction was that it was not involved in formal politics or tied to a particular party. She added that sometimes party members also took part in Pro-Democrația projects but that young people very rarely moved from Pro-Democrația into party activities. This supports findings in established democracies and in Poland which suggest that although volunteering in cause-oriented organisations may encourage greater political interest and participation, there is little evidence of a crossover from such activity to formal party membership (Cross and Young 2008).

5.2c. Reasons for Low Levels of Cause-Oriented Volunteering in Poland and Romania

From my qualitative research, two main reasons for such low levels of cause-oriented volunteering in Poland and Romania amongst young people can be identified. First, in both countries there is a notable lack of structure for such organisations particularly outside the capital cities. Second, in newer democracies democratic voluntary participation remains a relatively new concept and the lack of experience of older cohorts in such activity means that the young cohort does not have the same degree of socialisation in this kind of participation as in established democracies.

5.2c(i) Lack of Organisational Structure

In their study of youth and social action in the UK, Roker and Eden (2002) found that young people very rarely formed their own voluntary organisations, even at local level. Indeed, the structure invariably was set up by a more formal organisation run by older people. Therefore, in Poland and Romania where the majority of cause-oriented organisations which do exist are concentrated in the capital cities or other areas with

high levels of socioeconomic resources¹⁴⁷ the lack of local level organisational structure could be expected to pose an even greater barrier to youth involvement. Indeed, this was supported by the respondents in focus groups in the smaller and less economically developed localities of Chełm in Poland and Alexandria in Romania. For instance, in Chełm, respondents said that apart from church charity groups, they did not know of any other type of organisation in the locality. In Romania, a respondent gave the following opinion on the situation in Alexandria,

‘Volunteering is good because you gain a lot of experience but there are not so many of these groups in Alexandria’. (f.17,Alexandria)

The result of this concentration of voluntary organisations in large cities or in areas which have high levels of social and economic resources is that the young people who are involved in these organisations are also often those with high levels of resources. In both countries studies have confirmed that volunteers generally have very high levels of educational attainment (Klon/Jawor 2004, Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF) 2005). This suggests that as in established democracies, the young people who are involved in cause-oriented volunteering often constitute a specific elite of politically motivated young people. However, in newer democracies the concentration of these organisations in large urban areas and the dearth of such structure at local level may mean the gap in resources between those who participate and those who do not is even wider. This is particularly problematic given that at local level the only organisations for young people are often leisure or civic based and as suggested in section 5.2b, this participation may actually serve to increase alienation from political agents and make young volunteers more inclined to opt out of political participation altogether.

¹⁴⁷ In both countries studies have shown that around one third of the total voluntary organisations which exist are located in the capital. In Poland the Klon/Jawor (2004) study of NGOs and voluntary associations found that 18% of these were based in Warsaw. Similarly, in Romania, the 2005 Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF) Report found that two thirds of the total voluntary organisations are based in urban centres and of these around 18% are based in Bucharest. It also found that 20% of the organisations were based in the North-West of Romania.

¹⁴⁷ The Civil Society Development Foundation (CDSF) (2007) Report found that over 20% of voluntary organisations were based in the North West, which is higher than in Bucharest (18%).

5.2c (ii) Lack of Experience

In post-communist countries, the lack of organisational structure of interest groups and activist organisations is coupled with the legacy of forced participation during communist times which means that cause-oriented volunteering remains a relatively new concept in Poland and Romania. For example, Musiało (2005) describes how, despite laws which recognise volunteering in Poland, the societal transition to accepting voluntary activity as part of a functioning democracy is an ongoing process. In particular, it is suggested that the lack of experience of older people means that younger cohorts do not have the same possibilities for discussing and learning about this kind of participation from parents as in established democracies (Youniss et al. 2002, Horowitz 2005). In established democracies, research suggests that political socialisation processes through parents who have existing experience in cause-oriented participation are important pre-cursors to youth involvement (Cross and Young 2008).

Certainly, the low levels of older people participating in cause-oriented volunteering in Poland and Romania support this argument of a 'vacuum' in experience (Mendelson and Glenn 2002, Howard 2003, Rose-Ackerman 2005). However the extent to which this impacts on the participation of young people is debatable. In interviews in both Poland and Romania, people involved in such voluntary organisations argued that the lack of experience of older people could act as a barrier to young people becoming involved. This was particularly the case in Romania, where volunteers in Youth Action for Peace, an NGO in Oradea designed to promote tolerance and fight racism stressed that it was very difficult to recruit young volunteers as their parents often tried to stop them becoming involved as they saw such activity as a waste of time. Yet, even in established democracies the strength of parents as political socialisation agents is questionable (Hahn 1998). Indeed, it is often contended that a wide range of interrelated factors can contribute to how a young person learns about and experiences politics (Hahn 1998, Shea and Green 2006). In newer democracies, the relative strengths of these factors remains understudied. In particular, it has been suggested that schools and the media may have a substantially different role in mobilising young people to participate to that in established democracies (Horowitz 2005, Hahn and Alviar-Martin 2008). This is a question which requires in-depth and detailed research beyond the remit of the present study. However, these findings suggest that both structural and

cultural factors play a role in explaining the reasons behind the widespread ‘exit’ from cause-oriented volunteering amongst young people in Poland and Romania.

This section has shown that, as hypothesised, levels of youth participation in voluntary activities in both Poland and Romania are generally low in comparison to established democracies. In addition, the voluntary activities young people are most likely to participate in are those of a civic nature rather than cause-oriented. The findings suggest that the reasons for low levels of cause-oriented volunteering are similar in both countries and are mainly based on the lack of organisational structure at local level and the ongoing legacies of forced participation during communism. My findings give little support for the hypothesis that higher socioeconomic levels in Poland would mean higher levels of youth informal participation. However, they do suggest that in both countries socioeconomic resources are important factors in determining participation in cause-oriented volunteering.

5.3 Youth Participation in Protest Activities

As discussed in Section 5.1, different theories exist as to why people are mobilised to protest at certain times. These often focus on the role of individual resources and on political opportunity structures and constraints¹⁴⁸ which can enable or suppress mobilisation. The stable elements of political opportunity structures vary from country to country and have an important influence on the possibilities for mobilisation (Gamson and Meyer 1996, Klandermans 1997, Tarrow 1998, Della Porta and Diani 2006). Thus, in countries with a history of protest and where protest is not severely curtailed by the authorities, political opportunities to participate should be more favourable than in countries with a history of repression and authoritarianism (Tarrow 1998). However, this opening up of political opportunities does not necessarily lead to collective action. Indeed, in established democracies, studies have pointed to a ‘normalisation’ of protest over recent decades, where authorities have learned to accept protest as part of everyday activity (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001, Tarrow 1998).

¹⁴⁸ Political opportunity structures can be understood as a range of different institutional, cultural and structural factors in a given country which can enable people to participate in informal forms of political involvement (Gamson and Meyer 1996, Tarrow 1998, Tilly 2004). Over time these opportunities may increase or decrease depending on the existence of constraints such as political repression which can act to contract opportunities and instability in political leadership which is likely to increase opportunities (McAdam et al. 1996, Gamson and Meyer 1996, Tarrow 1998, Kowalchuk 2005).

Although this lowers individual costs and risks for participants, it is argued that it also means protest is often less contentious than in a country where the costs and risks of participation are higher. Indeed in countries where participation channels are more ‘blocked’ by political constraints such as repression and corruption by authorities, the potential for contentious mobilisation and revolutionary activities may be higher (Tarrow 1998, Tucker 2007¹⁴⁹).

In post-communist democracies, the transition to democracy necessarily opened formal channels for democratic protest activities, however the extent to which these activities have become ‘normalised’ as in established democracies is less clear. In addition, there is little understanding as to whether the attitudes towards protest are changing in relation to the youngest cohorts. Existing studies have argued that a legacy of repression of dissidence during communism have left post-communist citizens reluctant to become involved in public protest unless it is for industrial action (Ekiert and Kubik 1998, Kramer 2002, Bernhagen and Marsh 2007). However, as explained in section 5.1, this could also be expected to differ depending on country-specific factors such as organisation of dissidence during communism and the nature of repression of protest by authorities. As such, this section will test the hypothesis that successful and organised anti-communist dissidence in Poland opened up political opportunity structures which give potential for ‘normalised’ protest activities. In Romania, in contrast, the lack of organised dissidence during communism, followed by violently repressed protest in the early 1990s continues to place constraints on protest participation amongst young people.

The following section first employs descriptive statistics, qualitative data and findings of existing studies to outline how the levels and nature of youth participation in protest activities in Poland and Romania compare to those of older age groups and participation rates in established democracies. Then, using qualitative data, I assess the reasons behind these participation patterns and test the hypothesis that contrasting legacies of anti-communist dissidence and post-communist political contexts in Poland and

¹⁴⁹ Tucker (2007) uses this to explain the emergence of the ‘coloured’ revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan between 2000 and 2005 where political constraints had depressed political participation by prohibitively increasing costs for participants but then disputed elections and widespread electoral fraud triggered mass unrest and collective action.

Romania provide different sets of political opportunity structures and constraints for youth protest participation in each country.

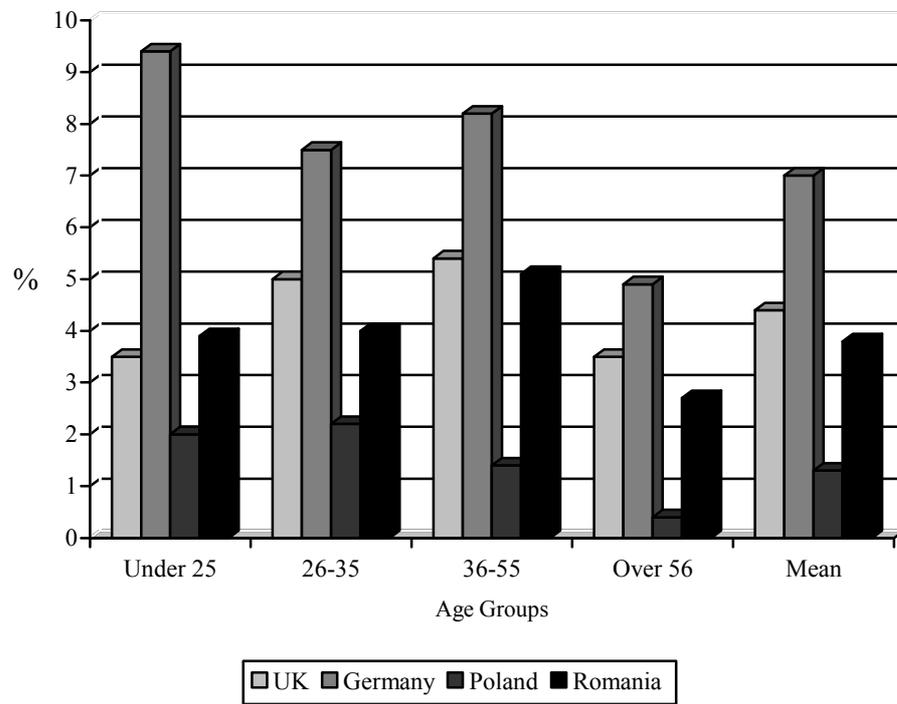
5.3a. How Participation in Protest Compares across Countries and Age Groups

In established democracies studies have shown a rise in recent years in the participation of people of all ages, and particularly young people¹⁵⁰ in protest activities such as demonstrating, petitioning and boycotting (Tarrow 1998, Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001, Norris 2002, Bernhagen and Marsh 2007). This is in stark contrast to falling rates of involvement in formal political participation and in particular in political party membership. However, in newer democracies, research has suggested that over the same period, involvement in protest activities, which was already at low levels, has fallen amongst the adult population (Bernhagen and Marsh 2007). As there is a lack of study of protest participation over time across the youngest cohorts in newer democracies, it is not clear whether this trend can also be observed for this age group. Indeed, measuring participation in protest activities at a given time is made more problematic by the nature of this type of involvement. Participation in protest is likely to be episodic and to vary significantly in intensity from low-cost (signing a petition) to high-cost (organising a demonstration)¹⁵¹. However, by combining quantitative survey response and qualitative data, I aim to control for some of these variations and draw up a comparative overview of protest participation by young people in Poland and Romania.

