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Panel VI

Youth, Women and Minorities and the Politics of Inclusion

Democratic Citizenship and Asian Youth

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Introduction: The Youth in Asian Context

The paper focuses on the relationship between democratic citizenship and youth in thirteen East Asian countries. It explores attitudes of youth toward democracy, their participation in politics, their evaluation of the performance of the political system and, importantly, differences among youth. Analysis was based on data from the third wave of the ABS project, which examines political attitudes and behavior in thirteen countries/territories in East Asia.

Democratic citizenship refers to many desired characteristics of “good citizens” who principally constitute the modern democracy (Weissberg 1974). There is a general consensus that democracy is a form of government where every citizen could have a voice in politics.

¹ This paper brings together contributions to the conference on Democratic Citizenship and Voices of Asia’s Youth, held in Taipei on September 20-21, 2012, which will be published in forthcoming volume *Democratic Citizenship and Youth in East Asia* edited by Bridget Welsh and Yun-han Chu. The conference was the result of a collaboration between the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that aimed to build a better understanding of the political role of young people in East Asia, including their attitudes towards political life, and how and why they engage in politics. This paper adopts materials extensively from our contributing colleagues, specifically from the work by Min-hua Huang, Yutzung Chang, Jack Wu, Chin-en Wu, Alex Chang, Chong-min Park, Zhengxu Wang and Ern-Ser Tang.

For such a system to work, citizens must become aware, knowledgeable, and active in public affairs, engaged with other citizens and psychologically attached to their national communities. In the following we examine the relationship between East Asian youth and the four core dimensions of democratic citizenship: cognitive, behavioral, evaluative, and affective.

This is an important task, both academically and for its wider policy implications, because the political role of young people as a distinct group has rarely been explored in any depth. The youth are politically important, in part, for demographic reasons. Close to half (45%) of East Asians are under thirty years of age, and in the less developed parts of the region, young people completing their education are a massive source of labor that need to be absorbed into expanding economies.

Although young people make up around 45% of the total population of the countries surveyed, the proportion of young people as a percentage of the overall population varies significantly between countries, as reported in Table 1.² In less developed countries, high birth rates and lower life expectancy means that young people make up a significant part of the population. In Mongolia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Malaysia, between around one-quarter and one-third of the population are under fifteen years old, while the population aged over sixty-five in these countries ranges from just 3.8% in Cambodia to 6.4% in Indonesia. In contrast to the population dividend enjoyed by these countries, the industrialized economies in the region are facing a crisis caused by a rapidly aging population. In the five most developed economies in the region (Japan plus the “four little dragons” - Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore – the proportion of the population aged under fifteen ranges from 16.8% in Singapore to just 11.6% in Hong Kong. Of these, Japan stands out for its rapidly aging population – 23.3% of Japanese are now over sixty-five years of age. However, as the post-War generation that reached working age during the boom years approaches retirement, the “four little dragons” are also facing the challenge of caring for an increasingly elderly population. Over sixty-fives already account for more than 10% of the population in Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan, and these figures are growing rapidly. Inevitably, the burden of caring for this aging population will fall on the youth (whether through increased tax and social security payments or direct transfers to family members), causing increasing financial pressures on both individuals and the state.

² See Chin-en Wu's (2012) discussion on youth demographics in East Asia.

[Table 1 here]

As well as the burden of caring for an aging population young people are also under pressure in the job market. Figure 1 shows unemployment rates for youth, adults, and seniors among respondents to third wave of the ABS.³ As the figure shows, youth unemployment is significantly higher than adult unemployment in all countries surveyed. In some countries, youth unemployment is extremely high – for instance reported youth unemployment in the Philippines is 46% - 30% higher than for adults, while in Indonesia it is 26%, compared to just 4% for adults. These high rates of youth unemployment are comparable to those found in many European countries following the economic crisis, and as the recent unrest in Europe has starkly exposed, present a serious threat to political stability. In fact, the picture may be even worse than the figures suggest, as the headline employment rate does not capture significant underemployment of young people. Growing their economies fast enough to absorb surplus youth labor is going to be a major challenge in the future for the region's less developed countries. Although headline youth unemployment in the region's industrialized countries has not reached the level of the Philippines or Indonesia, it still presents a serious challenge to the governments in these countries Youth unemployment is already significantly higher than adult unemployment in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, and appears to be on an upward trend. In addition, the effects of unemployment are unequally felt, as the relocation of manufacturing jobs that has resulted from the international division of labor under globalization disproportionately affects blue-collar workers in industrialized countries.

