Chapter 1 Introduction

Why This Book and Why Now?

The level of youth participation in the 2017 UK election is contested and widely debated (Sloam et al. 2018; Sloam and Henn 2019; Prosser et al. 2018). However, what is uncontested is the fact that by some considerable margin the social group who voted the least were disadvantaged young people (young people aged 18-34 who were either unemployed or doing unskilled and semi-skilled labour). Their level of voter turnout was about 35% (IPSOS Mori 2017). The second lowest group in terms of turnout levels were young people (18-34) doing skilled manual labor at 49%. All other social groups according to gender, age, social class and ethnicity had a turnout rate of more than 50% and the overall turnout was about 63% (IPSOS Mori 2017). Thus, the intersection between social class and age was the crucial factor amongst the myriad of ways in which people differ that defines the likelihood that they voted in the 2017 election. Research indicates that political participation at a young age instills patterns of behaviour that individuals draw on through the rest of their lives (Flanagan and Levine 2010). Thus, from this initial evidence, social differences in political engagement are unlikely to improve in the short term and it is the next generation currently in education that we need to support in their learning of political engagement.

The phenomenon of socioeconomic inequalities in political engagement unfortunately is not new, not confined just to voting and applies to most of the democratic western world (Dalton 2017). Nevertheless, these inequalities are significantly worse in the UK compared to other countries in Europe. To see this visually, the graph below (Fig. 1.1), shows the strength of the association between socioeconomic background, as measured with parental education and occupation, and electoral participation for 14 years old and young adults across Europe. The UK stands out as the country in Europe with the largest effect of social background on voting for both age groups (voting intentions for the 14 year olds). This effect is positive, which means that turnout among young people of disadvantaged backgrounds is much lower than among their more socially privileged peers.
Figure 1.1 The relation between social background and voting among two age groups.

Sources: ICCS 2009 for the 14 year olds; European Social Survey, Rounds 4 to 7 (2008-2014) for the young adults

Adding to the importance and urgency of examining how social disparities in political participation come about, particularly in the UK, is the fact that these disparities appear to become more salient during adolescence. This is demonstrated by Figure 1.2, which shows that the association between SES and intention to vote among young people in England is becoming stronger between the ages of 12 and 20, moving from an insignificant positive correlation of 0.15 to a significant one of 0.31.

Figure 1.2 The relation between social background and intention to vote among English teenagers
The democratic ideal is social equality in political voice. The justification for this is that everybody's views and needs should be taken into account in political decisions and policy development for a democracy to be truly representative and responsive to its electorate. Nevertheless, social inequalities in political engagement have been rife within western democracies for a considerable amount of time and the evidence suggests that this gap is increasing in the ever more unequal and globalized world in which we live (Dalton 2017). This phenomenon has been connected to ‘Diploma democracy’ (Bovens and Wille 2017 p.140), which refers to a situation where the university educated dominate the parliaments, the political parties, NGO’s and even protest marches whilst the less educated are participating less in all these political arenas and have great difficulty in having their voices heard. The long-term effect of this has been that the educated and wealthy have acquired a greater influence on public policy (Verba et al 1995), leaving the poor and least educated feeling alienated, powerless and distrustful of mainstream politics (Bovens and Wille 2017). The feeling of political alienation not only excludes certain voices from the decision-making process but also leaves untapped frustration which has been exploited in referendums and elections by populist and extremist parties (Huber and Ruth 2017; Kriesi 2014; Mair 2009; Katz and Mair 2009). These parties and political agendas have quite successfully positioned themselves as outsiders agitating against the political elite and have had some success in politically mobilising the disaffected and lower socioeconomic groups, as exemplified by the UK EU referendum in 2016, Trump's election in the US in 2016, and the victories of populist anti-immigrant parties in the 2018 Hungarian and Italian parliamentary elections.
Instead of tackling the issue of political alienation head on with a strong citizenship education programme, gradually more and more schools in England have been able to opt out of citizenship education as they have taken on the status of academies or free schools and are only required to teach Math, Science, English and Religious Education. In England in 2018 just under three quarters of state funded secondary schools had this status and their number is growing rapidly (UK Government 2018). Thus, this recent trend in England may well undo the progress made with the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in the National Curriculum in 2001. In the US, a country which the UK often follows, inequalities in the provision of citizenship education have become so extreme that in New York students are suing the Rhode Island Department of Education for not providing the education that they need to vote or have their voices heard (New York Times 2018).

Nevertheless, citizenship education may not always be the most effective way to learn political engagement. How young people learn to politically engage is complex and the influence of social class and family background on this process is even more difficult to tease out. Recent political socialization research indicates that the political alienation and disengagement of the disadvantaged are passed down from one generation to the next (Brady 2015, Hoskins et al. 2017), thus maintaining the status quo and preventing social mobility in political engagement. Nevertheless, until now there are few in-depth theories that explain the reproduction of social inequalities in political engagement and little in the way of systematic analysis of empirical data on the role of the school in this process. In this regard, Brady (2015) berates the lack of political socialisation theory and empirical research that identifies the transmission process between generations of economic, human and social capital and how this perpetuates unequal patterns of political engagement. Rather than researching the education system to explore how social inequalities in political engagement are reproduced, much of the focus of recent political science research has been on the social status afforded by education (Nie et al 1996, Campbell 2006; Dalton 2017) and contextual factors such as the changing nature of political participation in western democracies, which demands higher levels of knowledge and skills to participate (Dalton 2017). We might have thought that the question of social reproduction in political engagement demands attention from the education field, but few educational studies appear to have focused on it. This book addresses this gap by discussing theories and evidence of the socialisation process from the sociology of education literature and draws on a range of learning theories, including participatory/constructionist, critical pedagogy and cognitive
theories, to develop and test theories about the learning of political engagement in the school environment.

*What’s New in This Book?*

The world of education has focused heavily in recent years on social mobility in employment, careers and economic returns (Blanden et al 2007; Macmillan 2009; Crawford et al 2011). **Education for Employability** is the dominant discourse within the political **neoliberal agenda** of the western world. In contrast learning political engagement, particularly since the 2008 economic crisis has been a low priority (Hoskins et al 2016). Policy and practice on facilitating social equality in political engagement is hardly mentioned at all. Schooling has been developed, even with the best of intentions, to help get disadvantaged kids to succeed on basic skills tests. Yet such practices represent more **restrictive environments** for the learning of political engagement (Ben-Porath 2013 and see chapter 2). Thus, qualifications for employability have become the dominant school mantra above educational aims towards supporting democracy, social justice and social inclusion and these aims have equally dominated the education research field.

The lack of empirical research focusing on the **reproduction of social inequalities in political engagement** has meant that we have had to turn in this book to the sociology of education literature and theories on social mobility more generally to develop our own theory. In this book we draw on the social theories of class and social reproduction of Bourdieu and Bernstein and theories of social class and access to learning from the seminal work of Bowles and Gintis (1976 and 2011). Back in the 1970s, the latter explained how the US education system socialised students into the appropriate attitudes, values and behaviour for particular positions in the labour market. They thus saw the education system as exclusively serving the needs of the market economy. We draw on these sociological theories and the criticisms of these theories to build a new theory of the reproduction of social inequalities in political engagement. **In brief, this theory states that young people learn to become engaged through a combination of participatory activities and knowledge transmission processes and that education can contribute to social reproduction (1) by not providing the same access to these learning opportunities and (2) by providing learning opportunities from which middle-class children benefit more than working class ones.** In this regard we build on a small but increasing body
of knowledge that has begun to show that the separation of students within the education system, technically referred to as tracking, has an additional and independent effect on levels of political engagement (Janmaat et al 2014; Hoskins and Janmaat 2016; Hoskins et al 2017). In this book we look at access to specific political learning approaches from the age of 11-12 to 23. This is particularly interesting as at this earlier age the separation and differentiation of learning opportunities is much less explicit in the UK education system. We also explore young people’s access to voluntary political learning opportunities both within and between schools with different social intakes.

This book not only provides the theory but also the evidence that explains the reproduction of social inequalities in political engagement and in particular the role of the school in this process. It examines in-depth the process of this reproduction within the education system in the UK and across Europe. It analyses the extent to which experiences of schooling have an influence, both positively and negatively, on social inequalities in political engagement. Education has been considered the main policy tool for increasing levels of political engagement. Scholars have consistently shown that education always has a strong association with levels of political engagement (Verba et al 1995, Nie et al 1996) and knowledge and skills have been considered crucial resources enabling political engagement (Verba et al 1995). Nevertheless, increasing levels of participation in higher education have not led to the same growth in political engagement. As a result, scholars have started to argue that measures of education are simply another metric of socio-economic status and reflect the social class differences in family socialisation for academic success and political engagement before school entry (Persson 2012 and 2014; Kam and Palmer 2008; Burden 2009). Another argument made is that political engagement is not a reflection of the learning process but rather a consequence of the social status afforded by the qualifications gained (Nie et al 1996; see also Campbell 2006). All these scholars argue that the school system and learning within the school make little difference to social inequalities in political engagement.

In contrast, the argument and evidence presented within this book is that the school system has an additional effect beyond the learning in the home in which one grows up and the social status of the qualifications that learners gain. We argue that the effect of the education system and schooling on political engagement is complex and certainly not all bad news. We will provide evidence showing that specific types of education such as participatory activities in school, a safe and open environment for discussion and citizenship education can provide all social groups with similar learning opportunities for political engagement. Thus, given the
opportunity, all young people can and do benefit from these learning opportunities (see Chapters 4 and 5).

However, the analyses presented in this book suggest that not all social groups within the schooling system have equal access to these learning opportunities. We find that students from lower social backgrounds gain less political learning experiences than their peers within the same school and in schools with a more socially privileged intake. The difference are in the opportunities to learn through participation. It is this lack of access that provides the basis for the reproduction of social inequalities in political engagement (Chapters 4 and 5). Tackling these differences in access to opportunities to learn is the basis for creating higher levels of equality in political engagement. We will return to this point in our concluding chapter (Chapter 8).

We also explore in the book whether there are methods used at school that can mitigate socioeconomic differences in political engagement (Chapters 4 and 5). The good news for the education system is that we find citizenship education, as one of the learning opportunities, to have some mitigating effects on inequalities in political engagement. Another uplifting result is that there are no accelerating effects. In other words, participation in the learning opportunities does not widen the social gaps in engagement (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Another of the added values of this book is the empirical evidence that we have drawn together to develop the findings on the reproduction of social inequalities in political engagement. This book focuses on analysing the education experience from the age of 11 to 23 including lower secondary, upper secondary and higher education. We follow the same young people in the UK using longitudinal data through their experiences of school to the age when they can legally vote and have a chance to participate in a national election. A major focus of this book is on lower secondary education (Chapters 4 and 5) as this is the phase of education when children experience compulsory citizenship education and when choices in education and training start to take place. We continue this analysis into post 16 education and higher education to explore how different educational trajectories and tracks vary in the opportunities they offer for learning political engagement (Chapters 6 and 7).

We compare both lower and upper secondary school experiences in England with other European countries. The benefits of providing this comparative analysis is to understand if education systems in other countries are better able to provide inclusive access to effective political learning opportunities. If some countries can achieve a greater level playing field for
learning opportunities in political engagement, social gaps in these opportunities are not inevitable and schools can be organized differently to create greater levels of equality in political engagement. Factors that we examine include the age of first selection, the status difference between academic and vocational tracks and participation in higher education. What we typically find (in Chapter 7) is that the English education system is providing the most unequal access to learning political engagement across Europe.

The data sources that we draw on are, first, the English Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS). The CELS data is unique in that it combines a panel study of adolescents with a questionnaire tapping a wide range of both forms of learning citizenship, actual and intended form of political engagement. The study includes a nationally representative cohort of young people aged 11-12 in 2003. This cohort was then surveyed about every two years until 2014 (Round 6) when the students were 22-23. For comparisons with other countries for lower secondary students we have used the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study. ICCS includes nationally representative samples collected among 8 Grade students (13-14 years old) in 25 European countries. We use the 2009 data as this was the last study that England participated in. The final data set that we use for comparisons is the European Social Survey. This survey, which occurs every two years, uses nationally representative samples of the adult population in 30 countries in Europe. It allows for comparison of social and political attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. We use the age group of 18-30 year olds.

When we explore the learning of political engagement, we explore a wide range of forms of political engagement from the more conventional such as voting and party membership to the less conventional such as different forms of peaceful protest (demonstrations, signing petitions, boycotting products) and illegal forms of protest. When the young people we follow are aged 18 and older we more often than not examine actual forms of political engagement focusing on recent national and European elections and their actual participation in protest activities. When they are younger we focus more on their intentions to politically engage so that we can track these same forms of political engagement into adulthood.

Who Will Be Interested in Reading This Book?
This is an interdisciplinary book written for multiple audiences. The first of these are academics and students who have an interest in political engagement from the field of education, political science, sociology and the social sciences more broadly. It is also equally written for policymakers, educators and those working in civil society organizations who are interested in understanding the topic of social inequalities in political engagement and who are keen to facilitate equality in political voice. The book is also written for members of the public who are concerned about the state of democracy in Western democracies and would like to consider some possible remedies using the education system.

Structure of Book

The book begins with two chapters that provide the basis for a theory on the reproduction of social inequalities in political engagement. They start by discussing theories on how young people learn to become engaged and then move on to identify theories that set out the barriers to these learning opportunities particularly in schools. The first of these chapters explains the theory of how political engagement is learnt using two different conceptual models of learning; one a cognitive model based on the acquisition of knowledge and the other a constructivist model based on active participation and co-construction of meaning. The chapter identifies how both theories can be useful in understanding the learning of political engagement and the extent to which these learning opportunities may exist within the school environment. The second of the theoretical chapters detects the potential barriers within the school system to learning political engagement. Drawing on Bourdieu and Bernstein, this chapter will explain the relationship between socioeconomic background and the learning of political engagement in the home and how this then influences the access to learning political engagement in the school environment. In addition, we draw on the social theory of Bowles and Gintis to explain the issue of access to political learning in school. The chapter will also discuss theories regarding the potential inequality enhancing or mitigating effects of different forms of political learning.

Having set out the framework of a theory of the social reproduction of inequalities in political engagement, Chapters 4 to 7 will then test these theories for different age groups and different education systems across Europe. Chapter 4 focuses on testing the theories in lower school using longitudinal in England whilst Chapter 5 focuses on analyzing and comparing barriers to
learning across Europe using large scale international studies (IEA ICCS). The idea for comparing countries here is to see whether different education systems vary in their ability to offer access to the learning of political engagement for children of disadvantaged backgrounds. Chapters 6 and 7 then focus on upper secondary and higher education; Chapter 6 does so for the UK and Chapter 7 for different European countries.

The concluding chapter identifies access to participatory forms of learning as the major barrier for equality in learning for political engagement and the additional role that schools currently play in reproducing socioeconomic inequalities in political engagement.
References


Chapter 2 Learning Political Engagement

The aim of Chapter 2 is to set out the likely processes in which political engagement is learnt inside schools to inform the first part of our theory on the social reproduction in political engagement. This step is necessary in order to be able to establish in the following chapter where potential barriers to this learning could be taking place in particular within the education system. This chapter also helps to provide clarity on what is meant in this book by the terms education, learning and political engagement. We discuss these terms in detail to unpack the theories in which these terms are embedded. This chapter and book is in part a response to recent economic and political science research that has cast doubt on the relevance of education in increasing political engagement (Persson, 2014, 2013; Kam and Palmer, 2008; Burden, 2009, Lauglo 2016). This research suggests that social class is the main factor influencing political engagement and that education merely proxies for social class. We will address this research and argue that this assumption is partly a misunderstanding of the role of education in the social reproduction of class.

Other scholars have argued that education only exerts an indirect effect on political engagement (Nie et al 1996; see also Campbell 2006). The argument here is that educational qualifications help in acquiring esteemed social positions, and that it is primarily through attaining such positions that people become politically engaged. The relative nature of these positions means that there will always be competition for them regardless of how highly educated a society is in the aggregate. In other words, the number of these positions does not change with ever more people attaining a degree in higher education. By implication, overall levels of political participation will not increase with educational expansion, notwithstanding the positive effect that being well-educated has for individuals themselves in terms of enhancing their political engagement. We explain this theory in greater detail within this chapter and clarify the extent to which this could provide an alternative explanation to barriers in the learning process.

However, others have argued that education does have a direct effect on political engagement and that it can be considered as one of its main drivers (Niemi and Junn, 1998; Emler and Frazer, 1999). However, what is meant by the term education has yet to be fully explained
(Hillygus 2005). In order to identify the effect of education and explain the mechanisms through which it operates, we will use two major theories of learning characterised by two metaphors; ‘acquisition’ and ‘participation’ (Sfard 1998). The first approach is frequently used by cognitive and developmental psychologists and understands the student as a consumer of knowledge transferred by the teacher to the student. The second approach to learning, used by many practitioners and educational researchers, understands the student as an active participant in the learning process. The learning then occurs through identifying with, joining and interacting within a community of practice and co-creating knowledge within that community. The benefits and limitations of both approaches for understanding how young people learn to be politically engaged will be explored. The chapter will draw on both approaches to identify the most effective methods for learning political engagement within a school environment. These findings will then be used in Chapter 3 to explore the access of different social groups to these learning opportunities and identify which groups benefit the most from this learning.

The chapter will begin by reflecting on theories that question the role of education in the learning of political engagement. First, we address the literature on education as a measure of social class and then scholars who argue that education only has an indirect effect through certification. We then move on to the main body of the chapter to identify the likely processes of learning political engagement. The purpose of this is to build our theory of the social reproduction of political engagement. In this section we explore the two processes of learning political engagement (cognitive and participatory approach) and identify when and where at school the learning using these paradigms might be taking place. Finally, we define political engagement within the context of this book.

**Education Levels are Simply a Measure for Social Class**

Recent research by political scientists and economists has claimed that educational attainment, years of education or expected education outcomes have no effect on levels of political engagement (Lauglo 2016, Persson, 2014, 2013; Kam and Palmer, 2008; Burden, 2009). The argument is that education is only an approximate measure that is actually capturing an individual’s socio-economic background. The behaviours and attitudes associated with particular class backgrounds are said to be developed through early socialization experiences within the home and are then argued to influence both certain choices in education and political
engagement (Lauglo 2016, Persson, 2014, 2013; Kam and Palmer, 2008; Burden, 2009). The precise preschool experiences that these scholars refer to have yet to be fully established, but Persson (2013) suggests that parental education, early cultural experiences in the home and cognitive test results at age 5 are the variables that are being captured by measures of years of education in cross sectional empirical research. Kam and Palmer (2008) builds on this theory by arguing that early socialisation provides the opportunity for the transmission from parents to children of attitudes and values such as a general sense of efficacy, an appreciation of education, political engagement, a sense of duty and a ‘willingness to delay gratification’ (p. 165). With a slightly different take, Lauglo (2016), argues that it is the early learning of public and private responsibility from parents in the home which is crucial. He argues that these attributes are acquired through political discussions with politically active parents and that this results in both the child’s desire for higher education attainment and future political engagement. Similarly, Noble and Davies (2009) argue that parental engagement in public affairs is crucial for children’s educational aspirations. In their research they identified parental engagement in public affairs as the strongest indicator of middle class cultural capital. Parental engagement in public affairs was then found to be the strongest predictor of children’s self-reported future desire to go to university. Thus the relationship between social class, political engagement, education and early socialisation in the home is complex to disentangle. The precise attitudes, values and behaviours being learnt in the home, the precision of how this is taking place and how these learning processes interact with issues of social economic background has to the best of our knowledge yet to be researched, due largely to the difficulties of measuring these dispositions at preschool age and the difficulties in observing political learning processes outside of a school environment (Lauglo 2016 p.434).

When these authors argue that years of education, education attainment or expected years of education have no additional effect what is less clear is the precise meaning of the word education given the limited discussion of this term. Are these authors referring to education as a set of specific learning outcomes developed to a certain level that provide the skills for political engagement? Are they referring to the learning of specific subjects or wider curricular approaches and activities across the whole school? Or are they referring to the social position derived from attaining a qualification at a particular level? If by education they are referring to educational attainment in terms of skills that are said to have no effect – is this a blanket impossibility for education environments to positively contribute to political learning, in
particular for those who do not experience these forms of learning at home? Is it equally impossible that certain education systems or education experiences can negatively affect political engagement for certain groups? The suggestion from the no effect perspective is that national education systems are unable to mitigate or even intensify either the potential for educational success or the potential for political engagement, as both have been preprogrammed by the age of 5. The relevance of social economic background and learning in the home on educational achievement is widely known (for example, Greenstone et al 2013; Hanushek, E.A., 2006). Nevertheless, it is unlikely that many in the educational world would suggest that education systems have no capacity to either enhance or mitigate the educational attainment and labour market performance of different social groups. In fact, the reverse is the case, as a lot of effort has gone into establishing the educational interventions that provide the opportunity to diminish socioeconomic inequalities in achievement (for example, Heckman and Masterov 2007). In this book we will argue that the same possibilities exist regarding the learning of political engagement. We believe the home environment and political discussions in the home are indeed crucial for learning political engagement. Nevertheless, education systems and the learning opportunities offered in schools can and do influence young people’s chances of becoming politically engaged.

