
Identities and Ideas: Participation of Young Legislators in the Canadian House of Commons

by J.P. Lewis

On June 16, 2005, Stephen Harper, then leader of the Official Opposition announced creation of the Youth Conservative caucus composed of members age forty and under. The group's mission was to develop policy that speaks to youth. The creation of this group highlighted a noticeable statistical advantage the Conservative Party held over the Liberal Party in the last Parliament. Almost twenty percent of the federal Conservative Party caucus was under the age of forty while less than ten percent of the Liberal Party caucus fell in the same age bracket. This situation provoked a number of interesting questions. How many young parliamentarians have been elected to federal Parliament since Confederation? Once in Parliament do young parliamentarians make a significant contribution to the legislature. This article begins with an overview of the theories of representation in parliament in relation to youth membership. It then looks at young member representation and participation. It argues that young federal parliamentarians tend to fulfill the role of 'standing for' rather than 'acting for' their constituents.

The notion of representation in liberal democracies has seen an evolution over the years since Edmund Burke's 1774 "Speech to the Electors of Bristol". At the time, Burke presented the idea of representation by "trustee" or "delegate". A trustee "makes decisions on basis of conscience, own judgement and understanding" while a delegate "makes decisions on basis of instructions or orders". Burke favoured the former. In Canada, there is a gap between the representative role performed by Members of Parliament and the expectations of the voter. While many believe Canadian members uphold the "trustee" tradition, many Canadians wish their representatives in Ottawa would follow the "delegate" model.

In the 1967 classic text, *The Concept of Representation*, Hanna Pitkin presented a number of formalistic views of

representation including descriptive representation and symbolic representation. Pitkin describes descriptive representation in the following manner: "the representative does not act for others; he 'stands for' them, by virtue of a correspondence or connection between them, a resemblance or reflection."¹ Others describe the descriptive approach to representation as "assuming that a government is representative of the social characteristics of its members and reflect the distribution of politically important social characteristics in the general public."² This view of representation has influenced many scholars, including Manon Tremblay's work on Canadian Parliament, and demonstrates the importance of considering youth simply as a factor of membership. Pitkin also introduces the concept of 'acting for' and defines this action as referring to "one who acts not merely autonomously but for, instead of, on behalf of, someone else; hence representing."³ Pitkin's theories were also adapted by Terence Ball during the 1980s.⁴ Ball manipulated Pitkin's theory to arrive at the "mandate theory" which

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posits that the task of representative is “to mirror the views of those whom he represents”.⁵ This concept of representation is empirically tested in the latter part of the paper focusing on parliamentary participation by members under forty.

Representation in Canadian politics has been a long debated and contested ideal. Canada has three established representative groups: language, religion and region. Traditionally in Canada, race has meant French and English, religion has referred to Protestant and Catholic while region has been defined by the four geographic regions; the Maritimes, the West, Ontario and Quebec. In the more recent progressive and post-materialistic era of Canadian politics, women, visible minorities and a number of different religions and cultural backgrounds have been considered important groups for representation.

One group’s membership in parliament that has not been considered extensively is youth.

The difficulty in studying youth is in defining youth as a group. It is quite apparent who belongs to certain groups such as gender or region because the traits are commonly accepted, but youth is much different. Youth related to politics has been defined in various ways. The Young Liberals of Canada define youth as twenty-five and under. Others define younger voters as thirty and under to describe an age gap in voter turnout.⁶ The Conservative’s definition of “youth” for their Youth Conservative Caucus has been partially adopted for this study. The Youth Conservative Caucus is limited to member aged forty and under. To make a more clear date of change from a “young” Member of Parliament to an “older” Member of Parliament, this study considers under forty to be “young”. This appears to be more clear and concise than including those that have already turned forty and creates a stricter guideline to a definition that many would probably argue is already too expansive.