[Figure 1 here]

Although they face a challenging employment situation, the youth of Asia enjoy much greater educational opportunities than either their parents or grandparents. This should be encouraging for the future of democracy in the region, as education is thought to be a predictor of pro-democracy values (Wang and Tan, 2013; forthcoming). Figure 2 shows the average number of years of formal education received by each generation, with the numbers on the horizontal axis indicating the years in which each generation was born.⁴ As is shown, on average, those born after 1980 received over twelve years of formal education, compared to only around eight years for those born between 1930 and 1939. There was a particularly sharp rise in educational levels immediately after the end of the Second World War – those born in the 1950s received, on average, nearly two more years of formal education than their

³ See Chin-en Wu's (2012) discussion on youth employment

⁴ See Zhengxu Wang's and Yu You's discussion on youth education

counterparts born in the preceding decade. It was, of course, this new post-War generation who entered the workforce in large numbers during the 1970s and contributed to the rapid economic growth of countries such as Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. Furthermore, in Taiwan and South Korea, the most educated members of this generation (university students) were at the center of demands for democratic reform, and played a crucial role in the eventual democratization of these two societies. Even in societies that have yet to democratize, young and educated people, most famously symbolized by the student protestors in Tiananmen Square, have been at the forefront of resistance to authoritarian rule. The value change represented by this generation provides cause for optimism about the prospects for democratic change in the future.

[Figure 2 here]

Patterns of civic engagement among the youth have also changed rapidly. Whereas young people are much less likely to be a member of an organization or formal group, they are much more likely than the older generations to be connected to the Internet (see Figure 3).⁵ For the younger generation, the Internet presents an alternative to traditional social networks, which are in decline. The youth across the region are now connecting online and instantaneously through social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. Figure 3 shows the sharp generational differences in Internet use. Whereas 56.2% of the youth are “frequent” Internet users (defined as those who use the Internet at least once a week), the corresponding figures for adults and seniors are only 34.2% and 12.2% respectively. In the four most developed economies, regular Internet users account for around 90% of more of young people, but significantly lower numbers of adults, and especially seniors. The “digital divide” between the youth and their grandparents is particularly wide. For instance, in Taiwan and South Korea, between 96%-98% of the youth are regular Internet users, compared with only 15-16% of the senior generation. In less economically developed countries, the youth is the only generation where at least 50% are regular Internet users. For example, in China, while 60% of youth are regular Internet users, the corresponding figures for adults and seniors are only 22% and 5% respectively. The Internet provides the possibility of a levelling in the field of communication by circumnavigating traditional media dominated by the state or large corporate interests. It also opens up the possibility for new democratic governance networks in areas ranging from environmental protection to the fight against corruption. However, because Internet discussion may pose a threat to elites, though, for example, the exposure of corruption or the

⁵ See Min-hua Huang’s discussion on Internet use by generation

organization of protest, Internet regulation has become an important site of contestation between state and society.

[Figure 3 here]

Young people in East Asia are growing up in a very different world to their parents and grandparents. They are more educated and more connected, yet also more likely to face the challenge of unemployment. Beginning the 1950s, East Asian societies have witnessed dramatic social change, transforming themselves from poor, primarily agricultural societies to modern industrial powerhouses. More recently, two broad patterns of change can be identified. First, the early industrializers in the region are being transformed into post-industrial knowledge and service-based economies. The second is that industrialization and urbanization are now taking place among the late industrializers, notably China, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia. This social and economic transformation brings the possibility a transition from “materialist” to “non-materialist” values, or as Ronald Inglehart phrases it – “survival” to “well-being” (Inglehart, 1997) or “self-expression” (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Yet, although there are encouraging signs for the development of pro-democratic values among the youth, the new generation is also faced with the pressing challenges of finding employment and providing for the elderly.⁶

To examine the relationship between youth and democratic citizenship, we distinguish between four dimensions of democratic citizenship - cognitive, behavioral, evaluative and affective, and bring together the work of contributors to the conference on the relationship between young people and the different dimensions of democratic citizenship.