¹⁵⁰ For example see Norris (2002, 2003), Kimberlee (2002), Quintelier (2007), Shea and Green (2006), Sloam (2007).

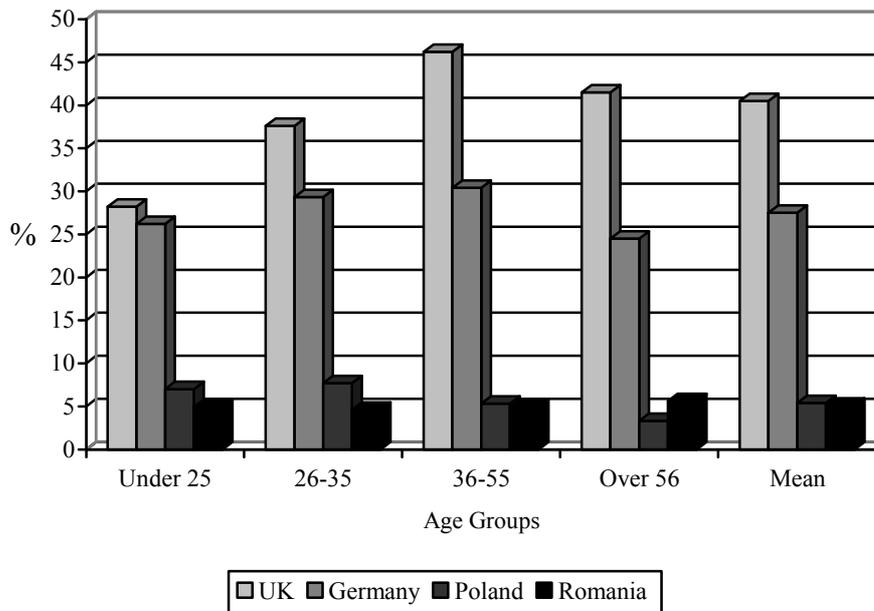
¹⁵¹ Protest is often seen to come in cycles of contention which increase rapidly and then later disperse (Tarrow 1998).

Figure 5.2: Participated in a Lawful Demonstration in last 12 Months by Country and Age Group



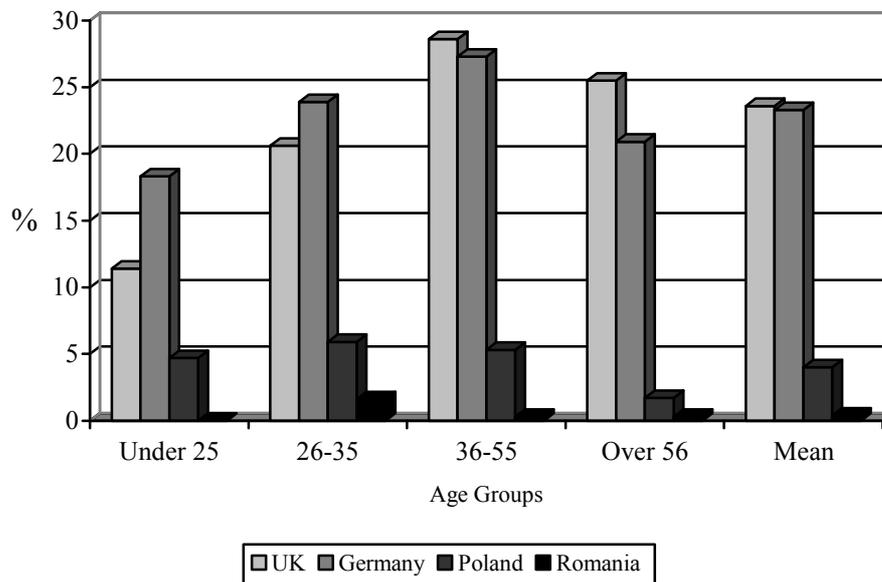
(Source: European Social Survey 2006 UK: N=2386, Germany: N= 2915, Poland: N= 1720, Romania: N= 2139)

Figure 5.3: Signed a Petition in last 12 Months by Country and Age Group



(Source: European Social Survey 2006 UK: N=2386, Germany: N= 2915, Poland: N= 1720, Romania: N= 2139)

Figure 5.4: Boycotted a Product in the last 12 months by Country and Age Group



(Source: European Social Survey 2006UK: N=2386, Germany: N=2915, Poland: N=1720, Romania: N=2139)

The three figures above show the results for the European Social Survey (ESS) 2006 questions on involvement in the last 12 months in three types of protest actions, participation in a lawful demonstration (Figure 5.2), signing a petition (Figure 5.3) and boycotting a product (Figure 5.4). These are shown for the UK, Germany, Poland and Romania and by age group. We can see that participation is higher in the established democracies than in Poland and Romania for all three types of action, and that this is particularly pronounced for petitioning and boycotting. These findings support existing studies which have shown the most frequent type of protest action in newer democracies to be demonstrations and strikes with very low levels of participation in more ‘modern’ types of protest such as petitions and boycotts (Ekiert and Kubik 1998, Kideckel 2001, Sum and Bădescu 2004). In Romania, the most frequent type of protest activity is demonstrating, while levels of response for signing a petition and boycotting a product are very low. In Poland, levels of demonstrating appear lower than in Romania, but there is relatively more participation in petitions and boycotting.

For all three types of action, the figures suggest that although young people in established democracies are not necessarily participating more than older cohorts, the

difference in participation levels between age groups is much less pronounced than for political party membership¹⁵². This gives support to the argument that young people may be more interested in this type of direct action than in traditional forms of participation. In the newer democracies, however, such trends are less pronounced. Indeed, in Poland, as for volunteering (see figure 5.1), the figures suggest that young people are more participative in all three types of protest actions than older age groups. In Romania, the levels of participation in the more ‘modern’ types of protest (signing a petition and boycotting) are similarly low for all age groups and the youngest age groups appear to have similar levels of demonstrating as older age groups. These findings suggest that the way in which young people in Poland are participating in protest may contrast slightly with that of older age groups. This possibility is explored further in section 5.3d. For Romania, the findings suggest a universally high level of ‘exit’ from protest activities across all age groups. The reasons behind this are assessed in more detail in section 5.3e.

5.3b. Nature of Youth Protest in Poland and Romania

Although rates of youth participation in protest actions in Poland and Romania appear notably low in comparison to rates in established democracies, it is still necessary to try and establish what types of issue are likely to provoke protest amongst young people in these countries.

The most well publicised protest actions involving youth in both Poland and Romania are the periodic and controversial street demonstrations carried out by far right wing organisations (Minkenberg 2002, Kopecký 2003, Mudde 2005). Particularly, these groups are known for their nationalistic and homophobic demonstrations which are often staged as a reaction to gay pride marches¹⁵³. However, the number of young people who actually engage in such activities is believed to be limited and as such the

¹⁵² See chapter four, section 4.3a(i).

¹⁵³ In Poland these are known as ‘Normality’ parades and are often counter-demonstrations to Tolerance Parades organised by LGBT groups. They include members of the far right organisation, National Radical Camp (ONR). *Gazeta Wyborcza* reports that at the 2005 Normality Parade skin heads dressed in black carried Polish flags, shouted ‘Zero tolerance for homosexuals’ and carried placards which read, ‘deviants’ and other homophobic slogans (Szacki 2005). The Romanian parades are also organised as a reaction to LGBT parades and are often attended by the far right group, Noua Dreaptă. Of the 2007 parades, the media reported that they were attended by young people who were hooded, dressed all in black who threw stones, eggs, rubbish and tomatoes (Iancu and Popescu 2007).

media reports can be seen to exaggerate the representation of young people who are involved (Mudde 2005). Indeed, the minority nature of these groups was also supported by focus group respondents who saw the activists in these organisations as comprising an isolated group of anti-democratic extremists. Only in Oradea in Romania, did some respondents know about the existence of such organisations at a local level. One respondent explained,

‘There is something called the New Right, its kind of neo- Nazi. Its just a few people, I don’t like it, they are very young. I don’t know what they do. I suppose they fight against things, they find something to fight against. I think they are foolish. They wear some army clothes and things like that. Very immature’ (f,18, Oradea)

In the other localities, the respondents only knew of far right organisations involving young people from media reports.

The other causes mentioned by focus group respondents in Poland which have mobilised collective protest action amongst young people were the 2006 student demonstrations against the appointment of the new education minister, Roman Giertych¹⁵⁴, and anti-abortion demonstrations.

In Romania, focus group participants in both Oradea and Bucharest explained that the most common cause for participation in demonstrations or signing petitions amongst young people was for the improvement of services to students. For instance, one respondent described such a protest in which he had been involved,

‘We have never had a demonstration on the streets but in the students association we had a protest across the whole country about problems in universities and we decided to make that protest on paper. It was like a petition, we tried to get some signatures from some people in other cities who were protesting about the same things’ (m, 20, Oradea)

¹⁵⁴ The nature of these protests and the legacy they leave are analysed in a case study in section 5.3d.

When asked about participation in protests for causes of ‘new social movements’ such as the environment or anti-globalisation, the focus groups in both countries stated that they had no personal experience of participating in these and they were unaware of them happening in their localities.

5.3c. Why such Low Levels of Involvement in Protest Activities?

As we have seen, young people in both Poland and Romania have generally very low rates of involvement in protest activities in comparison to their counterparts in established democracies. However, at least in Poland, there is limited evidence that the present young cohort, who are too young to have been politically socialised under communism may be more likely to participate in such actions than older cohorts. In Romania, young people do not generally show a similar tendency. The following section first assesses the general reasons behind such low levels of involvement in protest activities amongst young people in Poland and Romania. Then, by analysing the case study of the 2006 demonstrations against the appointment of the new education minister in Poland, I question whether this episode represents a turning point in how young people in Poland participate politically. Finally, I assess some country-specific factors which help to explain the low rates of protest participation amongst young people in Romania.