As mentioned earlier, age has been consistently ignored when studying the membership of legislatures and the profiles of legislators. Studlar et al. contend that “occupation, region, party affiliation and previous offices...gender and ethnicity” have all been studied in face of “Canada’s growing demographic diversity and self-image of inclusiveness”.⁷ Even with the extent of this list, the age of the legislator and the role his or her age may influence decision making has not been adequately addressed. Age was considered by Trimble and Tremblay in 2003, but this is in the context of comparing

age of election between men and women. The authors state that “Canadian women politicians tend to be older than their male counterparts, perhaps in part because women often delay candidacy until their children are grown.”⁸ For Trimble and Tremblay age is a variable, but not one isolated on its own.

Some may question the utility of studying youth membership in parliament at all. Maybe legislatures are just a part of the political system where youth are not an important factor. Possibly it takes years of life experience and time in the work force or raising a family to help a Member of Parliament develop a well-rounded understanding of society and sympathy for the average Canadian voter. It is conceivable that youth in parliament is a subject irrelevant and not in need of study. There are a number of reasons to reject these claims. First of all, with the recent decline in youth participation in politics, any work considering the problem of youth’s disengagement from politics should be welcome. It is unclear whether or not enhancement of younger member representation and participation would change the direction of youth political engagement, but it can be argued that political representation can have a notable impact. Writing on African-Americans in United States Congress, Katherine Tate argues that representation can be powerfully symbolic and be composed of much more than “policy representation or service”.⁹ Some aspects of political learning and political socialization may be enlightened for youth in Canadian by having those closer to their generation fulfill meaningful roles in the political system. Secondly the numbers on youth in parliament simply do not exist anywhere else in such a comprehensive manner. This study produces figures for members under forty which have not appeared in other academic works. The empirical data provides evidential information for discussion and debate.

The empirical element of this work is divided up into two parts following the “standing for” and “acting for” model. The “standing for” section of the study will simply consider how many “young” parliamentarians have served in the House of Commons. The “acting for” part will be a study of the younger members’ activities and responsibilities in parliament. A major argument of this article is that participation of Canadian citizens under forty in federal parliament has been historically and currently low and in turn contributes as one of the many deterrents directed towards youth political participation in Canada today. If the younger Canadians can not see their peers in the political process, how will they ever see themselves in the political process?

Representation in Parliament

The following section gives a detailed description of the number of federal parliamentarians under the age of forty since Confederation. While some may argue that this type of presentation has limited utility, it does offer a set of data which has not been compiled in the past. The parliamentary guide and website, which were used to create these tables, offers an average age of each parliament. It does not package age statistics in a manner that presents the raw number of “young” Members of Parliament per parliament, per party, per government and per opposition. The following section of the essay also provides a background for the analysis of young parliamentary activity during the 1st session of the 38th parliament.

Table 1 displays the number of members under the age of forty in federal parliament since Confederation. The figures demonstrate how this percentage has just slightly rebounded from a sixty year low. In addition since peaking at almost one third of the legislature in 1974, the percentage of members under forty has been on a steady decline. In 1926, the lowest percentage registered with only 9.6%. While there have been two peaks of young members, first in the first few decades after Confederation and second following the World Wars, the trend is again downward. Unlike other representative factors such as visible minorities or women, the under forty cohort did not gain ground approaching the 21st century, but in fact has seen a great decline.

It is difficult to arrive at a suitable or acceptable number for youth representation in federal parliament but an attempt can be made using up-to-date demographic information from Statistics Canada. In 2005, the Canadian population of 32 million citizens was made up of 52.2% under forty and approximately 28% between eighteen and forty, being eligible to vote. Using the number of possible eligible voters would suggest that a 28-30% proportion of Members of Parliament under forty would be appropriate. As Table 1 demonstrated this was achieved once in 1974.

The Table demonstrates that using under forty as a general measuring age makes more sense than under thirty or the common youth determining ages of eighteen to twenty-four. Since Confederation there have been only 174 or 1.7% Members of Parliament under thirty and only 21 or 0.2% members between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four. To measure the membership and activities of younger Members of Parliament, the age range must be raised to create any sense of significance. It can be safely concluded from the figures that Members of Parliament under thirty are extremely rare and members

falling in the common youth range of eighteen to twenty-four years old are practically non-existent.