The Cognitive Aspect

The cognitive aspect of democratic citizenship is measured on the dimensions of political interest, political efficacy, and democratic understanding.

The ABS measures the extent to which East Asian youth and adults are interested in politics, how often they follow political news, and how often they discuss politics.⁷ Looking at the overall regional pattern, we did not find a large difference between political interest between youth and adults. Although slightly more adults (54%) than youth (48%) stated they were interested in politics, in terms of discussing politics and party affiliation, there no significant

⁶ See the discussion in Wang and You (2012)

⁷ See Alex Chang’s (2012) discussion on political interest

difference between the results of adults and youth. In the case, life cycle theory, which suggests that interests in politics rise in the early years, peaks in middle age, and falls in later years does not hold.

When we break down the results by country (Figure 4), we find some interesting patterns. In the Philippines and Indonesia, the tradition of youth movements is reflected in greater levels of interest in politics among the youth when compared to the older generations. In the late 19th century, young Filipinos joined the independence struggle against Spanish colonialism, and again, in the early 1970s, youth activists mobilized against the Marcos dictatorship. Similarly, in Indonesia, a student-led reform movement that emerged on the national political stage in 1998 has been active in encouraging greater youth participation (Chang, 2013). However, in the industrialized countries, we find that interest in politics among adults is higher than the youth, as predicted by life cycle theory. However, the generational differences are not large, suggesting that although many young people have withdrawn from formal channels of political participation (especially voting), they are not significantly less interested in politics than the preceding generations.

[Figure 4 here]

We also find higher levels of political efficacy among East Asian youth when compared to the preceding generations.⁸ Figure 5 shows the proportion of people who feel they are able to participate politics, feel they can understand politics, and feel they can influence politics. The figures show that 48% of Asian youth feel they are able to participate in politics, 30% feel they can understand politics, and 42% believe they can influence politics. With the exception of the item on understanding politics, which shows little variation between generations, East Asian youth score higher on political efficacy than adults and seniors. Min-Hua Huang also breaks down the item on participation in politics by country, and finds that young people feel more capable than adults to participate in politics in five of the twelve countries surveyed (South Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia, Philippines, and Indonesia), and less capable in only one country (Vietnam). In the remaining six countries, the generational differences are statistically insignificant. The fact that many young people have a stronger sense of civic empowerment than older generations demonstrates that the stereotype of the “disempowered” youth is often wide of the mark – many young people feel they are able to understand, engage in, and make a difference to politics.

⁸ See Huang’s (2012) discussion

[Figure 5 here]

Education is widely believed to be a positive factor for greater civic engagement. Therefore, we would expect that the relatively high levels of political interest and political efficacy shown by the education youth might be related to their higher levels of education.⁹ To measure the level of education, Min-Hua Huang (dichotomizes the original scale into a binary variable “below college” and “college or above” scale. As Figure 6 shows, Asian youth who are educated to college level or above have a higher level of civic engagement than their counterparts who did not receive a college education. The findings that individuals with higher education show greater levels of political efficacy, 59% of college-educated youth stated they often follow the political news, compared to only 49% of their counterparts without a college education. However, the effect of education on civic empowerment is weaker; 50% of college education youth felt they were able to participate in politics, compared to 47% of those without an education. Overall, the findings confirm our theory that the relatively high levels of political interest and political efficacy shown by the youth in East Asia are, at least partly, the product of higher levels of education, and suggest that in the future, political interest and political efficacy may continue to increase as greater numbers of people gain access to higher education for the first time.

[Figure 6 here]

The concept of democratic citizenship is also anchored on the assumption that citizens have a cognitive understanding of what “democracy” means.¹⁰ However, research has shown that, in reality, people have very different understandings of “democracy.” Even people living in the same social or cultural context may conceive of democracy in divergent ways (Shi and Lu, 2010; Chu and Huang 2010). Furthermore, findings from the ABS show that people in East Asia tend to think of their political system as a democracy, regardless of expert judgments from Freedom House or Polity IV to the contrary (Chu and Huang, 2012). While the mainstream literature on democratic citizenship is based on a procedural definition of liberal democracy in the Schumpeterian or Dahlian tradition, for many East Asians democracy is much more broadly conceived – covering a range of desirable political outcomes that might have nothing to do with the classical procedural democracy of liberal democracy.

