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DOES CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION MATTER?

A MULTILEVEL ANALYSIS ON WHETHER EDUCATION, AND SPECIFICALLY
CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION, POSITIVELY AFFECTS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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Abstract

The beating heart of a democracy is its people. A lack of political participation is a cause of concern, therefore it should be encouraged. Citizenship education may enable people to participate. This master thesis investigates whether education, and specifically citizenship education has an effect on political participation by doing a multilevel analysis on a large sample of thousands of respondents from more than 20 countries. The results show that an increase of educational level corresponds with an increase of about 0.240 of political participation score in all the estimated models. No support has been found to indicate an indirect effect of education as a proxy of social status (the relative education model), strengthening the case of skills and knowledge enabling participation (the absolute education model). Against my expectations, no sufficient support has been found in favor of the citizenship education model, meaning that I cannot conclude that citizenship education is a helpful tool in improving political participation.

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1. Introduction

The beating heart of a democracy is its people. A vibrant community of participating citizens keeps democratic institutions in good health. Whether you look from a classical or Schumpeter's point of view, the people's involvement is important for those who are in, or intent to become part of, parliament. Politicians have varying motivations for encouraging political participation of the people, like getting a competitive advantage or in a normative fashion, ensuring that people's voices are heard.

A lack of involvement may be a cause for concern. The 2019 European elections had the highest voter turnout in decades, which sounds great at first, but when diving into the details some worrisome characteristics emerge. In 2019 just 51 percent of eligible European voters voted. Many EU countries are currently seeing rising turnout levels, after decades of steady decline (Jockers, 2019). Luckily in many countries the turnout for national elections is much higher, but in general low turnout negatively affects the legitimacy and accountability of governments. In light of the given example of the European elections, how can Europeans be properly represented when a little more than half of the voter actually vote?

A possible solution could be a little guidance to encourage participation, as has been done in the Netherlands. In 2006 the Dutch government required primary and secondary schools to provide citizenship education. A core objective was teaching children the basics of the Dutch democratic system and how they can participate in that system when they are older. Teaching children such knowledge and skills makes sense, because there is a theoretical relationship between education and political participation, but how and to what degree it affects participation is a much debated topic (Persson, 2013). Studies seem to vary a lot in shape, size and intent, but despite creative ways of studying the relationship ambiguity remains.

To give a quick overview, the debate concerns three main models as summarized by Persson: the absolute education model, the relative education model and the pre-adult socialization model (Review Article: Education and Political Participation, 2013, p. 690). The

absolute education model theorizes a direct causal effect on political participation, where education increases civic skills and political knowledge, triggering political participation (Persson, 2013, p. 690). This relationship has been popularized by Verba, Schlozman and Brady in the Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, *Voice and Equality*, 1995). The relative education model does not theorize a direct relation. Education has an indirect effect on political participation via social status (Persson, 2013, p. 692). Basically the argument is that relative higher education causes higher social status, which increases political participation (Persson, 2013). The pre-adult socialization model theorizes education as a proxy (Persson, 2013). This model disagrees with how the relation has been studied so far. Pre-adult factors like family socioeconomic status and personal characteristics determine both education and political participation (Persson, 2013, p. 691). The causes for education choice and political participation are possibly the same, which implies that education itself does not matter (Persson, 2013).

Considering the literature and the Dutch government's approach to tackling the participation problem, it is relevant to investigate whether citizenship education is an effective tool in the policy maker's tool box to encourage political participation. If so, countries with low participation levels may want to explore the possibilities of (more) citizenship education. Therefore this study concerns the following thesis: does citizenship education have a direct positive effect on the political participation? Or alternatively, can there be a citizenship education model?

To explore the feasibility of a citizenship education model multiple research questions need to be answered. The first research question is: what causes people to participate politically more than others? The main purpose of this research question is to find out what factors may determine participation, which models reflect the theorized relation between education and political participation well and if education actually matters.

The second research question is: does citizenship education have a moderating effect on the theorized relation between education and political participation? I argue that the absolute

education model can be improved by including citizenship education as moderating variable in the mechanism, because it essentially entails improving the skills and knowledge enabling participation. The altered model (which is named the citizenship education model) includes citizenship education as interacting variable which increases the effect of education on political participation.

This study explores the feasibility of said models by multilevel analysis. The main data source is the European Social Survey (ESS8) published in 2016. The dataset contains individual surveys of a little less than 40.000 inhabitants of European countries. Because little quantitative research on the individual level has been done regarding citizenship education the 2017 Eurydice Report on citizenship education in the EU and EEA is used to provide the education characteristics of the countries surveyed in the ESS8.

The outline of this study is as follows. The first section gives an overview of the relevant contemporary theories, models and studies. In this section the models are explained in detail, as well as other views on what causes political participation and the hypotheses. In the second section the data and methodology are presented. The third section contains the descriptive and explanatory multilevel analysis. The final section is the conclusion. This part includes the discussion and limitations as well. The appendix contains the coefficient tables. Here you can find the estimated models.

2. Theory

This section gives an overview of leading contemporary theories and an impression of the current academic debate on the supposed relation between education and political participation. First, political participation and citizenship education are conceptualized to provide a basic introduction to the commonly used terms and ongoing debate. In this section I explain why I prefer to specifically speak of citizenship education, in contrast to civic education. Second, leading theories, studies and conceptual models are presented, as well as the authors and their positions on the relation between education and political participation. Furthermore, other theorized variables that may influence political participation are discussed to give a broader insight to the grand debate surrounding the causes of political participation.

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Citizenship education

Citizenship education exists in widely different shapes and forms. This causes an important problem that has to be addressed: there is no consensus on the concept of citizenship education in academic articles, with studies often refraining to conceptualize the phenomenon. Additionally, citizenship education is occasionally associated with civic education, but to what degree are they actually comparable? Therefore, a proper conceptualization of citizenship education is necessary.

Definitions of citizenship education can be sorted into two categories: a narrow meaning and a broad meaning. The narrow meaning of citizenship itself is just a legal status, designating a person's rights and responsibilities (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). The Eurydice report *Citizenship Education at School* (2017) in Europe shows that countries vary greatly in approaches to citizenship education and what its characteristics and curriculum contents are. To illustrate the variety: the Dutch national citizenship education curriculum addresses nondiscrimination as a specific learning objective, whereas Hungary does not (Eurydice, 2017). This variety between countries may be the result of different aims, challenges and conceptions of citizenship (Kerr, 1999). A narrow definition of citizenship education is tied to the narrow definition of citizenship,

meaning citizenship education would be solely focused on teaching the individual's rights and knowledge about the government (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). This traditional approach with the primary aim to inform is typified as civics education or civics (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006) (Kerr, 1999).

The broad definition of citizenship education is likewise tied to a broader concept of citizenship. Democratic citizenship means active participation for the common good, not primarily being aware of your rights and responsibilities. Citizenship education is intended to inform, help understand and enhance the capacity to participate (Kerr, 1999). Democratic citizenship requires certain competencies, which citizenship education can enhance. Althof and Berkowitz argue that the following groups of competences are required for active democratic citizenship:

- Civic and political knowledge (how democracy works);
- Intellectual skills (how to critically analyze information);
- Social and participatory skills (how to participate);
- Certain values, attitudes and 'dispositions' with a motivational power (2006, p. 503).

These competences are reminiscent of Robert Dahl's view on the importance of citizen participation in the democratic process: citizens in a democracy should have the fundamental right to be able to participate and have the opportunity to understand civic issues (Dahl, 1989). This raises the question as to what degree this citizen's understanding should be nurtured, but I would not doubt that Dahl's ideal type democracy would favor teaching children Althof and Berkowitz's competences.

To conclude, the broader definition of citizenship education is more appropriate for this study, because it encompasses a notion of citizenship where the individual is an active member of a democratic society. Unlike civics, citizenship education is both education 'about' and education 'encouraging' citizenship (Kerr, 1999). Unlike civics, citizenship education teaches civic knowledge and understanding, as well as the skills required for active citizenship. This enhances

the citizen's capacity to participate in the democratic process. Therefore, I prefer the use of citizenship education in the broader sense of the word for this study.

2.1.2 Appearances of political participation

The discussion as to what political participation is can largely be summarized as a debate on what can be seen as a truly participatory act and what not. It is an important element, because including and excluding certain actions determines research outcomes. For example, it may be possible that when just focusing on conventional institutional forms of political participation (like voting) some people may be unjustly regarded as nonparticipants. Whether including or excluding certain acts of participation just depends on the researcher's reasoning and intent. In the last five decades scholars have put forward their views on political participation and the forms it may manifest in. In this part I give a brief overview of this debate.

The much cited American authors Verba and Nie offer a popular and relatively narrow definition (Van Deth, 2016). They describe political participation as: "[...] those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take" (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 2). This is nowadays perceived as a conventional understanding of the word, but was seen at that time as a relative widening of the scope of political activities by private individuals due to its attention beyond electoral participation (Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007). An example of participation in such a way is simply voting during elections or contacting a representative. This is also considered as an institutional view on political participation.

The perspective of Barnes and Kaase in *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies* (1979) is different. The authors argue that political participation as a term is not sufficiently appropriate for noninstitutionalized and nonelectoral forms of political action and favor the use of 'political action' for their research (Barnes & Kaase, 1979). Their study is an example of how actions like protests can be regarded as a form of unconventional political participation, because the protesting individual is actively involved in the political domain, but

not in an institutionalized manner. Barnes and Kaase are an example of authors broadening the definition of political participation, making it more inclusive to unconventional action (Van Deth, 2016).

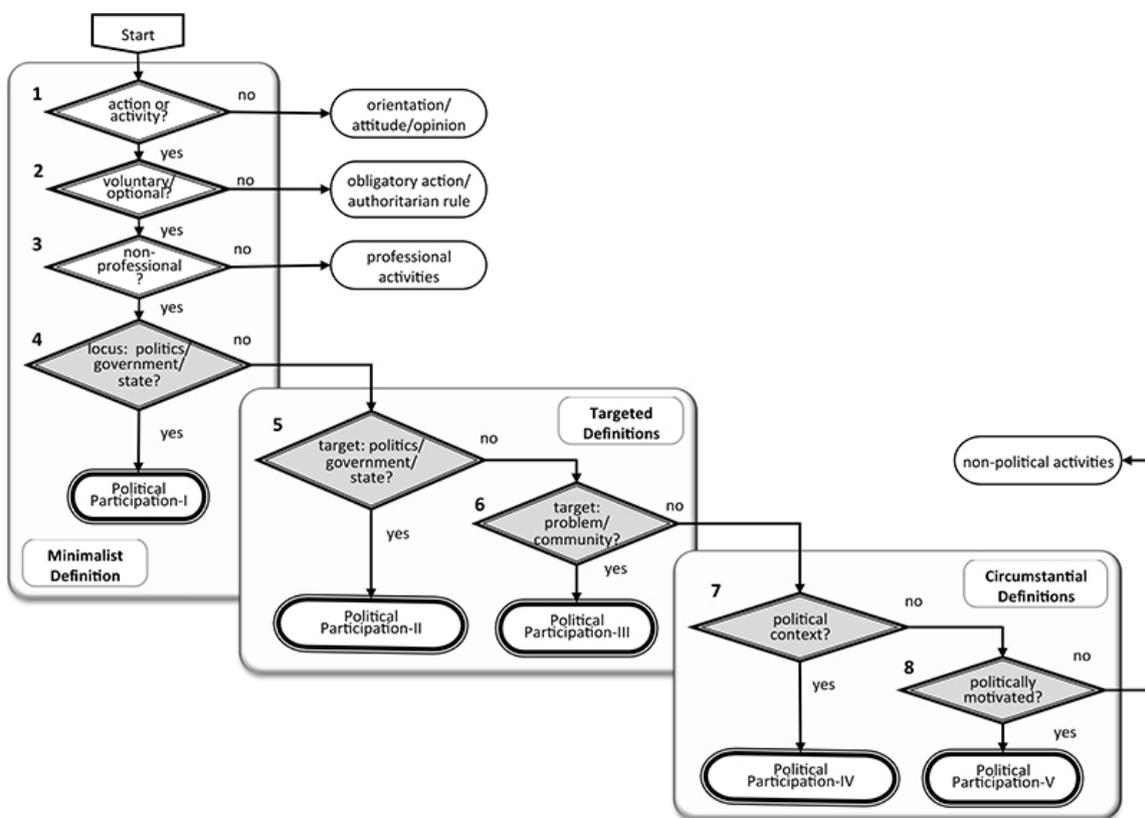
I could position Verba and Nie in the camp of the ‘conventionalists’ and Barnes and Kaase in the camp ‘unconventionalists’ when summarizing their positions. But framing conventional and unconventional political participation as a dichotomy is troublesome. What is regarded as conventional and not is historically relative and context dependent, because some previously unconventional actions may end up becoming more conventional over time (Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007). For example, in some countries, like France, protesting has become a regular and accepted form to express political concerns, whilst Germany currently favors more corporatist approaches. Of course this is a bit of a generalization, but attitudes change and so do perceptions on what is conventional and unconventional. Despite this major drawback of the use of conventional and unconventional it is commonly used in political participation research.

