

Becoming a Democratic Citizen.
Quasi-experimental Evidence on the Effects of
Coming of Voting Age

Thorsten Faas, Arndt Leininger, Sigrid Roßteutscher und Armin
Schäfer

21 June 2019

EPSA 2019, Queens University Belfast

Berit and Birte

Berit



Born 7 May 2001

12th grade

Thor-Heyerdahl-Gymnasium Kiel

Birte



Born 8 May 2001

12th grade

Thor-Heyerdahl-Gymnasium Kiel

The state elections in Schleswig-Holstein 2017

Sendung: tagesschau 08.05.2017 20:00 Uhr



The state elections in Schleswig-Holstein 2017

Frankfurter Allgemeine

80 Prozent



Frankfurt am Main 5°

RUBRIKEN

INLAND

AUSLAND

TRUMPS PRÄSIDENTSCHAFT

STAAT UND RECHT

DIE GEGENWART

#80 PROZENT FÜR DEUTSCHLAND

Ist es sinnvoll, dass Minderjährige wählen dürfen?

VON THORSTEN FAAS · AKTUALISIERT AM 03.05.2017 · 14:11



Den Jungen hängt der schlechte Ruf des Nicht-Wählers an. Dennoch hat mit Schleswig-Holstein das vierte deutsche Bundesland sein Wahlrecht auf 16- und 17-Jährige erweitert. Ist das sinnvoll – und wie verändert es das Wahlergebnis? Ein Gastbeitrag als Teil eines unseres Erstwählerlexikons.

Berit can vote, Birte can't

Berit



Born 7 May 2001

12th grade

Thor-Heyerdahl-Gymnasium Kiel

Birte



Born 8 May 2001

12th grade

Thor-Heyerdahl-Gymnasium Kiel

Political Socialization

*“learning of social patterns corresponding to his societal position as mediated through various agencies of society.”
(Hyman 1959, 25)*

- ▶ Political interest
- ▶ Party identification
- ▶ Duty to vote
- ▶ **Habitual voting**

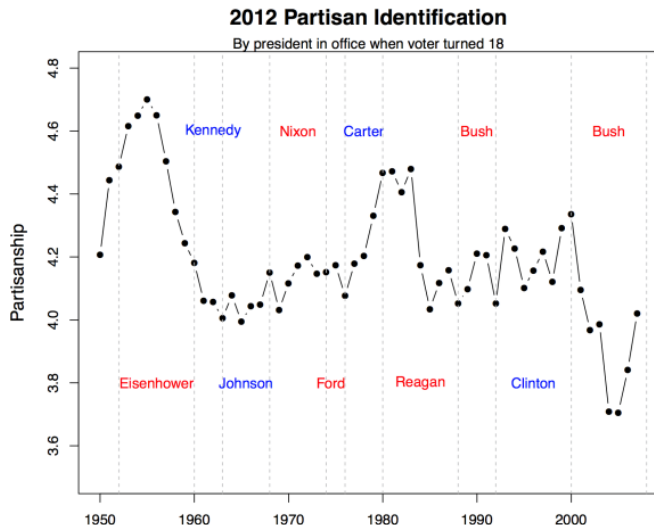
“socializing agents”

- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Teachers
- ▶ Media
- ▶ Parties/politicians

Political Socialization

Political Socialization is a context-dependent long-term process, but the “**impressionable years**” (Kinder 2006; Highton and Wolfinger 2001; Strate et al. 1989; Jennings 1979) are particularly important. Roughly from ages 17 to 24 (Jennings and Niemi 1981)

Political Socialization



https:

//fivethirtyeight.com/features/partisan-loyalty-begins-at-age-18/

Eligibility

What is the role of eligibility (“coming of voting age”) in political socialization?

1. Parents increasingly talk about electoral and political issues if their children are eligible to vote
2. Teachers focus more on elections and politics in classes when pupils are eligible to vote
3. First-time eligible citizens are specifically targeted by parties
4. Young people inform themselves more and develop a greater interest because they are allowed to take part in decisions

Targeting of “Erstwähler*innen”