⁹ See the discussion in Huang (2012)

¹⁰ See the discussion in Chu and Huang (2012)

To measure popular understandings of democracy, the third wave of the ABS includes four question items that ask respondents to choose from one of four statements that they believe represent the most important characteristic of democracy. The four statements represent four different understandings of democracy: social equity, norms and procedures, good government, and freedom and liberty.¹¹ We can then calculate the probability that each component is chosen. For example, if a respondent selects social equity in two of the four questions, the probability of his/her understanding of democracy as social equity is 50%. Aggregating the individual scores, we arrive at country-level results for the conception of democracy (see Figure 7).

Overall, 31% of Asian youth conceive of democracy as good governance, 27% as social equity, 23% as norms and procedures, and only 19% understand democracy as freedom and liberty. In total, 58% of youth conceive of democracy in procedural terms (good governance or social equity), while only 42% conceive of democracy in procedural terms (norms and procedures or freedom and liberty). These results run counter to our expectation that young people generally have a more idealistic view of democracy. This pattern was consistent across the region. Except for Mongolia, the Philippines, and Cambodia, a significant majority of young people has a procedural conception of democracy in every country surveyed.

[Figure 7 Here]

However, the preference for substantive definitions of democracy is not limited to young people. In figure 8, the four components are ranked by the probability of being selected. For

¹¹ The question items are as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| Q1. | (1) | Government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor. (social equity) |
| | (2) | People choose the government leaders in free and fair election. (norms and procedures) |
| | (3) | Government does not waste any public money. (good government) |
| | (4) | People are free to express their political views openly. (freedom and liberty) |
| Q2. | (1) | The legislature has oversight over the government. (norms and procedures) |
| | (2) | Basic necessities, like food, clothes and shelter, are provided for all. (social equity) |
| | (3) | People are free to organize political groups. (freedom and liberty) |
| | (4) | Government provides people with quality public services. (good government) |
| Q3. | (1) | Government ensures law and order. (good government) |
| | (2) | Media is free to criticize the things government does. (freedom and liberty) |
| | (3) | Government ensures job opportunities for all. (social equity) |
| | (4) | Multiple parties compete fairly in the election. (norms and procedures) |
| Q4. | (1) | People have the freedom to take part in protests and demonstrations. (freedom and liberty) |
| | (2) | Politics is clean and free of corruption. (good government) |
| | (3) | The court protects the ordinary people from the abuse of government power. (norms and procedures) |
| | (4) | People receive state aid if they are unemployed. (social equity) |

each generation, good governance was the most frequently chosen, followed by social equity, norms and procedures, and finally freedom and liberty.

[Figure 8 Here]

Chu and Huang are also interested in which explanatory variables account for different understandings of democracy, and find that education is the most significant explanatory variable. Figure 9 shows that more educated young people that the probability that democracy is understood in terms of good governance increases with educational attainment, from 28% of those who did not complete high school to 33% of those with some college education. However, college education youth are less likely than those without a college education to view democracy in terms of social equity, presumably because of their relatively advantageous economic position. Interestingly, there is a u-shaped relationship between adherence to the Western conception of liberal democracy (freedom and liberty) and education, with less than 16% of high-school leavers showing this orientation, compared to 20% for both those who did not complete high school and those who are college educated.

[Figure 9 Here]

The Behavioral Aspect

To measure the behavioral aspects of democratic citizenship, we look at membership of formal groups or organizations and political participation.

The conventional wisdom is that young people tend to have lower social capital due to their weaker social networks and lack of life experience (Putnam, 2000).¹² In addition, it is generally accepted that social capital can promote civic engagement in a democracy (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, 1993). If a society has a high level of social capital, the costs of civic engagement are lower and citizens therefore willing to contribute to the common good.