So far defining political participation has been relatively abstract. To answer ‘what is political participation?’ it is necessary to ask ourselves ‘when is someone participating in a political manner?’. This is basically a duck test for people who participate politically. Verba and Nie (1972) offer four concrete well observable modes of political participation: voting, campaign activity (e.g. active membership), contacting public officials and taking part in local communal activities. Van Deth (2016, p. 287) claims there is a more extensive typology, giving a broader sense of political participation, as presented by Teorell, Torcal and Montero (2007): electoral participation (e.g. voting), consumer participation (e.g. boycotting), party activity (e.g. active membership), protest activity and contact activity. These acts of political participation go beyond the dichotomy and interpretation of conventional and unconventional political participation by offering different modes, making their interpretations more durable against the test of time.

Especially Van Deth’s account on political participation is useful for studying its appearances and concepts. In *What is Political Participation?* (Van Deth, 2016) he offers an

extensive typology of political participation alongside with an easily understandable yet very informative conceptual map (figure 1) that can be read as a flowchart by method of exclusion. Van Deth basically offers five specific definitions of political participation, separated in three general themes. All definitions of political participation contain at least all of the three following conditions: it must be an activity, it must be nonprofessional and it must be voluntary (Van Deth, 2016).

Figure 1. A Conceptual Map of Political Participation (Van Deth, 2016, p. 7)



The first given definition, fittingly named Political Participation-I, is comparable to Verba and Nie’s interpretation of participatory activities (Van Deth, 2016). Political Participation-I covers “all nonprofessional, voluntary activities located in the sphere of government, state, and/or politics” (Van Deth, 2016, pp. 8-9). This would be regarded as a conventional view (Van Deth, 2016).

Whereas Political Participation-I focusses on the locus (where it is happening), Political Participation-II and III focuses on the target (what the objective is) and are therefore categorized as targeted definitions. If activities are targeted towards actors in government or politics, Van Deth would designate this as Political Participation-II (or basic civic engagement) (2016). If the aim of political activities is solving collective problems, then it is designated as Political Participation-III (Van Deth, 2016). An example of a Political Participation-III activity would be protesting for better climate change policies.

Van Deth argues that there are still other ways people can be regarded as political participants if the earlier mentioned conditions are not at play, without the activity being political at first sight (Van Deth, 2016). A given example by Van Deth is camping. When I would go camping in the woods nobody would bat an eye, but when I would go camping in the Binnenhof, where my parliament resides, people would rightfully perceive my camping activity as political. Buying certain foods and online image sharing can be perceived as participating acts when politically motivated. This highlights the importance of context and how it makes essentially nonpolitical action political. Van Deth categorized such actions as Political Participation-IV (Van Deth, 2016).

The conceptual map offers many types, but there is still one type left. As stated before Van Deth's flowchart works by method of exclusion ('if not this, then that'). Political Participation V is as how he describes:

Any activity that fulfills the first three rules - activity, voluntariness, nonprofessionally - but is not located in the political arena, is not aimed at either political actors or collective problems, and is not placed in a political context can be depicted as a form of political participation if the activity is used to express political aims and intentions by the participants. (Van Deth, 2016, p. 12)

To summarize the quote briefly: it concerns the leftover activities that are politically motivated. Political Participation-IV and V are grouped together by the theme of context. If the

conditions are not applicable after all these considerations for an activity, Van Deth deems it not a form of political participation (Van Deth, 2016).

This brief overview addressed the debate on what is political participation and how it can be recognized. The minimalist definition by Van Deth is comparable to Verba and Nie's (I would say) American view on conventional political participation, but by limiting it to the formal political arena and its institutions it does not reflect European participation very well. Whilst there is an ongoing debate on whether there is a rise in protest politics in Europe or not, some countries experience relatively high mobilization levels (Hutter, 2012). Not taking into account protests as a form of political participation would not be satisfactory, because in some countries it is nowadays a common and effective way to participate. Moreover, this is just one example of the many forms of participation that would not be included.

To fully capture the appearances of political participation, all types, from Political Participation-I to Political Participation-V, are preferably to be studied. It covers both conventional and unconventional ways to participate and political aspects of civic engagement. To maximize inclusivity this study uses a broad definition of political participation, without conceptual ambiguity due to the clearly demarcated types and discrimination of nonpolitical action. The basic conditions are it being an action or activity, which is voluntary and nonprofessional. If an activity would not conform to the criteria of any of Van Deth's political participation types, it is regarded as non-political and therefore not a form of political participation and should not be studied.

2.2 Contemporary theories and models explaining political participation

A core element of this study is why some citizens participate more than others, or more specifically, how (citizenship) education possibly affects a person's ability and willingness to participate. The question why people participate is has been asked for decades, but its focus has shifted over time. In the early days of contemporary political participation study scholars focused on electoral participation; which citizens vote (Uhlener, 2015). This gradually transformed into a

broader understanding of participation. The main question evolved to who participates and why. Despite some leading models there is an intensive debate on why certain variables seem to predict political participation well and what other variables may also affect political participation.

This section gives an overview of the ongoing debate and popular relevant theories. The socioeconomic status model and the CVM are extensively discussed because of two reasons. First, both models offer reliable predictors that have been used in many other studies. Second, the CVM is the most comprehensive model that includes education, which is a focus of this study. Other education specific models are explained to further illustrate the varying viewpoints.

2.2.1 The socioeconomic status model

A fairly easy to understand, but nonetheless important, resource theory of why some citizens participate more than others is the socioeconomic status (SES) model. This model originates from Verba and Nie's *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality* (1972) and has been further developed in *Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation* (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). The model predicts that if a citizen has a relatively high socioeconomic status (which is closely related to his or hers education, income and occupation), he or she is more likely to participate than those who have a relatively low socioeconomic status (Verba & Nie, 1972). The same effect applies to political activity of young adults, but in this case parent SES is very influential (Beck & Jennings, 1982).

Citizens with higher income, higher education and higher status occupations tend to be more politically active. But why? Authors using the SES model theorize that higher SES citizens have better resources to participate, better opportunity and better contacts than lower SES citizens (Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001). Political participation is a costly endeavor and those with better resources are more likely to be capable to cope with the associated costs. To briefly explain the associated costs: participation is likely to cost time, money and effort. Some are better equipped to face the costs than others.

At the heart of most studies done by Verba and his colleagues in the last four decades are variables related to SES. The authors describe the durability of SES in the following manner: “However we look at the issue and however we analyze our wide-ranging data, SES always seems to return to the center of our explanation for differences in political voice” (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018, p. 11). The focus of their studies has shifted over time to more comprehensive models, but this greater understanding has not reduced the importance of variables like income and education.

The SES model has its shortcomings as well. First and foremost, it has little explanatory value. The model scratches the surface of what precisely causes political participation of citizens and why, despite its prediction power. The SES model does not have detailed causal mechanism. Second, a critique is that American studies confirming the SES model may have a biased sample with mainly American non-Hispanic whites (Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999). Third, it is argued that SES variables do not affect political participation directly, but may shape variables that do, like beliefs and attitudes (Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001). This would mean there is a correlation, but not necessarily a causation. But despite its shortcomings it still remains fundamental in political participation research.

2.2.2 The civic voluntarism model

Arguably Schlozman’s, Brady’s and Verba’s most popular addition to political participation research is the civic voluntarism model (CVM), as described in *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995) and elaborated in *Unequal and Unrepresented: Political Inequality and the People’s Voice in the New Gilded Age* (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). The CVM is illustrated in figure 2. A brief characterization of their work in this field would be that they helped introduce nonelectoral activities as being part of political participation and finding empirical proof for a wide range of influential variables (Uhlener, 2015). To understand CVM it is helpful to know what prohibits people from becoming participants.

Schlozman, Brady and Verba (2018) thought of three probable answers to the question why people do not take part in US politics: 'they can't', 'they don't want to', and 'nobody asked'.

'They can't' is a substitute for an insufficiency in necessary resources to participate (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). The authors emphasize the role of certain resources, money, time, civic skills, and how they are in varying degrees unequally available to certain groups in society (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). Money as an important resource for political participation is noncontroversial in the field of study. If a person is lacking money, it would seriously disadvantage his or hers participatory capabilities because activities to do so have become more difficult to afford. Contributing to a campaign, going to a protest meeting in another city, and boycotting certain brands can only be done if you have the luxury to do so. Schlozman, Brady and Verba (2018) note that especially non-Hispanic white men have comparably higher incomes, suggesting this group would be less likely to answer 'I can't' than other groups in the United States. Such income differences are also at play on the European continent. European citizens with an immigrant background tend to have lower incomes than native-born citizens (OECD Centre for Opportunity and Equality, 2017).

Subsequently time is a valuable resource. People need enough free time to be able to participate. The authors argue that the amount of available time is not related to socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, and gender (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). It is related to life circumstances (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). If a person does not has children and/or a spouse, it is more likely that this person has more time to participate. The authors conclude that the retired in particular are more able to participate due to an abundance of time (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018).

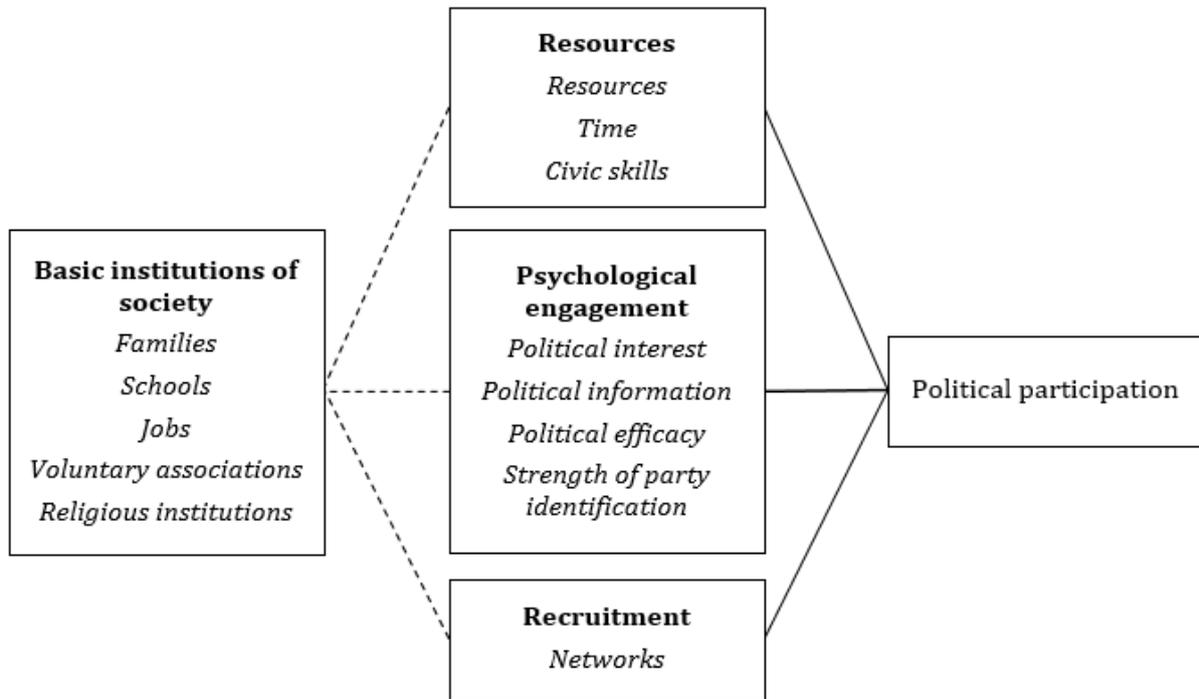
Finally, civic skills are an important resource. This resource is closely related to education, because education fosters the enabling civic skills and knowledge. Children, for example, learn at school how political institutions work, how to think critically, and basic skills like how to read and write (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). This view on education and how it impacts civic skills is

also known as the absolute education model, where education has a direct causal effect on political participation (Persson, 2013). Schools have already been mentioned as a place where people can attain civic skills, but the authors argue that other nonpolitical settings, like work and church, have a positive developmental influence as well (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). It is not necessary to learn such skills in a political context, nonpolitical environments are suitable as well. Acquiring civic skills does especially depends on education and income, but race, ethnicity and gender has an effect too (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018).