5.3c(i) Association with Labour Disputes/Protests by Economic ‘Losers’

In both Poland and Romania, focus groups respondents predominately associated protest activities with economic or labour disputes by disadvantaged workers rather than with the causes of new social movements. In both countries, these workers’ protests were often seen as desperate acts by people who faced with job cuts or low wages, had nothing more to lose. In Romania, in particular, respondents were quick to stress that they felt protesting was a last resort activity. For example, one respondent stated,

‘People who protest are desperate, they haven’t got enough money’ (m. 18, Oradea)

Another explained,

'The only time to protest is if things get so bad and your job won't be there any more'
(f. 23, Oradea)

In Poland, respondents also illustrated how they mainly associated protesting with labour disputes. One explained,

'Some people do that kind of thing (protesting) if there is a problem about pay or something, but it doesn't really make much difference' (m. 29 Chelm)

Another said,

'Doctors and nurses have been protesting for weeks about pay and the government does nothing. In fact they went on holiday and said nothing could be done until after, basically they said we don't care, work for nothing, go piss off to England' (m. 25 Bielsko-Biala)

This linking of protest in newer democracies with labour disputes rather than for any other aim reflects the experience of post-communist societies which have necessarily faced radical changes in the industrial and public sectors which have in turn led to large scale redundancies and economic hardship. Indeed, in the first period of post-communism, these societies faced regular strikes and demonstrations by workers (Ekiert and Kubik 1998, Kideckel 2001, Kramer 2002). However, it is also evident from the statements above that these young people do not associate themselves with the people who take part in these labour disputes. Indeed they appear to see them as economic 'losers' who are protesting to desperately plead with the authorities to give them their jobs back. This may indicate a generational contrast between how young people see their own identity and how they view older cohorts. This is particularly evident in how they see themselves in relation to political agents (politicians and political parties). Although many young people in Poland and Romania, like older cohorts, frequently feel dissatisfied and unrepresented by political agents¹⁵⁵, the nature of this dissatisfaction

¹⁵⁵ See chapter three section 3.3b.

appears to contrast with the findings of existing studies on older people in post-communist countries (Rose and Munro 2003, Tworzecki 2003, Howard 2003). Unlike older people who often had great hopes for life after communism, these young people do not feel the bitter disappointment brought on by the economic difficulties of life under post-communism. Instead as they have no basis for contrast, they appear to show a greater acceptance that they can only rely on themselves to make changes for their own lives. In this way, they appear to expect even less of political agents than older cohorts, and this often manifests itself in a complete 'exit' from political participation in favour of concentration on their private lives. One of the clearest ways in which this was expressed in focus groups in both countries was the ability for young people to decide on their own future by migrating abroad. For instance, in Poland, one respondent explained,

'There is no point in doing much here just now. It is better to go away to another country and find work and make money for yourself and your family' (f, 25, Chelm)

Similarly in Romania, a focus group respondent explained,

'The old people – they just moan and they don't want to try and change anything for themselves. They just want things to be as they were and to stay like that. That's why young people, the smart ones, go abroad' (f, 17, Oradea)

These views suggest that instead of seeing themselves as dependent on policies of political agents, these young people feel that, as politicians and parties can do nothing for them, their decisions in life should be taken independently of wider politics. This supports earlier findings of a 'separation' between politics and society in post-communist countries (Howard 2003). However this adamant rejection of people who protest for economic reasons as desperate and dependent on political agents also indicates that this gap may be increasing with generational renewal.

5.3c(ii) 'New Social Movement' Protests as a Luxury for Prosperous Times

In both countries, a number of focus group respondents expressed the opinion that protesting for non-economic causes was generally something that people did in other,

richer countries and that at present people in their countries were more concerned with immediate issues such as making money. For example, one respondent in Poland gave the following opinion,

'It's not a priority to demonstrate and things now, when things get better for jobs etc. then it might change' (m, 20 Warsaw)

Similar views were given by respondents in Romania,

'There is even less point in that. The problem is economic. People need better jobs and more money and if we can't change that then why spend time protesting about the environment' (m, 18, Bucharest)

'People campaigning about environmental problems is something that happens in richer countries, there is no point in that here. It is about jobs here' (f,18 Oradea)

These materialist views, in that they stress the importance of basic living and working conditions, of these young people in Poland and Romania provide an interesting contrast with that of the findings of studies in established democracies which stress an increasing interest in participation in activities which reflect post-material value systems, particularly amongst younger and more educated citizens (Inglehart 1997, Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001, Norris 2002, Della Porta and Diani 2006). Indeed, that these young people would have more materialistic views than their counterparts in established democracies could be expected given the more difficult economic and social situation (Arts and Halman 2004). However, it is particularly interesting to note how these young people, many of whom are well-educated, and have had a much broader access to media and travel than the older cohorts, do not appear to identify any closer with post-material protestors in the established democracies than with those who protest for economic reasons in their own countries. One explanation for this may be that as protest activities have not reached the same level of normalisation in Poland and Romania as in established democracies, young people do not perceive the same opportunities to participate in such activities. Indeed, reports have suggested that the media coverage of protest in these countries tends to focus on economic protest and to frame these

protesters as rebellious and anti-democratic (Bush 2004, Ost 2005¹⁵⁶). This is a contrast with the situation in established democracies where the normalisation of protest activities has arguably made protest seem an integral part of democracy rather than acting as a threat to its existence (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001, Della Porta and Diani 2006).

This association of protest activities with either economic ‘losers’ or with people in richer countries means many young people in Poland and Romania simply ‘exit’ from such participation, preferring instead to concentrate on their private lives. However, in spite of these general similarities between the countries, it is also necessary to assess how the potential for young people to become more involved in protest activities compares in each country. To do this, in the following sections I look at country-specific factors which analyse the different political opportunities and constraints on participation which exist in Poland and Romania.

5.3d A Case Study: The 2006 Student Demonstrations in Poland against the Appointment of Roman Giertych as Education Minister

The student demonstrations against the appointment of the new education minister, Roman Giertych, across Poland during 2006 provide a rare example of mass collective action by young people. In the following sections I first outline and analyse the background to these protests and question which factors, given the generally very low levels of youth participation in protest activities in Poland, came together in this instance to mobilise young people into collective action. I then assess whether this episode suggests the potential for a change in the way in which young people in Poland conceive of and interact with politics.

¹⁵⁶ Ost (2005) explains how participants in workers protests are portrayed by the Polish media as ‘irrational hotheads’ and an anti-democratic force, In Romania, the violent methods used by miners both in the crushing of student anti-government protests in 1990 and later in economic protests has meant that this media portrayal of protestors as rebellious and anti-democratic is even more stark than in Poland (Bush 2004, Vasi 2004).

5.3d(i) The Background

In September 2005, the Polish parliamentary elections were won by two centre-right, post-Solidarity parties, Law and Justice (PiS) and Civic Platform (PO). By November 2005, these parties had failed to negotiate a coalition government and as a result PiS formed a minority government supported by two smaller radical parties, the agrarian-based, populist, Samoobrona and the right-wing, nationalistic, League of Polish Families (LPR)¹⁵⁷. In May 2006, these three parties formally created a coalition government. The policies of this new government were controversial (Jasiewicz 2008). It relied on a rhetoric which emphasised the need for the return to traditional, catholic morals and the purging of communist elements from Polish society. They were also seen as anti-European and distrustful of civil society. This rhetoric which attacked what Law and Justice (PiS) saw as ‘liberal’ elements of Polish society, created a clear separation within the Polish political classes which in turn resonated with particular groups in society (Szczurbiak 2007). Kolarska-Bobińska (2007) argues that for the first time since 1989, the rhetoric used by the PiS-led government meant many educated people with liberal values across Poland felt their core values and beliefs were threatened. In particular, groups of public sector workers such as teachers, on hearing this rhetoric, began to fear that the new government’s policies would infringe on their autonomy. As a result, from 2005, collective actions such as demonstrations and open-letters by this educated, middle class increased. Unlike the more common economic protests, these had broader ideological demands based on human rights, tolerance and the freedom of civil society. However, despite this important increase and change in generalised collective action, it was the appointment of the leader of the League of Polish Families (LPR), Roman Giertych, as new education minister in May 2006 which was to produce the most intensive protests and importantly signal the beginning of a period of collective mobilisation amongst young people.

Giertych was already a well known figure, having refounded the nationalist, right wing youth party, All-Polish Youth (MW) in 1989. He held a reputation as a supporter of conservative Catholicism and was an out-spoken homophobe and anti-abortionist. There were also suggestions of him being an anti-semite (Repa 2006). The day after his

¹⁵⁷ For a more detailed account of these parties see chapter four section 4.2.

appointment, several hundred young demonstrators marched through Warsaw demanding his removal from the post (Czeladko and Kwaśniewski 2006). In the following months the demonstrations in Warsaw grew and protests by school students and university students as well as some teachers erupted across the country. Reports suggest that these protests varied from a few hundred people to a few thousand participants¹⁵⁸. As these demonstrations multiplied, there were also counter demonstrations organised by supporters of The League of Polish Families (LPR), members of All-Polish Youth and students in favour of Giertych. However, these were generally on a smaller scale than the anti-Giertych movement¹⁵⁹.

Although the fervour and size of the demonstrations in May and June died down after it became evident that Giertych was to stay as minister, in the months which followed his educational policy changes provoked further protest. A last minute alteration to the high school leaving exam, the Matura, again saw protest by school students across the country and his pledges to keep homophobia out of schools and to customise reading lists to make sure Polish children only read books which were 'suitable' and promoted patriotism continued to anger many young people (Kość 2006).

Many of the student demonstrations were organised under the auspices of the organisation, Student's Initiative (IU) but numerous other movements also emerged such as 'Giertych Must Go'¹⁶⁰. Characteristically these demonstrations were organised through the internet and by SMS (Czeladko and Kwaśniewski 2006)¹⁶¹. Along with the demonstrations, an open letter was organised through the internet and sent to the Prime Minister demanding the resignation of Roman Giertych. It had around 60000 signatures which were mainly school and university students but also included politicians, academics and writers (Czeladko 2006).

¹⁵⁸ For example, the second protest in Warsaw attracted around 2000 people and one in Katowice around 1000. See Czeladko (2006) and Czeladko and Kwaśniewski (2006).

¹⁵⁹ Wprost (20th May 2006) reports that pro-Giertych demonstrations took place in various cities in Poland. Common slogans at these read, 'Giertych must stay', 'Stop Left-wing Indoctrination' and 'the Education Minister is 100% right'. They were generally of a smaller scale than the anti-Giertych demonstrations, attracting a few hundred people at most.