Bündnis 90/Die Grünen Freiburg

May 8 at 6:29 AM · 🌐

Heute haben zahlreiche Freiburger Eltern von uns einen Brief erhalten, der an ihre kleinen Kinder adressiert ist, in dem diese als vermeintliche Erstwählerinnen und Erstwähler angesprochen werden. Zurecht erreichen uns im Moment viele Emails und Anrufe irritierter und verärrgerter Bürgerinnen und Bürger. Grund für dieses Versehen ist ein falscher Datensatz, den uns die Stadt Freiburg zur Verfügung gestellt hat. Hintergrund: Zur Europa- und Kommunalwahl wollen wir mit Erstwählerinnen und Erstwähler ins Gespräch kommen. Denn es ist die junge Generation, die am stärksten von politischen Entscheidungen betroffen sein wird. Deswegen wollten wir allen Freiburger Erstwählerinnen und Erstwählern einen Brief schreiben mit einem Aufruf, wählen zu gehen, und mit der Einladung, uns im Rahmen verschiedener Veranstaltungsformate Fragen zu stellen. Die Gemeinden können politischen Parteien im Vorfeld von Wahlen für solche Zwecke Daten der Erstwählerinnen und Erstwähler zur Verfügung stellen, die selbstverständlich einem strikten Datenschutz unterliegen und im Anschluss an das Schreiben wieder gelöscht werden. Leider war der Datensatz, den die Stadt Freiburg uns zur Verfügung gestellt hat, falsch, sodass anscheinend alle seit der letzten Wahl geborenen Kleinkinder angeschrieben wurden. Das unterlag nicht unserer Kontrolle und war ganz sicher nicht unsere Absicht. Auch wenn es nicht unser Fehler war, entschuldigen wir uns hiermit aufrichtig bei allen irritierten Eltern. Wir erwarten von der Stadt Freiburg, dass sie alle Betroffenen anschreibt und sich entschuldigt.

👍 🙄 🗨️ 24

29 Comments 10 Shares

➦ Share

Expectations

1. Electoral eligibility has a positive influence on *political socialization outcomes* such as political interest, efficacy or partisanship
2. Electoral eligibility has a positive influence on *election-specific attitudes and behavior* such as interest in the campaign, political conversations or VAA usage

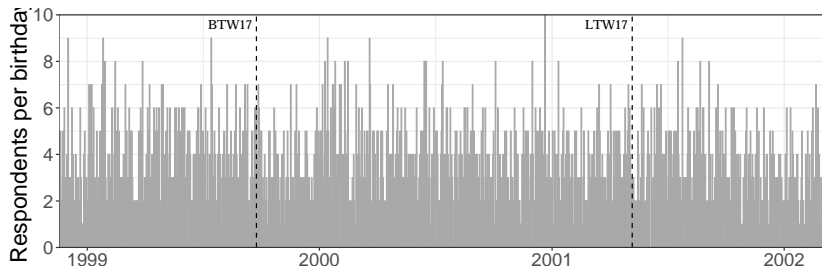
Data

	1st wave	2nd wave	3rd wave
Election	State	Federal	Municipal
Election day	7 May 2017	24 September 2017	6 May 2018
Voting age	16	18	16
Target population	22 133	3 414	3 414
Field time	8 May 2017 - 6 June 2017	25 September 2017 - 22 October 2017	7 May 2018 - 24 May 2018
Invitation via	Mail	E-Mail / SMS	E-Mail / SMS
Participants	3897 (18.4%)	1900 (55.7%)	1529 (44.8%)

Regression Discontinuity Design

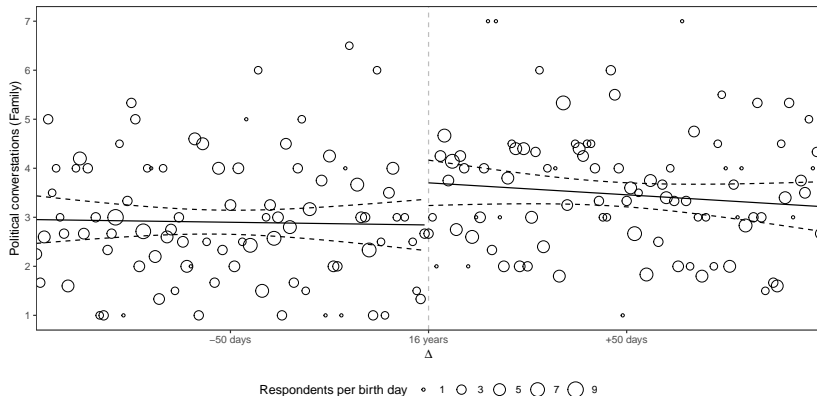
- ▶ Regulations regarding the voting age set a strict cut-off date (c) for electoral eligibility, before which citizens have to be born in order to be allowed to vote.
- ▶ Eligibility is a binary treatment (D_i) that is completely dependent on a respondents birth date (b_i)

$$D_i = \begin{cases} D_1 = 1 & \text{if } b_i \leq c \\ D_0 = 0 & \text{if } b_i > c \end{cases}$$



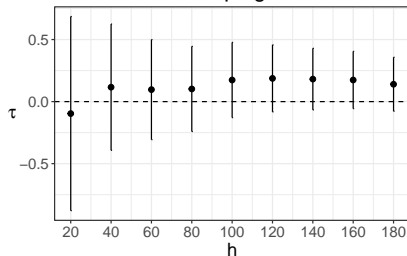
Regression Discontinuity Design

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \tau D_i + \beta_1(c - b_i) + \beta_2 D_i \times (c - b_i) + \epsilon_i$$