'They don't want to' refers to the psychological engagement with politics that may lead to political participation (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). Although a person may be able to be participate, he or she may not be willing to do so. Some may choose to participate more than others, despite having a severe shortage of resources, indicating a deep rooted engagement. The authors' preferred variables indicating this willingness are: political interest, political information, political efficacy, and strength of party identification (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018, p. 59). The variables are related with one another. Political information is less difficult to measure due to its objective nature. It basically covers the who, what, and how of politics and government and such knowledge can be tested. The authors argue that education level positively affects interest, efficacy and knowledge (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018).

The answer 'nobody asked' equates to the effect of (no) recruitment for political activities, i.e. someone asked them to participate (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). According to the authors this has a positive effect on political participation. Like the previous examples, people with a higher income and higher education level have a higher probability to be recruited and are more likely to commit time and effort to participate (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018).

Figure 2. The civic voluntarism model (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018, p. 79)¹



The CVM explores the variables affecting political participation: resources, psychological engagement and recruitment. These variables are however affected by the basic institutions of society: families, schools, jobs, voluntary associations, religious institutions (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018, p. 79). These institutions create and constrain people’s possibilities by influencing the mentioned predictors. For instance, a well-off family may provide their children with better resources, better engagement and better access to networks than a less well-off family. The children in the well-off family would be more likely to participate than the children of the less well-off family.

The CVM offers a detailed account of who is participating, why they are participating and how they are participating. Basic institutions of society, like the school, influence the resources, psychological engagement and recruitment opportunities we have, causing some to be more

¹ It should be noted that not everything is likely to be equally applicable to European countries. Strength of party identification may, for instance, have less of an effect in a multi-party system than a two-party system.

politically participatory than others. Despite the creators being primarily focused on the US, I find it likely that those basic institutions are just as important in European societies.

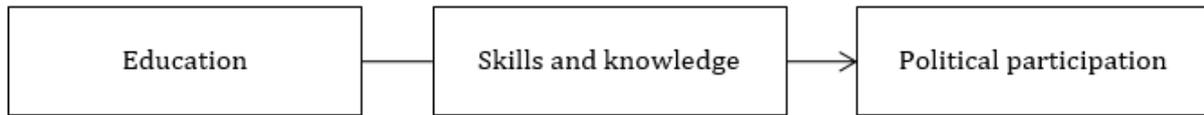
2.2.3 Education specific models

Both the SES model and the CVM demonstrate that education is an important predictor of political participation. Schlozman, Brady and Verba (*Unequal and Unrepresented: Political Inequality and the People's Voice in the New Gilded Age*, 2018) highlight the importance of education, because it positively influences almost every variable in a variety of ways. They summarize its value as: “educational attainment affects not only the kinds of resources individuals accumulate but also the kinds of citizens they become.” (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018, p. 80). The more education a child gets, the higher the chance that he or she will be politically active as an adult due to learning the enabling skills and knowledge (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). Logically, the school is in the eyes of the authors an important place. Another good predictor of political participation, like having a higher level of education, is involvement in high school government and clubs (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). The school is not just a physical building where useful information is transferred, it is also a training ground.

In light of the review article by Persson I would argue that the views of Schlozman, Brady and Verba are comparable to characteristics of the absolute education model (figure 3) (Persson, 2013). He describes the absolute education model as: “education increases civic skills and political knowledge, which function as the causal mechanism triggering participation” (Persson, 2013, p. 690). Persson does however warn that how education exactly affects political participation directly is often not comprehensively addressed, nor substantiated with much evidence (2013). Nonetheless Schlozman, Brady and Verba argue that education improves civic skills, provides information about government and politics, and encourages attitudes that may lead to political participation (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). According to the CVM citizens would be educated by the basic institutions of society, like schools. Basically the argument of the absolute

education model is that more education would equate to more and/or better civic skills, and therefore a bigger likelihood to participate.

Figure 3. The absolute education model (Persson, 2013, p. 690)



Persson notes in his review article that there two other models discussed in the debate on the relationship between education and political participation: the pre-adult socialization model and the relative education model (2013). To understand the other models I need to clarify what is meant by ‘absolute’ in the absolute education model. In the absolute education model “the effects of education are not dependent on the level of education in the environment” (Persson, 2013, p. 691). It is an individual attribute and the educational level of others in the environment does not matter. A theory in this view would be: the higher the level of education of a citizen, the more likely it is that he or she is participating.

The relative education model theorizes that the level of education of the environment does matter. According to Persson scholars studying the effects of education on political participation have noticed that on the macro level an increase of the level of education of a population as whole does not lead to an aggregate increase political participation (2013, p. 692). Because of this some scholars have argued that education does not directly affect political participation. Their argument is that social status affects political participation and social status is affected by education (Persson, 2013). This would mean that the effect of education on political participation is indirect. Civic skills are not that important, but having a higher social status than many others in a society because of education is. Especially in a lower educated society relatively higher educated citizens would find it easier to participate, because less education is needed to have a higher social status.

But how does social status affect political participation? To briefly answer this question: it is all because of networking capabilities. It is more likely that if a citizen has a relatively higher social status he or she is exposed to networks encouraging participation and recruitment (Persson, 2013). Putnam's social capital theory relates to this reasoning. He describes social capital as "features or social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). Citizens with relatively higher social status enjoy social capital that enables and encourages political participation.

The pre-adult socialization model sticks out like the proverbial sore thumb, because the theory completely dismisses education as a cause despite being a good predictor of political participation. The central idea is that factors like personal characteristics, family socioeconomic status, and political socialization in the home environment influence the likelihood of a citizen participating (Persson, 2013). The level of education is a consequence of these pre-adult factors. It does not have a direct effect and serves as a proxy (Persson, 2013).

The three models emphasize the differing views in the debate on the relationship between education and political participation. The absolute education model features education as having a direct effect on political participation. Citizens individually learn civic skills and knowledge that encourages and enables political participation. The relative education model focusses on the role of social status, which is gained by being part of a relatively small group of higher educated citizens in a society. The pre-adult socialization model disagrees with education having any effect and emphasizes that education is just a visible symptom of pre-adult factors that influence political participation.

2.4 Hypotheses

Models like the CVM provide a holistic overview of what affects political participation. This study mainly concerns education as the primary independent variable. Based on the literature discussed in the previous section and the research questions I made several hypotheses.

2.4.1 Education related

The SES model gives an insight into how socioeconomic status affects political participation. The main argument is that income, education and occupational status predict the citizens' ability to participate well. Interestingly the basic premise of the SES model is related to the CVM and the absolute education model. All models emphasize the relation between education and political participation at the level of the individual citizen. But scholars are divided on how education should be measured, because some argue that it is not the length of education that matters, but the level of education (Persson, 2013). In this study the focus lies on the level of education, because higher levels of education are associated with longer education. To get, for example, a Master's degree takes a lot of education time. Beyond education the SES model and CVM theorize that level of income matters as well, but it is relevant to study which variable, income or education, is a better predictor. Based on the models' importance of education and income I created the following hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 1 (micro-level):** the higher the education of a citizen, the more he or she participates politically
- **Hypothesis 2 (micro level):** the higher the income of a citizen, the more he or she participates politically
- **Hypothesis 3 (micro level):** education has a stronger effect on political participation than income

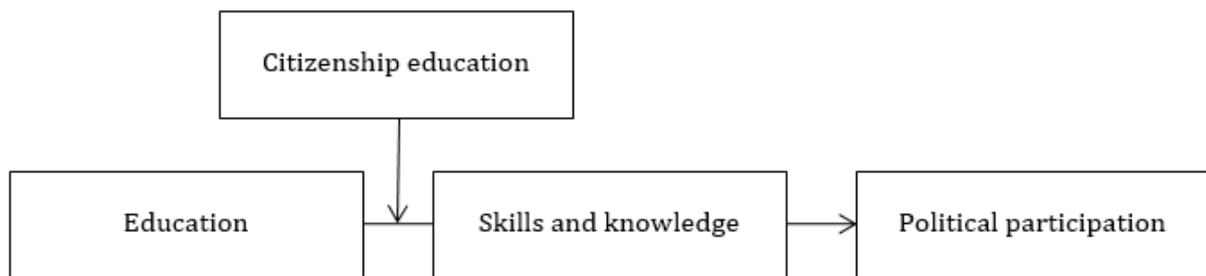
The hypotheses are micro-level, but according to Persson the effect of education is not applicable at the macro-level (e.g. citizens of a generally higher educated country do not participate more than citizens of a generally lower educated country) (Review Article: Education and Political Participation, 2013). Therefore, education may be proxy of social status. This would mean that skills, knowledge and encouragement do not matter much. To test this alternate theory I have made the following hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 4 (cross-level):** the better educated the people are in a country, the lower the effect of education on political participation

2.4.2 Citizenship education model

Based on the presented literature I theorize my own model: the citizenship education model (figure 4). The citizenship education model is comparable to the absolute education model, because it theorizes a more or less direct relation between education and political participation. Education provides the skills and knowledge enabling and encouraging political participation. According to Schlozman, Brady and Verba basic institutions of society educate people, affecting citizens' resources and psychological engagement, making them more likely to participate (Unequal and Unrepresented: Political Inequality and the People's Voice in the New Gilded Age, 2018). A particular environment I would like to highlight is the school and its educational role in the absolute education model.

Figure 4. The citizenship education model



My model differs with the absolute education model by theorizing an interaction effect of citizenship education on the relationship between education and political participation. Nowadays many European countries require schools to offer citizenship education, albeit in widely different forms and degrees of comprehensives. Broadly defined, citizenship education is intended to inform, help understand and enhance the capacity to participate (Kerr, 1999). National governments are 'training' their citizens to become participating citizens. In line with the logic of the absolute education model I argue that citizenship education, as a country level moderating variable, can strengthen the effect of education on political participation by specifically targeting the required knowledge and skills as well as encouraging participation. Based on the citizen education model the following hypotheses are made:

- **Hypothesis 5 (cross-level):** the more comprehensive citizenship education in a country, the higher the effect of education on political participation
- **Hypothesis 6 (cross-level):** the longer citizenship education in a country, the higher the effect of education on political participation

2.4.3 Hypotheses table

Table 1 summarizes the hypotheses.