¹⁶⁰ In Polish Giertych Musi Odejść.

¹⁶¹ Organisation through the internet involved sending multiple emails and also the Polish social networking site Gadu-Gadu was used to spread the word.

5.3d(iii) Why did such Mobilisation Occur?

The appointment of Roman Giertych as Education Minister acted as a trigger for sustained collective mobilisation by young people in Poland. Given the generally high levels of ‘exit’ amongst young people from all forms of political participation, it is important to understand which factors interrelated in this unique instance to provoke such action. One way of unpacking these factors is to employ Norris’s (2003) framework of targets, repertoires and agencies. This can help to explain how this specific combination of individuals, organisations and events resulted in young Poles taking to the streets.

The initial target of the protests in 2006 was the new Education Minister, Giertych. The main demand made by demonstrators was for his immediate resignation¹⁶². However, as the protests intensified the targets also broadened. In addition to Giertych’s resignation, protestors began to also target the wider policies of the Law and Justice (PiS)-led government and to demand respect of human rights and tolerance (Czeladko and Kwaśniewski 2006). This signified the transition from a contentious episode to a more sustained social movement (Tarrow 1998). This expansion in the range of targets was achieved through a well-organised structure of effective repertoires and agencies.

One of the reasons for the successful mobilisation of young people was the affiliations and networks which formed between the organisations and groups (agencies) behind the demonstrations. The organisation Student’s Initiative (IU) which brought together school students into a wider association prided itself on being non-hierarchical, self-governing and making it straightforward for interested parties to form their own sections across the country. By providing a support mechanism for young people to organise protests, this organisation effectively reduced the costs and obstacles for individual young people to participate. In addition, it formed loose affiliations with other organisations such as the Federation of Anarchists, the Red Collective (an alternative Socialist organisation) and the Young Greens all of which took part in the various anti-Giertych demonstrations. Such networks have long been found to be crucial elements in recruiting participants and in sustaining contentious activity (Diani and

¹⁶²A Common slogan at the demonstrations was ‘Giertych Must Go’, (Czeladko and Kwaśniewski 2006).

McAdam 2003, Della Porta and Diani 2006). Unusually, the appointment of Roman Giertych appears to have offered this usually diverse range of youth organisations a common target. One key to how this issue had become such a hot topic capable of encouraging such mobilisation is in the way in which these organisations used the media and other forms of mass communication (repertoires) to link the appointment of Giertych to wider issues of tolerance and human rights and to make these seem personal to young people.

Young people were mobilised to protest through new technologies such as mobile phones and the internet as well as through word of mouth. However, it was the use of the more traditional forms of media, such as newspapers and television which created the sense of urgency and collective involvement so vital for developing and sustaining mass contentious action (Gamson and Meyer 1996, Tarrow 1998). The liberal press, and in particular, the popular daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* seized the opportunity of the rise in demonstrations by young people to report extensively on the threat Giertych's policies and actions posed for liberal democracy (Kość 2006). Although much of this was done through ridicule of Mr. Giertych and the Kaczyński twins, leaders of Law and Justice (PiS), it still managed to create a sense that for young people ousting this government was a priority. Particularly, the intolerance and anti-Europeanisation of Law and Justice (PiS) and the League of Polish Families (LPR) was seen by many young people, at this point so close after accession to the European Union in 2004, as potentially threatening to democracy in Poland and therefore to their own personal futures. Suggestions of how these issues had resonated with young people were given by respondents in my focus groups.

For instance one respondent in Warsaw stated,

'It is shameful that people like him (Giertych) are allowed to represent Poland. It makes everyone think that Polish people are racist and homophobic' (m. 17, Warsaw)

Another explained,

'We can be seen as a bit of joke. Did you see that our government wanted to ban a children's cartoon because they thought it was gay? But there are more serious things behind that' (m. 18, Bielsko- Biała)

These views suggest that the artificial cleavage in Polish society between liberal and social elements¹⁶³ which had emerged as a result of the election of Law and Justice (PiS), provided a ready-made frame for the opinions of young people towards politicians at the time. However, it was only when Giertych was elected and young people felt that their own futures were threatened did these factors combine to produce mass mobilisation amongst youth.

5.23(iv) Legacies of the Anti-Giertych Protests for Polish Youth

An episode of sustained mass protest such as in Poland in 2006 is likely to open up political opportunities to a range of other actors such as counter-protestors and elites who may also seize these opportunities (Tarrow 1998). It may also leave legacies for future cycles of contention, where similar, practised repertoires are used to form the basis for mobilisation against different targets (Koopmans 2004). The student demonstrations of 2006 in Poland offered a rare instance where young people recognised and acted upon expanding political opportunities to participate politically. However, the degree to which this can be seen as a turning point for how young people interact with politics is debatable.

First, there is some evidence that the protests also opened up opportunities for young counter-protestors who supported the conservative, patriotic policies of the Law and Justice (PiS)-led government¹⁶⁴. This, 'them and us' division amongst young people, of those who were 'for' Giertych and those who were 'against' Giertych appeared, at least amongst focus group participants, to have had the effect of promoting greater debate and discussion on political issues. For instance, one focus group participant (m,18 Warsaw) explained that he felt it was right that Giertych promoted a greater degree of

¹⁶³ For in-depth discussion of this see Szczerbiak (2007) and Kolarska-Bobińska (2007).

¹⁶⁴ See footnote 159.

patriotism and respect for religion within schools; however he did not agree with the ‘censorship’ of which books should be read in classrooms. This point of view was then disputed by another focus group member and an active discussion ensued. One participant explained to me,

‘Sorry, this is what we are like now, always arguing about these things’ (f, 18, Warsaw)

Another consequence of this heightened interest in political issues and debate may be seen in the considerably higher turnout of young people in the 2007 parliamentary elections which ousted Law and Justice (PiS) and its coalition partners from power¹⁶⁵. Young people became involved in numerous campaigns on the internet and by SMS to mobilise the vote against PiS¹⁶⁶. In this way, these elections can be seen as an extension of the liberal-based protest against Law and Justice (PiS). Indeed, this was also supported by my qualitative research during 2006/2007 where many focus group respondents who were sceptical about the PiS-led government’s policies indicated that these protests and the ensuing polarised debate meant that they would be more likely to turn out to vote against PiS and its coalition partners at the next election.

However, given the unique circumstances of the anti-Giertych demonstrations which provided a clear target for young people in the shape of the appointment of an extremely controversial education minister, it seems unlikely that these protests alone will have been able to counteract the reasons behind the generally very low levels of political participation amongst Polish youth. In addition, although these protests took place across the country, the protestors were mainly those young people with high levels of educational resources. Therefore these protests can tell us little about the potential for more wide-ranging youth participation across all social groups. Nonetheless, these demonstrations do illustrate a potential for a well-resourced group of young people to become politically active when they feel sufficiently interested and engaged in a particular issue. They also provide a concrete example of the existence of channels for democratic and peaceful informal participation amongst young people in Poland. In turn, this supports the hypothesis that political opportunities created by the legacy of

¹⁶⁵ See chapter three, section 3.2c(i) for the estimated turnout figures, also see Kotowicz (2007).

¹⁶⁶ There were many examples of such campaigns. Some of these are explained in *Gazeta Wyborcza* (16th Oct. 2007). One example was an SMS message campaign started by a 27 year old computer technician. It stated ‘Go and vote – we must save our country’. See also Kulish (2007).

peaceful and organised dissidence under communism continue to offer a basis for potential youth informal political participation. These favourable political opportunities appeared to be also recognised by some focus group participants who were proud of Solidarity and the legacy it had left for peaceful protest in Poland. For instance, one explained,

‘We have a great tradition of protest in Poland. It is how we got rid of communism and still now there is a chance to really change things this way’ (m, 17, Warsaw)

This view suggests that although young people in Poland may not always recognise opportunities for protest, they do not feel inhibited from participating through fear of repression by authorities or by the possibility of negative repercussions in the future.

5.3e. Romania: ‘blocked’ Political Opportunities for Youth Protest?

As discussed in section 5.3a, as in Poland, youth involvement in protest activities in Romania is generally at very low levels. Communist legacies and post-communist political and socioeconomic change have meant that young people continue to associate protest with economic losers or with post-materialist richer countries in the West. However, despite these important similarities between the situation in Poland and Romania, my qualitative research also highlighted country-specific reasons for the low levels of protest amongst young people. In particular, unlike in Poland where the recent student protests signal a potential for active informal participation amongst young people, in Romania I found no evidence of similar possible openings in participation channels. Indeed, widespread corruption and clientelism, combined with the legacies of failed student protest in the 1990s and repression of dissidence from authorities appears to have effectively ‘blocked’ channels for both formal and informal participation amongst young people. In the following section, I first unpack the nature of these ‘blockages’ and second discuss the potential for such blockages to ultimately lead to more radicalised youth protest.

5.3e(i) The nature of the 'blockages'

There are two main factors which mean that young people in Romania perceive channels for informal participation to be 'blocked'. The first stems from the legacy of failed protest in the 1990s and from the violent repression of dissidence by the authorities during communism and in the early period of post-communism. The second relates to the common perception that political corruption and clientelism pervades public life, effectively rendering young people as completely powerless in the face of authority.

5.3e(ii) Legacies of Violent Repression and Failed Protests

The crushing of dissidence by the authorities during communism and in the early period of post-communism in Romania appears to have left young people with a view that protesting is a risky activity. Although they may not fear violent repression, focus group respondents expressed that they felt protesting was still something which was not necessarily governed by clear legal norms. As such, they suggested that the reactions of authorities to protesting remained highly unpredictable. In turn, it was suggested that involvement in such activities could mean perverse effects for the participants¹⁶⁷.

One respondent in Oradea gave an example of why he felt people were fearful of the personal consequences of protest,

'I remember that people tried to start a protest in Oradea because they don't like the new pedestrian area and hundreds of people said yes let's start this but no one was in the street, people don't protest because they are afraid of losing their jobs' (m, 22, Oradea)

It appears that this fear often stems from the lack of knowledge and trust of the legal rules on protest. For instance, some respondents explained that authorities prevented protest happening legally by refusing organisers permission to take to the streets.

¹⁶⁷ For a discussion of how the fear of perverse personal effects can act to demobilise people from participating in protest see Gamson and Meyer (2006).

Another participant suggested that the law changed depending on circumstances. He stated,

'The law here is not fixed. Someone in power could kill someone and get away with it but if we protested about it, we could end up in jail' (m, 17, Oradea)

To check whether in fact the legal rules on organising peaceful protest in Romania were so changeable I asked a number of NGO activists and academics how difficult it was to get permission to protest. I was told by the leader of the Pro-Democrația (Pro-Democracy) organisation in Oradea that it was actually very simple to gain permission to hold a demonstration but that the general perception in society was that it would be stopped by the authorities. An academic in the political science department in Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca supported this and said that the only protests which were banned by authorities were the Equality parades in Bucharest. It therefore appears likely that the views of young people towards the legal basis for protest activities derives more from a perception of constraints rather than their existence. This may stem from a lack of experience with democratic protest and from the legacies of repression by the authorities of protests in the early 1990s. However, these views may also be a product of a broader perception that widespread political corruption and clientelism mean young people are powerless in the face of authority.