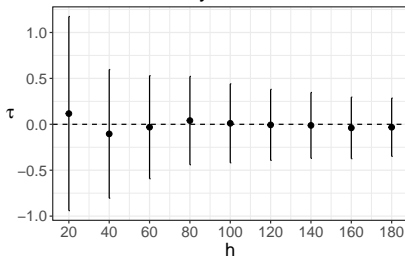


Results: Political socialization outcomes

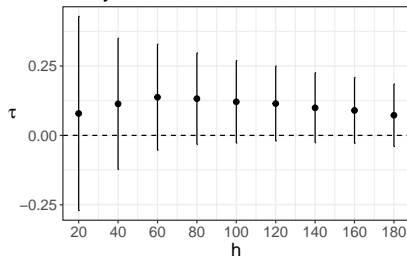
Political and Campaign Interest



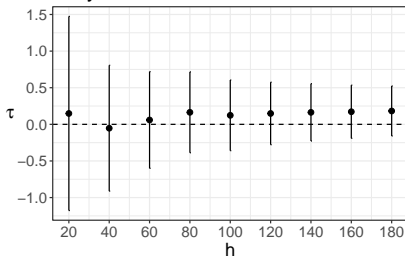
Political Efficacy



Party identification

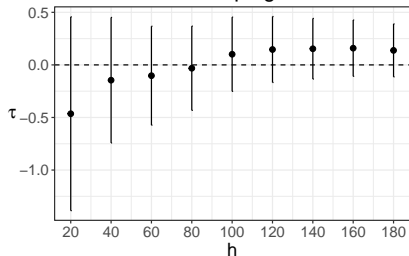


Duty to vote

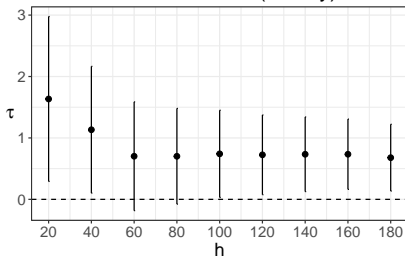


Results: Election-specific outcomes

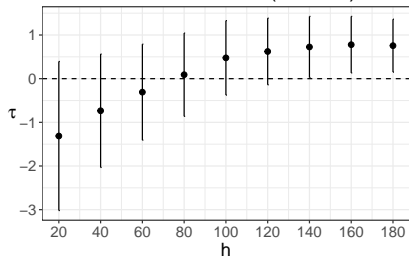
Interest in the campaign



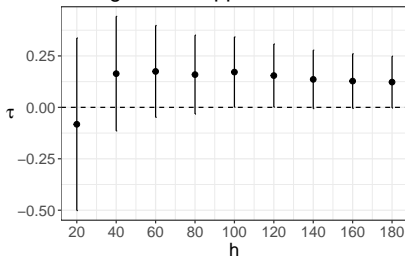
Political Conversations (Family)



Political Conversations (Friends)



Voting Advice Application



In lieu of a conclusion

- ▶ Electoral eligibility seems to have a positive influence on election-specific outcomes such as the search for information, but does not affect classical political socialization outcomes.
- ▶ Eligibility might not be a determinant of, but merely a trigger for previously “learned” predispositions.
- ▶ Voting at 16: Comparisons with eligible and non-eligible citizens are problematic because eligibility has at least some effect on political information searches.

In lieu of a conclusion

- ▶ Self-selection (18.4% response rate) implies very interested (eligible and ineligible) respondents
- ▶ Cut-off *de facto* not as strict as it is *de jure*
 - ▶ Young citizens may wrongly think that they are eligible
 - ▶ Young citizens missing the deadline by only a few days might still take an interest

In lieu of a conclusion

- ▶ Investigate long-term effects: does eligibility in state election affect
 - ▶ outcomes measured after federal election in September 2017 (4 months later, none eligible)
 - ▶ outcomes measured after municipal election in May 2018 (year later, all eligible)
- ▶ We will conduct a similar survey after the state elections in Brandenburg and Sachsen on 1 September 2019
 - ▶ **What items should we include?**

References

Highton, Benjamin, and Raymond E. Wolfinger. 2001. "The First Seven Years of the Political Life Cycle." *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (1): 202–9. doi:10.2307/2669367.

Hyman, Herbert Hiram. 1959. *Political Socialization: A Study in the Psychology of Political Behavior*. Free Press.

Jennings, M. Kent. 1979. "Another Look at the Life Cycle and Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 23 (4): 755–71. doi:10.2307/2110805.

Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1981. *Generations and Politics: A Panel Study of Young Adults and Their Parents*. Princeton University Press.

Kinder, Donald R. 2006. "Politics and the Life Cycle." *Science* 312 (5782): 1905–8. doi:10.1126/science.1127891.

Strate, John M., Charles J. Parrish, Charles D. Elder, and Coit Ford. 1989. "Life Span Civic Development and Voting Participation." *American Political Science Review* 83 (2): 443–64. doi:10.2307/1962399.