Although we will use years of education and educational attainment as measures of education in our research, we are fully aware of the limitations of these measurement approaches. Such approaches are based on the assumption that learning is an individual process, that formal education is akin to a medical treatment on the individual brain, and that each single year/dose of education would have an additive linear growth effect on the human brain, resulting in increased political engagement. This assumption thus ignores the social and interactive elements of learning and the participatory nature of what is being learnt i.e. political engagement. It also ignores that some experiences in school may actually be detrimental to learning political engagement, for example, if students experience a lack of voice in their lives in the school environment. The final assumptions underlying this approach are that an experience of a year of education is similar for each student in each school in each country. This is of course is not the case as the schooling system particularly in the UK is very diverse and these experiences differ according to one’s social background. If the econometric analysis regarding education suggests that there is no effect would the conclusion then be that political engagement cannot be taught in schools and education is irrelevant, and that there is therefore
no need for young people to attend school if political engagement is the objective? To answer this question, we will explore the theories that suggest that education and learning either have an indirect or a direct effect on political engagement.

The **Positional Thesis:** Education Only Has an Indirect Effect

Others claim that education does more than simply proxy for social background but influences political engagement still only indirectly. The thesis here is that education gives people a competitive edge and access to higher social positions, and that it is this higher ranking on the social pecking order that makes people more engaged. Nie *et al* (1996, 39) call this mechanism the ‘positional pathway’ (also called the ‘sorting’ effect of education). They argue that education enhances the ‘social network centrality’ of individuals. This centrality is crucial for getting access to and influencing politicians, thus giving individuals an incentive to become politically active. Social network centrality, however, is a zero-sum property as the gains for one individual will automatically entail losses for others. This property, according to Nie *et al* (1996), can help explain why overall political participation levels have not increased while society as a whole has steadily become more educated.

Nie *et al* (1996) sparked a huge debate that continues to the present day. It immediately attracted criticism by Helliwell and Putnam (1999), who, with a different measure of relative education, found no evidence for a positional effect on the majority of social engagement indicators. Refining the positional effects thesis, Campbell (2006) proposes that the degree of competition involved in a political activity can explain why the effect of education is absolute on some socio-political outcomes and positional on others. In his view only when people are in direct competition with one another is the effect positional. He indeed only finds evidence for a positional effect on ‘competitive political activity’ (*ibid* p 51). For all the other outcomes in his research (expressive political activity, voting, civic participation, institutional trust and social trust) the absolute (i.e. direct) effect is either stronger than the positional effect or the positional effect is entirely absent. However, recent research has increasingly questioned the absolute effect of education on political engagement and has shown that positional effects do occur for voter turnout (Burden, 2009; Tenn, 2007), political sophistication (Highton, 2009)
and **democratic citizenship** (Persson and Oscarsson, 2010). We will engage with this debate in Chapter 7, where the cross-national analyses allows us to partly test the effect of education as either absolute or positional.

**Theories of Learning Political Engagement**

Although many studies claim that formal education does have a direct influence on the disposition to participate, little in the way of research and theory sufficiently explains why education should have this effect (Hillygus 2005). The basic theory used widely by political scientists and econometrics has been inspired by a cognitive and developmental psychology perspective of learning and applies the ‘**acquisition metaphor**’ (Sfard 1998). The basis for the acquisition metaphor used by a range of theories of learning is that knowledge is a set of abstract objects that an individual can possess. Education is then understood as a system of codifying the knowledge. The codified system is the knowledge held within an education system through the curriculum, teachers and teaching materials. The education system provides the organisation of the systematic transfer of this knowledge according to the developmental age of the student through instruction by the teacher within the classroom (Duffy 1992). This transfer involves internalising and memorising the information by the students. The students can then recall and repeat this knowledge on other occasions and in different contexts. This knowledge includes the basics of reading and writing (Hillygus 2005). Other knowledge and skills can be added to this repertoire such as analytical and problem-solving skills. All these skills can then be acquired and possessed through formal education in a linear process.

The effect of an additional year of education is the additional acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills to understand how to register and vote, follow politics, and evaluate and assess campaigns and candidates (Rosenstone et al 1993), or, as put more eloquently by Nie et al (1996), through every additional year of education an individual gains the political knowledge and **verbal cognitive proficiency** to enable them to understand the world of politics better and to take more advantage of the opportunities it offers to defend one's interests (Nie et al., 1996). More knowledge and better reading and writing skills are then understood as a possible causal mechanism for higher levels of political engagement. The belief is that the more advanced these skills become, the better the individual is at political engagement and the lower the cost of political participation. Consequently, if an education system was meritocratic it
would then always be the most educated who are most politically engaged. Or, as Campbell (2006) argued from the absolute effects of education thesis, if everyone was taught to the same level of education, everyone would participate to the same degree.

There is a general assumption behind much of this literature that specific subjects such as social science and citizenship education would be more helpful in developing these skills than others as they directly aim at fostering political engagement. In fact, when Hillygus (2005) tested the different knowledge and skills on political engagement he found that it was SAT verbal skills scores that had a strong and significant effect on political engagement. He found no relationship with SAT maths scores. Citizenship education, although contested when measured in terms of years, has been found to have a positive and significant effect on intentions to and actual levels of political engagement (Whitely 2014). Nevertheless, graduates of all academic disciplines, i.e. not just of the social sciences and humanities, have been found to have higher levels of political engagement (Yang and Hoskins forthcoming), which introduces additional questions and complexity to the absolute effect of education thesis.

One of the main strengths of the acquisition metaphor of learning is that we can use it to define the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for political engagement and establish levels of proficiency in these competences. These qualities have been referred to as civic competences (see Hoskins et al 2012). The competences needed for civic engagement is not the focus for this book. However, they are relevant as a step in the learning process of becoming more politically engaged.

The acquisition approach to understanding and teaching in education, in which the above theories are situated, is criticised by education researchers from a critical pedagogy perspective. Authors such as Paolo Freire (1970), argue that education based on the acquisition model produces quite the opposite to political engagement. Instead, they would argue that it is this form of education that depoliticises individuals and groups. Freire (1970) argues that there is a connection between teaching the learners as passive recipients of knowledge and passive acceptance of the social structures in society and the status quo.
The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. Freire (1970 p. 165)

The acquisition concept of the education system builds a system of power in which the teacher has the knowledge and therefore the power to be listened to and the student is powerless and obliged to listen (Cho 2010). Thus, the education system is mirroring and reproducing the power structures within society – a point that we shall return to later in Chapter 2 on inequalities in the education system. Political education as opposed to education for acquisition is argued to be a process of actively involving learners in the critical engagement with existing knowledge and developing new and alternative forms of knowledge. From a critical pedagogy perspective, dialogical, critical and transformative thinking is the central process of consciousness raising and politicking of learners. Although adding to this we recognise that it is possible, even if it is undesirable, for people to act politically, for example, in the form of voting without a great deal of critical thought.

**Participatory Learning Theories**

An alternative approach to theories of learning built on the metaphor of acquisition are theories of **learning as participation** (Sfard 1998). These theories typically understand learning as action and part of a joint social enterprise to build and transform communities (Wenger 1998). The emphasis of the participation theories is on social participation in communities and the collaborative development of knowledge and meaning as opposed to instruction and the transference of knowledge via cognitive acquisition. Instead of individuals having abstract knowledge transmitted into their brains and possessing it, people are collaboratively and actively doing, knowing and taking part in a process of **negotiating collective meaning** (Sfard 1998). The goal of learning is community building as opposed to the cognitive metaphor of individual enrichment and instead of a student being a consumer of knowledge they become an apprentice to the community that they are joining (Sfard 1998). These theories are widely
known within the education community but much less known and respected within the economic and political science disciplines.

Social processes of learning through open dialogue and practicing political engagement has been widely cited as an effective way to learn the skills for political engagement (Knowles, Torney-Purta and Barber 2018; Hoskins et al 2017; Hoskins et al 2012; Keating and Janmmat 2016) but why this is the case has not been much discussed. Evidence using communities of practice and constructivist theories of learning suggests that young people learn to become politically engaged in real world environments or contexts that reflect the real world. In other words, the learning is situated (Biesta, Lawy and Kelly 2009). This learning is a social process and is developed through interaction with others within the communities in which they live (Hoskins et al 2012). Through the social interaction in real world conditions political identities are developed (Hoskins et al 2012).

Although various participatory theories of learning exist the original and seminal text in the Communities of Practice theory of learning was the book by Lave and Wenger (1991), who noted through anthropological explorations how learning was socially situated. They developed an analytic approach to learning where learning is understood to happen through social participation in different communities of practice. From this perspective, learning develops through relationships, interactions and conflicts that occur in the process of reproducing and adapting communities. The community forms the context in which meaning is actively negotiated between different actors. Meaning is the product of past interactions, is temporal in nature and develops both through participation (in common activities) and reification (visible codification and recognition of learning achievements).

Integral to this approach is a view that the individual is an engaged agent in the learning process, with a growing sense of membership, identity and belonging. The learner is therefore involved in co-constructing knowledge and skills, and this entails the construction or reconstruction of his/her identity in the process. Haste (2004) argues for the importance of identity formation as central to political engagement. She argues that it is central to political engagement to have a feeling of ownership of the topic, to define yourself as part of a group of
people who believe in the value of participation. Knowledge by itself is not sufficient. For the issues to become salient, the individual needs to become engaged in relevant action.

The Lave and Wenger’s (1991) situated learning theory emphasises the importance of role models in learning, as they embody the form of practice combining the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required for successful performance. People within the communities learn through observation of the role models and then experimenting with acting out these competences by themselves in similar contexts. Wenger (1998) later developed the communities of practice model further through developing a social theory of learning. Within the social theory of learning he creates a typology of learning that includes four dimensions: meaning-making = learning as experience; practice = learning as doing; community = learning as belonging; and identity = learning as becoming.

Qualitative research by Biesta, Lawy and Kelly (2009), who interviewed the same 30 young people in England several times over the period between 2003-2005, found that political learning for young people is situated in multiple communities (Home, work, school and sports and hobbies) and takes place through diverse social relationships in these communities. They found that the prior experiences of the young people affected learning within the new communities and that the structure and rules of the community really matter for the extent that they afford the capacity for learning. Contexts in which the young people felt that they were listened to or could influence learning and teaching were the ones most likely to facilitate political learning.

Our own quantitative study, using the IEA CIVED data in 5 different countries in Europe (Hoskins et al 2012) and applying the theory of Communities of Practice, showed that knowledge and skills about democracy and participatory attitudes are learnt through the process of meaning making in discussion with parents and friends about politics, discussion inside the classroom (an open classroom climate) and through social participation in school councils. What we can conclude from the positive findings regarding the student councils is that the process of gaining the identity of a member of a student council through a social process of interaction and election by peers has brought members of such councils to the centre of the
school participatory community, and this process has either supported or reinforced their learning of knowledge and skills regarding democracy and their participatory attitudes.

Another participatory theory that relates to the learning of political engagement is critical pedagogy. This theory used within the teaching of political engagement and most notably through the work of Paulo Freire (1970), is built on the foundations on Marxist theories of learning and is useful in understanding the learning of political engagement, regardless of whether you believe in Marxist revolutionary principles or not. Allman describes the founding principle as Praxis, which refers to the idea that only when practice is combined with thought and reflection will political consciousness emerge. This consciousness will then motivate people to become politically active. Experience, including experiences of political engagement, by itself can achieve haphazard learning outcomes including no learning at all. It is not inevitable that experiences are seen with a critical lens. Attempting to learn knowledge without actively engaging both physically and mentally (for example in dialogue with others) in the contents is then also argued to be fruitless as the content has no meaning to the individual. This process is what we have referred to in this chapter as the acquisition metaphor, which Freire (1970) critiqued as the process in which the powerful transmit the status quo to the powerless. Haste (2010 p.163) applies this to the field of political socialisation and suggests that we are not the “passive recipients of a top down conduit of knowledge and values”. Experience first brings the young person to become aware of an issue through actual contact with it. Second, through action on the issue, the individual gains the skills, knowledge, motivation and confidence for competent engagement. Allman (2001) acknowledges that other interpretations of Praxis have sequenced, for example, action and then thought (including theory), or the reverse, namely thought (including theory) and then action, but Allman’s interpretation of Marx’s theory of learning is that these learning processes are simultaneous.

What is of particular importance to Allman (2001) and what we will draw on in the section on schools is that the learning experiences should embody the values and principles of the type of political engagement that is desired, i.e. if you want to teach democratic participation you need to apply these principles in the classroom/school. If you want to teach about social transformation you need to transform the classroom to reflect the values of the new ideal state. For example, if the ideal to be attained is equality, then a prerequisite of social transformation
is equality between learners and teachers. Thus critical pedagogy is argued to be successful through simultaneous experience and critical reflection, but also through coherence between the learning process and the principles on the basis of which they are delivered on the one hand and the desired political outcomes on the other.

Participatory theories of learning also help to explain the most likely process of learning political engagement in the home. The more open and democratic the decision-making in the family is, the more these practices are going to be learnt. The learning is likely to be occurring through interaction, negotiation and co-construction of knowledge between the children and their politically engaged parents, carers, siblings and friends of their parents. The children are observing the more or less overtly political discussions of the adults closest to them and experimenting with trying to understand and engage with them. The parents are then likely to be encouraging these discussions, asking their children about their thoughts and opinions and helping the young people to develop a political identity within the community of the family.

The participatory approach also helps us also to understand how political learning takes place within the adult community. For example, a person or group of people see an important issue within their everyday lives and it is discussed with others and ideas are debated and negotiated. Meaning about the issue is negotiated and co-created within the interested community and actions are decided upon. One of the individuals becomes more engaged on this topic, perhaps reading more information on the issue and becoming more involved in the debates. They start to become important actors or political leaders in the community and move towards the centre of activities deciding on which actions should be taken when. This helps them to develop a stronger feeling of belonging to the group. The greater the levels of success in this process of getting to the centre of the group, the greater the levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy developed and the more the individual identifies with the community.

Social and constructionist theories of learning are currently dominant within educational research community and education research conducted through qualitative research methods. These theories are fairly convincing in particular regarding the process of learning for political engagement. Political engagement is a real-world activity that is about how our communities
should be governed and political engagement happens through social relationships and social participation. Learning through social participation, like the above, example, can be seen to occur at all ages and across many types of contexts and not necessarily within national education systems or schools.

Nevertheless, the learning as participation approach may lead us to a number of false conclusions. First that school and schools systems are less relevant for political learning and that this learning can be left to communities outside the school environment. This conclusion is misguided because if we leave learning political engagement to social occurrences in communities outside of formal learning then inequalities and barriers to these learning experiences could well be even greater. The reason for this is that young people from families with social networks that are already highly politically active will find it easier to join these communities whilst young people without politically active parents will have less opportunities or encouragement to join such communities. We discuss these ideas in more detail in Chapter 3.

A second conclusion that could be drawn from participation theories of learning is that if we build school as a democratic community there will be no need to develop a curriculum or monitor quality or levels of learning. Participatory theories of learning can be considered to be at odds with the concept of defining a systematic approach to the curriculum, i.e. in terms of identifying specific knowledge and skills content, quality or levels of learning. Thus, taking these ideas into the school environment, the learning processes could be without regulation and, although rich, could also be chaotic, with the likelihood of gaps occurring in important areas for political engagement for particular groups of young people. Without some forms of regulation and assessment it is not possible to know which students are succeeding, and which need more support and which students need to be helped to be brought to the centre of the learning communities.

However, if we understand the school in terms of both participatory theories and acquisition theories of learning then the school can be a site that draws from the best that these two understandings of learning for political learning have to offer. The school therefore could be understood as a participatory community for learning about living in a diverse society through living this experience in the school. It can also be seen as an environment for engaging in
democratic practices, reflecting on these experiences and reflecting on experiences from outside school (Daniels 2001). Using the acquisition metaphor, the school could then also have the responsibility to facilitate the process of learning political engagement for each young person and enhance the quality of their political engagement by providing each learner with the breadth of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values (i.e. as competences) needed for effective and democratic political engagement. Educators can assess and evaluate the learning that is needed to enhance engagement and the quality of political engagement and can use either subject lessons like ´citizenship education´ to deliver the content and offer learning processes within the school community to deliver political learning.

Nevertheless, school communities are not always open and democratic environments. Particularly in the recent policy climate, schools are often based on strict rules with a system of rewards and punishment. In addition, young people are not treated by all teachers in a fair way with differing expectations of students according to where they come from and the different social groups to which they belong (Reay 2006). When young people do not feel able to engage openly in the classroom discussion or participate on an equal footing in a debate the classroom becomes a restricted learning environment (Fuller & Unwin, 2004, p.3) for this individual or social group. These young people are then on the edge of the community. For a school to really be a democratic learning community it may well take more effort and time to bring all voices into discussions and decision making. Democracy has to be a priority in schools in order to devote sufficient time to the processes needed to learn these competences. Schools with regular high-stake testing and where the priority is labour market preparation the possibilities for learning political engagement may be limited. This may well allow certain social groups to advance and socially reproduce political engagement whilst other young people are left behind on the periphery of the community. These ideas will be taken forward within Chapter 3.

How Can Schools Facilitate the Learning of Political Engagement?
The participatory theories of learning help us to understand which methods of learning are most effective for political engagement. If we borrow from the participatory theories of learning the understanding that the school is a community that young people join and participate in for the negotiation of meaning and norms of the community, then there are many activities in a school that can facilitate political learning.

An *Open Climate of Classroom Discussion*

The most frequently cited of these methods is an open climate of classroom discussion (Hahn 1998, Torney-Purta et al, 2002a, Campbell 2008, Hoskins et al 2016; Quintelier and Hooghe 2011, Keating and Janmaat 2016, Knowles, Torney-Purta, and Barber 2018). This refers to a situation where students feel free to ask questions, bring up issues for discussion, express their own opinions, feel able to make up their own minds, and perceive that the teachers respect their opinion and present different sides to an argument. The characteristics of a classroom based on these principles clearly follow the participatory approaches to learning where learning is happening through interaction, negotiation and through joint enterprise. There is a great deal of research, using both cross-sectional and longitudinal data, that demonstrated that the open classroom method of learning is effective in enhancing political engagement (Torney-Purta et al, 2002a, Campbell 2008, Hoskins et al 2012, Quintelier and Hooghe 2011, Keating and Janmaat 2016, Knowles, Torney-Purta, and Barber 2018.), positive attitudes towards political engagement (Geboers et al 2013 p.164), critical thinking (ten Dam and Volman 2004), citizenship skills (Finkel and Ernst 2005), and political knowledge (McDevitt and Kiousis 2006). It should be taken into account that Geboers et al’s (2012) systematic review of evidence found that the evidence of these positive effects was stronger for political engagement and civic attitudes and weaker for political knowledge.

*Political Activities in the School*

The participatory processes of learning political engagement also happen when young people are offered the chance to practice political engagement and decision making at school (Hoskins
et al 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Knowles, et al 2018.). These can be through activities such as class councils, school parliaments, clubs and societies and through mock elections, and there is considerable evidence for their effectiveness (Hoskins et al 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016). Youth participation activities are said to lead to the development of skills such as deliberation, compromise, speaking in public, expressing an opinion, learning to work in groups, and assimilating other people's opinions (Quintelier 2008, p. 357). In addition, they are also argued to provide greater awareness of issues in their communities and build the efficacy needed to become involved in creating the changes (McFarland and Thomas, 2006, p. 404; Keating and Janmaat 2016).

_Citizenship Education_

Since the majority of evidence suggests that learning for political engagement takes place through participatory learning processes, it may be a surprise to have a specific subject and curriculum for political learning, as studying a subject in a classroom could well be very decontextualized (not situated) and be limited in its interactivity. But as Haste (2010) alluded to, citizenship education can be understood in different ways according to the different metaphors of learning that we have used in this chapter. First, using the acquisition metaphor and the **cognitive theories of learning**, we can postulate that teaching political knowledge will lead to higher levels of political participation and reduce the cost/effort towards political participation in the future. Second, through organising political engagement activities in the class (simulation activities, mock elections and student led debates) that are situated in relevant and current issues that affect young people lives, this then allows the students to actively construct their knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed for future political engagement. The evidence weighs more heavily on the success of the participatory approaches to learning political engagement. Nevertheless, this does not imply that learning political knowledge is not important. It simply means that using a participatory approach to learning political knowledge is more likely to result in political action later on.

Research on citizenship education has identified both no effects and positive effects on political engagement, with different delivery methods likely to produce different effects. Experimental
design research has shown us that participatory learning inside citizenship education classes is effective. For example, the *Students Voice* programme in the US that targeted disadvantaged urban schools found that contextualising debates in local politics and using interactive methodologies were effective for enhancing political knowledge, political efficacy and political participation (Feldman et al 2007). In Germany research by Oberle and Leunig (2016), who also used an experimental design, found that using simulation games inside citizenship education classes were effective for teaching knowledge about the EU and increasing levels of trust, in particular for more socioeconomically deprived groups.