5.3e(ii) The Penetration of Corruption and Clientelism throughout Public Life as a Constraint on Protest

The perception that corruption, scandals and clientelism are part of daily political and public life in Romania is one which appeared widespread amongst the young people in my focus groups. Particularly, as shown in the section above, they stressed that those who made public decisions were in the privileged position to be able to make the law and then ignore it, behaving however they desired. They suggested that ordinary people have little say in what is decided in the country and that instead people in power lack accountability and can freely behave in an illegal manner and escape justice. This perception appears to reflect media reporting in Romania, which has been found to particularly focus on sensationalist scandals involving politicians and others in public life (Nicolae 2006). This is accentuated by the degree of political interference in the

Romanian media which often leads to biased and exaggerated reporting (Vasilescu 2004, Gross 2008). By emphasising corruption scandals and highlighting apparent political immunity, the media can be seen as instrumental in shaping these public perceptions.

This perception of politicians as ‘above the law’ appears to have important ramifications for the way in which young people perceive the opportunities to participate in contentious politics. A common factor mentioned by focus group respondents was the role of money in influencing change in Romanian public life. Many gave opinions which showed that they saw Romanian society as divided into two parts, one rich and one poor. For instance,

‘People in this country are either poor or rich. The poor ones can’t do anything and the rich ones just want to get richer’ (f.17, Alexandria)

The rich people were frequently seen to be those in power and particularly politicians. One respondent explained,

‘In our country the political class are the wealthy class and the financial men of this country. I think we need something like a dictator to take over for 10 years and in 10 years it would mean Romania would have some rules, stop politicians from stealing money to stop corruption and poverty. Because at the moment all of the politicians are really powerful, they have written the laws and what is needed is for the corrupt people to be arrested, not just the small people but the sharks’ (m,18, Alexandria)

This ‘black and white’ view of Romanian society is significant as it means that people outside political circles often see a distinct separation between their lives and political life. In this way they feel largely removed from influencing decision-making unless they are prepared to engage in corrupt practices themselves (Heidenheimer and Johnstone 2001). In turn this makes legitimate and public methods, such as demonstrations and petitions, appear futile and potentially risky as would place the participant in a vulnerable situation (Grødeland 2007). Indeed, the following statement explicitly links these perceptions of political corruption with participation in protests.

'They (protests) are not so effective, because there is nothing from a material sense. They do not pay. They don't pay the people, who change things so I don't think they change anything' (m,17, Oradea)

These views support existing study on public perceptions of corruption in Romania. For instance Bădescu (2007) found that 38% of Romanian people perceived that corruption was the worst problem in society. This was a substantially greater percentage than in many other countries studied and crucially was significantly more than in Poland where only 2% of respondents felt corruption was the most important problem in society. Uslaner's (2008) recent study also stressed the strength of this public perception in Romania. He showed how this was based on both the existence of everyday corruption and of higher level political corruption. Despite warning that these perceptions were, in some cases, exaggerated, he saw these as particularly damaging for levels of political trust and for building linkages between society and political agents. Faced with this inequality in public life, many people simply choose to 'exit' from participation.

In the case of young people, there may also be a generational aspect to these perceptions as they often ascribe the perpetuation of corruption to communist elements in public life. An example of this point of view was given by a focus group respondent in Alexandria who stated,

'There are changes here since communism but these are really in theory and not in practice because the older politicians are not interested in losing their lifestyles'
(f,17 Alexandria)

Indeed, this supports findings by Grødeland's (2007) study into informal networks and politics in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania. She found that, particularly in Romania, the perception of old 'communist' ways in public life was one which had endured into the youngest cohort. One reason for this could be the relative lack of accounting for communist-era activity in Romania, where unlike in some other post-communist countries there has been little in the way of lustration (Stan 2006).

These perceptions mean that for many young people in Romania, the costs, in terms of time, effort and risk, of participating in protest are perceived as simply too high.

5.2e (iv) Potential for a Revolution?

According to conventional social movement theory, blockages of participation channels as found in Romania could be expected in time to lead to more radicalised forms of protest than in countries where there are fewer constraints on such activity (Tarrow 1998, Koopmans 2004). If indeed the obstacles to informal youth participation are as considerable as the views of focus group participants suggest, then we should ask whether these could be seen to potentially trigger a youth-led rebellion as in the recent coloured revolutions of Ukraine, Serbia and Georgia or indeed radicalised youth protest as is common in centralised established democracies such as France (Koopmans 2004). There are two main reasons why this is unlikely.

First, as argued by Tucker (2007) in his study of the coloured revolutions, the trigger for each of these contentious episodes was a stolen election by an autocratic government. Such a blatant abuse of power at election time is seen to lower the costs and increase potential benefits of protest. He contends that although citizens in a corrupt state may have deep-rooted grievances against the government, this alone will not be sufficient to trigger widespread collective action. To do this, a significant event such as serious electoral fraud is required. However, the situation in Romania differs significantly from the countries where these coloured revolutions took place. First, despite considerable clientelism and corruption which pervades public life, the relatively stable party system, generally pro-European parties and mainly free elections mean that political opportunities for radicalisation against a particular target are lacking. Indeed, unlike in the Ukraine and Georgia, where youth NGOs and grass-roots activists were supported by the West in overthrowing authoritarian regimes (Way 2008), it seems very unlikely that there will be international interest in supporting mass collective action within an already Pro-European state which is a member of NATO and of the European Union.

However, despite the lack of potential for rebellion by young people in the same way as in the coloured revolutions, it also seems unlikely that the blockages in participation channels will mean Romanian young people will take to frequent, radicalised protest as is common in highly centralised, established democracies such as France (Koopmans 2004). This is because the lack of experience in democratic protest by young people in Romania means that, unlike in established democracies, there are no past cycles of

contention to shape the repertoires and agencies of future protest actions. This is a stark contrast with the situation in Poland where the experience of organised, peaceful dissidence under communism means that there is a basis for potential future democratic protest by young people.

5.4 Conclusions

The central aim of this chapter was to outline and analyse the extent and nature of youth political participation in informal forms in Poland and Romania and to compare this with findings in established democracies. The first part of the chapter assessed the level and nature of youth participation and non-participation in volunteering in NGOS. The second part looked at involvement in protest activities. The chapter tested two main comparative hypotheses. First, that higher socioeconomic levels in Poland would mean higher levels of informal participation than in Romania. Second, that different legacies of anti-communist dissidence would have created contrasting political opportunity structures and constraints for youth informal participation today.

I found that levels of youth participation in informal modes in Poland and Romania were notably low in comparison to established democracies. This was both in cause-oriented volunteering and in protest activities such as petitioning, boycotting and demonstrating. To explain such high levels of non-participation, I pinpointed a number of common reasons across both countries. In the case of cause-oriented volunteering, the main reasons stemmed from lack of organisational structure, particularly, at local level and a lack of experience in such participation. These explanations suggest legacies of forced volunteerism during communism, and that post-communist political and socioeconomic change have an enduring influence on the channels for youth informal participation. In both countries explanations behind low rates of participation in protest activities were based on the associations which young people make between protest and economic ‘losers’ on one hand, and with richer, post-materialist countries on the other. As a consequence, many young people feel disconnected with such forms of participation, and coupled with feelings of alienation from political agents and formal political processes, they often choose to exit political participation altogether. This represents an important contrast with established democracies where studies have

suggested that young people are increasingly opting to participate in informal forms which can give them a 'voice'.

However, despite these general similarities my research also highlighted some country-specific factors which suggested, as hypothesised, that the political opportunities for youth informal participation in Poland and Romania contrast importantly.

First, I found that in Poland channels for informal participation, and particularly for democratic, peaceful protest, were more open than in Romania. A concrete example of this was given by the case study of the anti-Giertych protests in 2006. Although this episode was a rare example of such collective mobilisation amongst youth in Poland, it highlighted the existence of opportunities for young people to participate in informal forms when they feel sufficiently involved in a specific political issue. As such, it also suggested that there is potential for future youth participation in Poland which resembles more closely that in established democracies.

In contrast, in Romania, as hypothesised, the legacies of failed protest and repression by authorities continue to negatively influence the perception of many young people towards protest activities. They see them as risky and costly activities. In addition, the widespread public perceptions of corruption in all areas of public life serve to effectively 'block' participation channels by making young people feel powerless in the face of authorities. However, there is no evidence at present that these blockages will ultimately lead to more radicalised youth protest as has happened in more authoritarian states or alternatively in centralised established democracies such as France.

CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSIONS

The central aim of this thesis was to address the following research question: how do the reasons behind the political participation patterns of young people in newer post-communist democracies compare to those behind youth political engagement in established democracies? More specifically, as explained in chapter one, I asked how youth political participation in newer post-communist democracies might be understood in terms of Hirschman's (1970) theoretical framework of exit, voice and loyalty and how this contrasts with the findings of existing studies of youth political involvement in established democracies. To address these questions in chapter two I developed a set of comparative hypotheses based on the contrasting communist and post-communist political and socioeconomic contexts in Poland and Romania which were then tested and expanded on in chapters 3-5 which assessed youth political participation in three main forms: voting, political party membership and participation in informal forms of political involvement. My study used a multi-method comparative approach which employed sub-national case studies to control for local variation and to contextualise the paired country comparison between Poland and Romania.

In this concluding chapter I have four main aims. First, I bring together the findings of the individual chapters to give an overview of youth political participation and non-participation in Poland and Romania and address the extent to which the comparative hypotheses set out in chapter two were met. Second, I analyse how the interactions and trade-offs between the different forms of political participation in the newer democracies contrast with existing study in established democracies and what this can tell us about exit, voice and loyalty. Third, I assess the implications of my findings for the improvement in the quality of democracy in Poland and Romania and finally, I suggest some potential avenues for further research.

6.1 How Youth Political Participation in Poland and Romania Compares

This thesis found that, as broadly hypothesised, youth political participation levels in general are very low in Poland and Romania in comparison to levels in established

democracies. In particular, I found that very limited numbers of young people in these countries turn out to vote or become involved in forms of informal participation such as cause-oriented volunteering and protest activities. Crucially, in contrast with the situation in established democracies, the differences between the levels of political participation of the young cohort and older cohorts were less pronounced. This suggests that some region-specific factors such as communist legacies and post-communist political and socioeconomic contexts remain important in understanding the reasons behind youth political participation and non-participation. However, my study also highlighted important and unexpected exceptions to this picture. For instance, it found relatively high levels of youth political party membership in Romania in comparison to both Poland and many established democracies. These differences can, however, also be explained by the comparative hypotheses presented in chapter two, which are summarised in table 6.1. The following sections review the findings in the light of these hypotheses in more detail.