General assumptions may lead some to believe that Conservatives are traditionally linked to the status quo and are supported by older Canadians, but the membership numbers suggest otherwise. In fact in the last Parliament, the Conservatives had the largest percentage of Members of Parliament under forty with 19.4%. Even though the Liberals had thirty-six more members than the Conservatives in that parliament, the Conservatives still had eight more members under the age of forty. It is especially noteworthy that the party created a parliamentary group for youth when only a few months prior it did not support the creation of extra-parliamentary group for youth activists in the party. With the populist influences of the former Reform Party still strongly entrenched in the party’s current status, the Youth Conservative Caucus was a novel idea indeed.

Conservatives have enjoyed large groups of young members in the past. Twice the former Progressive Conservative party sent over 40 members under the age of forty to Ottawa including in 1958 when they had 57 members under forty.

In recent history, the Liberals enjoyed a youthful parliamentary caucus under Prime Minister Trudeau during the 1970s but this trend has quickly reversed. By 1974 almost one third of the Liberal governing caucus was under the age of forty. This level remained relatively stable through Trudeau’s last years and into John Turner’s time as Liberal party leader. The party was close to the 1974 figures again in 1988 but the following election cut the amount in half. During the Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin era, the party elected very few members under forty. Since 1997 the party has been composed of over 90% members over the age of forty. This lack of youth may have contributed to problems the Martin Government experienced in distancing itself from negative aspects of Mr. Chrétien’s legacy.

The case of the CCF and NDP is difficult to assess due to the low number of members they have elected to Ottawa. Even though there is the general assumption that the CCF/NDP are supported by younger Canadians and students, this does not necessarily translate into a caucus consistently composed of younger members. In the past there have been parliaments where the New Democrats were well represented by those under forty. During the brief 31st parliament in 1979, the New Democratic experienced a caucus with over half the members under the age of forty. Similar to the Liberal Party, the New Democrats have had a lot more difficulty electing younger members recently. Since 1994 the caucus has not broken the 15% threshold for members under forty. The appear-