In the UK Citizenship education has been a mandatory part of the national curriculum from 11-16 in England since 2002. Schools are free to decide on the content, mode of delivery and volume of citizenship education and schools started to vary substantially in these matters, accordingly (Kerr et al 2007). Some schools have taken the route of offering Citizenship education as a specific subject, some as a cross curricular approach, whilst others have preferred to take a more obviously participatory route by introducing citizenship activities into the whole of the school (Keating and Janmaat 2016). How citizenship education is implemented may well have consequences for its effectiveness.

**Political Engagement**

Before finalising this chapter, it is necessary to define the concept of political engagement. This definition is more pragmatic and developed in conjunction with the data. It is therefore less theoretical than our concepts of education and learning. The purpose of this is to enable accurate analysis of the processes of learning and inequalities within these processes.

Confusion can arise around the term political engagement because scholars understand it in different ways. These differences mainly concern the scope of the concept, with some using a definition that only comprises different forms of political participation (e.g. Macedo 2005) while others entertain a much broader understanding including attitudes and dispositions such as political interest, engaging in political discussions, keeping track of news, political efficacy
and political trust (e.g. Norris 2000; and Solt 2008). Finally, from a participatory learning perspective political engagement can also be understood as part of the learning process (Freire 1970 Allman etc.).

In line with Macedo (2005), we use it in a narrow sense to only refer to adult political activities. We consciously exclude other elements such as political efficacy and interest from the definition as these are also often considered as predictors of participation (see, for instance, Blais 2000 and Moeller et al 2014) and we want to avoid confusing components with predictors of political engagement. In addition, and for research purposes, we refer to political activities at school as part of the learning component rather than the outcome of political activities.

Another reason to adopt a narrow definition is that we wish to reserve the term for outcomes that have an observable influence on collective decision-making: it is people’s actual adult political participation (i.e. behaviour) that shapes politicians’ responses rather than their attitudes, dispositions or cognitive abilities. We hasten to add that the only exception to this rule is intentions to participate, which we will also consider as one of the outcomes captured under the label political engagement. This is because participatory intentions are closely aligned with actual participation, even though intentions need not always be acted upon (Achen and Blais 2010). In other words, people who say they will vote will most often also cast their vote. Moreover, as this book focuses on young people, including minors, tapping intentions are the only way to get some idea of actual future participation for those political activities that are either not available for minors (such as voting) or that are unusual for them to engage in at a very young age (such as joining a political party or taking part in a demonstration).

The forms of political participation we will examine in this book are voting, joining a political party, legal protest and illegal protest. Not only do these forms cover quite a range of political activities, they also represent a good mix of more conventional and more alternative, widespread and rarer, influential and less influential, and accepted and more controversial forms of participation. Voting is an obvious choice. Although this conventional mode of participation is relatively unpopular among young people (Sloam 2014), it is the most common and widespread form of political activity, also among that age group (Keating and Janmaat
What also makes this an interesting outcome is the social gap in participation, with the less well educated as a rule showing lower voting levels (Sloam 2013). Long term developments, moreover, suggest that these inequalities are widening: the gap between low and high incomes in electoral participation has become ever more pronounced over the last 30 years (Lawrence 2015). As the focus of our book is precisely on social inequalities in participation, any kind of participation that displays such disparities is of obvious interest to us. There is discussion over the question of whether the lack of popularity of voting among youth is a temporary phenomenon that will disappear as people grow older (thus constituting an age effect) or whether the present generation of young people shows permanently lower voting levels than previous generations of young people (Lieberman, Inglehart etc). Evidence from the United States suggests it is an age effect as turnout has not changed among young people over the past four decades and the differences with older age groups have stayed the same (Sloam 2014). In Britain, however, young people have become ever less prone to cast their votes and the gap with older groups has been increasing, which is indicative of a cohort effect, or a combination of both an age and a cohort effect. This is disconcerting as it indicates ever lower turnout rates among new generations reaching adulthood.

At least this had been the trend until the 2017 election. Initial data and analysis suggested a significant increase in youth voter turnout in this election, indicating that a so-called ‘youthquake’ had occurred. Ipsos MORI and the Essex Continuous Monitoring Survey (Whiteley and Clarke 2017) both estimated an increase in youth turnout of around 20 percentage points. However, better quality data from the British Election Study and more sophisticated data analysis contested these findings suggesting that there was little in the way of evidence of a significant increase in young people’s voter turnout (Prosser et al 2018). Nevertheless, dramatic increases in the youth vote towards Labour (Sloam et al 2018) and the change in the role of young people in political campaigning within this election is much less disputed (Pickard 2018).

Similar to voting, party membership is often thought of as a conventional mode of participation that has largely fallen out of favour among the electorate and particular amongst the young (Lieberman, Inglehart etc.). Being the preserve of the highly engaged, it is a much rarer form of participation, but also one that is likely to be much more influential than voting. Recent
developments within the Labour party can illustrate this: the far left candidate Jeremy Corbyn, who emerged victorious in the party’s leadership contest, was elected by many new members flocking to the party. In fact, this increase has been so dramatic – from 190,000 in May 2015 to 515,000 in July 2016 (Whiteley et al 2018), that joining a political party seems to have made a comeback as a viable form of political participation. As with voting, there is a pronounced social skew in party membership. In fact, white middle class elderly males are overrepresented in each of the four major parties in Britain (The Guardian 4 January 2018).

The third form of participation we chose to examine is legal protest. It captures activities such as partaking in demonstrations, organising and signing petitions, boycotting products and wearing badges. This form is often labelled as alternative and tends to be more popular among young people because of the more informal and egalitarian nature of these activities (Lichtereman 1996; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). These forms of collective action also allow for greater input from the participants which may contribute to their sense of agency and efficacy. Yet, the number of people engaging in these activities, particularly in demonstrations, is small by comparison to voting (Keating 2015). Moreover, in Britain social disparities in this form of participation are even starker than for voting. While graduates vote 1.1 times as much as the average citizen, they take part in demonstrations 2.6 times as much (Sloam 2014: 672). In Germany and the United States the difference in these social gaps between conventional and alternative forms of participation is much less pronounced. Particularly in Britain, therefore, engaging in legal protest seems to be an elite affair.

Illegal protest is the last form of participation we are interested in exploring. It includes actions such as partaking in a violent demonstration, blocking traffic and occupying public buildings. This form is controversial as it involves civil disobedience and breaking the law. Consequently, the number of people engaging in this form of participation is very low. Yet illegal protest is almost always covered by the media, and this high visibility could make it an effective strategy in terms of influencing policy makers. Although the debate among political philosophers about the place of illegal protest in liberal democracies is ongoing - with some defending violent forms of disobedience (e.g. McCloskey 1980; Kabat-Zinn 2003) – we believe that a lack of consensus on its desirability should not stop us from investigating it. If some students or groups plan to engage in illegal activities to protest against something they believe to be wrong and would like to see changed, such activities can be seen as a form of political participation, just

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like voting or joining a political party, and therefore merit our attention. We are particularly interested in this form of participation as it may display a reverse social skew. Working class youth may feel they lack the verbal skills and social etiquette to participate effectively in legal and conventional ways, and may therefore be more inclined to resort to illegal activities to make their voices heard. The 2011 London riots have been interpreted by some along these lines (Hegarty 16 August 2011 (Guardian); Lamprianou 2013). Indeed, Armstrong (2012: 1) believes that such activities are an acceptable and emancipating form of participation for the disadvantaged:

“Rioting is a legitimate form of struggle that working class people and sections of the oppressed have resorted to time and time again to defend their interests. Indeed, they have found them an exhilarating experience – a brief moment of liberation.”

A conspicuous omission in the forms of participation to be explored in this book is online participation. We have no good theoretical argument for disregarding online political activities, only a pragmatic one: the International Citizenship and Civic Education Study (ICCS) of 2009, the data source that we will use to compare across countries, did not include items to measure this form of participation with. Other data sources investigating political participation among young people across Europe that do include such items are unfortunately not available.

**Conclusions**

This chapter has established the first part of the theory of the social reproduction of inequalities in political learning and identified the most likely approaches to learning political engagement. It has identified the main two paradigms for understanding the processes in which political learning is likely to take place both inside and outside school and referred to these as participation and acquisition. The acquisition paradigm positions the transmission of political knowledge from teachers to students as the first step in learning political engagement and then proposes that in the future this enables young people to have a better understanding of politics and have gained the ability to engage with it. The participation paradigm, conceptualises political knowledge to be co-created through participatory learning processes including discussions and debates within communities such as schools and families. It is this experience of participation and co-creation of meaning that develops young people’s qualities that lead to
future engagement, for example, a political identity, political efficacy and sense of belonging to a political community. We proposed that both these paradigms can actually be complimentary in terms of understanding political learning and even a necessity within a citizenship education curriculum aimed at developing informed and politically engaged young people.

The participatory forms of learning can be found within a school environment such as through an open classroom climate across subject disciplines and political activities at the school such as school councils. The acquisition of knowledge is likely to occur through specific subject disciplines such as citizenship education where subject knowledge and skills are pre-established and the learning can be tested.

In order to establish where inequalities in learning political engagement are occurring, the next step in this book is to identify where the barriers to this learning could be taking place. This is part two of the theory of the social reproduction of inequalities in political engagement and the topic of Chapter 3. In Chapters 4 to 7 of this book we will measure and test access to participatory and acquisition forms of learning for different social groups and at different stages of education. We will assess whether gaining access to these experiences has differential effects for different social groups in terms of mitigating or enhancing social inequalities in political engagement.

References


Chapter 3 Access to forms of political learning

In Chapter 2 we developed the first step of our theory on the social reproduction of political engagement and identified the learning processes that are most likely to be effective in learning political engagement using the metaphors ‘participation’ and ‘acquisition’. In schools these learning experiences were an open classroom climate, political activities at school and Citizenship Education. The aim of this third chapter is to address the next part of this theory by identifying the likely mechanisms within the school system that might act as a barrier for disadvantaged young people to learn political engagement. The remaining chapters of the book will test this theory for different age groups.

This chapter, on access to political learning, will explore theories that explain the relationship between a child’s family background and resources, their experience of the education system and social inequalities in adult life. In particular we will focus on theories of social reproduction arguing that the education system is part of a societal structure that merely proffers young people the skills, values and qualifications associated with their parents’ social class and that thus prepares them for their class ‘appropriate’ position in the labour market. We will proceed by discussing the criticisms of these theories, in particular the lack of agency afforded to working class students within social reproduction theory to defy the structures of power and to succeed, and by explaining how we will address these within our research. Furthermore, this chapter will explore the relevance of sociology of education theories on class social reproduction for research on social inequalities in political engagement.

This chapter will begin by exploring the sociology of education theories of social reproduction. It will do this first, by identifying the effect of socialisation in the home and then, second, by identifying the issue of access to learning in schools. Following this, the agency of the student in challenging these structures will be explored. We will then explore theories suggesting there are differential effects from these learning experiences. Finally, we discuss the differences between an education system exclusively focused on producing optimal labour market outcomes and one that takes the need for equality in the learning of political engagement into
Education, Social Reproduction and the Labour Market

Education systems have been cited in a number of seminal texts originating from the post-World War II Europe and the US as the major contributing factor towards the lack of social mobility, or what these texts referred to as the social reproduction of socioeconomic inequalities in the labour market (Collins 2009). Instead of schools being a site for meritocracy and social mobility rewarding talent and effort, education is identified as the force that legitimises the status quo. Social class position is seen to be legitimately accomplished through the attainment of externally verified educational qualifications, which represent exchanges, within the education system, of middle class held knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviour (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). These educational qualifications then provide what is considered to be legitimate access to the top-level careers within the labour market (Bowles and Gintis 1976 and 2011). Although the language may have changed since the 1970s and priorities have been placed on social inclusion and social mobility in current policy debates (Whitty 2001), theories of social reproduction are highly relevant to the situation today where we have large socioeconomic inequalities in society and where the social reproduction of class within the labour market is occurring even more now than when these theories were first written (Collins 2009). The theories of social reproduction explain how socialisation in the family interrelates with access to learning within schools and the consequences of this process on labour market outcomes. We will begin the next section by examining these processes in more detail including reflecting on the agency of individuals in this process and then move on to identifying the implications of these theories for political engagement.

Socialisation in the Family

The relationship between education and social reproduction of class is heavily influenced by the family (Vincent and Ball 2007). Learning within the family starts directly from birth and there are distinct social and cultural differences in how families bring up their children and these often reflect the resources or what is referred to by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) as
social, economic and cultural capital of the parents or carers. Scholars have argued that the type of language, communication and learning experiences within middle-class and working-class homes differs. These different types of experiences lead to children’s learning of different behavioural repertoires, which subsequently meet with differential acceptance within the school environment (Bernstein 2003). Bernstein’s (2003) seminal research identified how middle class students tend to be brought up in a family environment where academic debate is encouraged and young people’s autonomy in decision making is nurtured. In this type of home environment, Bernstein argues, children learn the rules of the game for discussion and debate found within a school environment. Equally, then, it could be argued that middle class young people are learning the skills for political participation at home. These findings are thus not too dissimilar from the political socialisation scholars that were discussed in Chapter 2, who identified the importance of the role of the family and political discussions in the home as important sources of learning for future political engagement (Lauglo 2016, Persson, 2014, 2013; Kam and Palmer, 2008; Burden, 2009). In addition, Bernstein’s description of the family environment for learning is fairly close in terms of pedagogy to what Citizenship Education researchers have named an open climate of classroom discussion in schools involving open student led debate. As discussed previously, this method has been found to be an effective strategy for teaching knowledge, skills, values and attitudes for political engagement.

Since the school is said to be developed in terms of middle-class language and communication, the school environment is then much more complex, hostile and difficult for working class young people to comply with and master in terms of their access to learning (Bernstein 2003). Recent research has gone on to demonstrate that middle class families not only impart different communication skills in their children but also different values, such as discipline and hard work (Lareau 1989 and 2003). Alternatively, working class families are said to promote the work attitudes and behaviours that they demonstrate in their day job such as not bringing the job home and resisting authority (Willis 1977).

Bernstein’s (2003) theories have been heavily criticised for blaming working class families for a deficit in their children’s learning and not focusing on the schools and the role of middle class families in maintaining their position of power through controlling the education of their children (Vincent and Ball 2007). The argument was that Bernstein’s research was contributing
to and building on history of perceptions of the working class as inferior to the middle classes (Reay, 2006). Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) theories of social reproduction from the side of the family are slightly different to Bernstein’s deficit model. Instead of indicating a gap in learning they argue that the learning is simply different. They posit that young people grow up in families with different types of capitals: economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. Economic capital refers to the family’s finances to pay for learning opportunities, social capital to the family’s networks of support, whilst cultural capital refers more to artefacts like art and books in the home and it can also be embodied learning through socialisation in the home (Bourdieu and Passeron’s 1977). The learning of cultural capital can occur through every-day interaction but also middle class investment in extra classes for their children to learn musical instruments, sport and foreign languages, taking their children on regular visits to museums, foreign countries and the theatre. All of which teach useful knowledge and skills and positive attitudes towards learning (Vincent and Ball 2007). This learning is then embodied by middle class kids who perform these qualities within the school environment. The school becomes the site where the embodied cultural capital is objectified through grades and through qualifications that are independently verified and thus given authentic value within the labour market. Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) thus explain that the school environment values and embodies middle class cultural capital.

Recent research building on Bourdieu’s theories have shown that middle class families are able to profit from the marketization of education and qualifications by making strategic choices and managing their children’s education career (Ball 2005; Vincent and Ball 2007). Parents manage the process from birth by moving into houses near good schools and offering regular learning opportunities from the moment the baby is born (Weis et al 2014). Middle class families are also more able to comply with demands from school for parental participation in the education of their children (Lareau 1987 and 2000) and levels of trust, common values and aspirations are shared between parents and the school (Weis et al 2014). Parents in recent years have assumed an increasingly important role within the school and are adding to the levels of competitiveness by plugging the gaps of public funding with fundraising activities within the school (Ball 2005).
Nevertheless, whether it is called a deficit in learning or different forms of cultural capital the result is the same, which is that young people arrive in formal education on an uneven playing field, making it harder for disadvantaged students to succeed (Collins 2009). We might expect, however, that quality comprehensive education would be able to mitigate the socioeconomic inequalities in starting positions of young people. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence of social reproduction does not suggest that this is the case, which leads us in the next section to have a closer look at the school learning environment.

**Access to Learning in Schools**

Theories of the role that education plays in reproducing socioeconomic inequalities have their origins within Marxist research, which considers the education system as an ‘apparatus of the state’ that teaches young people to play their role in the capitalist system of production (Althusser 1971 p. 1). These ideas were developed in seminal texts in this field by Bowles and Gintis (1976 and 2011) and then Anyon (1997) in the USA, who argued that the US education system socialised students into the appropriate attitudes, values and behaviour linked to particular labour market positions. Although they later recognised that the system was rife with contradictions as many educators were trying to disrupt this pattern, they maintained that the content and type of education offered was different for future blue collar workers compared with students heading for more middle class professions. Bowles and Gintis (1976 and 2011) argued that schools with a low SES intake generally resorted to more authoritarian approaches consisting of strict rule-based systems with threats of punishment to socialize working class kids in the discipline needed for blue collar work. Similarly, Anyon (1997) found that low SES classrooms in the US involved more mechanical rote learning behaviour and instructions from the teacher, which were delivered like orders in the army, with students offered little choice and say in the teaching process (p.73). Bowles and Gintis (1976 and 2011) argued that grading was another example of how social order was taught with higher grades given to compliant working class students and lower grades given to ‘violators’ regardless of cognitive achievement (p.39). In contrast the attitudes and norms of freedom, self-directed learning and analytic thinking were taught to the middle-class students in elite universities aiming for middle class professions. These students were given better grades when they demonstrated initiative and assertiveness.
Research on the English education system does not suggest that it is any better than the situation in the US with working class children typically found in the bottom academic streams and sets reinforcing feelings of failure and receiving less challenging academic input (Reay, 2006). In addition, these students reported a lack of fairness in their treatment by teachers claiming that the teachers treat them as though they were ‘stupid’ and ‘inadequate learners’ (ibid p.298).

Although the above theories and evidence of social reproduction focus on labour market outcomes, there are serious implications of these theories for access to learning political engagement as skills such as analytic thinking are generally considered beneficial for skilled political engagement and teaching individuals to be docile workers is a practice that is more closely associated with apathy than political activism.

Recent empirical research suggests that the US education system has not moved on from the 1970’s when the initial research took place and that schools with a large intake of low SES children frequently espouse an ideology that the most effective way to teach underprivileged students is through strict management practices severely curtailing student voice (Ben-Porath 2012; Nolan 2018). Teaching and learning in these schools focus on high performance in Maths and English tests (which do offer some chance at academic success and social mobility) and allow little time for extracurricular political activities (mock elections, debates or political projects in the local community) or subjects like Citizenship Education, which are considered to detract from the core (Ben-Porath 2012). These schools have sometimes been described in a US context as having ‘police in the hallway’ and criminalising even the smallest acts of defiance in under privileged largely black intake schools (Nolan 2018 p.12). The examples provided by Nolan (2018) included cases in which students were stopped for not following the dress code and the resulting debate between the student and member of the staff escalated to the student being arrested by the police and charged. Although the situation in the UK school context on the whole may well be less extreme than in the US, we know from the previous chapter strict regimes provide only a very restrictive learning environment for political engagement. Young people who often have not learnt about political engagement in the home are then further prevented from gaining these experiences at school.
Building on the theories of Bowles and Gintis, we then argue that education systems can pose various barriers for access to political learning. First, young people can attend schools that offer less in the way of learning opportunities for political engagement and secondly, not all young people stay in education the same length of time. Those who do not make it to university or drop out of education earlier than 18 will have less access to the learning needed for political engagement than their peers who stay on to learn more. This argument has been developed in the political socialisation field by Nie et al (1996) and empirically corroborated by Hoskins et al (2008) regarding voting and by Borgonovi et al (2010) regarding informed voting.

The second barrier on access to learning political engagement is said to be happening within a comprehensive education system in which students in theory should all experience the same level and type of learning. However, scholars are starting to argue that students of different social backgrounds are not getting the same access to political learning opportunities from the ages of 11-12, even within the same class or school (Hoskins et al 2017; Kahne and Middaugh 2008; McFarlane and Starmanns 2009). This is due to teacher selection and expectations of students for certain learning activities, teacher choice of pedagogy for a lower stream/sets and/or students’ choice not to participate in certain learning activities. Like other learning communities, schools are argued to be regulated by role models or ‘masters’, who decide on the level and speed of access to information, position within the community and degree of transparency in this process (Lave and Wenger 1991). ‘Masters’ of communities hold positions of power, and act as gatekeepers by controlling and describing the process of progress to high performance and acceptance into full membership of the community (for more detail see Fuller et al., 2005; Jewson et al., 2007). Thus access to learning that may support political engagement can be withheld from certain groups or individuals by teachers who are maintaining control of the day to day sorting mechanism of students learning.