The ABS project asked respondents to identify the three most important organizations or formal groups that he or she is a member of. Respondents who name at least one organization or formal group are recoded as members, while those who fail to name an organization or group are recoded as non-members. The results show that membership rates are lower among young people - 33% East Asian youth are members of at least one organization or formal

¹² See the discussion in Huang (2012)

group, compared to 48% of adults and 49% of seniors. In nine of the eleven countries, youth membership rates are significantly lower than the preceding generations, while only Indonesia and Singapore show roughly similar membership figures regardless of generation. These findings match our expectation that young people tend to have lower levels of social capital.

[Figure 10 Here]

Turning to participation in elections, the ABS also shows a worrying decline in youth turnout between elections, despite the fact that overall turnout has shown little change.¹³ Between the Second Wave and Third Wave, youth turnout (measured as participation in the most recent national election) declined in all countries except South Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam.

[Figure 11 Here]

Lifecycle theory would expect youth participation in elections to be low, but then gradually increase with age as people become socialized into the political process and acquire greater social capital (Verba and Nie, 1972; Parry, Moyser, and Day, 1992; Quintelier, 2007). Figure 12 shows generational differences in two aspects of political participation – voting and closeness to a political party. As expected from the life cycle theory, turnout among young people is between 15-30% lower than the preceding generations.

Figure 12 depicts generation difference in political participation, including voting, participating in campaign rally, and being close to a political party. First of all, as most studies assert, young people are not sufficiently engaged in voting. Figure 2 shows that youth turnout rate is generally 15%~30% lower than that of adults and senior citizens. In the cases of Japan and Malaysia, the generation gap is even wider – for instance, only 51% of young people reported voting in the most recent Japanese election, compared to 84% of the adult generation and 93% of seniors. However, lower levels of youth turnout have not translated into reduced partisanship. With the exception of Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, and Malaysia, we do not find significantly lower levels of partisanship among the youth when compared to the preceding generations. Therefore, it seems that the process of socialization into political parties takes place faster than that for voting, and that political parties have large untapped reservoirs of support among young people that they are failing mobilize effectively at election time.

¹³ See the discussion in Chang (2012)

[Figure 12 Here]

The fact that rates of partisanship among young people are comparable to the preceding generations suggests that low youth voter turnout may, in fact, not be an indicator of apathy. As Alex Chang points out, young people may develop less institutionalized and more individual forms of participation. Chang compares levels of lobbying and activism between generations.¹⁴ Although adults are somewhat more likely than young people to engage in lobbying and activism, the gap between the two generations is very small in most countries. Interestingly, in China, young people are actually more likely to engage in lobbying and activism than their parents' and grandparents' generation, and young people have become important drivers in protests against environmental degradation and local government corruption.

[Figure 13 Here]

Chang is also interested how education levels effect political participation. While scholars generally agree that better educated citizens are more likely to engage in politics and to become involved in various political activities, turnout among young people is much lower than the preceding generations, even though the current generation has enjoyed much wider access to education. As Figure 15 shows, with the exception of Taiwan, Singapore, and Cambodia, better-educated young people (coded as a college education or above) are more likely to vote than those who did not attend college. Similarly, with the exceptions of Japan and Taiwan, better-educated people are more likely to lobby influential people for help. It is likely that education partially, but not completely, mitigates the effect of lower social capital on youth participation.

[Figure 14 Here]

Finally, Chang explores the relationship between Internet use and youth political participation. As discussed previously, young people have significantly higher rates of Internet use than their parents' generation. Figure 15 shows the effect of Internet use on political participation in the surveyed countries, except for Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan which are excluded as the very small population of non-Internet users among the youth makes reliable statistical analysis impossible. The results show that, with the exception of Malaysia, high Internet usage actually discourages electoral participation. For instance, 66% of Singaporean youth

¹⁴ See the discussion in Chang (2012)

with low Internet usage participated in the most recent election, compared to 43% of youth with high usage. Similarly, in Indonesia, while 88% of youngsters with low Internet usage voted in the most recent election, only 74% of youth with high Internet usage voted. However, although Internet seems to discourage youngsters from voting, it stimulates participation in lobbying and activism. For instance, in Cambodia, 29% of young people who frequently used the Internet had contacted media and influential people for help, and 35% of them had signed petitions, participated in protests, or joined together with other to solve local problems, compared to only 12% and 24% of young people who rarely used the Internet. It seems that the new generation are increasingly disillusioned with electoral politics (indeed the Internet is a perfect platform for highlighting the flaws in the electoral process), yet also increasingly politically engaged online. The role of the “connected youth” in the 2011 Arab Spring was widely discussed in political and media circles, highlighting the emergence of important new forms of political participation that are also making a difference in East Asia.