Table 1. Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Level	Hypothesis
Absolute education model		
H1	Micro	The higher the education of a citizen, the more he or she participates politically
H2	Micro	The higher the income of a citizen, the more he or she participates politically
H3	Micro	The level of education has a stronger effect than the level of income on the citizen's degree of political participation
Relative education model		
H3	Cross-level interaction	The better educated the people are in a country, the lower the effect of level of education on citizens' degree of political participation
Citizenship education model		
H4	Cross-level interaction	The more comprehensive citizenship education in a country, the higher the effect of education on political participation
H5	Cross-level interaction	The longer citizenship education in a country, the higher the effect of education on political participation

3. Data and methodology

This chapter concerns the data and methodology of this study. First, the research method is presented in detail. Second, the datasets are presented as well as a potential drawback of using this data. Third, the variables are described and how they are operationalized.

3.1 Research method

This study focusses on several hypotheses of which three contain variables that are country specific. Like many datasets the survey data used in this study is hierarchic in nature and is nested. By nested data is meant that the observations are clustered, or in this case, grouped by country. Observations close in space are likely to be more similar than observations far apart and arguably the individual is not isolated from the context (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017, p. 195). In hierarchic terms the country level is the macro level and the individual level is the micro level. Because of the hypotheses containing variables at different levels and the hierarchic nature of the data at hand a multilevel approach to regression analysis is appropriate.

When estimating effects by using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method in combination with nested data some critical issues are to be expected. A major issue when using OLS for this study is the violation of the independent error assumption. It is likely that a country, which is in this study the macro level, affects micro level data. Because of this, errors would likely correlate. If the errors are correlated it could result in downwardly biased standard errors. This affects the confidence interval, which increases the likelihood of a type I error (false positive). The OLS method does not take into account that data is potentially clustered. Neither does such a regression acknowledge the variance within and between groups, simply because the data is not seen as grouped.

By using the statistical analysis software STATA, which allows units to be automatically weighted, I make use of a method better suited for multilevel data: the random intercept model. It is used to estimate models with different (random) intercepts and fixed regression lines (i.e. slopes), which is suitable for multilevel analysis (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017). For example,

dummy variables would have different starting points, but the effects of value 1 are the same for each country (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017, p. 205).

The basic formula for a random intercept model with one micro level variable is shown below. Y_{ij} is the value for an individual (micro level entity) i from country (macro level entity) j for the dependent variable (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017, p. 200). β_0 is the overall mean of the dependent variable, u_{0j} is the macro level error term and e_{ij} is the micro level error term (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017, p. 201). The error terms indicate a variance between groups and variance within groups respectively, and is the random part of the formula.

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{ij} + u_{0j} + e_{ij}$$

Several hypotheses do not only require a multilevel approach, but also require an analysis of cross-level interactions. A cross-level interaction is a macro level variable affecting the relationship between micro level variables. For example, as stated in a hypothesis, a macro level variable like a country being generally well educated may affect the relation between education and political participation. Analyzing a cross-level interaction is done by creating a cross-level interaction term by multiplying two variables when running a multilevel model. This can be conveniently done by using commands in STATA instead of creating dummy variables by hand. An exemplary formula of a cross-level interaction is shown below. $\beta_3 X_{1ij} X_{2j}$ is the interaction term, which is basically the first variable (micro) multiplied by the second variable (macro).

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1ij} + \beta_2 X_{2j} + \beta_3 X_{1ij} X_{2j} + u_{0j} + e_{ij}$$

Results of regressions could be misleading if variables correlate perfectly. The standard errors may be too low due to highly correlated variables, which would make the results difficult to be properly interpreted (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017). To ensure that multicollinearity is absent I have performed a VIF-test. VIF is the abbreviation of Variance Inflation Factor, which value indicates the possibility of multicollinearity. If a VIF-value higher than 5, it would mean that

variables correlate too highly. The variables used in this study are well below this threshold with a mean VIF of 1.28. Therefore multicollinearity is not at play.

3.2 Sample

3.2.1 European Social Survey

The *European Social Survey* (ESS) has been since its establishment in 2001 a useful tool for researchers in the field of European comparative politics. According to the organization their data has been downloaded a little more than a 100.000 times by mostly academic users and has contributed to well over 3000 publications (ESS ERIC, n.d.a). The data provided by the ESS consists of multiple bi-annual rounds of survey taking in an increasingly large number of European countries. Round 8 consists of 24 countries and in countries with more than 2 million inhabitants more than 1500 people were interviewed (ESS ERIC, n.d.a). In short, the ESS is a large and popular dataset.

A central objective of the ESS is to make comparative data accessible for everyone, so that “the views of the people within Europe are heard” and social, political and moral developments in Europe are better understood (ESS ERIC, n.d.a, p. 1). Every round has certain specific contemporary topics and a number of core topics. For example, round 8 (which was taken in 2016) focused on climate change, as well as general topics like crime, democracy and politics, media use, religion, and more.

The ESS is very transparent about its methodology. The organization makes use of local non-profit research institutes and national statistics institutes in participating countries (ESS ERIC, n.d.a). These institutes are tasked with conducting face-to-face interviews in all languages spoken by more than five percent of the population, ensuring that most people can take the survey (ESS ERIC, n.d.b). By random probability sampling individuals above the age of 15 living within a private household are selected to be interviewed in their homes (ESS ERIC, n.d.b). The ESS ensures that surveys are taken in a standardized interviewing approach by trained interviewers, meaning the survey questions are asked exactly as they are written (ESS ERIC, n.d.b).

I have opted for the ESS because it provides a large dataset with useful data. It offers several questions related to education and political participation. Other datasets, like the Eurobarometer, either did not have a large enough sample or did not have sufficient data on the mentioned topics. Moreover, their methodology is transparent and sound, meaning their data is reliable. Other positive aspects of the ESS are its free to use, customizable to researcher preferences and usable with STATA.

The following countries are included in the survey: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and United Kingdom.

3.2.2 Eurydice Report on Citizenship Education at School in Europe

The Eurydice Network is an organization commissioned by the European Commission to analyze European education systems and provide policy makers with comparative reports on current European educational developments (European Commission, 2019). Eurydice is centered in Brussels and has 42 national units in 38 mainly EU/EEA countries dedicated to local reporting (European Commission, 2019).

Eurydice provides public access to information regarding European national education systems and a wide range of reports on educational topics like teacher salaries, student support systems and more. For this research I use the qualitative report *Citizenship Education at School in Europe* because it provides a detailed analysis of the diverse structures and curriculums of citizenship education in European countries (Eurydice, 2017).

The 2016 *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (ICCS) would be an alternative to the Eurydice Report. The focus of the ICCS is more global, but the amount of studied European countries is considerably less. If I would make use of the ICCS my sample size of countries would be very small.

Eurydice's methodology for writing the report is explained briefly. A central office coordinated the national units to gather data using experts and information provided by governments of the participating countries (Eurydice, 2017). Despite the methodology being briefly addressed Eurydice is transparent in who is involved by listing everyone and what documentation has been used.

The definition of citizenship education used in this study is comparable with the definition posed by Eurydice. The authors of the report argue that citizenship education is diverse in Europe and therefore use a broad definition to be more inclusive (Eurydice, 2017). The authors conceptualize citizenship education as education where knowledge, skills and attitudes are related to the following categories: acting democratically, acting socially responsibly, effective and constructive interaction, and critical thinking (Eurydice, 2017). These categories are subsequently divided in a number of measurable competences to study national curriculums. For example, a competence of acting democratically is knowledge of political institutions.

The following countries were studied by Eurydice: Belgium (3 systems), Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom (4 systems), Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, and Turkey.

3.3 Operationalization variables and data preparation

3.3.1 Dependent variable

The dependent variable in this study is the **political participation score (pps)** and indicates how much a citizen participates. As presented before political participation is difficult to define and the preferred definition influences the analysis. The conceptual map by Van Deth gives an insight into the wide variety of forms of political participation, unlike the popular dichotomy of conventional and unconventional actions. To fully capture political participation as far as possible with the ESS dataset I have selected a number of items that would be considered acts of political participation:

voted in last national election (*vote*), contacted politician or government official in the last 12 months (*contplt*), worked in political party or action group in the last 12 months (*wrkprty*), worked in another organization or association in the last 12 months (*wrkorg*), worn or displayed campaign badge or sticker in the last 12 months (*badge*), signed a petition in the last 12 months (*sgnptit*), taken part in a lawful public demonstration in the last 12 months (*pbldmn*), boycotted certain products in the last 12 months (*bctprd*), and posted or shared anything about politics online in the last 12 months (*pstplonl*).

All the variables are forms of political participation. I intent to create a single variable indicating a participation score, because a central question is why do some participate more than others. This would be appropriate if the data is multidimensional, meaning that all the items are sufficiently unrelated to be scored independently as forms of political participation. Alternatively, it could be possible that items are highly correlated and multiple factors (other than different forms of political participation) account for the variance. To examine the dimensionality and possibly reduce the number of variables a factor analysis is appropriate, according to the authors of *Applied Statistics Using Stata* (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017).

To prepare the data of all the surveyed countries combined for the factor analysis I investigated the items for consistency. Almost all the item were dichotomous yes (1) and no (2) answers. Only the variable *vote* had a different answer not relevant for this research: not eligible to vote (3). I recoded the value to 'missing' to ensure all variables are dichotomous in the same way. Moreover, it does not relate to the willingness to vote which is of importance for this study, but indicates an inability.

I conducted a principal factor analysis on the 9 items with oblique rotation (promax) using the entire sample to study possible latent variables, like conventional and unconventional participation. I opted for promax because I want to obtain factors with the best structure and lowest correlation between the factors and it is the most common oblique rotation technique (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017). To verify the sampling adequacy for the analysis I calculated the

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values. The overall KMO value is 0.816, which is considered 'meritorious' and indicates that the variables have sufficient in common to conduct a factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The communalities are less than 1s, meaning the Eigenvalues for the factors should be higher than the average of the communalities (0.243) (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017). Only two factors have Eigenvalues higher than the average of the communalities of which the first factor has a comparably much higher value (1.879). I performed a scree test, which indicated that two factors should be retained. The second factor was, however, of a much lower Eigenvalue than the first factor. After rotation the first factor contains the variables *pstplonl*, *bctprd* and *sgnptit*. The second factor contains *wrkprty*, *contplt* and *wrkorg*. The other variables did not meet the criteria to be included, because the factor loading coefficients were below the commonly used 0.400 threshold and are therefore regarded as insignificant (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017).

A problem arises when conducting a reliability check by calculating Cronbach's alpha. The calculation gives an indication of the interrelatedness of the items tested and can be used to assess validity (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The factors have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.585 and 0.499 respectively. This indicates that the percentage of variance due to error is very high (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017). This can be the result of a small number of items or poor correlations between the items (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The correlations of the items are significant, but very small as well.

For me there are multiple reasons not to use the factors and factor scores for the analysis. As mentioned before the reliability of both factors are an issue. Only one factor has a relatively high Eigenvalue and the factor loading coefficients of both factors were often just above the threshold. The evidence for factors being present is not compelling. Theoretically it is more likely that the items represent the multidimensionality of political participation because it has many forms. Van Deth shows in his conceptual map five forms of political participation, each having differing characteristics (What is Political Participation?, 2016). Documentation provided by the ESS show the questions are related to the topic of forms of participation (ESS ERIC, 2016). When

comparing the questions from the questionnaire with the conceptual map by Van Deth all relate to one of the forms of political participation. Because of the factor analysis, the reliability issue, and theoretical considerations I opt for a more crude calculation for creating a score based on all the forms of participation, instead of using factor scores.