The third barrier discussed in the political socialisation literature on schooling, which is very much informed by the research of Bowles and Gintis (1976 and 2011), is the practice of allocating students to different tracks on the basis of prior educational achievement. Tracks in an English context refer to the different pathways in upper secondary education, which consist of A-levels as the academic route and a variety of vocational courses. As achievement is so
closely related to social background, assignment or ‘choice’ of different tracks on the basis of performance amounts to social sorting with children of lower SES being disproportionately allocated to the less demanding, and therefore less prestigious, vocational tracks (Hallinan, 1994; Loveless, 1999). The education that these children will experience in such tracks is not likely to be beneficial for their political engagement and will often only enhance the engagement gap with those in the more demanding academic tracks who are mainly from middle class backgrounds. In this way, track placement on the basis of achievement only exacerbates pre-existing social differences in civic and political engagement (Janmaat et al 2014; Hoskins and Janmaat 2016).

The literature has suggested several reasons why vocational tracks offer limited political learning opportunities by comparison to the academic track. These concern access to the learning mechanisms highlighted in Chapter 2 and thus relate to knowledge acquisition, in terms of the substance and breadth of the curriculum, and participation, in terms of pedagogy used within the classroom, opportunities for political voice and extracurricular political activities offered across the school more broadly. Regarding knowledge acquisition, while students in the academic tracks are taught about contemporary political issues and institutions, trained in the skills to navigate the political world and encouraged to form their own informed opinions about contentious issues, the curriculum in vocational tracks focuses more on instruction in social competences, including behaving appropriately and adapting to decisions taken by others (Apple, 1990; Ichilov, 2002; Dam and Volman, 2003; van de Werfhorst, 2009; Janmaat & Mons 2011; Eckstein et al., 2012). Regarding participation, teachers in the vocational tracks are said to be less likely to encourage discussion of political issues as they fear a disruption of order within the class (Hurn 1978; Ichilov 1991). In the academic track, by contrast, teachers have higher expectations of students. They encourage them to take part in debates on sensitive social and political issues and to participate in school decision-making as these activities are seen as important for their formation as engaged and responsible citizens willing to take on leadership roles in the future (Ichilov 2002).

There are two further explanations for this effect of track allocation on political engagement, relating, respectively, to peer influences and levels of self-confidence. Third then, because of the difference in social composition, children in the vocational tracks experience different peer
influences. As political engagement also directly depends on social background (Verba et al., 1995; Achen, 2002), the preponderance of low SES children in vocational tracks has self-reinforcing effects, giving rise to a peer group culture marked by a rejection of the world of politics, alternative status symbols and a contempt for the educational process (Willis 1977; Ichilov, 2002; van de Werfhorst, 2007). In this counter culture politicians are depicted as arrogant, unreliable and self-serving people out of touch with and indifferent to the needs and desires of the ordinary person. The notion of political alienation will be explored more within the following section when exploring the critiques of social reproduction theory.

Fourth as allocation to a vocational track is associated with failure, particularly in England (Hoskins et al 2016), students in the vocational track typically lack self-efficacy and feel stigmatized. This not only has consequences for their educational aspirations (van Houtte and Stevens 2009), but also for their engagement with the world of politics. The educated and sophisticated jargon of this social domain, which they struggle to understand, only reinforces their low levels of political efficacy and sense of exclusion (Hoskins et al 2016; van der Werfhorst 2017).

Having explored the socialisation process of the family and school we will now move on to focus on the role of the students and the extent to which they are empowered to disrupt the process of social reproduction.

Young People’s Agency

The original theories of social reproduction (Althusser 1971, Bowles and Gintis 1976 and Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) were criticised for not acknowledging the agency of young working-class students (Reay, 2006 and Savage 2003). It was noted that some did succeed in the education system (O’Connor and Michaels 1996) and some challenged school authority and the values being imposed upon them. The research of Willis (1977) on young white working class boys, McRobbie (1978) on young working class white girls and Nolan’s (2018) more recent research on working class black kids showed how working class children felt their
cultural capital was not valued in schools and consequentially resisted participation. The young working class students often performed this resistance by defying authority from teachers in the school, not complying with the norms of the school community and devaluing the learning and qualifications that the school offers. Thus, they effectively placed themselves even further towards the edge of the learning environment.

There is plenty of evidence of resistance to middle class schooling by working class kids (Reay 2006). Loud and passionate disagreements between disadvantaged students or students’ abrupt challenges aimed at the teacher have been found to be interpreted by both the teacher and their fellow more advantaged peers as confrontational and disruptive to the class rather than an opportunity for student voice and student learning (Hooks 1996). More recently acts of defiance in the classroom in particular from working class black kids have even begun to be constructed as criminal behaviour (Nolan 2011 and 2018). Adding to this Ratcliff et al (2010) found that teachers who had difficulty with students that they identified as ‘troublesome’ in class asked these students less questions and tended to involve them less in discussions of subject matter. Finally, students from working class backgrounds have also been identified as feeling anxious and not fitting in with the context of classroom discussions and debates (Brookfield 2012).

The notion of defiance and resistance may seem like an opportunity to learn skills for political engagement, and scholars such as Nolan (2018) suggest that it could be in particular for class consciousness and protest-based activities, but the evidence does not seem to suggest this. Instead defiance usually results in punishment and academic failure, leading to low self-esteem and low levels of political efficacy (Reay, 2006). These children are thus learning that they cannot really have a say in institutions and the public realm. In effect the working class students are learning that they are not valued and do not belong in these middle class communities with their specific social and political mores. Thus if options are available for participating in class councils, debates and mock elections, working class students may well resist partaking, devalue the opportunity or try to disrupt the activity. Thus, by putting up resistance to the middle class school environment, which they perceive as failing them, young working class students become

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1 These accounts also demonstrate the complexity of the intersectionality of inequalities of class, gender and race. Future research needs to take this research a step further by exploring these complexities.
unknowingly complicit in their lack of access and attainment in political learning. Reay (2006) highlights the cost to the individual working class student for taking on the attitudes and behaviours associated with a positive learner identity as it contradicts with the attitudes and behaviour required to maintain a place within the peer group and their local community.

**Voluntary and Compulsory Political Learning**

Although there is little in the way of literature that has previously highlighted this issue we think that access to political learning may also depend on whether activities are compulsory or voluntary, either for the school to offer or for the students to participate in. The non-compulsory nature of many political learning opportunities such as school debates and mock elections means that the question of access is of greater pertinence to them than to learning activities that are mandatory such as Citizenship Education. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the learning methods identified in Chapter 2 and how access to these methods and the mitigating or enhancing effects of these methods may influence the learning of political engagement (see Table 3.1). We will now discuss the explanations given in the table, first for access and then for mitigating effects.

Table 3.1 How access and mitigating effects can influence young people’s political learning in schools as a result of their family social background.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of learning</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Potential for mitigating effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

55
| Citizenship Education | | • Compulsory?  
• School dependent?  
• Some students offered more?  
| • High SES gain more because they start off knowing more  
| or  
• Low SES opportunity to catch up  
| Open Classroom climate | | • Self-reported student experience dependent on student-teacher relationship  
• Expect high SES family open home environment ‘know the rules of the game’ to access this  
• Teachers skills to enable all students to feel this  
| • High SES gain more because of familiarity of this experience  
| or  
• Low SES opportunity to catch up  
| Political activities inside school (sum) | | Compulsory?  
• School decision?  
• Individual choice?  
• Peer influence?  
• Teacher selection?  
| • High SES gain more because of familiarity of this experience & know more about politics  
| or  
• Low SES opportunity to catch up  
|
Access

An example in England of a compulsory political learning activity is Citizenship Education. Definitions of Citizenship Education are contested but at its very basic level the subject can be understood as the study of political institutions, ideologies and allegiances, which can show marked cross-national variation as a result of different needs and priorities of national governments and international organisations (see Chapter 2 and Keating et al 2009). In England the main aims for this discipline were, ‘social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy’ between 2003 and 2007 (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998, p. 11). In these years there was a strong emphasis on both political engagement and voting, alongside volunteering and participation in the community (Kisby and Sloam 2011). As Citizenship Education became an obligatory part of the National Curriculum for compulsory education in 2002, all students aged 11 to 16 in England, the target population of this research, should theoretically have had access to this learning opportunity.

Nevertheless, due to the ambiguity and ad hoc nature regarding the implementation of Citizenship Education in schools this may not be the reality (Andrews and Mycock 2007). The considerable school autonomy regarding the implementation of the National Curriculum, moreover, enables individual head teachers to select from a number of strategies to teach Citizenship in their schools, including teaching it as a separate subject, implementing it as a cross-curricular programme, embedding it in the modus operandi and decision-making structure of the school or implementing it in individual lessons. The design and the level of importance placed on the subject by the head teacher may well influence how much Citizenship Education a student receives. Nevertheless, the reported low value placed on Citizenship Education by teachers, parents and students alike (Burton et al 2015) would suggest there is little pressure on students to engage with this subject. Taking this into account we would not expect there to be pronounced socioeconomic differences in the quantity of Citizenship Education received.

As explained in Chapter 2, another form of widely reported learning of political engagement at school is an open climate of classroom discussion (Alivernini and Manganelli 2011; Campbell
2008; Ichilov 2003, 2007; Gainous and Martens 2012; Quintelier and Hooghe 2012; Solhaug 2006; Torney-Purta 2002b). Access to this form of learning may well be differentiated as students from more educated backgrounds may have more political discussions with their parents at home and their peers in other environments, which means that they are better able to take the opportunities available in the classroom (Eckstein and Noack 2016). In addition, recent evidence suggests that schools with a high intake of children from disadvantaged backgrounds develop a very strict school environment that inhibits open discussions.

Participatory activities in schools such as debates, student councils, electing school councils, and holding mock elections have equally been found to be associated with higher levels of political engagement (see Chapter 2; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Hoskins et al 2012). These activities are not mandatory for schools to undertake, which means that access could be an issue. In addition, within each school these activities may well not be mandatory for students to participate in, suggesting that there could be a self-selection effect for partaking in these activities. The choice to participate could also be influenced by the students’ peers or by their teachers.

**Differential Learning Effects for Different Social Groups**

Our theory on the reproduction of social inequalities in political engagement proposes that the learning of political engagement is not only a function of access to learning opportunities but also of the effects of these opportunities for different social groups. Regarding the latter, students of disadvantaged backgrounds may benefit more (or less) from some of these opportunities than their middle class peers. When they benefit more, Campbell (2008) speaks of a compensatory effect. The premise behind this label is that socioeconomic inequality in political engagement is transmitted from one generation to the next through political socialisation in the home (see above and Schlozman and Brady 2012). When working class children then gain more from a certain learning opportunity, this opportunity ‘compensates’ for missed parental socialization and disrupts or mitigates the transmission process (Campbell 2008). In other words, access for less advantaged students to Citizenship Education, an open classroom climate and political activities inside school may actually reduce inequalities in
political engagement as these students will be able to catch up in terms of their political learning (see Table 3.1). **Accelerating effects** then denote the opposite: children from privileged backgrounds benefiting more from learning opportunities than working class ones. Middle class children may benefit more because they have the foundation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values from which to build on (Campbell 2008) and the familiarity with these experiences.

We will now move on to discuss if the theories of social reproduction in the labour market are helpful in explaining socioeconomic inequalities in political engagement.

**Education, the Labour Market and Political Engagement**

If we consider the role of education in more normative terms, it may be questioned whether the effect that we would like education to have on labour market outcomes should be the same as that for political engagement. From a **meritocratic** point of view, an education system is ‘fair’ if it allocates young people to different labour market positions solely on the basis of their talent and effort (i.e. not according to their social background). However, an education system optimally preparing for political engagement should not sort on the basis of talent, but enable everyone to participate equally within the democratic system and have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

As we have discussed earlier in this chapter, social inequalities in political engagement are perpetuated by different socialization practices in working- and middle-class families. In Chapter 2 we have seen that some scholars are even arguing that open political discussions in the home are an indicator of socioeconomic class. It is clear in this context that social class and the intensity and form of political engagement are intertwined. The labour market is the prime allocator of opportunities in western societies and a major distributor of resources for political engagement. The labour market to a large extent controls the resources of time, money and social networks. The education system controls the qualifications that rate the skills and consequentially has a considerable impact on where you end up in the labour market. At its best, an education system enables access based on talent and effort (and not social background) to differing positions on the labour market, providing a talent-based sorting mechanism for
future prosperity. However, an education system optimally preparing for political engagement should enable everyone to participate equally within the democratic system. Thus even a meritocratic education system that focuses predominantly on rewarding talent and hard work may not aim towards teaching everyone the qualities needed for political engagement. As a consequence even education systems producing optimal meritocratic labour market outcomes may well produce inequalities in political engagement, and indeed, evidence for such inequality yielding systems has been found by Campbell (2009). Nevertheless, since we know that the education system is not currently a system of meritocracy and that disadvantaged students end up disproportionally in tracks that lead to lower qualifications including vocational ones, it is not unreasonable in these circumstances to propose that the social reproduction occurring within the education system regarding labour market outcomes is also occurring for political engagement. The fact that the education system is reproducing social class is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to disentangle the effects of education and social class on political engagement. Large inequalities and the lack of social mobility in the labour market are harmful for social cohesion in society. Large inequalities in mainstream forms of political engagement are very unhealthy for democracy and can leave spaces open for populist and extremist political movements.

Conclusion

The theory about the role of schools in the social reproduction of inequalities in political engagement consists of the following central tenets. First, young people learn political engagement through a combination of participatory activities and knowledge transmission processes in school, notably through an open classroom climate, political activities at school and Citizenship Education. Second, and building from the theories given in this chapter, education can contribute to social reproduction by introducing barriers that inhibit equal access to these learning opportunities. These barriers can be applied by school principals, teachers, parents/carers and the students themselves through choices and availability of participatory activities, curricular contents offered in schools, subject choices and education pathways followed. Third, inequalities can be further exacerbated by the provision of learning opportunities from which middle-class children benefit more than working class ones.
Based on the above theory, we hypothesize in this book that young people from working class backgrounds would appear to be getting less access to the communities for learning political engagement than their middle class peers and benefiting less from them. We propose that this is beginning at a young age as children from disadvantaged homes are less likely to have a home environment that is orientated to learning about politics and democratic processes and decision making. They therefore arrive in schools with less of the cultural capital needed to succeed. Schools could be an environment that has the potential to open up opportunities for political learning for all students. However, the theories of social reproduction lead us to believe otherwise. We therefore hypothesise that students from disadvantaged homes begin at and are left on the edge of the school learning community and tend to be taught in a more restricted learning environment characterised by styles of teaching and punishment that do not support the learning of political engagement or skills for democracy. Young people’s defiance against the system is then punished with early school failure, lower grades and decrease in self-esteem or political self-efficacy as the likely consequences.

Learning the skills for democratic debates and discussions may well take longer with students who are unfamiliar with these approaches. The teachers may require more skills to enable all groups and children in the class to have their voice heard. Nevertheless, learning these skills is incredibly important for students who have not had the opportunities to learn these skills in their home environment.

Chapters 4 to 7 will test the theory and our hypothesis regarding the social reproduction of inequalities in political engagement and examine the degree to which the empirical evidence supports this theory.
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Chapter 4 Social gaps in forms of learning and political engagement: 11-16 year olds in England

In the previous two chapters we have developed a theory on the social reproduction of inequalities in political engagement stating that young people learn political engagement through a combination of participatory activities and knowledge acquisition processes, notably through an open classroom climate, political activities at school and citizenship education classes. Education can then contribute to social reproduction by not providing different social groups with the same access to these learning opportunities as a result of barriers within the school system. These barriers emanate from the behaviour and choices of school principals, teachers, parents/carers and the students themselves concerning the participatory activities, curriculum contents, subject choices and education pathways available in schools. Schools can further exacerbate these inequalities by providing learning opportunities from which middle-class children benefit more than working class ones. Alternatively, schools could intervene in a more positive direction and provide learning experiences that mitigate and reduce inequalities in political engagement by offering learning experiences in which working class students gain more.

Using our theory of social reproduction of political engagement, we build a number of hypothesis that we will test in this chapter. The central two are that, first, young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds have less access to the learning for political engagement in the form of political activities at school and an open classroom climate, and second, that young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds actually gain more from political learning experiences at school (see further below). These hypotheses are tested in this chapter in the context of lower secondary education in England. The data that will be used to test these hypotheses is the Citizenship Education Longitudinal study.

In first part of this chapter we will explore whether students of different social backgrounds have unequal access to learning sources. Subsequently we will investigate whether these learning sources have effects on political engagement that differ by social group i.e. is
experiencing such learning sources mitigating or accelerating social disparities in political engagement?

For the first step of the analysis, we use Ordinary Least Squared (OLS) regressions and then multilevel analysis (MLA) to investigate access to sources of learning political engagement. In a second step we then use OLS regression with interaction effects to establish whether participation in a variety of learning activities has a mitigating or accelerating effect on social inequalities in political engagement.

**Social Gaps in Political Engagement: Access to Learning Opportunities and Differential Effects**

The inequalities that we focus on in this book are social inequalities. Our understanding of social inequalities is informed by Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), and we therefore use indicators of parental education and cultural artefacts for the purpose of measurement. Consequently, we understand disadvantaged youth as children whose families have below average levels of cultural capital. Social inequalities concern both the level of political engagement of parents and that of their children (Brady et al 2015; Scholzman and Brady 2012). The process in which these social inequalities in political engagement are transferred to the next generation is the focus of this chapter.

In the previous chapter we began to set out the different barriers to learning political engagement. The first of these was the issue of access to learning opportunities for different social groups (Kahne and Middaugh 2008), which has received only scant attention in the literature. Scholars who have researched this area include Verba, Burns & Scholzman (2003) and Neundorf et al (2016). They have focused on access to learning opportunities and resources within the home environment, and demonstrated how this is crucial for learning political engagement. However, they have failed to investigate the issue of access to learning beyond the home and how social stratification within the school system may influence inequalities in political engagement.
To the best of our knowledge Khan and Middaugh (2008) and McFarlane and Starmanns (2009) are the only researchers who have performed analysis exploring access to political learning opportunities in the schools. Using the US sample of the IEA CIVED 1999 study, Khan and Middaugh (2008) found that in the US disadvantaged youth had significantly less access to service learning opportunities and debates than students from more privileged groups. McFarlane and Starmanns focused on student councils as a form of learning and showed that such councils were not only a rarer phenomenon in schools serving disadvantaged communities but also had more limited powers and were subject to more managerial oversight in such schools by comparison to student councils in elite public schools. These differences between social groups and schools may be explained by the propensity of schools with a low SES intake to be so preoccupied with improving the academic achievements of disadvantaged youth that they enforce strict behavioural regulations (Ben-Porath 2013) and devote all resources to teaching the core subjects of English and Maths (Bischoff 2016). A downside of strict enforcement, however, is that it inhibits open discussions and student initiatives, which are important conduits for developing autonomous thinking, a sense of agency and political engagement (Ben-Porath 2013).

A limitation of the two studies discussed above is that they have only examined the differential access to civic learning sources in the United States. Our study will be the first, to our knowledge, that investigates this issue for England. In the first step of our analysis for this chapter we will thus explore the extent to which there is differential access to political learning opportunities in schools, on the basis of students’ social background.

As we outlined in Chapter 2, there are two main approaches to learning political engagement: through participatory activities and knowledge acquisition. Participatory learning activities are operationalised in this chapter as open classroom climate of discussion (Alivernini and Manganelli 2011; Campbell 2008; Ichilov 2003, 2007; Quintelier and Hooghe 2012; Solhaug 2006; Torney-Purta, 2002a; and Torney-Purta et al. 2001) and political activities in school (Hoskins et al 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016). Citizenship Education (Whitely, 2012; Gainous and Martens 2012), which has specified learning outcomes that can be tested, is our approximate measure of knowledge acquisition.
In Chapter 3 we argued that the issue of access to political learning forms part of the process of the social reproduction of inequalities in political engagement. We suggested that compulsory activities such as citizenship education may well be less influenced by issues of access than voluntary activities such as mock elections and debates in school, where participation may be influenced by children’s own preferences, peers, and teacher selection. The situation regarding open classroom climate may equally be influenced by the type of school students attend with schools with lower SES tending to provide a stricter learning environment (Ben-Porath 2013). For a complete overview of activities regarding the issue of access, see Chapter 3 Table 3.1.

The second part of this chapter tests the hypothesis that some forms of political learning in schools are effective in offsetting inequalities in political engagement. We conjecture that as disadvantaged youngsters have less access to political learning in the home they are then more likely to benefit from these learning opportunities when offered in the school (see Chapter 3 and Campbell 2008). In other words, they will be very responsive to such opportunities as the subject matter and participatory activities included in them are largely new to these young people. In contrast, children from the middle class have already actively been involved in developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes on political engagement from interaction with their family, peers and the mass media, and hence they will not learn much extra from the opportunities offered in schools (Langton and Jennings 1968). Therefore, access for less advantaged students to citizenship education, an open classroom climate and political activities inside school will actually reduce inequalities in political engagement as these students will be able to catch up in terms of their political learning.