[Figure 15 Here]

The Evaluative Aspect

Turning to evaluative aspect of democratic citizenship, we look the level institutional trust among the youth and their evaluation of the quality of democratic governance. We first look at trust in the executive, parliament, and courts, shown in Figure 16.¹⁵ Trust in both the executive and legislature shows a remarkably similar pattern across the region. First, we find that trust in the executive and legislature declines with the level of democracy. Citizens in the three countries ranked as “Free” by Freedom House (Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea) showed the lowest levels of trust in the executive and legislature, while the “Not Free” countries showed consistently high levels of trust. The “Partly Free” countries were somewhere in the middle, with countries that have competitive elections (including the Philippines and Mongolia) tending to score closer to the “Free” countries than countries where elections tend to be uncompetitive (notably Singapore and Malaysia). Furthermore, young people were only marginally less likely to express “a great deal of trust” or “quite a lot of trust” in most of the “Not Free” and “Partly Free” regimes, the youth were in general less likely than the preceding generations to express “a great deal of trust.” In contrast, youth political trust in the three full democracies was alarmingly low. For the executive, trust

¹⁵ See the discussion in Weatherall, Wu, and Chang (2012)

among the youth was only 13% in Japan and 22% in South Korea, although somewhat stronger (35%) in Taiwan. Trust in the legislature among the youth was still lower at 12% in Japan, 6% in Korea, and 24% in Taiwan. Second, while trust in the judiciary also tends to decline with the level of democracy, youth in the three “Free” countries have higher levels of trust in the judiciary than their older counterparts.

[Figure 16 Here]

Does regular use of the Internet matter for institutional trust? Internet usage may increase feelings of political engagement, strengthening institutional trust. On the other hand, it may undermine political trust by providing greater access to negative information.¹⁶ However, as Figure 17 shows, the effect of Internet usage is quite weak. While Internet users have higher institutional trust in Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Singapore, and China, they have lower institutional trust in Taiwan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In most cases, the gap between Internet and non-Internet users is small, and only exceeds 10% in South Korea and Thailand. In the region’s three most authoritarian regimes, the gap in institutional trust between Internet users and nonusers is 3% or less, suggesting the political effect of widening Internet use may be less than many commentators suggest.

We also examine the effect of income on institutional trust. Respondents whose income “covers their needs” showed higher institutional support in all countries except Vietnam. However, it should be noted that the gap between the two income groups was relatively small in most cases. Taiwan had the largest fall off in institutional support among the low-income group, with 43% of the high-income group expressing institutional support, as opposed to only 31% of the low-income group. Many countries showed virtually no gap between the two income groups – around 1% in South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, and less than 6% in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Cambodia. Looking at the region as a whole, while institutional trust is somewhat higher among the comfortably off, the effect of income levels on institutional trust does not appear to be large.

[Figure 17 Here]

Core elements that constitute good governance include rule of law, control of corruption, equality and responsiveness. In a democracy, public officials should be constrained by, and subject to the law the law should apply equally to everyone. To ascertain how citizens viewed

¹⁶ See the discussion in Weatherall, Wu, and Chang (2012)

adherence to this aspect of rule of law, the ABS asked respondents how often they thought government leaders broke the law or abused their power.¹⁷ Four response categories were provided: “always,” “most of the time,” “sometimes,” and “rarely.” Responses of “rarely” and “sometimes” indicate favorable evaluations of official law-abidingness.