As briefly mentioned before my intent is to create a single variable: the political participation score. The variable *pps* is used to measure to what degree the surveyed individual is participatory by calculating a personal score. The score is based on the selected items after recoding certain values. The value 2 (no) is recoded to 0 (no) and 1 (yes) remains unaltered. Other scores are deemed as missing. Only data containing values of 0 (no) or 1 (yes) are used to ensure balanced scoring. Because voting is a basic form of political participation I removed those who were unable to vote (3) from the sample for the variable *vote*. Every positive answer to the participation questions is regarded as 1 point. The points are added together to create a single political participation score with a maximum of 9. The more points an individual scores, the more he or she participates

3.3.2 Micro-level independent variables

The first variable is the respondent's **highest attained educational level (*eisced*)** and is ordinal, ranging from 1 to 7. The mean is 4,007. Most respondents (19,74%) claim that their attained highest level of education is upper tier of upper secondary school. About a quarter of the respondents (24,39%) have completed tertiary education. Relatively few respondents (8,74%) have an educational level of below secondary education. Russian respondents have the highest mean of educational level (5,070), whilst Portugal has the lowest mean (3,202).

The second variable is **household income (*hinctnta*)**, which is ordinal as well. The ESS questionnaire uses the following question: "Using this card, please tell me which letter describes your household's total income, after tax and compulsory deductions, from all sources? If you don't know the exact figure, please give an estimate. Use the part of the card that you know best: weekly, monthly or annual income." (ESS ERIC, 2016, p. 403). The interviewer shows a card which the

respondent can use to give an indication of his or hers total net household income. The values are categorical and represent income deciles, ranging from 1 (first decile) to 10 (tenth decile). The value in the dataset represents the income decile the respondent belongs to. The values 77 (refusal), 88 (don't know) and 99 (no answer) are not included in the analysis.

3.3.3 Macro-level independent variables

The Eurydice report is a largely qualitative study, meaning the data has to be transformed to measurable values. The first variable is **citizenship education comprehensiveness (*ceco*)**. Eurydice conducted a content analysis of the curriculums per country to study what competences are taught and at what ISCED level (Citizenship Education at School in Europe 2017, 2017). I use this information to assess how relatively comprehensive a country is in teaching citizenship competences. The United Kingdom and Belgium were left out because the countries were not assessed as a single educational system and would not be comparable with other data. The procedure for creating a single variable value was the following: first I counted how many times a competence was mentioned in the curriculum for every category, regardless of educational level. Second, I divided the number of mentioned competences by the total amount of competences studied for each category. Third, I added the values for each country together and divided it by the number of categories (4). The resulting value, after additional centering, (*ceco*) indicates to what degree the categories are present in the curriculums and gives an insight into the comprehensiveness of citizenship education per country.

The second variable is **citizenship education duration (*cedu*)**. The Eurydice report contains information when citizenship education is taught, or more specifically, in which grades during primary and general secondary education as separate subject or as integrated education into other subjects (ISCED 1 to 3) (Eurydice, 2017). This gives an indication how long citizenship education is explicitly present at school. To create a single country variable I first counted how many grades have citizenship education. Second, I divided the number of grades with the total grades of ISCED 1-3 education to improve consistency. The resulting value (*cedu*) indicates the

duration of citizenship education compared to the length of primary and secondary education combined. The values are however not normally distributed due to many countries having the maximum value of 1. To account for this I use a dummy coded version of the variable with the following categories: 'not all grades' (0) and 'all grades' (1).

The third variable is the **education index (*edin*)**. The United Nations Development Programme uses the education index for their annual reporting on human development (UNDP, n.d.). The education index makes use of a simple calculation: the scores of the mean years of schooling index and expected years of schooling index are added together and divided by 2. The resulting value, ranging from 0 to 1, indicates how well educated a country generally is.

3.3.4 Control variables

The first and second control variables are **government satisfactions (*stfgov*)** and **democracy satisfaction (*stfdem*)**. According to Melo and Stockemer it is likely that individuals who are more satisfied with their government and how democracy works in their country are more inclined to participate (Age and Political Participation in Germany, France and the UK: A Comparative Analysis, 2014). Such attitudes may affect political participation and are therefore included as control variables.

Gender (*gndr*) as a fourth control variable may also have an effect on political participation. As Schlozman, Brady and Verba state there are inequalities of political participation on the basis of gender, albeit increasingly smaller, especially among American minorities (Unequal and Unrepresented: Political Inequality and the People's Voice in the New Gilded Age, 2018). Furthermore, they argue that men dominate as campaign donors (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). Melo and Stockemer also agree that men are predicted to be more likely to participate (Age and Political Participation in Germany, France and the UK: A Comparative Analysis, 2014). Because gender theoretically still affects political participation, it is included as control variable.

The last control variable is **age in years (*agea*)**. Multiple studies theorize differences in participation depending on age groups and Melo and Stockemer's study shows differences in age for certain activities (Age and Political Participation in Germany, France and the UK: A Comparative Analysis, 2014). For example, more young adults participated in demonstrations than other age groups (Melo & Stockemer, 2014). Schlozman, Brady and Verba argue that most forms of political participation rise with age, until they peak in middle age before falling off among the elderly (Unequal and Unrepresented: Political Inequality and the People's Voice in the New Gilded Age, 2018, p. 121). It may be possible that age affects participation and is therefore included as control variable, albeit in a linear fashion.

4. Analysis

In the previous chapter the methodology was discussed. Now it is time to analyze the data to test the hypotheses. This chapter first presents a general description of the sample data. The descriptions do not only concern individual data, but is also grouped per country to get a better insight into differences between countries. Consequently the hypotheses are tested by using regression models.

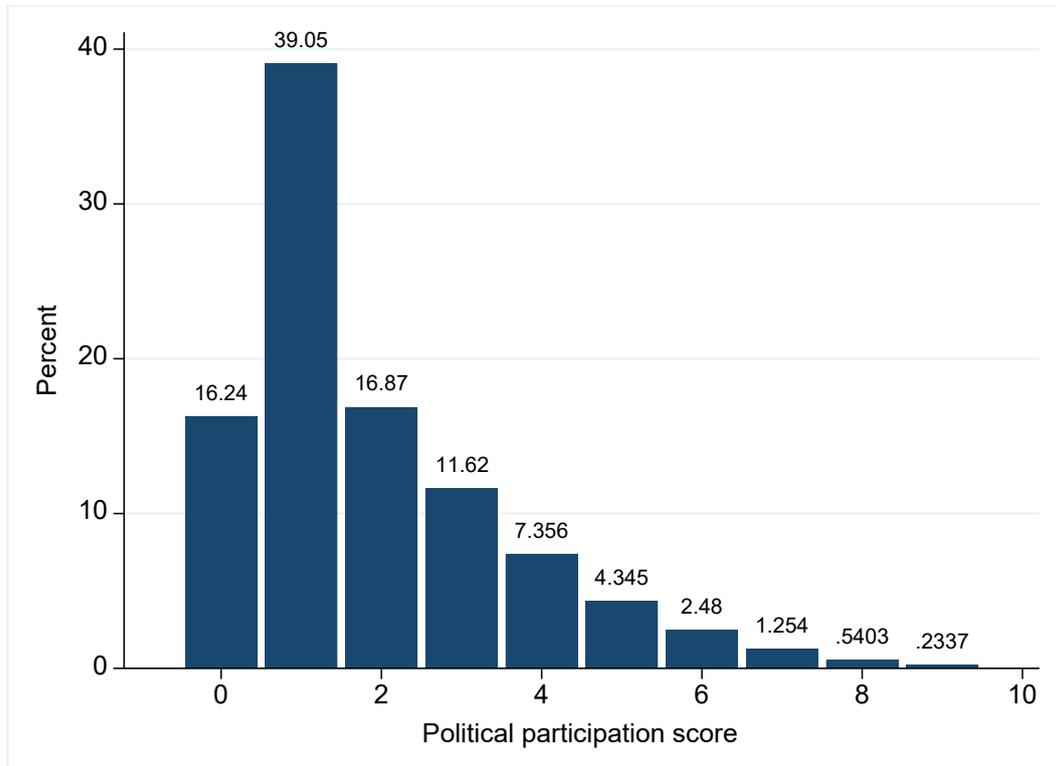
4.1 Descriptive analysis

Before doing a multilevel analysis it is important to reflect on the data at hand. The descriptive statistics can be found in the appendix (A1).

4.1.1 Dependent variable

The dependent variable is a calculated score, based on whether the respondent answered positively on survey questions regarding political participation forms. The maximum total points that could be awarded is 9. In total, of all the 23 countries in the dataset, 39.791 respondents were scored. When looking at the sample, without grouping per country, most respondents (39.05%) have a political participation score of 1. The amount of respondents scoring a value of 1 is more than double the size of respondents scoring 2 (16.87%) or 0 (16.24%). Just 93 respondents (0.23%) scored the maximum score and I would regard them as exceptionally participative. Figure 5 shows the distribution of the scores.

Figure 5: histogram of the political participation score with percentages

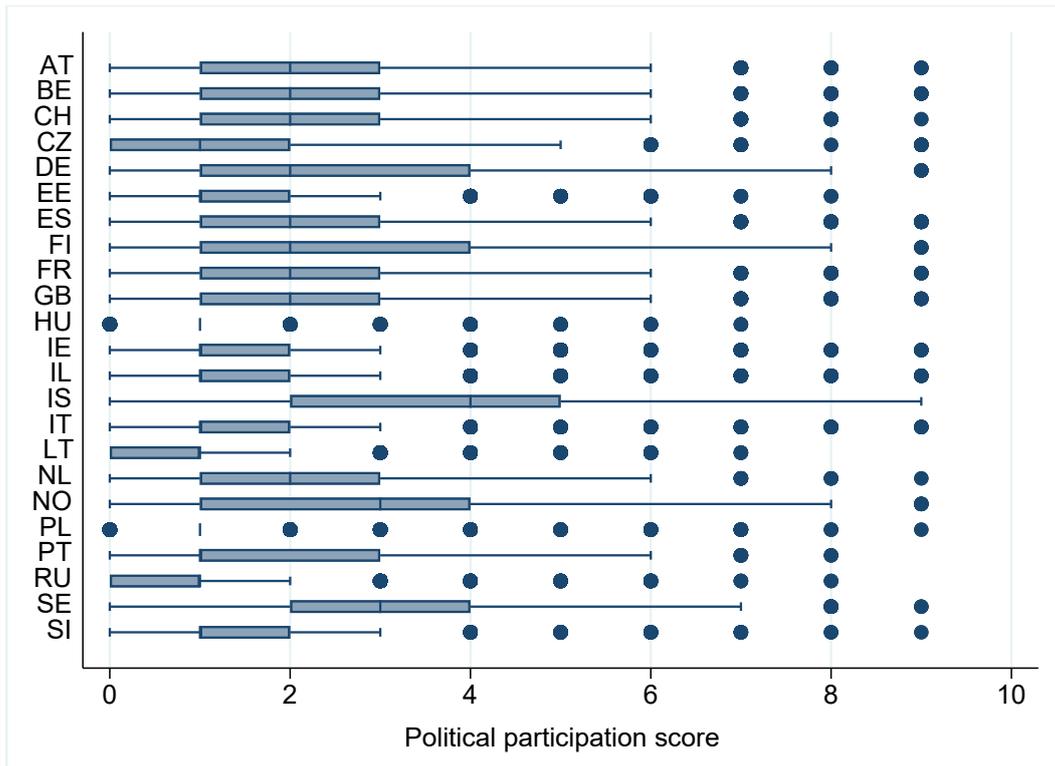


Now that the scores are known it is worthwhile to investigate what forms of political participation is popular. The variable *vote* has a mean of 0.766 which indicates voting is by far the most common form of political participation. Less common is signing a petition with a mean of 0.247, indicating that it is the second most prevalent form of political participation. The least popular form is working for a political party, with the variable *wrkprty* having a mean of 0.044. Of the 39.791 respondents only 1.751 were active for a political party in the last 12 months. Respectively, working for a political party, taking part in a public demonstration and wearing a badge are very uncommon forms of political participation for the respondents.