There are a number of scholars who have identified these compensatory effects from education experiences (Castillo et al 2015: Gainous and Martens 2012: Campbell 2008). Gainous and Martens (2012) found that citizenship education in the US mitigated the effect of social background on civic knowledge whilst Neundorf et al (2016) found that it compensated for interest in politics but not actual levels of political participation. Campbell’s (2008) research in the US suggests that classroom climate had a compensatory effect on civic engagement. Nevertheless, Castillo et al (2014), using panel data based on the Chilean ICCS sample, and Persson (2015), using the Swedish sample of the IEA CIVED study, find no differential effects of classroom climate on political outcomes. Persson (2015) suggests that the difference
between his results and those of Campbell was because of the greater level of equality in Sweden: if social inequality is less pronounced in the first place, it is not surprising to find no compensatory effects for disadvantaged groups. However, this would not explain the Chilean results, as Chile has one of the highest rates of inequality in the world and has large inequalities built into the education system (Castillo et al 2015). Our research will examine if any of the three forms of learning have compensatory effects for disadvantaged young people in England.

The accelerating hypothesis introduces the alternative explanation that young people from more advantaged homes (where parents are more likely to discuss politics and be politically engaged themselves) may gain more from the political learning experiences on offer as they have the foundation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values from which to build on (Campbell 2008) and the familiarity with these experiences. The only research that we have been able to identify that finds an accelerated effect is Hooghe and Dassonneville (2013) who found that students who had a higher level of political knowledge gained more from civic education classes in terms of enhanced political engagement. As this field of political mobility is quite under-researched we did not want to discount the possibility that other forms of political learning in schools could, potentially, have such exacerbating effects on inequalities in political engagement so we include this scenario as the alternative hypothesis.

For the purpose of clarity in this section we will draw together the hypotheses that will be tested in this chapter.

*Access to Learning Political Engagement at School*

Hypothesis 1 is that young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds have less access to the learning for political engagement in the form of political activities at school and open classroom climate;

Hypothesis 2 is that social background will not matter regarding access to citizenship education as a learning activity for political engagement.

*Mitigation Effects*
Hypothesis 3 is that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to gain more from political learning experiences at school in terms of the effects of these experiences on political engagement than young people from more privileged backgrounds.

Hypothesis 4 (the alternative hypothesis) is that young people from more advantaged backgrounds gain more from political learning experiences at school.

These hypotheses will be tested by analysing the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) data with the methods described below.

Data

We used CELS as the data source for this chapter. The CELS dataset is unique in that it combines a panel study of adolescents with a questionnaire tapping a wide range of civic attitudes. The study includes data from a cohort of young people aged 11 and 12 (Year 7; first year of secondary school) when they were surveyed for the first time in 2003. This cohort was then surveyed every two years until 2014 (Round 6). The data was collected from a nationally representative sample of 112 state maintained schools in England – representative in terms of region, GCSE attainment and percentage of students on free school meals (Keating and Benton 2013). Within each school all the students of the target year were selected – Year 7 in Round 1, Year 9 in Round 2, Year 11 in Round 3. We used the data from Rounds 1, 2 and 3, when pupils were aged 11/12, 13/14 and 15/16, respectively. In Round 3 the students are in Year 11 which is the final year of lower secondary education and the last year of citizenship education as a statutory component of the curriculum. As CELS also collected data among the teachers and school principals of the students included in the study, we merged this data with the student data and utilised several items of the school principal questionnaire in the ensuing analyses.

Measures of Political Engagement

In this chapter our political engagement outcomes consist of the four forms of political participation explained in Chapter 2: Voting, Legal protest, Joining a political party and Illegal protest. As noted before, we measured these forms as intentions rather than actual participation. They were tapped with items asking respondents how likely they would be in the future to; vote in general elections, join a political party or participate in either a peaceful protest or a
violent demonstration. These items were asked in Rounds 1-3. Respondents could state their answers on a Likert scale with the following categories: Definitely not do this; Probably not do this; Probably do this; Definitely do this.

Voting is the activity that most students expect to be doing in the future. Three quarters of students respond positively to this question in all three rounds (see Figure 3.1 below). Peaceful protests was the next most popular activity with about 40% of young people saying they would probably or definitely engage in this form of participation. Young people were the least likely to join a political party with about 85% of young people giving a negative response to this question and levels of violent protests were also low at about 80% of negative responses. However, it is somewhat surprising that still slightly more than one-fifth of the students think they will engage in the last-mentioned form when this activity is obviously illegal and poses great risk to one’s own security and that of others. It is interesting that this form of participation is slightly more popular than joining a political party, which may also be a good indication of just how much the latter has fallen out of favour among the young. Figure 4.1 further shows that the intentions to engage in the four forms of participation are remarkably stable over the course of four years. Voting, joining a political party and taking part in violent demonstrations become slightly more popular between ages 12 and 16 but the increase is marginal. Taking part in a peaceful protest does not change at all.

Figure 4.1. The development of political engagement among adolescents
Table 4.1 below shows how the four forms of political participation are interlinked and how the pattern of interrelations changes from Round 1 to Round 3. We see that voting, joining a political party and engaging in peaceful protest, as the three accepted and established forms of participation, are all closely related. In other words, young people who intend to vote in the future also plan to sign up to a political party and join a peaceful demonstration, albeit in much smaller numbers (as highlighted above). This pattern of relationships does not change much from age 11 to 16. We also see that illegal protest stands out by being negatively related to voting. It is positively linked to the other two forms of participation but these links are not very strong. Again this pattern does not change much across the three rounds. Illegal protest thus assumes the separate position we postulated it would have in Chapter 3. Apparently it is an attractive form of participation for a sub-group that sees no point in voting but that is more supportive of engaging in peaceful protest and joining a political party. Thus, the people attracted to illegal protest are not altogether alienated from established forms of participation.
Table 4.1 Correlations between four different forms of participation across three rounds of CELS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Vote in general elections</th>
<th>Political party</th>
<th>Non-violent protest</th>
<th>Violent demonstration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Round 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote in general elections</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.298***</td>
<td>.277***</td>
<td>-.035*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party</td>
<td>.298***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.292***</td>
<td>.128***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-violent protest</td>
<td>.277***</td>
<td>.292***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.143***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent demonstration</td>
<td>-.035*</td>
<td>.128***</td>
<td>.143***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Round 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote in general elections</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.323***</td>
<td>.284***</td>
<td>-.104***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party</td>
<td>.323***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.287***</td>
<td>.077***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-violent protest</td>
<td>.234***</td>
<td>.287***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.194***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent demonstration</td>
<td>-.104***</td>
<td>.077***</td>
<td>.194***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Round 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote in general elections</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-violent protest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent demonstration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.286***</td>
<td>.282***</td>
<td>-.108***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote in general elections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party</td>
<td>.286***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.274***</td>
<td>.068***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-violent protest</td>
<td>.282***</td>
<td>.274***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.097***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent demonstration</td>
<td>-.108***</td>
<td>.068***</td>
<td>.097***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P<0.05; ** P<0.01; *** P<0.001. The N ranges between 3075 and 4828.
Key Independent Variables

Chapter 2 identified three processes of learning within the school environment that supported young people towards becoming politically engaged citizens. They were citizenship education, participation in political activities in school and an open classroom climate for discussion. The first of these was measured within the CELS data with an item asking respondents about the amount of citizenship education they had received (not at all; a little; a lot) (henceforth called *CE volume*). As noted before, citizenship education is mandatory in lower secondary schools in England, but this does not mean that it is taught in a uniform manner. Schools are free to decide on the content, mode of delivery and volume of citizenship education and vary substantially in these aspects, accordingly (Kerr et al 2007). A scale was created to gauge participation in school-based political activities. This scale represents the sum of the responses to four items asking students whether they have participated in debates, the student council, elections for the school, or in mock elections in the last year. It has a minimum of 0 (not participated in any clubs or events) and a maximum of 4 (participated in all clubs and events). The third school based source of learning, open classroom climate, was measured with a scale consisting of six items about freedom of expression, open discussions and teachers’ facilitation of this (see Table 2.1 for the wording of the items). The scale showed a sound level of internal coherence (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.811) and represents the saved output of a factor analysis (i.e. the factor scores). These variables were constructed in the same way for each of the three rounds of data.

We have included in the analysis the prior measures of the outcomes (intentions to politically engage) into each step of the model as this allows one to assess the degree of autocorrelation in the outcomes of interest. This is an important step in ensuring that the effect of school-based learning sources, such as citizenship education and open climate, on the engagement outcomes is genuine and does not reflect a prior propensity of individuals to be engaged. Controlling for these initial levels of engagement thus enables us to assess the extent to which school-based learning sources have contributed to changes in engagement from the moment when pupils entered secondary schools at age 11 (cf. Finkel, 1995; Kahne et al, 2013). It thus allows us to more accurately assess the influence of such sources during lower secondary.
It could be expected that some of the sources of learning would be interrelated. If, for instance, open discussions mainly take place during citizenship education lessons because the teacher deems debate to be important for the formation of civic competences, then the first and third source of learning will be strongly linked. Similarly, it could be anticipated that schools offering many opportunities to take part in political activities in school are also more inclined to create space for open discussions than schools that do not offer such opportunities. We checked these interlinkages by examining the degree of multicollinearity in regression models. None of these relationships exceeded critical multicollinearity levels.

As highlighted above, we consider social background to be a key influence on political engagement both in regards to access to the learning experiences and through the effect of this experience on the individual. We measure social background with a scale based on the number of books at home and parental educational attainment. This measure focuses on Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital that may be understood as an individual’s gain from parental level of education and cultural artefacts such as books (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). The number of books at home has also been found to be strongly correlated to parental income (Schuetz, Ursprung and Woessmann 2008; Baird 2012), making it a reasonable replacement for parental income and occupation considering that more obvious measures of social background, are not available within the CELS dataset (Keating and Benton 2013). In addition in the analysis we have added controls for gender and ethnic identity (White British; other) as these background characteristics have been found to be related to political engagement by previous research (e.g. Uslaner et al 1989; Hooghe and Stolle 2004).

**Methods**

**Access**

In the first step of the analysis for this chapter we use OLS regression analysis in order to identify the extent that social background influences access to forms of political learning. We do this analysis when the young people are in Year 7 ages 11-12, Year 9 when the young people are 13-14 and Year 11 when the young people are aged 15-16. This allows us to identify the changes in the strength of the effect of social background as the young people develop. Where possible we have created a second regression model that includes prior measures of accessing these learning resources from when these students were younger (autocorrelations). This
enables us to identify the additional effect of social class on access to political learning for that specific school year. Thus we are able to check that we are not simply measuring the gap between social groups on entry into the formal education system.

In a second step we decompose access to learning sources into a *between* and a *within* schools component. Within schools, students of different social backgrounds may vary in the degree to which they make use of or are asked to participate in the (same) learning opportunities provided by the school, particularly if participation in these opportunities is voluntary. This constitutes the individual (within schools) component. Apart from variation between individuals within schools, schools also vary in the learning opportunities they offer, and this is partly determined by the social composition of the school (as noted before – see McFarlane and Starmanns 2009). This is the between schools component. Social inequalities in access to learning opportunities can be measured with respect to individual social background and that of school social composition on such opportunities: the stronger these effects, the greater the inequalities. The total social gap in access is thus a combination of these effects. It is entirely possible that the two effects are in opposite directions. This is for instance the case if low SES students are not using the learning opportunities to the same degree as middle class ones and low status schools provide more of such learning opportunities than elite schools. In this way, the effect of school social status neutralises that of individual social background. If the former fully compensates for the latter, there will not be a social gap in access.

In order to separate the within and the between schools effects we use multilevel analysis (MLA) to explore the determinants of access to learning sources. MLA is necessary because of the clustered structure of the sample (respondents in grades; grades in schools) (Snijders and Bosker 1999) and because of our intention to assess school social status as predictor at the contextual level. In view of the sample structure of CELS – of one whole year selected in each school – we will use a two-level MLA consisting of individuals (Level 1) nested in year (Level 2). A distinct feature of a two-level MLA is that the variance in the outcome is split in a within and a between Level 2 component. The within Level 2 part concerns the individual level. The predictors at this level in our analyses thus aim to explain the variance in the learning sources *within* the school year measured. The predictors at the year level (such as year SES – which we
use a proxy for school social composition) target the variance in these outcomes *between* schools that participate in the study.

**Mitigating Effects**

To establish the possible mitigating or accelerating effects of learning processes on inequalities in intended political engagement we have used linear regression with interaction effects between social background and learning methods on intentions to politically engage. We include in this analysis levels of intended political engagement from the previous round in order to control for the prior levels of political engagement. This is to ensure that we are only assessing the effect of this method and not pre-existing levels of political engagement.

**Results**

**Access**

**Table 4.2 Access to learning opportunities to become politically engaged**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Round 1</th>
<th>Round 2</th>
<th>Round2 model 2</th>
<th>Round 3</th>
<th>Round3 model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political activities (PA)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social background</td>
<td>0.073***</td>
<td>0.068**</td>
<td>.071**</td>
<td>0.160***</td>
<td>0.107***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*</td>
<td>-0.091***</td>
<td>-0.027</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (white British)</td>
<td>-0.06**</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.073***</td>
<td>-0.093***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior round PA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.139***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.282***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result of the regression analysis (Table 4.2) show that political activities in school and open classroom climate are significantly and positively related to the social background of the student suggesting a likely effect of social background on access to participatory forms of
learning activities. In fact, the social gap in access is largest for political activities in school. We also see that it has become stronger as adolescents become older. Similar trends cannot be observed for the other two sources of learning.

For rounds 2 and round 3 where possible we have included a second model that also includes the prior levels of engagement in this activity from the previous round. The purpose of this is to be able to identify the additional effect of social background on access to the learning experience for that particular year. This would demonstrate the ongoing process of social reproduction within the school environment. Although the amount that the student participates in these learning processes in the previous round has a sizable effect on access to levels of participation in the current round, there is still an additional significant effect of social background above being engaged in this learning process in the previous years. Thus we find an ongoing effect of social reproduction of inequalities in political engagement within the school environment.

In the case of the learning experience of Citizenship Education, social background in most cases has no significant relationship, or so small that it can be discounted, with social background of the student. In addition, there is no significant effect for all of the models that include prior measures of citizenship education. This means that once we have controlled for prior levels of participation in Citizenship Education social background has no relationship with access to this learning method. Thus there is no evidence of social reproduction of political inequalities in terms of the volume of citizenship education.

Let us now proceed with investigating the between and within school differences in access. In order to find out whether the main influence on access is due to an individual’s social background and other individual characteristics or if the school that they attend is having the greatest effect we start by reporting the findings of the empty model (i.e. the model without predictors) to see how the variance in the three outcomes is distributed across the two levels. If nearly all of the variance in some outcome is at the individual level (i.e. within a school), we know that this outcome is mainly responsive to individual-level influences such as parental education and that school level factors, such as the school social status, will not be important
predictors. According to Duncan and Raudenbusch’s (1999) rule of thumb, the threshold value is 4%. School level predictors are unlikely to have any effect if less than 4% of the variance in the outcome is at the school level (i.e. between schools). The empty model shows that by far most of the variance in the three learning sources is at the individual level (Table 4.3). All outcomes have more than 4% of the variance at the school level, however, indicating that it is worthwhile to investigate school-level factors. Among the learning sources classroom climate shows the lowest proportion of the variance at the school level (just 4.9 %), while political activities in school (10.1%) and volume of CE (15.8%) would seem to be more susceptible to school-level influences.

Table 4.3. Partition of the variance in three learning sources within and between schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CE volume</th>
<th>Open climate</th>
<th>Political activities in school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within school</td>
<td>84.2 %</td>
<td>95.1 %</td>
<td>89.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between individuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between schools</td>
<td>15.8 %</td>
<td>4.9 %</td>
<td>10.1 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In fact it is quite surprising that still only 15.8% of the variance in the volume of CE is at the school level as it is likely that that the time dedicated to CE does not vary at all within most academic year in schools. Evidently, since our measure of CE volume relies on student reporting, students vary quite substantially in their perceptions of what constitutes “not at all”, “a little” or “a lot” of CE even if they have all experienced the same amount of CE. The only alternative explanation for this surprisingly low level of variance at the school level would be that the volume of CE does in fact vary within academic years/grades between streams or classes. This could happen if CE is mostly taught as a cross-curricular programme embedded in several subjects. Early specialization of students in distinct streams or tracks could then lead to differences between students in the amount of CE experienced. A cross-curricular approach to CE is not very popular, however, as the data from the school questionnaire shows that the vast majority of schools teach CE predominantly as a standalone subject (39.9%) or as a module within Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) (45.8%). Unfortunately, the data do not allow us to assess differences within grades between classes or streams.
Let us now move to the models with the predictors (Table 4.4). We see that social background shows a strong positive link with this time all three learning sources. In other words, low SES students report significantly lower levels of access to these sources than high SES students. Again, for CE volume this is a remarkable and a different finding to the regression level results. One would not expect students to differ much in their accounts of their exposure to CE because most of them are likely to have received the same amount of CE within a year. Apparently, even when disadvantaged students objectively experience the same amount of CE as their more privileged classmates, they still perceive to have received less of it. The strong positive associations with the other two learning opportunities are less of a puzzle in view of the voluntary nature of participation in these sources. This optional character makes it likely that social selection occurs with middle class children being more inclined to put themselves forward for these opportunities and teachers more likely to ask them to participate.

Table 4.4 Results of the MLA analyses on access to Round 3 learning opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CE volume</th>
<th>Open climate</th>
<th>Political activities in school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social background</td>
<td>.071***</td>
<td>.085***</td>
<td>.137***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (0=M/1=F)</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.149***</td>
<td>-.626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (0=other/1=WhiteBritish)</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>-.151**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School social status</td>
<td>-.276*</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* \( P < .05; ** \( P < .01; *** \( P < .001. \text{ The N ranges between 3075 and 4828.} \)

In contrast to individual social background, school social status is related very differently to the three learning sources. It is negatively linked to CE volume, meaning that students in lower status schools are more positive about the amount of CE received than students in schools with a more privileged intake. Thus, for this learning opportunity we see exactly the pattern of opposite effects that we suggested earlier. Thus, it would indeed appear that the social inequalities in access to this form of learning within schools are compensated for by the
tendency of schools with a low SES intake to offer more citizenship education. In other words, the positive effect of individual SES is cancelled out by the negative effect of school SES resulting in no significant differences overall between social groups in access to citizenship education. School social status does not make a difference for access to an open climate of classroom discussion (henceforth open climate), which does not come as a surprise since only a fraction of the variation in this learning source is at the school level anyway. Interestingly school social status is positively related (at the 10% significance level) to political activities in school, which indicates that schools with a more privileged intake offer more opportunities for students to practice democratic politics. As middle class students are more inclined to participate in these activities anyway, the socially skewed provision of this learning resource in schools cannot but widen the social disparities in access to this form of learning. As one component of political activities is elections for student councils, this finding is also in full agreement with McFarlane and Starmann’s (2009) aforementioned observation that schools with a low SES intake in the US are less likely to have student councils. Evidently, low status schools on both sides of the Atlantic are relatively reluctant to give students a say in school matters through student councils and other activities, perhaps because of a belief that such activities are distractions that cannot be afforded.

It is worth taking a closer look at the negative link between school social status and CE volume. Are students in low status schools simply inclined to be more positive about the amount of CE they experienced or are their perceptions systematically related to the way that CE is offered in such schools? The latter turns out to be the case. Once controls are added for CE delivered as a standalone subject, as integrated in PSHE, or as delivered in some other way, the link between school social status and CE volume disappears. A difference of means test shows that schools that teach CE in a dedicated time slot have a significantly lower social status than other schools, while those that teach it as a distinct component of PSHE have the highest social status. Evidently it is the dedicated time slot for CE in low status schools that must have given students in such schools the impression that they were taught relatively many hours of CE. We rely on the above-mentioned item from the school questionnaire to explore how much time schools devote to CE when they teach it as a separate subject. It turns out that the amount of time allocated to CE as distinct subject is positively related to school SES. In other words, schools with a low SES intake are more likely to teach CE as separate subject but when they do they afford relatively little time to it. Considering the earlier noted propensity of schools serving
disadvantage communities to focus on improving academic achievement and providing a safe and orderly environment for learning, this pattern makes sense. Offering CE as a standalone subject is appealing from the point of view of providing a clearly structured curriculum, which students from disadvantaged backgrounds are thought to be in greater need of. At the same time CE should not take up too much time as the main emphasis should be on improving literacy and numeracy skills.