As shown in Figure 18, in eight of the twelve countries surveyed only a minority of young people made favorable judgments of official law-abidingness by choosing either “rarely” or “sometimes.” Generally speaking, young people are somewhat more skeptical of the law-abidingness of their government officials than the preceding generations, although with the exceptions of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, the generational difference is generally not large. Mongolia displayed the lowest level of youth approval, followed by South Korea, Taiwan, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines in that order. Only small minorities of youth in these countries considered government officials law-abiding. In contrast, in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, a majority of young people considered their government leaders law-abiding. The Singapore result is of particular interest, as it reveals an overwhelming majority of young Singaporeans consider their government leaders law-abiding.

[Figure 18 Here]

Control of corruption is one of the key elements of democratic governance. Although control of corruption may be regarded as one aspect of the rule of the law, the ABS also includes separate items measuring corruption at the local/municipal level and the national level. For corruption at the national level, respondents were asked how widespread they thought corruption and bribe taking were in the national government in their capital city.¹⁸ Four response options were provided: “hardly anyone is involved,” “not a lot of officials are corrupt,” “most officials are corrupt,” and “almost everyone is corrupt.” Responses of “hardly anyone is involved” or “not a lot of officials are corrupt” indicate favorable evaluations of the extent of official corruption at the national level. Figure 18 shows the distribution of responses across the three age cohorts in the sample countries except Vietnam where the question was not asked.

In six of the level countries, only minorities of young people gave positive responses on the corruption item. Surprisingly, some of the least favorable responses were found in Taiwan and South Korea, despite the fact that these countries rank relatively strongly on expert

¹⁷ See the discussion in Park (2012)

¹⁸ See the discussion in Park (2012)

assessments of official corruption. However, in the region's longest standing democracy, Japan, responses were more favorable, with a small majority of young people answering that of "hardly anyone is involved" or "not a lot of officials are corrupt." Singaporean youth were least likely to think that national government officials were involved in corruption, a finding consistent with their positive assessment of official law-abidingness. We also find an interesting generational pattern; young people in democracies are less likely to give positive evaluations of official corruption than the preceding generations, whereas young people living under authoritarian regimes are more likely than the preceding generations to give positive evaluations.

[Figure 19 here]

A core aspect of democratic governance is equality.¹⁹ As well as formal political equality, citizens assess the performance of democratic governments by the extent to which they can deliver social and economic equality. The ABS asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "Rich and poor people are treated equally by the government." Affirmative responses indicate that state institutions do not discriminate based on wealth. Figure 20 shows the results across the three age cohorts.

In Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia, and the Philippines, only small minorities of young people agreed that the government does not discriminate against the poor. In contrast, in most of the authoritarian regimes, large majorities of young people thought that the government treated the poor fairly. These results suggest that East Asian democracies are failing to promote economic and social equality. Ultimately, a failure to deliver social and economic equality has implications for political rights as socioeconomically disadvantaged groups in society often also find themselves politically excluded.

[Figure 20 here]

Application of the rule of law pertains to the procedural aspect of democracy, while political equality involves the substantive aspect of democracy. The third aspect of democracy is the results part – whether the government can deliver what its citizens want.²⁰ The ABS asks respondents whether the government is responsive to their needs. Four response categories were provided: "very responsive," "largely responsive," "not very responsive," and "not

¹⁹ See the discussion in Park (2012)

²⁰ See the discussion in Park (2012)

responsive at all.” Responses of “very responsive” or “largely responsive” indicate favorable evaluations of government responsiveness.

As Figure 21 shows, in seven of the twelve countries surveyed, only minorities of young people considered their government “very” or “largely” responsive. Government responsiveness was ranked less favorably in democracies such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. In contrast, large majorities of young people in Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, China, and Cambodia rated their government as responsive. However, in most countries, we did not find a significant generational gap – adults and seniors tended to be as skeptical as young people are about the government’s capacity to respond to their needs

[Figure 21 here]

How do young people’s evaluations of democratic performance translate into democratic satisfaction? Figure 22 shows that, as theories about psychological involvement in politics predict, people tend to become more satisfied with the way democracy works as they become older.²¹ However, Taiwan is an interesting exception to this pattern – Taiwanese people become less satisfied with democracy as they become older. The Taiwanese exception may indicate high levels of “authoritarian nostalgia” – Taiwanese who remember the boom years of the 1960s and 1970s under authoritarian rule are likely to compare this period favorably to the current sluggish economic performance and seemingly intractable conflict under democracy.