**Table 1
Members of Parliament by Age 1867-2004**

Year	Parliament	Total					% Conservative Members Under 40	% Liberal Members under 40	% CCF/NDP Members under 40
			# Under 40	% Under 40	# Under 30	% Under 30			
1867	1st	228	56	24.6%	3	1.3%	21.9%	30.4%	–
1873	2nd	230	57	24.8%	6	2.6%	22.9%	27.2%	–
1874	3rd	296	71	24.0%	7	2.4%	24.8%	24.1%	–
1879	4th	253	64	25.3%	6	2.4%	25.0%	25.4%	–
1883	5th	251	50	19.9%	5	2.0%	21.0%	17.1%	–
1887	6th	269	45	16.7%	3	1.1%	18.3%	13.5%	–
1891	7th	299	41	13.7%	8	2.7%	13.5%	14.7%	–
1896	8th	261	37	14.2%	5	1.9%	12.2%	15.2%	–
1901	9th	256	34	13.3%	2	0.8%	5.2%	17.2%	–
1905	10th	259	52	20.1%	7	2.7%	13.9%	22.8%	–
1909	11th	233	43	18.5%	3	1.3%	10.6%	22.9%	–
1911	12th	261	44	16.9%	1	0.4%	18.1%	15.7%	–
1918	13th	254	29	11.4%	2	0.8%	8.9%	17.2%	–
1922	14th	275	30	10.9%	0	0.0%	7.4%	9.2%	–
1926	15th	249	24	9.6%	1	0.4%	8.7%	12.5%	–
1926	16th	278	35	12.6%	2	0.7%	8.4%	16.8%	–
1930	17th	276	28	10.1%	0	0.0%	8.4%	11.0%	–
1936	18th	275	31	11.3%	2	0.7%	4.4%	10.3%	14.3%
1940	19th	261	30	11.5%	3	1.1%	2.4%	10.8%	16.7%
1945	20th	263	46	17.5%	3	1.1%	7.0%	18.9%	29.0%
1949	21st	292	39	13.4%	3	1.0%	13.0%	13.2%	15.4%
1953	22nd	282	41	14.5%	2	0.7%	21.4%	11.7%	20.8%
1957	23rd	268	51	19.0%	3	1.1%	25.4%	10.6%	28.0%
1958	24th	278	69	24.8%	9	3.2%	26.5%	15.1%	37.5%
1962	25th	266	56	21.1%	5	1.9%	15.5%	20.2%	20.0%
1963	26th	271	53	19.6%	4	1.5%	11.5%	21.2%	11.1%
1966	27th	276	51	18.5%	5	1.8%	11.1%	24.5%	9.1%
1968	28th	275	63	22.9%	8	2.9%	18.9%	24.7%	22.2%
1973	29th	264	65	24.6%	9	3.4%	21.5%	27.5%	29.0%
1974	30th	289	84	29.1%	12	4.2%	20.4%	28.2%	38.9%
1979	31st	284	58	20.4%	8	2.8%	14.7%	19.1%	51.9%
1980	32nd	294	56	19.0%	7	2.4%	11.0%	19.2%	44.1%
1984	33rd	288	58	20.1%	8	2.8%	18.8%	24.4%	24.2%
1988	34th	301	54	18.0%	2	0.7%	13.5%	27.1%	17.8%
1994	35th	305	43	14.1%	3	1.0%	13.0%	14.5%	0.0%
1997	36th	311	34	11.0%	8	2.6%	13.3%	5.6%	13.6%
2001	37th	313	33	11.0%	4	1.3%	14.8%	5.6%	7.1%
2004	38th	309	39	12.6%	5	1.6%	19.4%	8.2%	10.5%
2006	39th	308	48	15.6%	7	2.3%	21.0%	12.6%	6.9%

Note: At press time, not all members had listed their ages in the official parliamentary guide for the 39th Parliament. Information on members who did not list their age was compiled through various political websites and news reports.

ance of younger Members in Parliament may not be as important for the New Democratic Party as their caucus regularly supports issues and policy options that young Canadians sympathize with regardless of the age of NDP member. The NDP could be considered as an excellent case that “acting for” may be a more important representative trait than “standing for” if the parties’ policies align with the policy expectations of young voters.

Participation in Parliament

It has been argued that new Members of Parliament encounter learning curves and steep cognitive challenges once they arrive on to federal parliament. David Docherty has written at length about the trials and tribulations of amateur Members of Parliament. Most members under forty are entering their first term in Parliament. It can be difficult to secure influence and power in such a hostile and unfamiliar environment. Former parliamentarian Robert Stanfield argued that “Now, every member wants to feel useful, but to be useful he must also feel competent. One of the things we learn when we enter a legislature is that success outside by no means guarantees success in the legislature. It is a different world.”¹⁰ It is also difficult to dictate a member’s own level of influence and participation due to the constraint of party government. Regardless of the enthusiastic intentions or hopeful contributions a member can make, they are still confined by the traditions of party discipline and organization. It would be an oversight to assess activity in federal parliament without considering the political party. Paul Thomas contends that “central to an understanding of the modern House of Commons – its functions, organization, procedures, and much of the activity of its members – is party.”¹¹ Due to the strength of the party in real politics, it is not surprising that this would dominate parliament studies in Canada. Thomas and Atkinson write that one of the main questions in Canadian legislative studies concerning representation is “how can representation be accomplished in a system based on strict party discipline?”¹²

While Table 2 is an useful descriptive tool, its’ analytic worth is questionable. Most students of Canadian politics would identify a few obvious flaws. First, it is much easier for a member of the opposition parties to receive elevated parliamentary posts since there are many more available in a smaller caucus. Thus, NDP member, Nathan Cullen, has three different critic responsibilities: youth, national parks and the environment in the last Parliament. The second problem is the subjective nature of committee membership. Is it a positive step for a parliamentarian to be a member of so many committees or is

this just busy work? Regardless of the table’s weakness, the figures can still explain a number of trends.