*Mitigating effects*
Table 4.5 OLS Regression analysis with interaction effects that demonstrate mitigating or accelerating effects of learning methods on future political engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Round 1</th>
<th>Round 2</th>
<th>Round 3</th>
<th>Round 1</th>
<th>Round 2</th>
<th>Round 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender *</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.58***</td>
<td>Gender *</td>
<td>-0.062*</td>
<td>0.082**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (white British)</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>Ethnicity (white British)</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior round voting intentions</td>
<td>0.340***</td>
<td>0.411***</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prior round protest intentions</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.280***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social background</td>
<td>0.142***</td>
<td>0.176***</td>
<td>0.157***</td>
<td>Social background</td>
<td>0.073**</td>
<td>0.164***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship education (CE)</td>
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<td>0.001</td>
<td>SES x PA</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: * indicates significance at the 0.1 level, ** at the 0.05 level, *** at the 0.01 level.
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The first observation that can be made from the analysis on mitigating effects (Table 4.5) is that prior measures of the learning activities all have strong positive effects on later measures of these outcomes a consistent finding with our earlier analysis (Table 4.2). They are in fact the strongest predictors. This does not come as a surprise as one might expect some continuity in the outcome over time. What happens to the effects of the learning sources if we take this autocorrelation in the outcome into account? We see that an open climate of classroom discussion and taking part in political activities in school have strong positive effects on the three established ways of participation (voting, joining a political party and taking part in a peaceful protest) in Rounds 2 and 3 (see Model 1). These are thus the most powerful learning sources. CE volume shows a strong positive link with voting but a non-significant one with the other two established forms of participation in all rounds. Open climate and CE volume are negatively related to illegal protest, once more underlining the special character of this form of participation. In other words, citizenship education, an open climate of classroom discussion and participation in political activities in school are all likely to help in increasing forms of participation that society deems acceptable. The latter two learning sources are particularly apt at increasing levels of the more demanding forms of participation. At the same time the learning sources discourage participation in illegal forms of political activity, and in so doing appear to be delivering what is expected of them (the presumption is here that the government would not like schools to foster illegal forms of political engagement).

Our interest in this article, however, is in the question whether these learning sources help in making young people from disadvantaged backgrounds catch up with their more privileged peers in political engagement or whether they only enhance the engagement gap across social groups. This question can be addressed by looking at the interaction effects of SES with each of the three learning sources (see Table 4.5). Out of the 32 interaction effects in total, only 5 are significant. Three of these concern SES x Citizenship Education and all of these are negative - on Voting in Round 3; on Legal Protest in Round 2 and on joining a political party in Round 2. These negative effects mean that the greater the amount of citizenship education provided (as reported by students), the smaller are the differences between social groups in these forms of political participation. Thus, for some rounds, citizenship education would indeed appear to be able to compensate for the disengaging effect of social disadvantage. The other two interaction effects concern school political activities, that has a very small

\[2\] The effect of open climate on joining a political party in Round 3 is insignificant though. The effects of the learning sources do not change in models without the interaction terms. These models can be obtained from the authors upon request.
accelerating effect and open climate that has a small mitigating effect but as these effects are small in size and given they only occur once out of the 36 interaction effects we have judged that these results may be incidental and of little worth to report on them. Hence, while the latter two learning sources may be good in enhancing political engagement in general, they do not seem to be able to reduce social gaps in engagement.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

In England in recent years schools have been placed at the centre of research and policies for enhancing socioeconomic mobility in the labour market but at the same time little attention has been placed on the role of school in reducing socioeconomic inequalities in political engagement. In this chapter we have filled this gap by investigating differences by social background in access to political learning at school and the effectiveness of specific methods for political learning in mitigating differences by social background in political engagement.

As discussed in Chapter 2, we distinguished between participatory forms of learning and forms of learning aimed at knowledge acquisition. We proposed political activities in school and an open classroom climate as capturing the former and citizenship education as broadly reflecting the latter. Political activities in school and open classroom climate turned out to be strong positive predictors of voting, joining a political party and engaging in legal protest. They would thus appear to be effective learning sources for the established and accepted forms of political engagement. However, in contrast to Campbell (2007) in the US and Eckstein and Noack (2016) in Germany, we do not find that these methods are effective in reducing social inequalities in political engagement.

Moreover, our analyses revealed disadvantaged youth to have significantly less access to these highly important ways of learning political engagement compared with their more advantaged peers. This access, moreover, was influenced by social background in every round that these methods of learning were measured.3 There is no justifiable reason why young people from different social backgrounds should have different levels of access to these forms of learning during their compulsory years of education. Perhaps it is this uneven access that can explain why open classroom climate and political activities are not able to reduce inequalities in

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3 We only have measures for Open classroom climate in Rounds 2 and 3 so from ages 13-14 years to 15-16.
political engagement. In other words, there may be too few children of low SES backgrounds experiencing these learning sources for these sources to have a mitigating effect.

One reason for different levels of access to political activities in school is that these opportunities are likely to be voluntary. For example, participating in debates or students councils may be a choice and influenced by an individual’s existing levels of political efficacy, political skills and interest. These qualities could already be higher amongst students from more privileged social backgrounds as these aspects of competences could be cultivated within the home environment. In addition, adolescents’ participation levels could equally well be influenced by their peers and their teachers. There is clearly a case for making political activities at school compulsory for all students, across all classes and all schools. In addition, getting teachers to encourage students from less advantaged backgrounds to stand for positions in school councils could also play an important role in reducing political inequalities.

As open classroom climate is a learning process rather than a specific activity it is perhaps more complicated to ensure access for all students. Again the home environment could be important. Bernstein’s (2003) seminal research has shown that middle class students tend to be brought up in a family environment where open debate is the norm and young people’s autonomy in decision making and language skills are enhanced. As a result these students may well be better placed to participate in open discussions of political issues in the classroom regardless of the skills of the teacher or the methods applied. We would suggest that these more advantaged students may well have learnt the rules of the game, i.e. how a young person makes their disagreement on an issue known with the teacher and how they express their opinions will inevitably shape the response of the teacher. It could well be that there is a miscommunication between disadvantaged students and middle class teachers in the school context. Loud and passionate disagreements between disadvantaged students or students’ abrupt challenges aimed at the teacher have been found to be interpreted by both the teacher and their fellow more advantaged students as confrontational and disruptive to the class rather than an opportunity for student voice and student learning (Hooks 1994). Adding to this Ratcliff et al (2010) found that teachers who had difficulty with students that they identified as ‘troublesome’ in class asked these students less questions and tended to involve them less in discussions of subject matter. Finally, students from working class backgrounds have also been identified as feeling anxious and not fitting in with the context of classroom discussions and debates (Brookfied 2012). Thus young people from less privileged social backgrounds may feel less able to have their voice heard through established and accepted ways of participating. Indeed, this may be
the very reason why engaging in illegal forms of participation is relatively more popular among them. Better training of teachers to support open discussion across the whole curricular and school environment for all children regardless of their social background could be one method for enhancing access to this form of learning. This would include teacher education that reflects on social economic class and how this influences everyday classroom interaction, the tensions between peer group and community identity and positive learner identities and how social class intersects with gender and race on these topics – something which according to Reay (2006) has practically disappeared from teacher training in the UK.

Our findings on Citizenship Education, on the other hand, diverge to some degree from those on open classroom climate and political activities. Although disadvantaged youth also reported lower levels of access to this form of learning than middle class children, students in lower status schools (i.e. schools serving disadvantaged communities) reported on average higher levels of access. In fact, the larger amount of CE provided in such schools fully compensated for the lower levels of access reported by low SES students, resulting in no differences between social groups in overall access to this learning source. We also found that the effect of school social composition was due to the way CE was delivered: schools with a low SES intake were more inclined to teach CE as a separate subject and this led students in such schools to be fairly positive about the amount of CE they experienced. We did not find school social composition to have this compensatory effect for open climate and political activities in school: it did not show a link with open climate while it even had a positive effect on school political activities. In other words, school social status only exacerbates the social gap in access to the last-named source of learning; if you are of disadvantaged background your chance of experiencing political activities in school are even lower when you are surrounded by peers of similar backgrounds. The differential ways in which school social status is related to the three learning opportunities demonstrates indirectly that schools can do a lot in terms of influencing the social gap in access to these opportunities. If schools serving disadvantaged communities drastically increase the provision of school-based political activities, they may well be able to close the social gap in access to this important form of learning altogether, just as they have achieved with citizenship education.

Despite the recorded weaknesses in the implementation of citizenship education in schools in England (Andrews and Mycock 2007) we also found it to foster the intention to vote and discourage young people from engaging in illegal forms of protest in every year studied. Most importantly, however, we found CE to be particularly effective in enhancing the intentions to
vote, to join a political party and to engage in legal forms of protest of those from lower social background. This indicates that CE has the ability to reduce social disparities in political engagement, although this effect could not be found in all rounds. The other two forms of learning did not show such compensatory effect on any of the four outcomes.

That we see such an important effect of citizenship education at this age is not surprising as mid to late adolescence has been identified as a key formative period for political engagement (Flanagan and Sherrod 1998). At this age young people begin to take up an interest in societal affairs after having explored family relations and parental authority in their early teens (Keniston 1968). Further research that explores whether these compensatory learning processes could also be successful if citizenship education was made compulsory post-16 would be a useful next step. In England education is now compulsory until the age of 18. If citizenship education could also be made statutory until that age, it offers the prospect of further reducing social gaps in voting as the most accepted and widespread form of political participation.

At the moment citizenship education is compulsory in England between the ages 11-16 (the period that this study observes). We provide evidence that a mandatory approach is needed in order to maintain equal access for different social groups, as non-compulsory activities like political activities in school are taken up mainly by more privileged students who are more politically aware and engaged in the first place. In finding that compulsory approaches not only offer more equal access but also result in more egalitarian outcomes than those relying on voluntary participation, our study is fully in line with Boudon’s (1974) observation that the more choice and ‘branching points’ a system has the more social class differences are reproduced. In this sense our findings clearly illustrate the tension between freedom of choice and equality, which is a key theme within sociology of education more generally.

The promising finding regarding citizenship education builds on the research from Gainous and Martens (2012) who found similar results in the US and who then proposed from their research that only disadvantaged students should take citizenship classes. In England citizenship education could be targeted at disadvantaged students, for example, within vocational education and training courses that in general include a higher intake of socially disadvantaged students. Our research strongly suggests that by giving such students extra CE input, the social gap in access to this form of learning can be closed. We suggest that compulsory citizenship until 18 combined with ensuring quality citizenship education in
vocational education and training are promising policy directions to support young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds to gain a greater political voice in the democratic system.
References


Chapter 5. England in a Comparative Light: Lower Secondary

In Chapters 2 and 3 of this book we have developed a theory on the social reproduction of inequalities in political engagement. In Chapter 4 we tested this theory in the lower secondary phase of the English education system. In this chapter we test and compare these results with other countries and education systems in Europe to understand if other education systems are better able to provide equality of access to political learning.

The basic theory of the social reproduction of inequalities in political engagement is that young people learn political engagement through a combination of participatory activities and knowledge acquisition processes. Education then contributes to social reproduction by not providing the same access to these learning opportunities through barriers within the school system. Moreover, these learning opportunities can have differential effects for different social groups, which represents another way in which schooling can maintain social inequalities in political engagement.

The previous chapter showed that young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds have less access to the learning for political engagement in the form of school political activities and an open classroom climate, and secondly, that the issue of access is much less apparent with formal citizenship education classes and that the disadvantaged actually gain more from citizenship education experiences at school. This chapter will test these findings for other countries in Europe.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part we will set the English findings of the previous chapter in context and will replicate the analyses of that chapter for various European countries. The aim is to see how England compares to other European countries in socioeconomic inequalities in political engagement, in issues of access to learning opportunities for children of different social backgrounds and in the effect of these learning opportunities on political engagement outcomes. As explained below, due to institutional variation one might expect to find differences between European countries in these dimensions of inequality. We will compare England to a limited number of individual countries, each of which can be seen to represent a group of countries with a specific education system.

In the second part we will focus on an important dimension of institutional differentiation, which is the contrast between states with early selection systems and those with comprehensive
For the reasons outlined in Chapter 3 one can expect greater social inequalities in political engagement in the former as well as greater segregation between schools in social composition, in learning opportunities and in engagement outcomes.

The last part of the chapter will zoom in on a number of these early selection states. For these states there is data available on track attended, enabling us to assess differences across tracks in political engagement. More importantly, this data also makes it possible to assess whether such differences are due to differential access to specific learning opportunities or other mechanisms. In other words, if there is a difference between (pre)vocational and academic tracks in – let’s say – voting intentions, is this because students in the vocational track are relatively deprived of citizenship education or an open climate of classroom discussion?

The reason why we put so much emphasis on institutional differentiation is that we wish to demonstrate that it matters how school education is organised for the chances of socially disadvantaged students to access learning opportunities and become politically engaged. Our study thus seeks to inform the policy debate about reforming the education system to achieve more egalitarian outcomes.

Before we discuss the European countries for the comparison with England in greater detail we explain the data source used for the analyses and the measures for the learning opportunities and outcomes of interest.

Data and Measures

Data Source

The data source that allows us to carry out all these analyses is the 2009 International Civics and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). ICCS includes data collected among 8 Grade students (13-14 year olds) in 25 European and 6 other countries. The samples of the participating countries range between 1964 (Netherlands) and 4650 (Czech Republic) students and constitute nationally representative stratified selections. In the first stage at least 70 schools per country were selected on a probability proportional to size basis. In the second stage one or two whole classrooms from the target grade were chosen, the students of which were surveyed with written questionnaires (for more information on the study and the sample characteristics, see Schulz et al 2010 and Schulz et al 2011). ICCS does not only offer information on many
relevant engagement outcomes, but also on learning opportunities, track attended and a range of background characteristics. This makes it an indispensable data source for anyone interested in assessing the links between schooling and civic outcomes comparatively. For Part I we selected the samples of six European states, for Part II those of all 25 European countries.

**Measures**

Political Engagement Outcomes

ICCS offers a wide array of items tapping not just voting as the most conventional form of political participation but also more demanding and both formal and informal forms of political activism. They allow us to develop measures for the outcomes of interest discussed in Chapter 2. Similar to the ones we used in the previous chapter, these items represent participatory intentions rather than reported behaviour, which is understandable in view of the young age of the respondents. Typically, these items were phrased as “Would you take part in any of the following forms in the future?” or “When you are an adult, what do you think you will do?”, followed by a list of different activities. Respondents could then indicate on a Likert response scale how likely they were to engage in these activities: “I would certainly not do this”, “I would probably not do this”, “I would probably do this” and “I would certainly do this”. The ICCS team prepared a number of scales measuring various forms of participation. Each of these scales captures a number of items and meets basic psychometric criteria (see Schulz et al 2011: 164-257, for information on their construction). We selected the following four as outcomes of interest:

1. **Expected adult electoral participation** (ELECPART), which captures items about voting in local and national elections and about acquiring information about candidates before elections. [Henceforth electoral participation or voting]

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*Electoral participation and formal participation represent the outcomes of voting and political party membership, respectively (as discussed in Chapter 2). We are aware that electoral participation and formal participation include more items and thus tap wider concepts. Yet we still consider them to capture voting and party membership well because the other items included in these measures are all highly correlated to voting and party membership (as demonstrated by the high alpha reliabilities of these measures in all countries participating in ICCS – see again Schulz et al 2011: 164-257). In view of their item composition, these measures can be said to represent conventional less demanding and conventional more demanding forms of participation, respectively, which are also defining characteristics of voting and party membership.*
2. *Expected participation in future legal protest* (LEGPROT), which includes questions on joining a peaceful march or rally, collecting signatures for a petition, boycotting product, and contacting politicians. [Henceforth *legal protest*]

3. *Expected adult participation in political activities* (POLPART), which asked respondents whether they would join a political party or trade union, volunteer for a candidate or party or stand as candidate themselves in their adult years. [Henceforth *formal participation*]

4. *Expected participation in future illegal protest* (ILLPROT), which includes items on spray-painting protest slogans on walls, blocking traffic and occupying public buildings. [Henceforth *illegal protest*]

The higher the value of these scales, the higher the level of intended participation. Appendix 5.1 provides the full wording of these items. As the scales represent standardized measures (with an international mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10), absolute levels of intended participation cannot be read from them. Therefore, for descriptive purposes we constructed simple additive scales which are equivalent to the pre-prepared scales in terms of item composition. These scales range between 0 and 10, with 0 denoting maximum abstention (only “I will certainly not do this”), 10 maximum participation (only “I will certainly do this”) and 5 uncertainty about participation. Using these additive scales we can assess which forms of participation are relatively popular and which are engaged in only rarely. We will use the pre-prepared scales for inferential analyses.

**Learning Opportunities**

Chapter 2 discussed two theories on how schools can foster the political engagement of young people. The first theory emphasized the importance of the transferral and acquisition of knowledge about politics. This knowledge purportedly helps young people understand the world of politics and see the benefits of participating in it. The *knowledge acquisition* theory can be said to inspire more conventional modes of citizenship education (CE) that, for instance, specify learning outcomes and test the learning of these results. These include lessons about the political system and the number of hours devoted to the subject in the curriculum. The second theory asserted that young people learn to become engaged through democratic

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5 The calculation of these scales was done as follows. First we reversed the response scales of the individual items so that higher values represent higher participation. We then added up the values of the items included in the scale. Next, the sum total was subtracted by the number of items in the scale. Finally, this sum total was multiplied by the quotient of 10 divided by the highest value of the sum total.
participation, such as engaging in classroom discussion or taking part in political activities run in the school. Through this participation process they co-construct political knowledge and begin to identify with and develop a sense of belonging to the group. This learning through participation theory is associated with more alternative constructivist and participatory CE approaches, including having student debates about political issues, holding mock elections and allowing students a say in school matters. It so happens that ICCS has an abundance of data on the latter but very little on the knowledge acquisition approaches. To tap the learning through participation approaches, we use the following two scales, which have the same characteristics as the scales measuring the engagement outcomes and have clear parallels in the CELS data, i.e. the data source used for the analyses of the previous chapter (see Appendix 5.1 for the items included in them):

1. **Civic participation at school** (PARTSCHL), which asks students whether they have ever voted for or stood as a candidate for a class representative or school parliament, took part in debates or discussion at a student assembly or in decision-making about the running of the school. [Henceforth civic participation]

2. **Open climate of classroom discussions** (OPDISC), which taps students’ perceptions of whether they are encouraged by the teacher to make up their own minds, express their own views, engage in discussions with others with different views, and bring up current political events for discussion in class. [Henceforth open climate]

As noted above, ICCS unfortunately, has little data on aspects related to conventional approaches. For instance, the content of CE lessons, the objectives of the CE curriculum and the amount of time devoted to CE are not addressed. The only formal and structural aspects of CE covered by the (school) questionnaire include the manner in which CE is taught (separate subject and/or cross-curricular component) and whether specific responsibilities for citizenship education have been assigned to a certain teacher. Where CE is taught as a separate subject, it is usually also a compulsory part of the curriculum with a specific amount of time allocated to it (Kerr 1999; Eurydice 2012). As such it may say something about the status of CE and thus the importance attached to it by the school or the country. However, having CE as a separate subject does not preclude also having it as cross-curricular programme spread out over different subjects and infused in the ethos of the school as a whole (we understand “cross-curricular” in this comprehensive way). We may also assume that if teachers have a specific responsibility for CE this is an indication of the weight given to the subject. Moreover, in view of the
discussion in the previous chapter about the inclination of low status schools to offer a more structured learning environment, there might well be a relation between school social composition on the one hand and mode of delivery of CE and specific responsibility to teach CE on the other. Of further interest is the considerable variation not only between countries but also within countries in how CE is taught (Eurydice 2012: 18-22). In countries where schools have a high degree of autonomy, schools will differ in their approach to CE regarding both how it is organised and whether specific persons are responsible for it. We therefore tapped the formal side of CE with the following three variables:

1. **CE as separate subject**, which is based on a single item asking whether CE was taught as a separate subject by teachers of civic and citizenship related subjects [0 = no; 1 = yes].
2. **CE as cross-curricular component**. This variable is the sum of the responses to three items asking whether (1) CE is integrated in all subjects taught at school, (2) CE is an extra-curricular activity, (3) is considered the result of school experience as a whole. These items were correlated positively to one another in all countries. The variable has a minimum of zero, meaning the response ‘no’ to all three items, and a maximum of 3, meaning the response ‘yes’ to all three items.
3. **Person responsible for CE**, which is based on a single item asking whether specific responsibilities for civic and citizenship education are assigned to individual teachers [0 = no; 1 = yes].

Socio-economic Status and Other Control Variables

We used the ready-made national index of socioeconomic background as measure of socio-economic status (henceforth SES). This index represents the saved factor scores of a principle component analysis on three standardized variables, namely parents’ highest occupational status, parents’ highest educational level and the number of books at home (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 196). We took the classroom mean of SES as a measure of classroom social status. We will use this variable to assess whether the social composition of an educational context is related to the availability of learning opportunities.

For some of the ensuing analyses we also used a number of control variables tapping other features of family background. These variables include mother’s interest in social and political
issues, father’s interest in social and political issues, talking with parents about social and political issues, talking with parents about events in other countries, speaking the state language at home and gender and are all based on individual items (see Appendix 5.1 for their full wording including the response categories). Similar to SES these characteristics influence both participation in the learning opportunities and engagement outcomes. They thus help us to more accurately assess the net effect of these learning opportunities on the engagement outcomes. Nonetheless, we are fully aware that using a cross-sectional dataset such as ICCS does not allow us to fully address selection effects, i.e. situations when a certain outcome is not influenced by an educational intervention but by other characteristics that also influence the experience of this educational intervention, including prior levels of the outcome. In our case, the impact of – say – open climate on intended political participation would constitute a selection effect if this “impact” disappears once controls are added that influence both the perception of an open climate and intended political participation. Only longitudinal data with repeated measures of the outcomes of interest, i.e. measures that both precede and succeed the educational interventions of interest, enable a full assessment of selection effects.