[Figure 22 here]

An individual’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the performance of democracy is likely to be reflected in their support for the democratic regime. A poor economy is likely to fuel popular discontent with existing political and economic arrangements, whereas an improved economy may lead to a deepening in democratic support. To test the relationship between support for democracy and an individual’s economic condition, we compare support for democracy among young people in employment and those out of work, as shown in Figure 23.²² As expected, in Japan and South Korea, the unemployed are significantly less likely to support democracy. As they have not done well under the current system, they are less likely to offer support for it. Yet in other countries, the relationship between employment status and support for democracy is less clear-cut. For instance, in China, the Philippines, Taiwan, and

²¹ See the discussion in Wang and You (2012)

²² See the discussion in Wu (2012)

Thailand, employment status has no significant effect on support for democracy, whereas in Malaysia, unemployed young people are more supportive of democracy than their employed counterparts.

[Figure 23 here]

The Affective Aspect

The affective aspect refers to the affection for one's national community and their diffuse support for the existing system of government. First we explore to what extent our respondent take pride in the system of government.²³ As Figure 24 shows, only minorities of young people in democratic countries are proud of their country's system of government. Notably, Japan, the oldest democracy in East Asia, registered the lowest level of pride. In contrast, a majority of respondents across all the three age cohorts in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam, and China expressed pride in their country's system of government

[Figure 24 here]

The low levels of pride in the system of government in democracies are also reflected in demands for changes in the system. As Figure 25 shows, in Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, and the Philippines, only minorities of young people desired little (none or only minor) system change. Mongolia displayed the lowest level of system allegiance, followed by the Philippines, South Korea, and Japan. Of the new democracies, Thailand was the only exception where a large majority of youths wanted little system change (Park, 2013). The result in Thailand is consistent with the high level of pride in the system, and may be a reflection of widespread support for the Thai monarchy rather than approval of the current regime. Finally, in the authoritarian regimes, demand for system change was consistently low, with majorities in each generation saying that no or only minor system change is needed.

[Figure 25 here]

²³ See the discussion in Park (2012)

Conclusion

This paper attempted to synthesize the relationship between East Asian youth and the four core dimensions of democratic citizenship: cognitive, behavioral, evaluative, and affective. This is an important task, both academically and for its wider policy implications, because the political role of young people as a distinct group has rarely been explored in any depth.

The youth are politically important, in part, for demographic reasons. Close to half (45%) of East Asians are under thirty years of age, and in the less developed parts of the region, young people completing their education are a massive source of labor that need to be absorbed into expanding economies. However, in the industrialized countries, plummeting birth rates mean that fewer and fewer young people are entering the workplace, increasing the burden on those already in employment to provide for an aging population.

Despite the challenges young people face, as a generation, they have enjoyed much wider access to education than their parents or grandparents. They are also, through the Internet, connected in a way that would have been impossible to imagine even a decade ago. Young people in East Asia are living in a rapidly changing world as the region's early industrializers enter a period of transition into post-industrial knowledge and service-based economies, and the less developed economies enter a period of rapid economic growth and industrialization. This social and economic transformation brings with it the possibility of a fundamental change in values, including the emergence of greater popular demand for democracy.

Yet, even as young people demand more democracy, they also seem to be deeply dissatisfied with the way democracy works in practice. Young people tend to conceive of democracy in substantive, rather than procedural terms. When democratic governments fail to deliver, young people are therefore likely to become dissatisfied with democracy. In contrast, authoritarian regimes may win the support of young people if they deliver certain policy outcomes, even when procedurally they are far from democratic.

The failure of democracy to deliver is starkly illustrated by the figures on institutional trust in the executive, parliament, and courts, which show an inverse relationship with Freedom House scores. This lack of trust reflects the fact that many young people do not trust the regime to ensure the rule of law is upheld, control corruption, treat people fairly regardless of income, or respond to citizens' needs. The lack of trust is also expressed as dissatisfaction with the way democracy works, a lack of pride in the system, and demands for major reform. Addressing these issues is the major challenge for future democratic consolidation.

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