First, six members of the Conservative caucus were under thirty. James Moore headed the list of Conservatives under thirty with a Critic’s Post and a very active role in Question Period. Twenty-six of the thirty-nine Members of Parliament under forty had no federal parliamentary experience. This high percentage of newcomers demonstrates that many of the members under forty are working as amateurs. Not only were these members possibly at a disadvantage because of their age but also a lack of experience. David Docherty, who presents a complex approach of the amateur parliamentarian with four definitions of amateurism, commented that “a more pronounced concern among Canadian academics is the experience gap between MPs that favours the domination of rookie recruits by veteran members”.¹³ Outside of the academic arena, the experiences of rookie Members of Parliament have been well documented in their own words. An example of the challenges met was described by former Member of Parliament Gordon Aiken when he wrote that “every member arrives in Ottawa with a mission...he has pictured himself getting up in parliament within a couple of weeks and really blowing the roof off but everything runs along as if he were not there.”¹⁴

Table 3 represents an analysis of the questions being asked during Question Period and the issues that they address. The first major uninterrupted period of the 38th Parliament, 1st Session was used as a set of data to assess the role of the Member of Parliament under forty as “acting for” younger Canadians. To measure this activity, the questions of members under forty were compared to questions from members over forty. The key figures in the table are found in the last two columns. These two columns represent the percentage of questions from under forty members dedicated to certain issues compared to the same percentage of questions delivered by members over forty. There is no specific difference in percentage that represents a certain state of significance, therefore each issue will be considered separately in its importance.

Question Period was chosen to analyze the activity of Members of Parliament due to its prevalence in the Canadian political system. It is in Question Period where the media obtains the sound bites for the evening news, it is the one arena outside of an election campaign where the nation’s attention can be captured effectively. David Docherty recently argued that “Question Period is without doubt the most watched event of the legislative day, and the period that garners the most media coverage and therefore public attention.”¹⁵ It is an important time

Table 2
Activity of Members under 40 in the 38th Parliament, 2004-2005

	Cabinet/ Critic/ Parliamentary Secretary	Committee Chair	Q.P. Questions	Experience (Prior Terms)
Allison, Dean - C	yes	0	4	0
Ambrose, Rona - C	yes	0	63	0
Anders, Rob - C	no	1	8	2
Bains, Navdeep - L*	no	1	5	0
Batters, Dave - C	no	0	7	0
Bergeron, Stéphane - BQ	yes	0	22	3
Bezan, James - C	no	0	22	0
Bigras, Bernard - BQ	yes	2	50	2
Boire, Alain - BQ	yes	0	7	0
Brisson, Scott - L	yes	0	—	2
Byrne, Gerry - L	yes	0	—	3
Chong, Michael - C	no	0	10	0
Cullen, Nathan - NDP	yes	0	15	0
D'Amours, Jean-Claude - L	no	0	12	0
Dhalla, Ruby - L*	no	0	8	0
Faille, Meili - BQ	yes	1	25	0
Fletcher, Steven - C	yes	0	43	0
Gagnon, Sebastian - BQ	yes	0	13	1
Guergis, Helena - C	no	0	50	0
Harrison, Jeremy - C*	no	1	11	0
Hiebert, Russ - C	no	0	12	0
Holland, Mark - L	no	1	9	0
Jaffer, Rahim - C	yes	0	60	2
Kenney, Jason - C	yes	0	85	2
LeBlanc, Dominic - L	yes	0	—	1
Marceau, Richard - BQ	yes	2	18	1
Masse, Brian - NDP	yes	0	3	1
Moore, James - C*	yes	0	92	0
Moore, Rob - C*	no	0	12	0
Poilievre, Pierre - C*	no	1	38	0
Rajotte, James - C	yes	0	38	1
Rodriguez, Pablo - L	no	1	3	0
Scheer, Andrew - C*	no	0	9	0
Simms, Scott - L	no	0	5	0
Silva, Mario - L	no	0	11	0
St. Hilaire, Caroline - BQ	yes	1	15	2
Stronach, Belinda - C/L	yes	0	37	0
Trost, Bradley - C*	no	0	8	0
Watson, Jeff - C	no	0	21	0

* under 30

within the legislative day for Members of Parliament under forty to make their voice heard.