Table 6.1: Comparative hypotheses and where they are tested in the thesis.

Hypothesis	Chapter 3: Electoral Turnout	Chapter 4: Party Membership	Chapter 5: Informal Forms
H1- legacies of dissidence			X
H2- decentralisation	X	X	
H3- party systems	X	X	
H4- socioeconomic resources	X	X	X

6.1a. The Impact of Differing Legacies of Anti-Communist Dissidence on Youth Political Participation (H1)

My study found levels of youth participation in informal forms (volunteering in cause-oriented organisations and protest activities) in both Romania and Poland to be low in comparison to established democracies. This finding appears to contradict my hypothesis that legacies of organised anti-communist dissidence in Poland would mean greater and more open political space for youth participation in informal forms than in Romania. However, I also found that despite the similarly low levels of youth

involvement, the channels for informal youth participation in Poland are substantially less 'blocked' than in Romania. For example, in Poland, the constraints on informal participation relate mainly to a lack of structure of relevant cause-oriented organisations at local levels, rather than fear of repression or of potentially negative consequences for later life. In Romania, similarly to Poland, there is a lack of organisational structure for informal youth participation. However, in addition, the legacies of an absence of organised dissidence during communism and violent repression of protest in the 1990s, coupled with widespread clientelism and corruption in public life, mean that for the majority of Romanian young people the costs of informal participation are seen as simply too high.

These findings suggest that despite current similar low levels of informal participation in both countries, differing legacies of dissidence and communist regime type do indeed continue to influence the *potential* for such involvement. In Poland, for instance, the recent student protests in 2006 highlighted the possibility for peaceful and sustained youth protest when a specific combination of factors come together and create a collective identity under which young people are mobilised. This was a concrete example of how favourable opportunity structures for youth informal participation in Poland do exist, even if they are not generally perceived by young people, who feel that protesting is largely ineffective. In Romania, my findings are consistent with the view that legacies of weak and largely unorganised dissidence and strong state repression mean continued constraints on youth informal participation today. We could therefore expect that the nature of potential informal youth participation is different. Unlike in Poland where more open political space means greater possibilities for the development of 'normalised' informal participation of the kind that exists in established democracies, the blockages of these participation channels in Romania suggest the theoretical potential for more contentious youth mobilisation, aimed at challenging corrupt leadership such as in the recent coloured revolutions in the Ukraine, Georgia and Serbia. However, from my study, there is little current evidence of such intent. Indeed, at present the majority of Romanian young people opt instead to 'exit' the public sphere altogether, preferring to concentrate on private concerns.

6.1b The Impact of Decentralisation Reform on Youth Political Participation (H2)

Contrary to my hypothesis that more developed administrative decentralisation reform would have heightened levels of youth political participation in Poland, I found that young people in both Poland and Romania had similarly low levels of interest and participation in local elections as in national elections. However, in Romania, levels of youth party membership and organisation at both national and local level were considerably higher than in Poland and in many established democracies. In Poland levels of youth party membership at national and local level were very low in comparison to established democracies. These findings only partly supported my hypothesis, but they do suggest that Romanian political parties are seen by young people as offering greater opportunities than in Poland.

In both countries, the feelings of young people about opportunities to participate electorally were similar for local and national elections. Many young people felt that there was a lack of choice between suitable candidates at all elections and that their vote could make little difference to policy change at any level. Politicians at both local and national level were seen as self-serving, unrepresentative and untrustworthy. Similar to the position in established democracies, many young people in Poland and Romania felt alienated from politicians and the electoral process and as a result made a reasoned choice to abstain from voting. This finding was similar in both countries suggesting that wider European youth-related factors such as feelings of alienation from political agents and processes can better explain youth voting patterns in Poland and Romania than relative levels of decentralisation in public administration.

However my findings on levels of youth party membership, suggest that the level of effective administrative decentralisation is important in helping to explain opportunities for participation in this form. In Poland, at both national and local level, youth party membership levels were low and this was particularly evident outside large urban centres. Local level party youth organisations were generally underdeveloped and had limited internal power and membership. As a result, young people with policy-seeking or ideological motivations either chose to join the main party or to work independently for local level politicians. In Romania, in contrast, many youth wings of political parties have a well developed organisational structure at local level. Unlike in Poland, members

were usually motivated to become involved for a wide variety of different selective incentives such as opportunities to socialise, career enhancement and access to local and national power structures. Membership for policy-seeking or ideologically motivated reasons was far less common.

Despite the low levels of youth party membership in Poland, these findings do partly support my hypothesis on administrative decentralisation. As the literature suggests, effective administrative decentralisation can render national party politics at local level less important and as a result open up opportunities to a wider range of citizens to participate at this level (Parry et al. 1992, Putnam 1993, Nations in Transit 2006). In turn, this diminishes the possibility for selective incentives to be offered by parties to members at local level. This was supported by my findings that young people in Poland perceived party membership as only for those young people with policy-seeking or ideological motivations. However, it was also clear that young people did not generally recognise the wider opportunities for political participation at local level engendered by self-government. Instead, the majority felt that even at local level, people involved in politics were unrepresentative and uncaring about their needs.

In Romania, the continued attraction of selective benefits for young party members, especially at local level, highlights that effective regulation of clientelism and corruption is still lacking. Incomplete administrative decentralisation means that political party groupings are still able to use their organisational structure and influence to dominate and control local level decision-making. Although, on the surface, this appears to open up opportunities for young people to become involved in political parties, in fact it lowers the quality of participation by ‘blocking’ policy-seeking or ideologically motivated individuals from participating.

6.1c Contrasting Post-communist Party Systems as Opportunity Structures for Youth Political Participation (H3)

My findings partly supported the hypothesis that different party systems would provide for contrasting political opportunity structures for youth political participation in Poland and Romania. Whereas in both countries levels of youth participation in elections and in informal forms were lower than in established democracies, youth party membership

levels in Romania were high in comparison to levels in established democracies and in Poland.

As explained in section 6.1b, the large scale ‘exit’ amongst young people in both countries from electoral participation can be explained mainly through alienation from politicians and political parties (political agents) whom they feel are unrepresentative and self-serving. This corresponds to similar trends found in established democracies. This conclusion is supported by the finding that even those young people who do vote often also feel alienated from political agents but feel it is a moral and democratic duty to vote at elections. This suggests that in the newer democracies, as in established democracies, factors such as the increasing professionalisation of political parties, which have meant a widening gap between political agents and citizens in general, and youth in particular, are important in explaining patterns of youth electoral participation.

In comparison, I found that the logics behind youth party membership in Poland and Romania derive more from country-specific factors such as the prevailing party system. As explained in section 6.1b, the higher levels of youth party membership in Romania can be explained by the selective incentives such as social activities, career enhancement and access to power structures, made available to members. In Poland, in contrast, the main incentives offered by political parties to young people are for those who are policy-seeking or ideologically motivated. This finding supports the hypothesis that although the more clientelistic party system in Romania provides greater opportunities for access to selective benefits, it also places constraints on formal participation channels for young people who are interested in participating for policy-seeking or ideological reasons. In Poland, in contrast, the more programmatic party system means greater opportunities for young people to participate. However in Poland, these opportunities, as in established democracies, are largely unrecognised and unexploited by young people. In part this can be explained by general Europe-wide alienation felt by young people towards political agents. In Poland though, this also reflects the specific post-communist mistrust and separation from political parties and politics felt by the population as a whole. This is exemplified by the notably high levels of people in *all* cohorts who choose to ‘exit’ from participation in political parties in contrast with established democracies.

I found that differing party systems can also help to explain the reasons behind patterns of youth involvement in informal forms of political participation in Poland and Romania. As assessed in section 6.1a, although the levels of participation in these forms were low in both countries, the political space for participation was less ‘blocked’ in Poland. In Romania, the clientelistic party system not only places constraints on formal channels for participation such as through political parties, but also extends to channels for informal participation. This is because the relative lack of regulation of the party system means that party politics are able to dominate public life and to control access to media and other resources vital for sustaining informal participation.

6.1d The Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on Youth Political Participation (H4)

This study found that, as hypothesised, higher levels of socioeconomic resources are associated with greater access to possibilities for youth political participation. In particular, in both countries, young people with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to engage in all forms of participation: to vote, join political parties and to become involved in informal forms of participation. This pattern was especially pronounced in Poland, where there was evidence that politically active young people form a select core elite of highly educated and urbanised young people. In Romania, the role of socioeconomic resources was less marked, with more geographically even patterns of youth political participation. This could be explained by the nature of the party system and the more developed nature of local level party organisations which can offer young people greater benefits than in Poland. The finding that socioeconomic resources are important for explaining patterns of youth political participation confirms findings of the existing literature on political involvement and as such does not require further explanation (Verba and Nie 1972, McCarthy and Zald 1977, Barnes and Kaase 1979).

6.2 Trade-Offs in Youth Political Participation in Newer Democracies - Exit, Loyalty and/or Voice?

The main purpose of conducting a paired country comparative study of youth political participation was to provide a valid basis for more robust general conclusions about

participation in Eastern Europe and hence to allow comparison of youth political participation patterns in older West European and newer Eastern European democracies.

My study suggests that young people in newer Eastern European democracies conceive of politics in similar ways to youth in established democracies. In particular, they tend to interpret 'politics' as meaning politicians and political parties rather than wider political and social issues and debates. However, my qualitative research on young people in Poland and Romania found that, as in established democracies, they are frequently very interested in and knowledgeable about broader political issues. Yet, they do show a high level of alienation from political agents and formal political processes which they feel are unrepresentative of their needs.

In comparison to the situation in established democracies, the findings of my study suggest that this alienation is also symptomatic of post-communist society as a whole rather than just particularly associated with young people. As such, despite similarities in the way in which young people conceive of politics, it would be incorrect to conclude that the reasons behind youth political participation patterns in newer and established European democracies are similar. Indeed, my findings suggest that region-specific factors such as communist legacies and post-communist political and socioeconomic factors remain highly important for explaining present-day youth political involvement in Poland and Romania.

This is evident in the finding that almost all young people in newer democracies simply choose to 'exit' political participation altogether. This is an important contrast with the findings of studies in established democracies which have suggested that a minority of young people, although alienated from formal political agents, are embracing informal forms of participation as an alternative to formal modes (Norris 2002, 2003, Kimberlee 2002, Shea and Green 2006, Quintelier 2007, Sloam 2007). In other words, in newer democracies, there is little evidence of the existence of trade-offs between formal and informal forms of participation whereby a young person who feels alienated from political agents chooses 'exit' over forms of 'loyalty' such as voting and political party membership and instead opts to participate informally through protest activities or volunteering in a cause-oriented organisation. Indeed, the findings of this thesis suggest that in both Poland and Romania, in contrast with the situation in established

democracies, many young people are simply opting to 'exit' from political participation altogether.