Part I. England Compared to Other European States

Selected Countries

We decided to compare England to Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland, Italy and Poland and to the pooled data of all European countries participating in ICCS. Aside from data availability constraints (France and Germany did not participate in ICCS), this choice of countries was motivated by the following considerations.

Sweden was selected because it can be seen as the typical representative of the Scandinavian group of countries with their classic comprehensive systems, which postpone selection to age 16. Both between and within school forms of grouping on the basis of ability (such as streaming and setting) are strictly forbidden in these countries (Green et al 2006; Wiborg 2009). This system is often associated with more egalitarian outcomes and greater opportunities for children of disadvantaged and/or immigrant backgrounds to perform well in school (Bauer and Riphahn 2006; OECD 2015). We would therefore expect social gaps in political engagement to be relatively small in Sweden.
Switzerland is an interesting choice not only because it is one of the countries with an early selection system but also because it is a federal state. Its cantons have ultimate authority over the education system. As a result, there is considerable variation within the country in the age of first selection, with the majority of cantons (19 out of 26) selecting at ages 10, 11 or 12 (EDK/CDIP/IDES, 2010) and a minority having a comprehensive system of lower secondary education. These systems, moreover, are rigorously separated: in cantons with an early selection system no integrated schools enrolling children of different levels of ability can be found and vice versa. The federal structure also means that cantons vary widely in the curriculum of relevant subjects such as citizenship education, history, geography and literature. Switzerland thus has a highly diverse system of lower secondary education. As both early selection and a decentralised system have been found to be associated with greater social inequalities in civic outcomes (Janmaat and Mons 2011; Witsche and van der Werfhorst 2016), one may expect such inequalities to be particularly large in Switzerland.

Ireland was selected because its system of lower secondary education is most similar to that of England. Aside from having the same language of instruction, Ireland also has a system that is formally comprehensive but that is quite diverse in other respects. As in England, schools differ by denominational status, ownership (private, state) and funding (private, state) (UNESCO 2001). As explained by Boudon (1974) and further clarified by Green et al (2006), the greater the offer of different types of schools, the more social class differences in educational choices and trajectories are reproduced. This is because middle class parents are better equipped to navigate the system and select the most appropriate school for their children in a diverse school landscape. Assuming that social differences in educational trajectories matter for political engagement, we would thus expect social inequalities in this outcome to be relatively high in Ireland. However, Irish schools have notably less autonomy in resource allocation and curriculum and assessment than their English counterparts (OECD 2011). Consequently we would anticipate somewhat lower levels of inequality than in England.

Italy was chosen to represent the Mediterranean states. Lower secondary education in these states is generally comprehensive and is further characterised by a high level of centralization and a broad encyclopaedic curriculum. However, most states have also retained some form of ability grouping in core subjects within schools and all of them require students who do not meet minimal standards to repeat the same year (i.e. grade repeating) (Green et al 2006; Janmaat and Mons 2011). These practices undermine the otherwise comprehensive character
of their education systems. Selective upper secondary starts relatively early in Italy, at Grade 9 (age 14), but as the ICCS study targeted Grade 8 students, Italy’s respondents still enjoyed common education and we therefore consider the country to have a comprehensive system. Due to the imperfections in this comprehensive system it may be expected that Italy shows fairly low levels of inequalities but not as low as those in Sweden.

Poland is representative of the post-communist countries that retained a comprehensive system. This specification is necessary as some of the post-communist countries reintroduced a selective system in lower secondary education. The system in Poland, in contrast, became more comprehensive following a reform in the late 1990s that added one more year of common education to compulsory education (Herbst and Wojciuk 2017). In other ways the country may be less representative of the former Warsaw pact countries. It was one of the early and most enthusiastic adopters of liberal democracy and a free market economy. It extended a relatively large degree of autonomy to schools, particularly in the area of curriculum and assessment (OECD 2011), and enabled the foundation of private schools that can draw on public funding for 50 percent of their operating costs (Silova and Eklof 2013). As a result school experiences became notably more diverse for Polish youth since the downfall of communism. In view of these considerations we expect Poland to show relatively low levels of inequality but not as low as those in Sweden.

Levels of Political Engagement

How politically engaged are young adolescents in the six selected countries? We examine this by running a series of error plots. Such plots allow for a quick and insightful assessment of differences between groups in mean levels of the outcomes of interest. If the confidence intervals, as indicated by vertical bars, overlap, the mean values are not significantly different. If they do not overlap, they are. The error plot of Figure 5.1, which is based on the pooled data of the six countries, shows that the level of political engagement very much depends on the form of participation. While many young people expect to vote in local and national elections when they become old enough to do so, few say they will engage in more formal forms beyond voting, such as joining a political party or standing as candidate, and even fewer expect to be partaking in illegal forms of protest. Engaging in legal forms of protest is slightly more popular but the gap of this mode of participation with voting is also very pronounced and highly
significant (as indicated by the small confidence intervals). In general, the regularity seems to be that the more demanding and controversial the form of participation, the less young people expect to engage in it once they are adults. This is a pattern that is not dissimilar to that of the adult population (APSA task force 2004) and therefore should not surprise us.

Figure 5.1. Levels of political engagement in the pooled data of six European countries

As so few young people plan to engage in illegal protest, how does this form of participation relate to the other modes of participation? Are students who think they will partake in such activities more engaged in general and therefore also planning to engage in the other activities? Or are they a specific group dismayed by the accepted, mainstream forms of participation and turning to alternative ways to express their voice? The evidence is inconclusive. Correlations between the four forms of participation based on the pooled data of the six countries show that illegal protest is negatively related to voting ($r = -0.88; P = 0.000; N = 18366$), which supports the second conjecture. However, illegal protest also shows positive links with legal protest ($r = 0.224; P = 0.000; N = 18235$) and with formal participation ($r = 0.172; P = 0.000; N = 18171$), suggesting there is some truth to the first presumption. Legal protest and formal participation, in turn, are positively related to voting ($r = 0.411; P = 0.000; N = 18194$ and $r = 0.392; P = 0.000; N = 18272$). These results suggest that the politically active students are a divided group,
with some appreciating mainstream forms of participation such as voting and others frowning on such forms and opting for more radical modes of political activism.

Going back to assessing levels of participation, what does catch the eye are the conspicuous differences between the countries in the popularity of the different forms of participation (Figure 5.2). Notwithstanding the high levels of support for voting across the board (as expressed by the mean scores above the midpoint of the scale), we see that voting is significantly more popular in Italy and Ireland than in Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and England. In fact, England’s youth is least willing to engage in this form of participation. Patterns are rather different regarding legal forms of protest. This time Ireland and England show the highest levels, scoring just above the midpoint of the scale, while this form of participation is much less popular in the other countries and particularly in Poland. Expectations to engage in other formal forms of participation are highest in Ireland and lowest in Poland, but these forms are not very popular anywhere as indicated by the mean scores lower than the midpoint. Support for illegal forms of participation is even lower than for formal forms of engagement. It is relatively high in Ireland, England and Poland, and relatively low in the other three countries. In terms of country profiles, Ireland can be characterised as a high participation country in general, Italy as a country where conventional and formal forms are relatively popular, England as a country where legal and illegal forms of protest are relatively popular, and Poland as a country where only illegal forms attract a relatively high level of support.
Figure 5.2 Levels of political engagement in six European countries

Voting

Legal protest
Formal participation

Illegal protest
These differences between countries may well partly reflect different political cultures. For instance, it has been argued that a republican culture of citizenship characterised by strong norms of electoral participation at the national level prevails in France and other Mediterranean countries (Preuss et al 2003). This sheds light on why voting is most popular in Italy. This republican culture has often been contrasted with a liberal political culture, which is usually associated with the English-speaking countries. In this culture participation through voting is seen as a voluntary activity and more emphasis is put on citizens organizing themselves at the local level (i.e. civil society) (Putnam 2000; Green and Janmaat 2011; Hoskins et al 2015). This might explain why English youth are least inclined to vote while they are relatively supportive of alternative forms of participation, such as partaking in illegal protest, which involve some form of self-organization. The low levels of formal participation among Polish youth become understandable when one takes note of the legacy of the communist era. The experience of communism has left people deeply distrustful of state institutions and formal politics (Rose et al 1997; Schoepflin 2000) and the generations raised under communism might well have passed this mindset onto their children. The Swedish pattern of only average participation levels may at first sight seem quite surprising as one would not expect that of high participation societies such as the Scandinavian ones (see also Hoskins et al 2006). Yet, as noted by Amna et al (2009), youth in Scandinavia only start to become more politically involved during late adolescence when society encourages them to take part in different kinds of public activities. It is these opportunities for participation and the use of them by young adults that, in their view, can explain why political participation levels among the adult population, in contrast to those among early adolescents, are relatively high in Sweden and Scandinavia more generally.

The Link between Learning Opportunities and Political Engagement

The next step in our analysis is to assess whether the learning opportunities are at all positively related to the engagement outcomes. If there is a negative link between some form of learning and some participation outcome, experiencing this form of learning would seem to make young people more disengaged, casting doubt on the desirability of this form of learning. In this respect it is important to note that not all participation outcomes are inter-related. Indeed, there is tension between illegal protest and voting, as we noted previously. We should thus not be surprised to find that learning opportunities are related in different ways to these forms of
participation. We calculated the correlations between the five learning opportunities and the four engagement outcomes using the pooled data of the six countries as the analytic sample (see Table 5.1 below). The two learning opportunities associated with the learning through participation theory, civic participation and open climate, show strong positive links with the first three outcomes but a negative (though fairly weak) one with illegal protest. This suggests, provisionally, that these forms of learning are conducive to established ways of participation and are discouraging radical forms of activism. The links of the forms of learning relating to the structural and formal status of CE are generally weaker and less coherent. While citizenship education as separate subject shows a weak positive connection with partaking in legal and illegal protest it is negatively related to voting. The weak but negative correlations of citizenship education as a cross-curricular component with all four forms of participation suggests that this form of learning does not help young people become more engaged. Having a member of staff responsible for citizenship education seems to be conducive to all forms of political engagement but the positive correlations are weak.

Table 5.1. Correlations between learning opportunities and forms of political participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Voting</th>
<th>Legal protest</th>
<th>Formal participation</th>
<th>Illegal protest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic participation</td>
<td>0.20***</td>
<td>0.26***</td>
<td>0.15***</td>
<td>-0.03***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open climate</td>
<td>0.22***</td>
<td>0.21***</td>
<td>0.09***</td>
<td>-0.11***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE as separate subject</td>
<td>-0.03**</td>
<td>0.03***</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.10***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE cross-curricular</td>
<td>-0.03**</td>
<td>-0.03***</td>
<td>-0.02*</td>
<td>-0.05***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person responsible for CE</td>
<td>0.02**</td>
<td>0.10***</td>
<td>0.03***</td>
<td>0.08***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .001. The N ranges between 16,500 and 18,600 for all correlations.

In fact, when we perform these correlations by country we see that weak correlations in the pooled data often represent contrasting ones across countries. Thus, while citizenship education as separate subject is positively linked to all four outcomes in Switzerland it shows a negative link with voting and legal protest in England. Similarly, while citizenship education

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6 Correlations at the country level can be obtained from the authors upon request
as cross-curricular programme is negatively linked to all four outcomes in Switzerland, it shows a positive connection with legal protest in England. The only learning sources that show the same pattern of relationships to the four outcomes across the six states are civic participation and open climate: in each state they are positively linked to voting, legal protest and formal participation and negatively related to illegal protest. This suggests that these forms of learning have beneficial effects for mainstream ways of participation universally. The influence of the other forms of learning seem to be more context-specific.

Another interesting aspect to take into account is the substantial variation across countries in whether the three ways of citizenship education delivery are at all related to the engagement outcomes. While they seem to be quite influential in Switzerland, judging by fact that out of 12 correlations as many as 10 are significant (positively or negatively), they hardly appear to matter in Sweden and Poland, as in these countries only three and zero out of 12 correlations are significant, respectively. This pattern may well have something to do with a country’s decision-making structure. Switzerland is a federal state where ultimate authority on education rests with the canton. As noted earlier, this could well result in substantial differences between schools not only in how citizenship education is taught but also in whether it is provided at all. In this light it is not surprising to see that the delivery of citizenship education shows some links with engagement outcomes in this country. By contrast, in countries with national curricula such as Sweden and Poland, there is likely to be less differentiation between schools in the delivery of citizenship education.

Social Inequalities in Learning Opportunities and Political Participation

How does England compare to the five other countries in the social gaps in political participation and in the learning opportunities? Do English young people of disadvantaged backgrounds face more obstacles in accessing learning sources and are they less inclined to engage politically than their peers in the other countries. Do we see the expected patterns noted in the selection of countries section emerge from the data?

For the the political engagement outcomes, we can see that social background is a powerful determinant of most outcomes (as shown by the correlations in Table 5.2). In all countries the same regularity applies: the more privileged the family, the higher the levels of accepted
participation (i.e. voting, legal protest and formal participation) but the lower the level of controversial participation (illegal protest). These results are quite revealing in terms of the attitudes of different social groups to political participation. Apparently, relative to their middle class peers, students of working class backgrounds expect less from the established forms of participation and have a greater preference to engage in more radical forms of action. However, we have to emphasize the word ‘relative’ here. As electoral participation is much more popular than illegal protest across the board, students of disadvantaged backgrounds also prefer the former to a much greater degree in absolute terms. What distinguishes them from their more privileged peers is the smaller gap between voting and illegal protest.

Table 5.2 The link between social background and political engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Voting</th>
<th>Legal protest</th>
<th>Formal participation</th>
<th>Illegal protest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
<td>0.21***</td>
<td>0.07***</td>
<td>-0.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.21***</td>
<td>0.10***</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>0.25***</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td>0.07***</td>
<td>-0.12***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0.24***</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>0.07***</td>
<td>-0.11***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>0.23***</td>
<td>0.15***</td>
<td>0.10***</td>
<td>-0.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>0.16***</td>
<td>0.12***</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .001. The N ranges between 16,500 and 18,600 for all correlations.

NB: the data in the table represent correlations between SES and an engagement outcome.

We further see that SES shows the strongest link to electoral participation and the weakest links to formal participation and illegal protest. Clearly the overall popularity of the form of participation again plays a role here: the less popular a particular form (e.g. illegal protest) the smaller the impact of SES. There are, however, salient differences between countries in the strength of the SES effect. England appears to show the strongest positive effects on accepted forms of participation and the strongest negative effect on illegal protest. This makes England

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7 We changed the continuous SES variable into a variable with three classes (1=bottom 33%; 2=middle 33%; 3=top 33%) and then assessed mean levels of the four outcomes by class using error bars (the analyses can be obtained from the authors upon request). This enabled us to explore absolute levels of support for the four forms of participation by social class.
the country where social background matters most for political participation. Switzerland follows closely in terms of the positive effect of SES on established forms of participation. It shows a non-significant link between SES and illegal protest, however. The impact of SES is by far the weakest in Poland. The other three countries have middling positions. This pattern is broadly in agreement with expectations. We indeed see that the impact of SES is largest in countries with a very diverse school landscape (England) or an early selection system (Switzerland). It is somewhat surprising to see SES having the lowest impact in Poland and not in Sweden, the country associated with egalitarian traditions par excellence. Here again levels of engagement may play a role. As noted before, Polish youth shows the lowest engagement levels, perhaps as a legacy of communism. Possibly, in societies that have only recently become democratic, the world of politics still has a too negative image for strong middle class norms of political participation to have taken root. Seen in this light, and provided that democracy survives in Poland, it would only be a matter of time for political engagement to show the same pattern of social stratification as in other (Western) countries (provided no action is taken to prevent this from happening).

How about the social skew in access to learning opportunities? As in the previous chapter, we explore this in two stages. We first run regression analyses with controls for gender and immigrant status to explore the link between SES and the learning opportunities and thus assess overall social disparities in access. We then perform MLA to see whether these inequalities primarily consist of differences between students of different social backgrounds within classrooms or differences in social composition between classrooms. MLA can only be performed on the learning through practice opportunities as these were measured at the individual level. The learning conditions relating to the delivery of CE were measured at the classroom level and thus do not vary within classrooms.

The pattern of relationships is less coherent than for the engagement outcomes (see Table 5.3). On the one hand we see a straightforward link of SES with the learning through practice opportunities: young people of more privileged backgrounds report higher levels of civic participation and openness of classroom discussions in all six countries (with the exception of Switzerland concerning open climate). These inequalities are greatest in England and smallest in Italy and Poland. Sweden and Ireland show moderately large social gaps. On the other hand, the links of SES with the delivery of CE variables are generally weaker and more contradictory. Thus students of disadvantaged backgrounds have greater access to CE as separate subject in
England but lower access to this mode of delivery in Switzerland. Almost the mirror image appears regarding access to CE as a cross-curricular component. Disadvantaged students have greater access to this mode of delivery in Switzerland, Sweden and Italy but less access to this mode in England and Ireland. We further see that in Switzerland and Ireland students of privileged backgrounds are more often taught by teachers with special responsibility for CE, while the reverse applies in England, Italy and Poland. This pattern of contradictory relationships shows just how much countries can differ in the mode of delivery conditions for student of different social backgrounds. It is interesting to note the very pronounced negative link between SES and CE as separate subject in England. In other words, the more the school recruits underprivileged students the more it is inclined to teach CE as a separate subject in this country. This confirms the finding of the previous chapter and provides further support for the idea mentioned earlier that low status schools prefer a structured learning environment with clearly demarcated curricular programmes. In sum, there are social gaps in access to important forms of learning in all countries, but these gaps are most serious in England. More so then elsewhere, students of disadvantaged backgrounds have lower levels of access to the learning through practice opportunities, which also happen to be the most powerful in terms of shaping political engagement.

Table 5.3. The social gap in access to learning opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Civic participation</th>
<th>Open climate</th>
<th>CE as separate subject</th>
<th>CE as cross-curricular component</th>
<th>Person responsible for CE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>-0.19***</td>
<td>0.05*</td>
<td>-0.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.11***</td>
<td>-0.11***</td>
<td>0.07**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>0.12***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.08***</td>
<td>0.07**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0.23***</td>
<td>0.12***</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.06**</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>0.10***</td>
<td>0.09***</td>
<td>-0.05**</td>
<td>-0.07***</td>
<td>-0.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.05**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .001. The N ranges between 2010 and 3500 for all correlations.

NB: The data in the table are standardized coefficients of OLS regressions. They represent the effect of SES on a learning opportunity. These effects were controlled for gender and immigrant status (not shown in the table). Full results can be obtained upon request.
Let us now see whether the social gaps in access to the learning through participation opportunities primarily reflect differences between individuals within classrooms or differences between classrooms (see the MLA results as reported in Table 5.4). We see that SES has a strong positive effect on civic participation in all six countries and that classroom SES only has a small significant positive effect in Sweden and is insignificant in the other countries. This means that access to this form of learning is almost entirely a reflection of disadvantaged students not participating to the same degree as their more privileged classmates and is not the result of schools with different social intakes providing different levels of civic participation. Thus the inequalities of access happen because of within classrooms processes of self- or teacher selection, which in all likelihood are related to the optional character of this form of learning (as noted earlier). The pattern on open climate is quite different. We see that classroom social status is at least as important as individual SES in England, Ireland and Sweden. In Poland only classroom social status is significant and not individual SES, meaning that access to this form of learning is entirely due to classrooms with different social compositions offering different levels of open climate. Possibly, teachers in Poland respond to the social intake of classrooms by offering little opportunity for open discussions in classrooms with a concentration of underprivileged children. Yet, the effect of classroom SES is even stronger in England, Ireland and Sweden. Thus teachers may be even more inclined to do so in these countries. In Switzerland neither SES nor classroom SES shows a significant effect while in Italy only the former is significant. In sum, while access to civic participation is a matter of within classroom selection across the board, access to open climate is a reflection of both selection within classrooms and between classroom differences in offer and shows much greater cross-country variability in this.

Interestingly it is in countries with long traditions of democracy (Ireland, England and Sweden) that both SES and classroom social status show a strong positive link with open climate. In other words, in these countries being of humble social background and being surrounded by peers of similar background means facing a double disadvantage in terms of access to this learning source. Going back to civic participation, we actually also see this double effect in Sweden. That Sweden shows this effect is surprising as one would not have expected this from a country known for its egalitarian traditions. Evidently, even established democracies - or, more accurately, particularly established ones – cannot ensure equal access to important learning opportunities for underprivileged students.
Table 5.4. Social gaps in access to forms of learning through practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Civic participation</th>
<th>Open climate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.27***</td>
<td>0.10***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom SES</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.24***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.10***</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom SES</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.16***</td>
<td>0.08***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom SES</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.20***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td>0.07***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom SES</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.11***</td>
<td>0.11***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom SES</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom SES</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .001. The N ranges between 2000 and 3000 for the individual level predictor (SES, gender and first/second generation immigrant) and between 100 and 200 for classroom level predictor (Classroom SES).