When considering the Table 3 figures, the issues that affected the September 2004 to June 2005 period must be put into context. There were many political scandals that dominated the House of Commons during the eight months studied. The presence of a minority government only heightened the scrutiny of prominent events. As the case with any parliament the government had nowhere to hide from the Opposition's accusations during Question Period. Question Period is a time to embarrass the government and to be a "constant nag". The importance of current events should not be ignored when examining the issues that members under forty are posing questions for.

The content analysis of Question Period presents some intriguing findings. The first conclusion is that regardless of age or representative interest, Question Period is dictated by issues that will embarrass and undermine the government. One fourth of the questions dealt with the issue of ethnics and governance and there was virtually no difference between the two age groups and their attention to the issue. It can easily be argued that ethical and moral scandals are not age specific. Some topics though appear to have been manipulated by the Conservatives to exploit certain age differences between opposition critics and government ministers. One of the more memorable exchanges that not only addressed female

concerns, but more specifically young female concerns occurred when the 36 year old Intergovernmental Affairs critic, Conservative Rona Ambrose challenged the 58 year old Liberal Minister of Social Development Ken Dryden with the powerful rhetoric concerning child care, "we do not need old white guys telling us what to do."¹⁶ This was a classic example of the young/old dichotomy being framed within the parliamentary discourse.

There were some issues where there was a noticeable difference between the two age groups. "Defence/Security" and "Finance/Economy/Business" were notably more important to members over forty than members under forty. This may be explained by the fact that many of these questions may have been asked at the beginning of Question Period by one of the three opposition party leaders who were all over forty years old. It also may represent a strategy of parties to assign questions of "money and war" to older, possibly more experienced Members of Parliament. On the other hand, "Citizenship/Immigration", "Environment/Science" and "Health Care" appeared to be more of a priority for young members of parliament. With each issue a larger percentage of members under forty asked more questions than their counterparts. These differences were not as strong as the case of "Defence/Security" but still represent a noticeable gap. The "Citizenship/Immigration" discrepancy may be explained by the ongoing attack on former Minister of

Table 3
Content Analysis of Question Period (September 2004-June 2005)

Issues	Questions Asked			
	Over 40	Under 40	% Over 40	% Under 40
Ethics / Governance	962	222	25.6%	25.5%
Industry / Transportation / Labour	455	103	12.1%	11.8%
Social Issues / Programs / Aboriginal Affairs	415	84	11.0%	9.6%
Defence / Security	453	30	12.0%	3.4%
International Affairs / Trade	245	65	6.5%	7.5%
Finance / Economy / Business	276	24	7.3%	2.8%
Citizenship / Immigration	188	100	5.0%	11.5%
Agriculture / Fisheries	176	46	4.7%	5.3%
Environment / Science	160	62	4.3%	7.1%
Other	174	46	4.6%	5.3%
Justice System	133	42	3.5%	4.8%
Health Care	123	48	3.3%	5.5%
Total Questions: 4,632	3,760	872		

Citizenship and Immigration Judy Sgro over the “Strippergate” affair.¹⁷ Many of the young Conservative members lead the political attack on Sgro.

In general, the most telling observation may be the lack of difference between the two age groups and the attention paid to certain issues. The gap between members under forty and members over forty is not substantial to indicate a strong presence of members under forty ‘acting for’ Canadian citizens under forty. In the top three issues raised in Question Period there was only just over a one percent combined difference in relative frequency. The numbers from this exercise suggest that even though the amount of members under forty has been down in recent years, these members representative role of “standing for” is still more significant than their role of “acting for”.