Crucially, the findings of this study suggest that the majority of young people in newer democracies do not associate informal forms of participation as potentially providing them with a 'voice'. Indeed, they tend to relate these activities either with disgruntled economic 'losers' in their own countries, or as something which occurs only in wealthier countries. Protest, in particular, is often seen as a last resort activity rather than something which makes up part of the ongoing democratic process. As such, there is no evidence that informal participation is becoming 'normalised' for young people in newer democracies. This constitutes an important contrast with the situation in established democracies and suggests that the deep-rooted separation between citizens and political agents and processes as found in existing study of newer democracies (Smolar 1996, Howard 2003, Mudde 2003) has a continuing influence on the political activities of the youngest cohort.

6.2a New Cohorts, Old Habits?

The findings of this thesis suggest that, in Eastern European countries, the passing of time and increased democratic experience alone should not be taken as a guarantee of growing societal interest and participation in politics. Indeed, contrary to the expectations of some academic observers (Sztompka 1996, Berglund et al. 2001, Howard 2003), generational renewal has not led to a more politically active citizenry. Instead of the division between society and politics gradually closing, it appears that in the case of young people it may actually be widening. There are a number of possible interrelated reasons for this.

First, unlike older cohorts who lived through communism, young people do not feel a personal level of disappointment with the transition to democracy. This has meant that many young people simply have *no* expectations of political agents, which in turn is seen to justify a complete 'exit' from political participation. Not only does this manifest itself in low youth voter turnout and in low levels of political party membership for ideological or policy-seeking reasons, but also is transferred to involvement in informal modes such as 'cause-oriented' volunteering and protest activities. This finding suggests

that the legacies of communist experience have not only endured but also have become consolidated through younger post-communist cohorts despite them lacking personal experience of communism.

Second, the top-down, elite-centred development of post-communist political systems means that the distance between young people and political agents appears even greater than that in established democracies. One consequence of this is that the majority of young people feel that they have little or no personal political efficacy and that politicians remain wholly unaccountable to the electorate. As a result, in contrast to established democracies, not even informal participation is seen as an effective route to changing policy or influencing political decision making. In turn, this is seen to justify a complete 'exit' from political participation.

6.3 Implications for Improvement of Democratic Quality in Poland and Romania

Active political participation by citizens is a vital component in increasing the quality of democracy in any country. Sustained citizen involvement helps to ensure accountability of politicians and parties both at and between elections, by providing for broader debate, challenges and discussion on policy making. In newer democracies, there is limited experience of democratic process and elite-based political transformation which means encouraging and sustaining citizen involvement remains imperative (Croissant and Merkel 2004, Diamond and Morlino 2004, Svetlozar 2005). Engaging young people in active political participation is therefore particularly important, as shaping their participation habits can help ensure a more active citizenry in the future (Franklin 2004, Fieldhouse et al. 2007).

At present, neither Poland nor Romania supports a comprehensive and politically independent programme of youth policy designed to encourage greater youth participation. In both countries, programmes are often fragmented in scope and are frequently based on models imported from established democracies. This is particularly evident in Romania, where various projects designed to increase youth engagement have been initiated with the backing of international organisations (UNICEF and World Bank 2002, Civitas Foundation 2002). Although some of these such as the annual youth parliament project developed by the Bucharest-based NGO, Pro-Democracy, can be

seen as successful in encouraging youth involvement, such programmes do tend to attract those young people who already possess high levels of resources and are thus likely participants.

In Poland, greater support from national authorities¹⁶⁸ has meant that some organisations have managed to develop programmes for youth engagement which are more attuned to the specifics of Polish youth rather than European youth in general. An example of this is the Young People Vote Programme initiated by the Centre for Citizenship Education. Since its launch in 1995, this programme has broadened its target base to now include young people from a wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. Nonetheless, between elections, as in Romania, youth engagement programmes still tend to be urban-based and target primarily those young people who have high levels of socioeconomic resources. As such, by focussing on those young people who are already most likely to participate, these programmes may actually further inequality between participants and non-participants rather than encourage more widespread involvement.

6.3a Poland: Unexploited Opportunities

The findings of this thesis suggest two important implications for the improvement in the quality of democracy in Poland. The first stems from the potentially widening gap between those who participate and those who do not, the second from the emerging changes in the way in which young people are choosing to participate politically.

In assessments of democratic quality using quantitative measures, Poland generally achieves a high score compared to other post-communist countries (Schneider and Schmitter 2004, Berg-Schlosser 2004). However, although institutional reforms such as electoral reform and administrative decentralisation have opened up formal channels for participation, this is not generally matched with active citizen participation. My study has shown that young people in Poland feel alienated and unrepresented by political agents who they view as self-serving and disinterested in their problems. As a result they often choose to ‘exit’ political participation altogether, even though opportunities

¹⁶⁸ See for example the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (2006) report on Poland which highlights the cooperation between central authorities and youth organisations.

to participate exist. This has left a small but distinctly elite-based group of young politically active people who are based in Warsaw or other large urban centres and are often highly educated.

If the main political parties in Poland stabilise and consolidate further, the incentives for parties to recruit new young members from these elite circles could be expected to increase. Given the low rates of youth participation in elections and in informal forms, this would serve to increase the division between politically active young people and the majority who 'exit' political involvement altogether. In turn, the costs in terms of time, money and education required to participate are likely to accumulate, meaning that those with fewer resources will be further disadvantaged.

To ensure improvement in the quality of Polish democracy in the future, it is critical that policy initiatives to encourage and develop opportunities for youth political participation in Poland should increasingly focus on this large group of disengaged young people. Stoker's (2006) warnings that formal schemes to increase political engagement which are demanding in terms of personal resources can exacerbate inequality between participants and non-participants are particularly pertinent. The focus must be on finding less costly, informal methods to engage non-participants.

Despite this wide gap between politically active and inactive young people in Poland, my study also highlighted some potential for changes in the ways in which Polish young people participate politically. The large turnout of young people in the 2007 parliamentary elections and the 2006 student protests against the appointment of a Catholic fundamentalist education minister have shown that the barriers to participation in Poland may be relatively low. These examples highlight the potential for rapid opening of opportunity structures in Poland, and show that given conducive circumstances young people can be motivated to participate. Again, this highlights the need for youth engagement programmes to address the reasons behind youth non-participation in Poland in greater depth.

6.3b Romania: 'Blocked' Political Space

Incomplete privatisation reform and administrative decentralisation and a perpetuation of clientelistic and corrupt practices at political level mean that formal and informal channels for political participation in Romania remain effectively 'blocked'. Indeed, the findings of this thesis paint a rather bleak prospect for the future improvement in the quality of democracy in Romania through active youth participation. The clientelistic links between politics, media and business at both national and local level continue to effectively place constraints on the participation of young people who are ideologically motivated or policy-seeking. Perceived costs (time, effort and moral compromise) of participating are such that many such young people choose to 'exit' completely from political life.

However, as my findings show, the numbers of young people participating in political parties in Romania compared to both Poland and many established democracies is rather high. This can appear contradictory given the continuation of clientelistic networks in Romania, which could be expected to block many young people from participating in political life. However, this can be explained through the possibilities for selective incentives and 'club' goods which are made available to young party members. These are often offered in return for supporting older politicians and for compliance with the practices of these politicians. Indeed, this exchange relationship helps to regulate that those young people who are incorporated into these clientelistic networks are those who are unlikely to challenge the status quo. In turn, the developed organisation and local level penetration of youth wings provides a ready-made structure for sustaining these clientelistic practices. As a result, these habits are likely to perpetuate into the next generation of young politicians which is particularly problematic for the improvement in the quality of democracy.

Academic literature suggests that faced with these blockages of formal channels to participate, there may be potential for young people to participate in contentious collective action aimed at overthrowing corrupt authorities (Tarrow 1998). However, as stated in section 6.1a, my study suggests there is little evidence of the potential for this to happen in Romania. Indeed the relative stability of the party system, the generally pro-European nature of political parties and largely free elections makes the

participation of young people in an uprising against political corruption in a similar way to in the ‘coloured’ revolutions of the Ukraine, Serbia and Georgia appear unlikely (Tucker 2007).

As such, policy to encourage and develop opportunities for youth political participation in Romania must contend with the blockages in the formal channels and should focus on ways to develop the possibilities for young people to challenge the system through democratic informal methods. Indeed, the findings of this study serve to reiterate the need for wider party system reform in Romania which aims to curb and control clientelism and political corruption and open up opportunities for citizen involvement.

6.4 Avenues for Further Research

This thesis has given a comprehensive study of youth political participation in two contrasting Eastern European countries addressing a near total absence of political science literature on youth participation in the region. However, it is essentially a pilot study. As such, there remains a need for further systematic and in-depth comparative studies and country case studies in the newer democracies of Eastern Europe. Given the finding that young people in newer Eastern European democracies, as in established democracies, have a narrow conception of politics, but in context-specific ways, such studies should use a multi-method approach. This work on Eastern Europe highlights that data from quantitative surveys must be contextualised with the use of qualitative data, including semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups.

The thesis also highlights that civic education and youth engagement programmes in newer Eastern European democracies seeking to mobilise young people to participate politically are not generally founded on a sound knowledge base. Given the potential importance of such education in post-communist democracies where older cohorts are also notably disengaged from political participation, this is an important weakness. As such, there is a critical need for further in-depth and systematic research on youth political participation patterns in Eastern European countries which can inform the drawing up of viable civic education programmes in these newer democracies.

Appendix A

Focus Groups

Setting up Procedure

In setting up my focus groups with young people in Poland and Romania, I attempted to have as broad sample of social backgrounds and characteristics as practical within certain constraints (time, money and geography). However, given that these groups were often set up through schools and colleges there was inevitably a bias towards participants with higher levels of education. In each country my aim was to hold two focus groups in each case study locality. One of these with younger participants 16-19 years, and the other with older participants 20-25 years. In practice, I succeeded in setting up 5 focus groups in each country. In both countries, the missing focus group was that of the older age group in the capital city. The focus groups in Romania took place between November 2006 and March 2007 and in Poland between May 2007 and November 2007.

The focus groups were set up through contacts with schools, colleges, universities and local NGOs. They typically lasted between 1 and 2 hours and had between 5 and 8 participants.

Participants were all made aware of the purposes of the research in advance of the discussion. Immediately before the discussion began, I reiterated this and explained that I was not looking for right or wrong answers but rather opinions and views. I assured participants that their views were for my research purposes only and that they would not be named in my thesis. Before the discussion, I also gave the participants a very short questionnaire which asked them about their age, political interest and political participation habits and offered them the opportunity to ask questions.

The focus groups were mainly conducted in English, with the exception of the older age group in Alexandria, Romania which was mainly conducted in Romanian. The discussions were taped and afterwards I transcribed them. This allowed me to code the responses and to compare findings.

Each discussion followed the same general format. In each case if the discussion strayed too far from the core questions, I would direct it back. In each group I used some visual aids (pictures

of protests, ballot boxes etc.) to generate initial discussion and focus the discussion. The discussion themes and core questions are set out below.