Both the total political participation score and the means of the forms of political participation are relevant to study per country, because respondents in one country may have different attitudes than respondents living in another country. The boxplot (figure 6) showing the scores per country indicates a diversity among the countries. At first sight three countries stand out: Hungary, Poland and Iceland. The latter country has a relatively high median of 4 and has a wide range, with half of the respondents having a score between 4 and 9. Norway and Sweden can

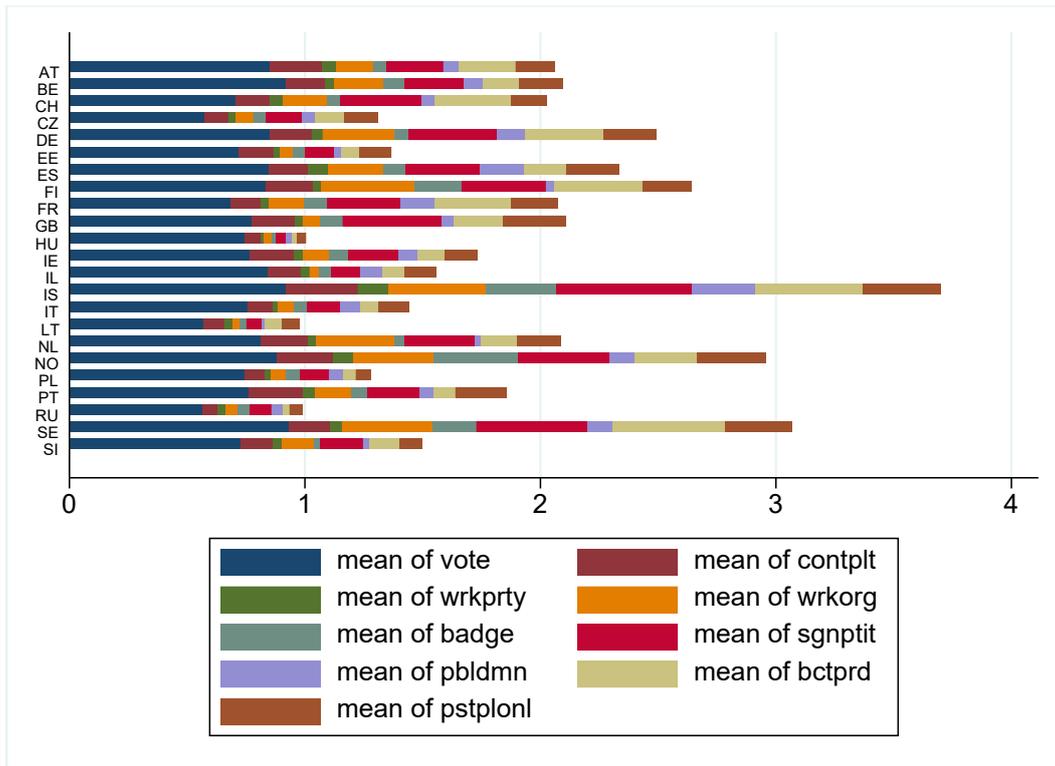
be considered to also have a high median like Iceland with a political participation score of 3. Hungary and Poland have a relatively low median score of 1 and do not have quartile groups ranging beyond this value, which is exceptional. Other countries with the same median scores are Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Russia and Slovenia.

Figure 6: boxplot of countries and their respondents' political participation score



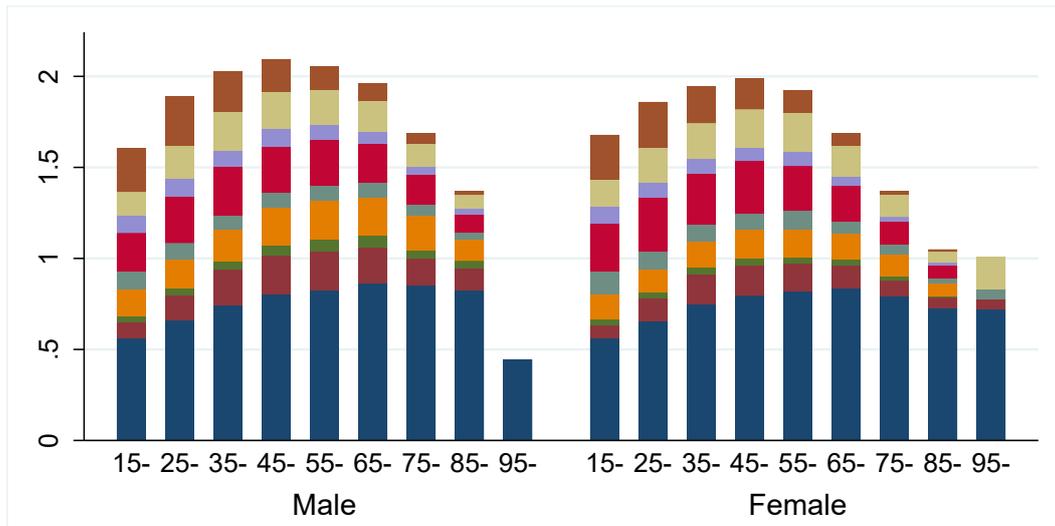
So what form of political participation is 'hot right now' in the surveyed countries? When looking at figure 7, which shows the stacked means of political participation in a graph, voting stands out because it has a relatively high mean in every country. It also shows the many differences between the countries. Unlike many countries Finland and The Netherlands have a relatively high mean of the variable *wrkorg*. Another peculiar country is Norway, which has the highest mean of *badge*. Wearing a badge is in many countries not that popular, with the exception of Iceland. In most countries either signing a petition or boycotting a product is the second and third most popular form of political participation.

Figure 7: stacked means of forms of political participation per country



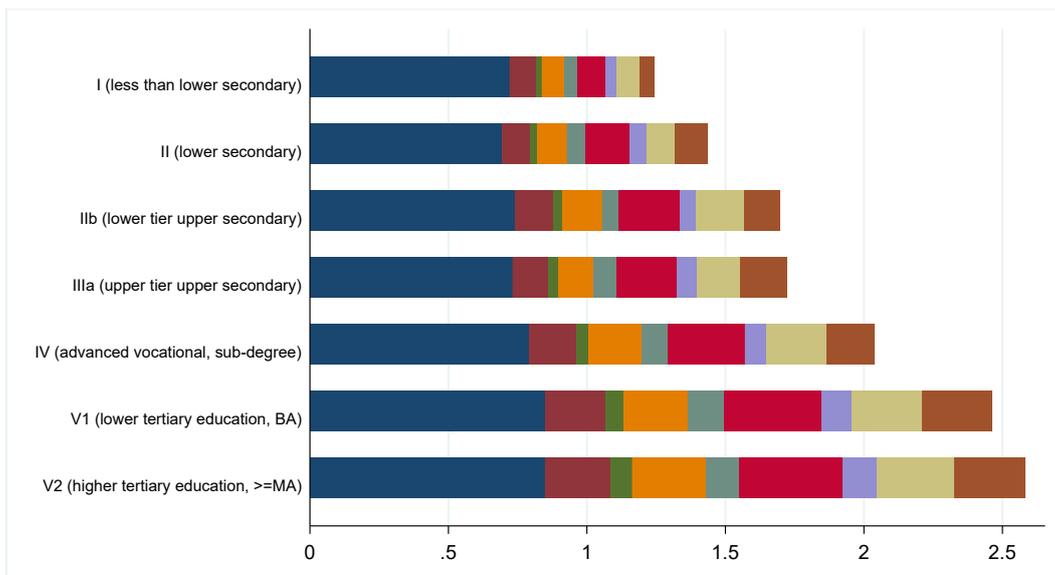
Another relevant grouping of political participation score data is per gender and age category. First of all, when looking at the stacked means of political participation forms in figure 8, male respondents have a slightly higher mean of political participation than female respondents. There are some other minor differences. The mean number of females who claimed to worked for a party and/or another organization is lower than that of males in almost every age category. Males aged 95 and older have a lower mean of participation than female respondents with the same age. Secondly, some age groups report a higher mean of certain forms of participation. The most obvious variable is posting political material online, which mean decreases per increase of age category. Overall, male respondents in the age category of 45 to 55 have the highest political participation score.

Figure 8: stacked means of forms of political participation per gender and age group



The last graph I would like to present relates to level of education and political participation forms. Multiple hypotheses in this study expect higher educated people to have a higher political participation score. Figure 9 shows that the highest educational level has the highest score means of almost every form, apart from wearing a badge. It visualizes the differences between educational levels well.

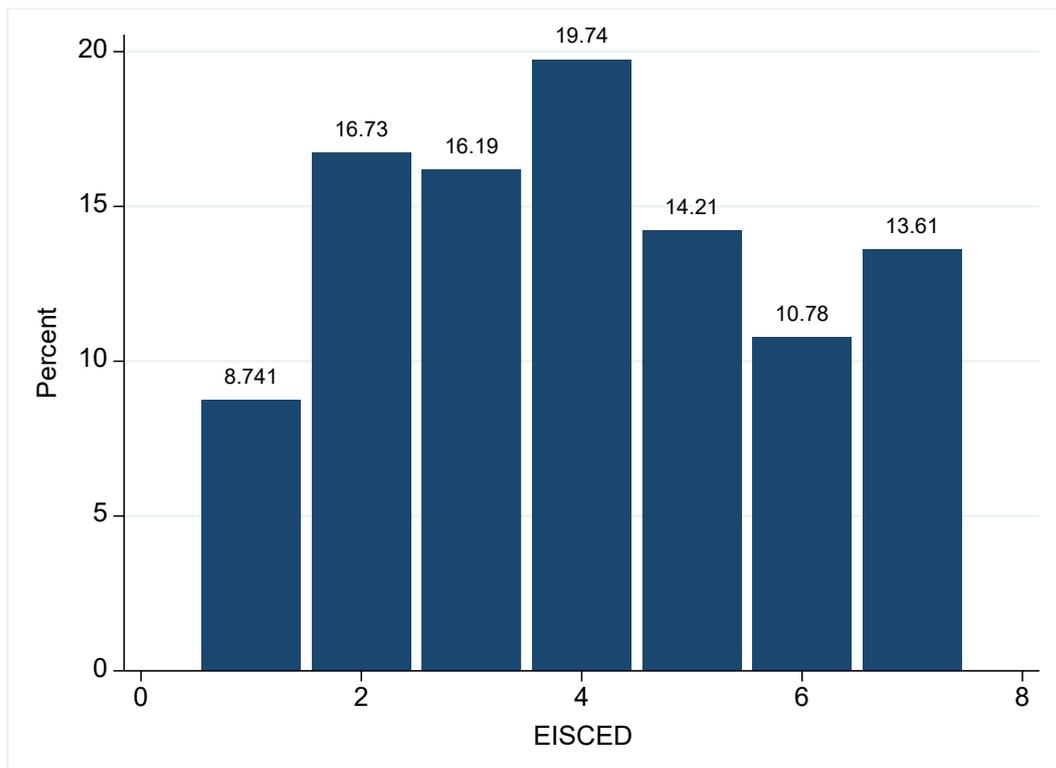
Figure 9: stacked means of forms of political participation



4.1.2 Micro-level independent variables

In this study the ESS variable *eisced* is to predict the effect of educational level. It indicates the highest completed level of education. It is an ordinal variable with intrinsic ordering from 1, the lowest category, to 7, the highest category. It has a mean of 4.001, indicating that most respondents have a completed EISCED-level of IIIa – upper tier upper secondary. Figure 10 shows the percentages of each category based on their frequency. Russia has the highest sample mean (5.007), with no other country having a mean of higher than 5. Portugal, Italy and Estonia have means close to 3. The other countries have means around 4.

Figure 10: histogram of the EISCED-levels with percentages



The second variable, *hinctnta*, is the total net household income in deciles. The mean is 5,189. Almost every decile accounts for about a tenth of the sample, with the 9th and 10th decile having a more lower percentage. Most respondents belong to the 3rd decile (11.35%), whilst the least respondents belong to the 10th decile (6.85%). Respondents from Sweden report the highest mean household income (6.298), whilst Israel has the lowest mean (5.630).