Conclusion

At the end of all these tables and figures there still is a basic question: Do younger Members of Parliament act their age? For some, the answer does not have to be clear, straightforward or convincing. Black and Lakhani have argued that “even if MPs fail to identify with or, indeed, disavow their ancestry, this does not necessarily dissuade others, inside and outside the community of origin, from regarding and remarking upon the symbolic aspects of their presence.”¹⁸ While young members are not representing an ancestry or ethnic group, they can be viewed as representing an important demographically based section of society. There is certainly a case for more representation and participation from younger members in creating a larger presence for youth issues on the policy agenda. In the months examined for this study, the recent Sponsorship Scandal was the topic of 16% of all questions in Question Period while specific “youth” topics garnered 0.09%. In raw numbers, that is 747 to 4 questions in favour of the Sponsorship Scandal. Some scholars strongly believe that for groups to advance their issues within the state, representation need to occur from that same group. Jerome Black commented that:

A more ‘authentic’ form of representation that can only be guaranteed by getting group members elected...driving this political strategy is the conviction that only individuals who share the defining characteristic (s) of the group can understand its true experiences – not least the hardships and biases it may have long faced – and therefore have the empathy and insight necessary to promote effectively the group’s interests.¹⁹

Members in their twenties and early thirties may better understand the concerns of younger Canadians as they themselves may have just graduated from post-second-

ary education, had to find employment and encountered the financial realities of adulthood. Young politicians may also be creations of strong political socialization in the home. Growing up in a familiar of political enthusiasts can have a major impact on an individual’s political development. As Clarke and Price contended in 1977, “individuals raised in ‘politicized’ families will tend to view political activity as ‘natural’ and desirable’ and hence will be predisposed towards political activity in a fashion quite atypical of the mass public as a whole.”²⁰ Combining this type of political socialization pedigree with a youthful enthusiasm should propel the House of Commons to contemplate progressive practices.

Should the issue of youth participation or representation in federal parliament be addressed? Does youth participation merit attention along side other representatively challenged groups such as women and visible minorities? Some jurisdictions have reacted to calls for descriptive representation by subscribing to the practice of seat reservation or gerrymandering for distinct communal groups.²¹ Would seat reservation be a suitable institutional change for sending more young Canadians to be representatives in Ottawa? The faltering relationship between young Canadians and Ottawa may have much deeper roots that electoral strategies or changes can not remedy. For women, it has been argued that “social attitudes and stereotypes towards women’s roles in turn influence women’s decisions to run for elective office and affect the electorate’s voting decisions.”²² Could this be the case for young Canadians? Survey work of young candidates and successful members would have to be completed to investigate such questions. The history of Canadian political development and the dependence of regionalism may defer any efforts to expand the representational concerns to younger Canadians. Past studies have suggested that regardless of the representative trait attributed to the member, geographical representation is the main concern of the Canadian federal legislator.²³ The representation burden can become so profound on Canadian federal Members of Parliament that age may be one trait in a constant struggle to be recognized. Similar to the manner in which Trimble and Tremblay end their 2003 chapter on the representation of women in parliament, the same can be said for youth representation in parliament. The relationship between representation by youth and representation for youth – that is, the link between identities and ideas – needs further exploration.

Notes

1. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin. *The Concept of Representation*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967) 61.

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2. Allan Kornberg, Harold D. Clarke and Arthur Goddard. "Parliament and the Representational Process in Contemporary Canada" *Parliament, Policy and Representation*. Ed. Harold D. Clarke, Colin Campbell, F.Q. Quo, Arthur Goddard. (Toronto: Methuen, 1980) xxvi.
 3. Pitkin 122.
 4. Bernard Manin. *The Principles of Representative Government*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 109.
 5. Terrence Ball. "A Republic – If you can keep it" *Conceptual Change and the Constitution*. Ed. Terrence Ball and J. Pocock. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987) 144.
 6. Daniel Rubenson, Andre Blais, Patrick Fournier, Elisabeth Gidengil and Neil Nevitte. "Accounting for the Age Gap in Turnout" *Acta Politica*. 39. (2004) 407.
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