Figure A.1: Discussion Themes and Questions for Focus Groups

1. Politics in General

- a. How interested are you in politics?
- b. What do you think of when you hear the word ‘politics’?
- c. Do you think young people are generally interested in politics? Why/Why not?
- d. What do you think are the biggest problems for young people in (name of town/country)?
- e. Do you watch programmes about politics on TV/read about politics on the internet/in newspapers?
- f. What do you think of the image of politics in the media?

2. Voting

- a. Is it important to vote at an election? Why/why not?
- b. Do you see any difference between voting at local elections and national elections?
- c. How much do you think family and friends influence voting?
- d. Do you think it is important to discuss elections with family/friends?

3. Political Parties

- a. Are youth parties in (name of town) active? (If yes, what do they do? what do you think of them? If no, why not?)
- b. Why do you think people join political parties?
- c. Are there any (young) politicians you admire? Why/why not?
- d. What do you think is the purpose of political parties and politicians?
- e. What kind of people do you think would be best at running the country? (examples: businessmen, celebrities, ‘ordinary’ people etc.)
- f. Are you aware of any radical or extremist youth parties in (town, country)?

4. Informal Participation

- a. Have you ever seen any protests in (name of town, country)?
- b. Have you ever taken part in a protest of any kind? (give examples)
- c. Is it important to protest when you disagree with something? Why/why not?
- d. What do you think stops people from protesting in (name of town, country)?
- e. Do you know of any ways in which to volunteer in your town?

f. What do you think are the benefits of volunteering?

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interviews

During my fieldwork in Poland and Romania I conducted 30 semi-structured interviews in my case-study localities (18 in Romania, 12 in Poland) with young activists. In Romania, I also interviewed a number of people in Cluj-Napoca as test interviews. I defined activists as youth party members or leaders and young people involved in informal forms of participation such as social movements or voluntary groups.

I set up the interviews by contacting political parties by telephone or by email, and through contacts I made at NGOs. I then used a snowballing technique to contact further interviewees. For people involved in informal participation, I also made initial contact through speculative emails or telephone calls.

In each case, I made clear to the prospective interviewee the purposes of my research. I assured them that they would not be named in my thesis, unless they specifically stated that this was acceptable. The interviewees who would be recognisable from my descriptions of their roles, are therefore those who had no objection to being identifiable. I also made clear that I was not looking for 'right' or 'wrong' answers and that they were free to refuse to answer any questions for any reason.

Each face-to face interview lasted between 45 minutes and 2 and half hours. These were mainly conducted in English. However, if they preferred they answered questions in their own language as my knowledge of Polish and Romanian meant I was able to understand the responses and check understanding through further questions. Immediately, after each interview, I wrote a detailed set of field notes. These were later coded and compared.

The tables below set out the locality, age, educational level and organisational affiliation of the interviewees in Romania (Table B.1) and in Poland (Table B.2).

Each interview was conducted within a broad framework of questions on motivations for and experiences of youth activism. However, I was flexible with the order in which the questions were asked in order to facilitate natural conversation and to allow the interviewee to expand on and explain matters of interest to them. The framework of interview questions for young political party members is set out in Figure B.1.

Table B.1: Semi-structured Interviews in Romania

Locality	Age	Education Level	Organisational Affiliation
Oradea	25	Higher	Party member of Democratic Party Youth Organisation (OT-PD)
Oradea	22	Higher	Party Member of Social Democratic Youth (TSD)
Oradea	22	Higher	Party Member of National Liberal Youth (TNL)
Oradea	24	Higher	Leader of Social Democratic Youth (TSD)
Oradea	25	Medium	Involved with Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)
Oradea	23, 26	Higher	Members of Mișcarea Tinerilor pentru Pace Oradea (Youth for Peace Oradea) Organisation.
Oradea	18	Medium	Member of Ecotop (environmental organisation)
Oradea	26	Medium	Member of Pro-Democrația (Pro-Democracy) Organisation
Bucharest	22, 24	Higher	Members of Greater Romania Youth Organisation (OTRM)
Bucharest	25	Higher	Member of Conservative Party (PC)
Bucharest	26	Higher	Member of Social Democratic Youth (TSD)
Bucharest	24	Higher	Member of Democratic Party Youth Organisation (OT-PD)
Bucharest	22	Higher	Member of Pro-Democrația (Pro-Democracy) Organisation
Alexandria	24	Medium	Member of Democratic Party Youth Organisation (OT-PD)
Alexandria	23	Higher	Member of National Liberal Youth (TNL)
Alexandria	22	Medium	Member of Social Democratic Youth (TSD)
Alexandria	26	Higher	Member of Pro-Democrația (Pro-Democracy) Organisation
By e-mail	25	Higher	Member of National Liberal Youth (TNL) in Bucharest
Cluj-Napoca	23	Higher	Former member of Conservative Party (PC)
Cluj-Napoca	22	Higher	Member of National Liberal Youth (TNL)
Cluj-Napoca	24	Higher	Leader of Social Democratic Youth (TSD)

Table B.2: Semi-structured Interviews in Poland

Locality	Age	Education Level	Organisational Affiliation
Bielsko-Biała	25	Higher	Member of Federation of Young Social Democrats (FMS)
Bielsko-Biała	22	Higher	Member of Young Democrats ('S'MD)
Bielsko-Biała	18	Higher	Organiser of local anti-Giertych protests in 2006.
Warsaw	25, 24	Higher	Members of Federation of Young Social Democrats (FMS)
Warsaw	26	Higher	Member of People's Party Youth Forum (FML)
Warsaw	25	Higher	Member of Young Democrats ('S'MD)
Warsaw	22	Higher	Member of Youth Forum of Law and Justice (FMPiS)
Warsaw	23	Higher	Co-founder of Wybieram.pl (a Get out the Vote initiative for young people)
Warsaw	18	Medium	Involved in several youth NGOs
Chełm	25	Higher	Young member of Civic Platform (PO)
Chełm	18	Medium	Volunteer for Catholic charity, Caritas
Chełm	32	Higher	Mayor – former member of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD).

Figure B.1: Interview Questions for Political Party Members

Motivations

1. What reasons did you have for becoming involved in the party?
2. Why do you think other young people in the party joined?
3. Do you think that young people have the same reasons as older members for joining?
4. Do you think that people involved in politics share some common characteristics? (expand)
5. How do you see your future in the party?
6. Are your family/friends involved in politics?
7. Do you discuss politics at home/with friends?
8. Do you think young people in your country are generally interested/disinterested in politics?
Why/why not?

Structure of Party

1. How is the youth wing of your party organised?
2. What is the hierarchical structure within the party?
3. What is the relationship with the main party?

4. How is your branch of the youth wing linked to other branches across the country?
4. Does the party have links with other groups – NGOs, community groups, other parties etc?
5. Does the party encourage young people to join? If yes – how? If no-why not?
6. How do people in the party communicate? By phone, email etc.

Activities

1. What are the main activities of the youth wing (in your town/ in the country)?
2. What is the role at election time?
3. How often does the youth wing meet?
4. What kind of activities does the youth wing do with the main party?

Role

1. What do you feel the role of the youth wing is – within the party? within society?
2. What do you feel your role in the party is?

Experiences

1. What are the best aspects of being a member of the party?
2. What are the worst aspects of being a member of the party?

Appendix C – Descriptives of Independent Variables

Table C.1: Descriptives of Independent Variables used for Logistic Regression Analysis in chapter three

Variable	Values	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Wording of the Question in the European Social Survey 2006
				Poland	Romania	
Gender	0=female, 1=male	0	1	0.47	0.48	
Education Level	0= no high school, 1=high school or above	0	1	0.46	0.69	
Feeling about Household Income	1=finding it very difficult, 2= finding it difficult, 3=coping, 4=living comfortably	1	4	2.36	2.81	Which of the following descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?
Voluntary Activity Frequency	0= never.....5=every day	0	5	0.24	0.62	In the past 12 months, how often did you get involved in work for voluntary or charitable organisations?
Religious Attendance Frequency	0=never.....6=every day	0	6	3.24	2.5	Apart from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services nowadays?
Signing a Petition	0=no, 1=yes	0	1	0.05	0.05	There are different ways of trying to improve things in (country) or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months have you done any other the following. Have you signed a petition?
Trust in Politicians	0=not at all.....10=complete trust	0	10	2.01	2.7	Using this card, please tell me on a score from 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out.
Interest in Politics	0= not interested.....3= very interested	0	3	1.3	2.07	How interested would you say you are in politics?
Closeness to Political Party	0=no, 1=yes	0	1	0.28	0.35	Is there a particular political party you feel closer to than all the other parties?
Live in Capital City (Warsaw and Bucharest)	0= no, 1=yes	0	1	0.14	0.09	
Live in Area 1 (Slaskie and North West Romania)	0=no, 1=yes	0	1	0.12	0.12	
Live in Area 2 (Lubelskie and Muntenia)	0=no, 1=yes	0	1	0.06	0.11	

Appendix D

Bivariate Correlations of Independent Variables from the European Social Survey 2006 (used in Chapter Three)

Table D.1: Pearson's r Bivariate Correlations for Poland (all age groups N= 1550)

	Gender	Education level	Household income	Voluntary Activity	Religious Attendance	Signed Petition	Trust Politicians	Interest in politics	Close to party
Gender	1								
Education Level	-0.032	1							
Household Income	-0.067*	-0.254*	1						
Voluntary Activity	-0.042	0.152*	-0.091*	1					
Religious Attendance	-0.161*	-0.082*	0.034	0.050	1				
Signed Petition	0.049	0.179*	-0.096*	0.088*	-0.043	1			
Trust Politicians	-0.038	0.034	-0.055*	0.066*	0.145*	0.038	1		
Interest in Politics	0.163*	0.224*	-0.141*	0.082*	-0.056*	0.130*	0.176*	1	
Close to Party	0.101*	0.155*	-0.110*	0.088*	-0.010	0.145*	0.158*	0.366*	1

*= significant at 0.01 level

Table D.2: Pearson's r Bivariate Correlations for Romania (all age groups N=1844)

	Gender	Education level	Household income	Voluntary Activity	Religious Attendance	Signed Petition	Trust Politicians	Interest in politics	Close to party
Gender	1								
Education Level	0.168*	1							
Household Income	-0.147*	-0.295*	1						
Voluntary Activity	-0.004	0.061*	-0.099*	1					
Religious Attendance	-0.141*	-0.125*	0.048*	0.136*	1				
Signed Petition	0.081*	0.060*	-0.045	0.093*	-0.042	1			
Trust Politicians	0.024	-0.067*	-0.070*	0.031	0.018	-0.038	1		
Interest in Politics	0.188*	0.170*	-0.113*	0.130*	0.016	0.124*	0.140*	1	
Close to Party	0.180*	0.062*	-0.036	0.084*	0.008	0.122*	0.129*	0.305*	1

*=significant at 0.01 level.

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