4.1.3 Macro-level independent variables

The macro-level independent variables are not part of the ESS survey and have been merged with the dataset by using external sources. Before the data of the variables are described it should be noted that the variables citizenship education comprehensiveness and citizenship education duration have many missing values. This is mainly because some countries were not studied in the Eurydice Report or were not able to merge with the ESS dataset. The countries not included are: Belgium, Great-Britain, Israel and Russia.

The first variable, *ceco*, is the comprehensiveness of citizenship education in a country. It has a mean of 0.683 with a possible maximum of 1. The countries Finland and Czechia both have a relatively high value of respectively 0.956 and 0.910. Italy and Estonia have low values of respectively 0.377 and 0.399.

The second variable, *cedu*, indicates the duration of citizenship education. The variable has a mean of 0.890 with a possible maximum of 1, which means that during the entirety of every grade (in primary and secondary school) citizenship education was part of the curriculum. The following countries have the maximum value: Switzerland, Germany, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, Italy, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Poland and Sweden. Portugal has a value of 0 due to not having citizenship education as a separate subject or integrated with another subject. Because many countries have the maximum of 1 and there is a lack of diversity in scores I decided to create a dummy variable for estimation as well. The dummy variable divides the data into two categories: all grades and not all grades, of which the latter is the reference category. It shows whether citizenship education was taught in all grades or not.

The third variable is *edin*, the Education Index value published by United Nations Development Programme and indicates in this study the general level of education in a country. The Education Index has a mean of 0.873, which is fairly high when comparing it with global values. Even the lowest value, calculated for Portugal, of 0.759 is well above the global average. Germany has the highest value with 0.940.

4.1.4 Control variables

The first control variable is government satisfaction, or *stfgov*. The mean value is 4.450. Most respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (17.90%). Only few respondents are extremely satisfied (1.19%) and a larger, but still small, number of respondents are extremely dissatisfied (8.44%). Swiss respondents are remarkably satisfied with their government with a mean value of 6.582, which is well above the sample mean. Respondents from Italy, France and Slovenia are quite dissatisfied with mean values of respectively 3.119, 3.144 and 3.404.

The second control variable indicates satisfaction with democracy, designated as *stfdem*. The mean value is 5.265. Like government satisfaction, most respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (17.18%). There is a relative positive attitude, because almost half of the respondents claim to be satisfied to a degree (48.66%). This is much higher than the combined percentage of respondents claiming to be unsatisfied to a degree (34.15%). Few respondents have an extremely negative (5.51%) or positive (2.51%) position. Swiss respondents have, again, an exceptionally high satisfaction with a mean of 7.379. This is also the case for respondents from Norway, of which the country mean is 7.216. The mean for Slovenia is remarkably low, with a value of 3.823, being the only country having a mean lower than 4.

The last control variables are gender (*gndr*) and age in years (*agea*). Gender is a dummy variable with the response 'male' being the reference category. The dataset has a slight majority of females (52.62%). The sample mean for age is 49.142. The youngest respondent is 15 years old. The oldest respondent is 100 years old.

4.2 Modelling approach

As explained in the previous chapter, the hypotheses concern one type of modelling: the multilevel random intercepts model. H1, H2 and H3 are micro level hypotheses. Because the data is nested in countries a multilevel approach is warranted. H4, H5 and H6 hypothesize cross-level interactions, which also requires a multilevel random intercept model. I have created an

additional model to highlight an effect without dummy variables, as can be seen in the explanatory analysis.

4.3 Explanatory analysis

In this section the hypotheses are tested by analysis and explained in detail. The order of presenting the results is likewise to the order of the hypotheses. Some hypotheses relate to a specific topic and are sectioned as such. The estimated models can be found in the appendix (A2).

4.4.1 Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3: the effects of education and income

The first hypothesis expected a positive effect of high educational levels and the political participation score (the higher the level of education, the more a person participates). The null hypothesis is that there is no or negative effect. The first and third models include the level of education. Both models predict the effect of educational level on political participation.

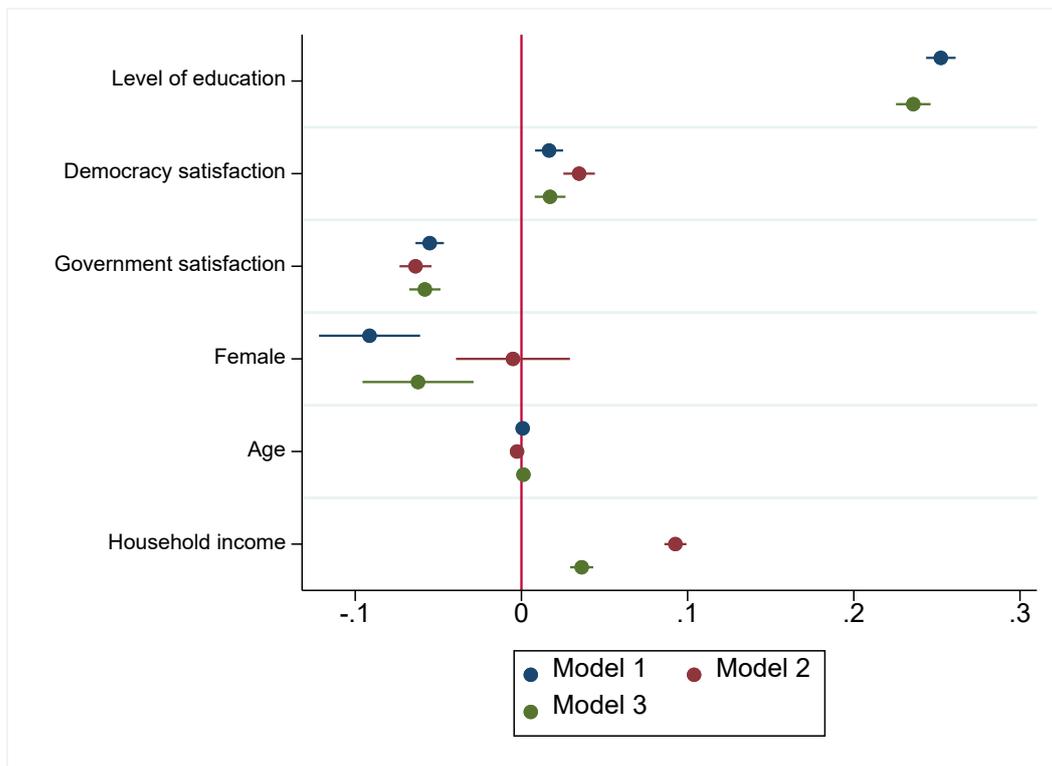
Model 1 indicates, like model 3, that educational level affects political participation significantly with an alpha value of 0.000. The coefficient for the effect of educational level is 0.252. This means that the political participation score increases by 0.252 per increase of educational level. Model 3 shows a comparable effect, albeit slightly weaker. In model 3 it is estimated that the political participation score increases by 0.236 per increase in educational level. The results reject the null hypothesis and supports hypothesis 1. The higher the level of education, the more a person participates.

The second and third models include the variable total net household income. The models predict the effect of income on political participation and are created to test hypothesis 2 (the higher the income, the more a person participates). The effect of income on political participation is highly significant like educational level with an alpha of 0.000 in the models. Model 2 estimates that the political participation score increases by 0.093 per increase of income level. Model 3 estimates a much weaker predicted effect of 0.036, indicating that educational level better captures some variance previously explained by income. Hypothesis 2 expected a significant effect

(the higher the income, the more a person participates). Model 2 and 3 supports the hypothesis and rejects the null hypothesis. The higher the income, the more a person participates.

Model 3 is used to test the expectations of hypothesis 3 (education has a stronger effect than income). The null hypothesis is that education does not have a stronger effect than income. The variables indicating educational level and income are included in one single mode. The model shows a much stronger predicted effect of educational level than income. Moreover, as mentioned before the effect of income is weaker than in model 2. This is illustrated in figure 11. Based on these results the null hypothesis can be rejected. The estimations support hypothesis 3.

Figure 11: illustration of the coefficients with confidence intervals of model 1, 2 and 3



4.4.2 Hypothesis 4: the interaction effect of a better educated people

The main objective of hypothesis 4 is to test whether the relative education model may be supported by the data. If so, it would strengthen the argument against the absolute education model. The hypothesis expects the following interaction of a macro level variable: the better educated the people are in a country, the weaker the effect of level of education on citizen's degree

of political participation. The null hypothesis is that there is no or stronger effect. Model 4 includes the interaction term, which has an alpha value of 0.439, meaning the interaction effect is insignificant. Because of this the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. There is no support for hypothesis 4 found.

4.4.3 Hypothesis 5 and 6: the interaction effects of citizenship education

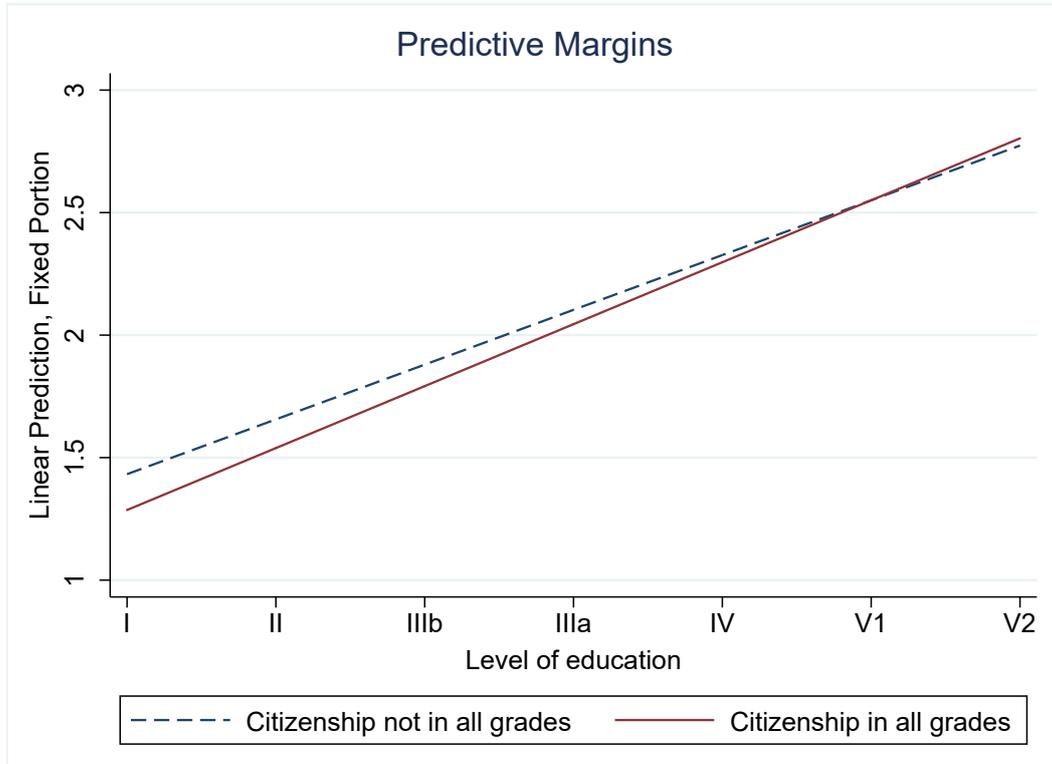
Hypotheses 5 (the more comprehensive citizenship education, the higher the effect of education on political participation) and 6 (the longer citizenship education, the higher the effect of education on political participation) both relate to the effect of citizenship education as theorized in the citizenship education model. The estimations are presented in model 5, 6 and 7. The null hypotheses are that there is no or weaker effect.

The predicted interaction term indicating a moderating effect of citizenship education comprehensiveness, as shown in model 5, is insignificant. The alpha value is 0.146 and does not meet the threshold of 0.100 to be significant. Therefore the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that this model does not support hypothesis 5. I did not find any support for a moderating effect of citizenship education comprehensiveness on the effect of educational level and political participation score.

Model 6 shows that the predicted interaction term indicating a moderating effect of citizenship education length is insignificant. The corresponding alpha value is 0.109, which is just above the stated threshold. By itself it would be sufficient to not reject the null hypothesis and dismiss hypothesis 6. A different result is observable when the variable is recoded as dummy to highlight a distinction between countries that provide citizenship education in all grades of primary and secondary school and countries that do not provide such education in all grades. As can be seen in model 7, the interaction term is highly significant with an alpha value of 0.009. Figure 12 illustrates the marginal effects: the effect of educational level on political participation is stronger for countries teaching citizenship education in all grades, because the corresponding

regression line is the steepest. This indicates that length matters, but because the interaction in model 6 is insignificant the hypothesis is only partially supported.

Figure 12. Graphical representation of interaction estimated in model 7



4.4.4 Summary of findings

To give an overview the findings I have created table 3.

Table 2. The hypotheses and findings after analysis

	Expectation of hypothesis	Findings
1	The higher the education of a citizen, the more he or she participates politically	Supported
2	The higher the income of a citizen, the more he or she participates politically	Supported
3	The level of education has a stronger effect than the level of income on the citizen's degree of political participation	Supported

4	The better educated the people are in a country, the lower the effect of level of education on citizens' degree of political participation	Not supported
5	The more comprehensive citizenship education in a country, the higher the effect of education on political participation	Not supported
6	The longer citizenship education in a country, the higher the effect of education on political participation	Partially supported

5. Conclusion and discussion

The theoretical and practical implications are discussed in the conclusion in context of the main findings. I use the discussion to reflect upon the results and the study in general, as well as other relevant topics.

5.1 Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning: at the heart of a democracy is its people. Like the body needs a beating heart, a democracy needs a participating populace. But why do some participate more than others? As scholars have pointed out, education arguably is the great predictor of political participation. How and why remains an ongoing debate, but the main objective of this study is to offer a contribution to the debate by exploring specific 'nuts and bolts' of the relationship and in particular possible effects of citizenship education.

The study focused on two popular theories and one personally developed model, respectively the absolute education model, the relative education model and the citizenship education model. All emphasize the importance of education, but are divided on whether this has a direct or indirect effect. I designed the citizenship education model in light of the absolute model and I theorized that citizenship education would strengthen the possible effect of education on political participation.

Does education matter according to results of the multilevel analyses? Yes, education seems to be the primary reason why some participate more than others. It has a consistent strong effect on political participation, more than income or any control variable. This result is comparable to established theories in participation literature and improves the foundations of the education-participation link. It also shows that educational level is a suitable variable to predict participation.

Does citizenship education matter as well? I have found too little evidence in support of the citizenship education model. I expected that especially citizenship education would

strengthen the effect of education because of its focus on relevant skills and knowledge possibly improving political participation, but the results show that this may not be the case.

I included a hypothesis to test whether the relative education model is likely or not. If the results would have supported the model it would make the citizenship education model less likely, because the model is a credible alternative to the foundational absolute education model. Persson theorized that education has an indirect effect on participation by increasing the relative social status (Persson, 2012). A well-educated population would theoretically reduce the social status of being highly educated and its effect on participation. I have found no support that a better educated people would weaken the effect of education on political participation.

Based on these conclusions I cannot argue that national governments should enforce citizenship education to encourage general political participation. I can however say that, despite not having such a desired effect on the people, its potential should not be underestimated. Maybe teaching citizenship education would not further inspire or enable people to participate, but learning skills and knowledge associated with citizenship still enriches a young adult's general capabilities that will benefit him or her greatly later in life. For me, that argument is convincing enough to provide citizenship education in schools.

5.2 Discussion

As mentioned in the conclusion the results both meet and did not meet my expectations. The effect of education has, as predicted, a strong effect. The implication of this result is that established theories are sound and once again proven. This study offers more than just the posed research questions to the debate. As addressed by Persson, it is sometimes unclear what predictor is better: level of education or years of education (Persson, 2013). This study shows that level of education is a good predictor. It also shows that the effect of education can be seen as linear, which is a further contribution to the debate on the education effect.

I did not find enough supportive results to argue citizenship education has a positive moderating effect. Personally I think this could be the result of multiple limitations. First the

availability of data is an issue when studying the effect of citizenship education. The used European Social Survey does not contain detailed education specific questions. The survey indicates the level and years of education, but does not provide what subjects respondents have followed. In my opinion it would be more relevant to study how long and at what level people have had certain subjects to study possible effects, like the effect of citizenship education. I do, however, understand why the ESS would not be willing to include such questioning, because it would make the survey too extensive.

The second limitation relates to the first. I have studied the effect of citizenship education as an interacting macro level variable due to data constraints. I find this a major methodological drawback. I cannot argue that the respondents of the European Social Survey have had citizenship education, but could look at relevant country characteristics regarding such education by using the Eurydice report. In the future I would like to study the possible relation at solely the micro level, by collecting my own data with more specific questions related to citizenship education to get a deeper understanding and more reliable and conclusive results despite a probable much smaller sample. If possible, I would like to use factor scores as well for more concise estimation.

To further reflect on the results of the study, as mentioned the results often fit with contemporary theories on political participation. The results indicate that education has a strong effect, more than income. The results align with findings by Schlozman, Brady and Verba (*Unequal and Unrepresented: Political Inequality and the People's Voice in the New Gilded Age*, 2018). The authors, as well as Melo and Stockemer, claimed that gender inequality in regards of political participation is decreasing (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018) (*Age and Political Participation in Germany, France and the UK: A Comparative Analysis*, 2014). I find the results regarding gender differences personally surprising. Female respondents' political participation score is estimated to be lower. Differences between genders were mentioned in the literature, but I did not expect that predicted female scores in the models would be between 0.051 and 0.091 lower than male scores. The effect of increase in income level is estimated to be generally smaller, despite gender being theorized as having an increasingly smaller effect (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018).

Although the effect of gender is presumably decreasing, gender inequality in political participation still is quite influential.

The control variable government satisfaction produced personally surprising results when included in the analysis. Melo and Stockemer argued that higher satisfaction with democracy and government would correlate with more participation (Melo & Stockemer, 2014). This is not the case for satisfaction with the government, the estimation indicates the opposite: the higher government satisfaction, the lower the participation score. This may be due to people being happy with the way things are when satisfied and not feeling the urgency to participate because of this, but this has to be studied more in depth to understand the effect.

Another personally surprising result is the gender inequality. Female respondents' political participation score is estimated to be lower. Differences between genders were mentioned in the literature, but I did not expect that predicted female scores in the models would be between 0.051 and 0.091 lower than male scores. The effect of increase in income level is estimated to be generally smaller, despite gender being theorized as having an increasingly smaller effect (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018). Although the effect of gender is possibly decreasing, gender inequality in political participation still is influential.

All in all, on a personal note, a particular reason to do such a quantitative study was because I thought it would be more difficult for me to do so. Like Kennedy once said in his famous speech in support of the Apollo program, which is for me a source of inspiration: "we choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard" (NASA, 2012). I believe that qualitative and quantitative methods are equally challenging, but because I am less experienced in quantitative analysis I took this chance to get more acquainted with quantitative research. I have learned a great deal and am satisfied with the research process, despite said limitations and difficulties.

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Appendix

A1. Descriptive table

Variables	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.	SD	N
Political participation score (pps)	1.889	1	0	9	1.688	39791
Voted (vote)	0.766	1	0	1	0.423	40232
Contacted politician (contplt)	0.153	0	0	1	0.360	44265
Worked for party (wrkprty)	0.043	0	0	1	0.202	44275
Worked for other organization (wrkorg)	0.162	0	0	1	0.368	44258
Wore a badge (badge)	0.086	0	0	1	0.280	44261
Signed petition (sgnptit)	0.241	0	0	1	0.428	44199
Took part in demonstration (pbldmn)	0.077	0	0	1	0.267	44252
Boycotted product (bctprd)	0.180	0	0	1	0.384	44173
Posted online (pstplonl)	0.164	0	0	1	0.371	44211
Education level (eisced)	4.001	4	1	7	1.848	44170
Income level (hinctnta)	5.189	5	1	10	2.724	36445
Education Index (edin)	0.875	0.879	0.759	0.940	0.044	44387
Citizenship education comprehensiveness (ceco)	0.683	0.630	0.377	0.956	0.173	35675
Citizenship education duration (cedu)	0.890	1	0	1	0.215	35675
Government satisfaction (stfgov)	4.450	5	0	10	2.405	43226
Democracy satisfaction (stfdem)	5.265	5	0	10	2.479	42896
Gender (gndr)	1.526	2	1	2	0.499	44378
Age in years (agea)	49.143	49	15	100	18.613	44232

Data not categorized per country. Sources: European Social Survey Round 8 (**Norwegian Centre for Research Data, 2016**), Citizenship Education at School in Europe (**Eurydice, 2017**), and Education Index 2016 (**UNDP, n.d.**).

A2. Estimated models

Dependent: political participation score	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Fixed effects							
Intercept	1.125*** (0.151)	1.773*** (0.147)	1.063*** (0.152)	1.005*** (0.141)	1.020*** (0.165)	1.013*** (0.167)	1.134*** (0.252)
Micro-level independent variables							
Education level	0.252*** (0.005)		0.236*** (0.005)	0.236*** (0.005)	0.242*** (0.006)	0.243*** (0.006)	0.224*** (0.009)
Total net household income		0.093*** (0.003)	0.036*** (0.004)	0.036*** (0.004)	0.037*** (0.004)	0.037*** (0.004)	0.037*** (0.004)
Macro-level independent variables							
Education Index (centered)				5.179* (3.070)			
Citizenship education comprehensiveness (centered)					0.298 (0.942)		
Citizenship education duration (centered)						-0.443 (0.639)	
Citizenship education duration (dummy) <i>Countries not citizenship all grades</i> <i>Countries citizenship all grades</i>							<i>Reference</i> -0.176 (0.327)
Interaction terms							
Education level * Education Index (centered)				0.080 (0.104)			
Education level * Citizenship education comprehensiveness (centered)					0.048 (0.033)		
Education level * Citizenship education duration (centered)						0.033 (0.020)	
Education level * Citizenship education duration (dummy)							0.029*** (0.011)
Control variables							

Government satisfaction	-0.055*** (0.004)	-0.064*** (0.005)	-0.058*** (0.005)	-0.058*** (0.005)	-0.053*** (0.005)	-0.054*** (0.005)	-0.054*** (0.005)
Democracy satisfaction	0.017*** (0.004)	0.035*** (0.005)	0.017*** (0.005)	0.017*** (0.005)	0.018*** (0.005)	0.018*** (0.005)	0.018*** (0.005)
Gender (dummy)							
<i>Male</i>	<i>Reference</i>						
<i>Female</i>	-0.091*** (0.016)	-0.005 (0.017)	-0.062*** (0.017)	-0.062*** (0.017)	-0.051*** (0.019)	-0.051*** (0.019)	-0.050*** (0.019)
Age	0.001* (0.000)	-0.003*** (0.001)	0.001** (0.001)	0.001** (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Random effects							
Level 2 variance	0.049 (0.145)	0.455 (0.135)	0.475 (0.141)	0.415 (0.123)	0.472 (0.154)	0.475 (0.155)	0.482 (0.157)
Level 1 variance	2.260 (0.016)	2.414 (0.019)	2.274 (0.018)	2.274 (0.018)	2.323 (0.021)	2.328 (0.021)	2.327 (0.021)
Log likelihood	-69252.330	-59558.815	-58457.877	-58456.066	-47344.683	-47344.464	-47342.496
Obs	37,875	31,993	31,915	31,915	25,683	25,683	25,683
Significance: *=p<0.100, **=p<0.050, ***=p<0.010. Sources: European Social Survey Round 8 (Norwegian Centre for Research Data, 2016), Citizenship Education at School in Europe (Eurydice, 2017), and Education Index 2016 (UNDP, n.d.).							