NB: The data represent coefficients of multilevel analyses. We conducted 12 analyses which also included gender and first and second generation immigrant as control variables. We only show the coefficients of SES and Classroom SES in the table. The full results can be obtained upon request.

*Learning Opportunities: Can They Compensate for Social Disadvantage?*
The previous section demonstrated that social background is strongly associated with political engagement. This raises the question whether experiencing different sources of learning in school can help to reduce the engagement gap. In other words, do working class children benefit more from experiencing a certain form of learning than middle class children and can this form of learning thus compensate for their lower levels of political learning in the home? The previous chapter showed that citizenship education indeed had this effect in England: the greater the volume of citizenship education experienced, the smaller was the social gap in intended voting. It also showed that the learning through practice forms of learning, such as civic participation and open climate, did not have these compensatory effects. We speculated that this difference may be due to whether the form of learning was optional or compulsory. Optional and voluntary sources of learning may lead to selection effects with middle class children disproportionately taking part in them. In contrast, compulsory forms rule out the possibility that distinct groups enjoy these forms more than others.

As noted above, we cannot replicate the analyses of the previous chapter in precisely the same way with the ICCS data, but nonetheless this data source shares many of the outcomes and forms of learning with CELS, the data source used in the previous chapter. We performed a multilevel analysis (MLA) for each outcome and for each country (i.e. 24 in total) using all the learning sources and the control variables mentioned above as independent variables. We first ran these analyses without interaction effects to assess the main effects of the learning sources (cf Brambor et al 2006). Subsequently we ran separate models with interaction terms for the learning sources and SES included. MLA is needed because the three learning sources pertaining to citizenship education are school-level variables, meaning that students within one school do not show variation on these variables. Ordinary regression analysis would overestimate the effects of such variables (Snijders and Bosker 1999). To minimize the space taken up by tables we present the results in a summary form in Table 5.5. This table shows in the second column what the general effect of a particular form of learning is on all engagement outcomes across the board, with ‘general’ referring here to the effect that can be seen in the majority of all cases (20). Columns 3 to 6 show the exceptions to this general effect by outcome and by country. The upper half of the table shows the main effects of the learning outcomes (as output of analyses without interaction terms), while the lower half shows the interaction terms of the learning outcomes with SES. If these interactions are negative, students of low SES benefit more from a certain learning source in terms of enhanced political engagement than
students of high SES. Negative interactions thus indicate compensatory effects. The complete output of these analyses can be obtained from the authors upon request.

Let us first look at the main effects of the learning sources. Of all five learning sources, civic participation is the only one that shows a strong positive effect on intended voting, legal protest and formal participation in all countries. Thus this form of learning would truly appear to be a helpful strategy to foster accepted forms of participation everywhere. It is not significantly related to illegal protest in any of the countries. Open climate enhances intended voting and legal protest everywhere but it appears less effective in fostering formal participation in a number of countries. It also shows a negative link with illegal protest across the board. The ‘performance’ of the civic education variables is weak. In the vast majority of cases they are not showing significant links to the engagement outcomes. The one country where they do seem to matter is Switzerland, where CE as separate subject and staff with special responsibility for CE are positively connected with intended voting and formal participation. This might well be related to the early selection system in this country. Does this pattern of relationships mean that only learning through participation approaches are effective in enhancing active citizenship? This would be a premature conclusion. As noted above, our measures of CE are far from ideal as they do not include measurements of the volume and the content of CE, nor of the way in which it is assessed. Until we can draw on better measures to assess the effect of more conventional forms of learning (i.e. those relating to the knowledge acquisition school of thought) we have to be cautious in making claims about the learning through participation approaches being more effective.

Table 5.5. Effects of learning sources on engagement outcomes (results from MLA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exceptions</th>
<th>Electoral participation</th>
<th>Legal protest</th>
<th>Formal participation</th>
<th>Informal participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General effect on the four outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

128
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic participation</th>
<th>+++</th>
<th></th>
<th>n.s. in ENG, POL, SWE, SWI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open climate</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>n.s. in ENG, POL, SWE, SWI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE as separate subject</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>Positive in SWI; Negative in ITA</td>
<td>Positive in ITA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE as cross-curricular component</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>Negative in IRL</td>
<td>Negative in IRL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person responsible for CE</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>Positive in SWI</td>
<td>Positive in SWI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic participation x SES</th>
<th>Exceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General effect on the four outcomes</td>
<td>Electoral participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>Negative in ENG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open climate x SES</th>
<th>Exceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CE as separate subject x SES</th>
<th>Exceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>Positive in SWI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CE as cross-curricular x SES</th>
<th>Exceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>Positive in SWI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are the learning through participation approaches capable of diminishing the social gaps in engagement? Regrettably, but also unsurprisingly, this is largely not the case. In the vast majority of cases the interaction effects of these forms of learning are not significant (see bottom half of Table 5.5). The sole consolation is that in the few instances that these interactions are significant, they are negative (excepting the positive interaction with illegal protest in Switzerland), meaning that they indeed show the compensatory effect. The lack of interaction effects can also be seen in a more positive light, however. Evidently, once working class children have access to these important learning approaches, they benefit as much from them in terms of enhanced political engagement levels as middle class children (and in some cases they benefit more). This suggests that working class children are not treated differently once they have learnt and adopted the rules on how to participate in these learning experiences. Thus, Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1990) fatalistic claim that schools and teachers merely reinforce the social divide by treating all children of working class backgrounds differently is not borne out by our findings regarding the learning through practice opportunities. This, of course, does not rule out the possibility that such discriminatory practices are manifested in other ways.

Interestingly, it is actually in England where civic participation, as one of these forms of learning, shows this mitigating effect on three outcomes, intended voting, formal participation and illegal protest. This would seem to contradict the findings of the previous chapter regarding intended voting. However, the interaction effect of civic participation with SES, though not significant, was also negative in that chapter (see Table 4.5 it would be significant at the 0.10 level), and in this respect the results are in agreement. Because civic participation is able to diminish social gaps in engagement after all (but only in England and only for two outcomes), learning sources could still have compensatory effects even when partaking in these sources shows a strong social skew (as is indeed the case for civic participation particularly in England; see previous section). Perhaps there is something in the character of civic participation in England that empowers students of low SES backgrounds and motivates them to partake in political activities such as voting later in life.
We can further see that the sources of learning relating to the teaching of citizenship are not capable of diminishing social gaps in engagement either, as evidenced by the non-significant effects of the interaction terms in the vast majority of cases. An exception is the negative interaction effect of two of these sources of learning with illegal protest in Switzerland. However, in this case a negative interaction actually indicates enhanced social gaps in engagement because the main effect of SES with illegal protest is negative. In other words, the more that students experience these forms of learning, the stronger the propensity of working class students to engage in illegal forms of protest relative to students of more privileged backgrounds. Other exceptions concern positive interaction effects, indicating that experiencing the source of learning enhances the effect of SES on political engagement. We see such effects in Switzerland for the links of CE as separate subject and as a cross-curricular component with electoral participation, and in England for the link of CE as separate subject with formal participation. The links in England are puzzling. Perhaps schools that predominantly recruit students from poorer backgrounds have a different curriculum of citizenship education when they teach it as a separate subject by comparison to schools that recruit more from middle class backgrounds. In view of the high degree of autonomy that schools in England have, which at least makes it possible for schools to vary greatly in the contents of citizenship lessons, this might well be a plausible explanation. However, this would sit uneasy with the compensatory effect of citizenship education on electoral participation in England, which was the main finding of the previous chapter. This compensatory effect suggests that citizenship education does not vary across schools and across students of different social backgrounds. The positive interaction effects in Switzerland are more understandable in view of the country’s early selection system in combination with its decentralised structure. If the modes in which citizenship education are delivered coincide with other differences, such as whether a canton operates an early selection or a comprehensive system, then these modes may well proxy for such differences. For instance, if the schools that teach citizenship education as a separate subject are all located in cantons with an early selection system and if these schools have different curricula for citizenship education depending on the track they provide, experiencing citizenship education as a separate subject may well enhance the social inequalities in political engagement. The next part focuses on the issue of early selection and explains why it matters for the link between social background and political engagement.
Part II. Comprehensive versus early selection systems

The Argument about Early Selection and Inequalities in Political Engagement

There is marked variation across Europe in the age at which students are allocated to different tracks on the basis of their prior educational achievement. In the majority of countries selection is postponed until age 15 or 16 when students enter upper secondary. This late selection is commonly known as comprehensive education. Many of these countries have introduced comprehensive education in the 1960s as part of reforms to facilitate access for all social groups (Wiborg 2009). A number of states did not participate in this reform and retained the practice of early selection, typically selecting students at ages 10, 11 or 12 on the basis of performance in primary education and allocating them to separate schools offering distinct academic or pre-vocational tracks. These states include Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Austria. In addition to these states, a number of post-communist countries re-established forms of early selection, including the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

The argument that early selection enhances social inequalities in political engagement consists of two steps. First, early selection on the basis of achievement leads to social segregation along the lines of track placement because of the strong link between social background and school achievement. Typically, children of disadvantaged backgrounds are allocated to the less demanding pre-vocational tracks while their middle class counterparts are enrolled in the more prestigious academic tracks (Hallinan, 1994; Loveless, 1999). Second, once enrolled in a specific track, children experience specific track-related phenomena that impact on their civic and political engagement. Because of these different experiences children in the (pre-)vocational track are not encouraged to become politically active while their peers in the academic track are. In this way, early selection only exacerbates pre-existing social differences in civic and political engagement (Janmaat et al 2014; Hoskins and Janmaat 2016). In Chapter 2 we already discussed what these track-related phenomena are and why they would influence political engagement.

Early Selection and Inequalities of Political Engagement: What Do the Data Say?

Let us now see whether the ICCS data are in agreement with the argument stated above. If the argument is correct, we would expect states with early selection systems to have greater
between school differences in social composition, learning sources and engagement outcomes than those with comprehensive systems. In other words, we would expect them to show greater school segregation on these dimensions. We would also anticipate stronger links between SES and the learning sources and between SES and the engagement outcomes in the former. We explore these conjectures step by step. In the analyses below the states with early selection systems include Austria, Czech Republic, Flanders (Belgium), Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovakia and Switzerland, and those with comprehensive systems include Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. As there are many more states with comprehensive systems (18) than states with early selection systems (7), we decided to first run the analyses by country and then average the country outcomes to arrive at mean results for the two groups. The alternative, i.e. first pooling the data for the two groups and then do the analyses, might produce a bias because of the uneven number of countries in the two groups.

A good way to assess school segregation (or, more properly speaking, classroom segregation because of ICCS’ one classroom per school sample) is to calculate the Intra-class Correlation Coefficient (ICCC) for each source of learning and engagement outcome. In case of our study, the ICCC of some variable represents the between classroom variance as a proportion of the total variance (or, more precisely, the ratio of the between classroom variance to the sum of the between and the within-classroom variance). Its values range between 0 and 1, with 1 meaning that all the variation is between classrooms and not any within classrooms (i.e. all students have the same score within classrooms) and 0 indicating that all classrooms have the same average score and students vary maximally within classrooms (cf. Green and Janmaat 2006; Janmaat 2011). Thus, 1 represents a situation of perfect segregation while 0 denotes a situation of perfect integration. We use the so-called zero model of MLA, i.e. the model without predictors, to calculate the ICCCs for the different dimensions. A more widely known measure of segregation is the Index of Dissimilarity, but this measure can only calculate levels of segregation for binary variables (Jenkins et al 2008). The three citizenship education variables that we examined as part of the learning sources constitute such binary variables but as these variables are based on the school questionnaire and are thus school-level variables (with no variation in student scores within a school) they have a 100% segregation score by definition. We therefore omit them from the ensuing analyses. As the remaining variables are all continuous ones we will only use the ICCC as measure of segregation.
Table 5.6 shows the between classroom variation as a percentage of the total variation of the variables of interest. The higher the value, the more segregated the system is. As expected, social segregation on average is higher in the states with early selection systems, the difference with the comprehensive systems being 4.4% in the between classroom variation of SES. We also see that the level of segregation is particularly high on this variable, with classrooms accounting for a quarter of the total variation in SES overall. The learning sources and especially the engagement outcomes vary much less between classrooms. The learning opportunities also turn out to be more segregated in the early selection states. This is most pronounced on civic participation (3.1% difference) and less so on open climate (0.4% difference; i.e. the early selection states have a 0.4% higher level of between classroom variation).

In terms of the engagement outcomes we see that levels of segregation are notably higher in the early selection states for electoral participation. The mean difference (4%) is even significant at the 0.05 level, which is remarkable in view of the small N (25 countries) on which the difference of means test is based. The early selection states are also a bit more segregated in terms of legal protest (0.9% difference) and illegal protest (0.4% difference), but the very low proportions of between classroom variance in both groups of countries indicate that this outcome has very low levels of segregation overall. This is even more the case for formal participation. Although this outcome appears to be slightly more segregated in the states with comprehensive systems, the difference with the early selection states is minimal (0.4%) and does not mean much in view of the negligible levels of segregation overall (only slightly over 3% of the total variation in this outcome is between classroom). In sum, in terms of segregation the expected differences between early selection and comprehensive states indeed show up. There appear to be links between the overall popularity of a certain form of engagement, the overall level of segregation and the difference between the two groups of countries: the more popular the type of engagement (e.g. electoral participation – see again Table 5.6, the more it is segregated overall and the more it is segregated in early selection states by comparison to the comprehensive ones.

Table 5.6. Average between classroom variation in SES, learning sources and engagement outcomes as percentage of the total variance
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Countries with comprehensive systems (N = 18)</th>
<th>Countries with early selection systems (N = 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Countries with comprehensive systems</th>
<th>Countries with early selection systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic participation</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open climate</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student influence</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Countries with comprehensive systems</th>
<th>Countries with early selection systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electoral participation</td>
<td>6.4*</td>
<td>10.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal protest</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal participation</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal participation</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mean difference significant at the .05 level

Let us now see how social background relates to both the learning sources and the engagement outcomes (Table 5.7). Is the gap between low and high SES students in accessing learning sources and in levels of engagement larger in early selection states? If the correlations shown in the table are higher for such states by comparison to the ones with comprehensive systems, this question can be answered in the affirmative. Patterns are not in line with expectation for the link between SES and the learning sources. It is actually in comprehensive systems that children of modest social backgrounds, relative to those of privileged ones, struggle more to attain access to civic participation and open climate, as the two most important sources of learning. We see that the difference in correlations with early selection states is actually significant at the 0.01 level in the case of open climate. In other words, the social gap in access to open climate is significantly greater in the states with comprehensive systems. The only exception, which is in line with expectation, concerns responsibility for CE. Low SES students
are less likely than middle class ones to be in schools where teachers having a specific responsibility for CE and this difference is greater in early selection states. The difference between the two groups of countries is only small in the correlations between SES and the remaining two learning sources (i.e. CE as separate subject and as cross-curricular component).

Why are the patterns on civic participation and particularly on open climate so much in contrast to expectation? Possibly the patterns can be explained by feelings of relative deprivation which includes the notion of limited comparative horizons. Once in a particular class or school, students compare themselves to others in their immediate environment and if they feel they are falling short of others their self-confidence and sense of efficacy suffer (Marsh et al 2008; Crosnoe 2009). They are unlikely to be aware of practices in other schools. This lack of information may lead them to think that – say – the climate of discussion in their own class is relatively open, particularly if they feel to be amongst the winners in the class pecking order, and this perception might well change if they knew what was happening in other schools. These issues can shed light on the weaker link between social background and the learning opportunities in the early selection states. As noted above, social segregation is notably higher in such states, expressed as a preponderance of low SES in the low status prevocational tracks and a concentration of middle class children in the academic tracks. If relative deprivation including the notion of limited horizons indeed played a role, then students in the prevocational tracks would not be more negative about - say - an open climate of discussion than their peers in the academic tracks. In combination with the pronounced social segregation across tracks this would have the effect of mitigating the link between social background and the learning opportunities (because the low SES students in the prevocational tracks would tend to be as positive in their perceptions of an open climate as the middle class students in the academic track).

Table 5.7 The impact of social background on learning sources and political engagement (correlations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning sources</th>
<th>Comprehensive systems</th>
<th>Early selection systems</th>
<th>Correlation difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation with SES</td>
<td>Correlation with SES</td>
<td>Fisher Z</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

136
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic participation</th>
<th>.150***</th>
<th>.134***</th>
<th>-2.04*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open climate</td>
<td>.091***</td>
<td>.028***</td>
<td>-7.92***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student influence</td>
<td>-.135***</td>
<td>-.158***</td>
<td>-2.94**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE as separate subject</td>
<td>.019***</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>-2.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE as cross-curricular component</td>
<td>.012**</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>-1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person responsible for CE</td>
<td>.017***</td>
<td>.094***</td>
<td>8.97***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral participation</th>
<th>.194***</th>
<th>.243***</th>
<th>6.43***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal protest</td>
<td>.120***</td>
<td>.149***</td>
<td>3.69***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal participation</td>
<td>.027***</td>
<td>.031***</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal participation</td>
<td>.097***</td>
<td>.086***</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .001

By contrast, the lower levels of social segregation in comprehensive systems mean that there will be more inter-social exposure and interaction within school classes in such systems. As middle class children are likely to participate more in political learning opportunities due to their favourable home resources and family socialization, social inequality in access to these opportunities might be manifested primarily within the classroom, with low SES children feeling intimidated and out-competed by their middle class peers and thus not being able to take part in learning opportunities to the same degree. In other words, the relative deprivation and competition experienced by children of low SES backgrounds in classrooms with a socially mixed intake could explain why SES shows a stronger link to the learning opportunities in states with comprehensive systems. This link would then primarily reflect a within classroom relation between SES and the learning opportunities. We come back to this issue in the next section.

In contrast, the expected patterns do appear when we look at the engagement outcomes. SES shows a strong positive link with all four outcomes but particularly so in the early selection states regarding electoral participation and legal protest (the difference with the comprehensive states being significant at the 0.1 level for electoral participation). In other words, students of low SES are significantly less engaged than their middle class counterparts and this gap is larger in early selection systems. As electoral participation and legal protest are such important
modes of participation, these patterns are possibly of great social significance. If social gaps in participation continue to be greater in the early selection states as young people mature, there would seem to be a clear case for postponing selection or ensuring, in an otherwise tracked system, that young people receive the very same educational input on matters relevant for political engagement (cf. van de Werfhorst 2009; van de Werfhorst 2017).

A Closer Look at the Early Selection States

For some of the states with early selection systems ICCS has data on the track attended, namely for Flanders (Belgium), Luxembourg, Netherlands and Switzerland. This offers us the unique opportunity to assess not only whether children of disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately enrolled in the low status tracks, but also whether levels of political engagement differ by track. If the latter is the case, even after controlling for family background factors, we have a fairly strong indication that track has an independent effect on engagement. In that case we can also examine through which of the four mechanisms suggested in Chapter 3 tracking has this effect, i.e. through the curriculum (broadly referring to the learning strategy of knowledge acquisition), pedagogy (as referring to the strategy of participation), peer influence or self-efficacy. We have good measures for pedagogy and peer influence. Pedagogy will be tapped with civic participation and open climate. Peer influence will be measured with the class mean of SES, which is commonly used as a measure of social context (e.g. Janmaat et al 2014). Unfortunately, the curriculum can be assessed only partially with the measures available, as we noted previously. These measures relate primarily to the structure and formal place of CE in the curriculum rather than its content. Assessing self-efficacy is also tricky, not because of a lack of appropriate measures (we measure it with the internal political efficacy scale prepared by the ICCS team – see Appendix 5.1 for its composition), but because of the impossibility to ascertain the direction of causality when we find an association between track placement and self-efficacy. Such an association could reflect both a genuine effect of track on self-confidence and a situation of students with a given prior level of self-confidence enrolling in a particular track. The latter would constitute a selection effect. With these caveats in place, it is nonetheless useful to test the four mechanisms with the measures available. If track still shows a significant effect on engagement after adding all the variables relating to the mechanisms in the model, track must be influencing engagement through some unobserved characteristic, such as, perhaps, CE content.
We will investigate the effect of track with a stepwise MLA. A stepwise approach is useful as it allows us to explore the questions noted above in as precise a manner as possible. The key idea is to assess what happens to the effect of track by adding ever more variables to the model. If this effect becomes insignificant after adding variables tapping a particular mechanism, we have a strong indication that track exerts its effect on engagement through this mechanism. We proceed with six models: Model 0 shows the unconditional effect of track on political engagement; Model 1 adds the individual and family background variables – i.e. SES, parental interest in political and social issues, discussing political issues and events abroad with parents, state language spoken at home and gender; Models 2 to 5 add the variables tapping the mechanisms in a cumulative manner. Model 5 thus represents the full model. We use MLA because both track attended, curriculum and peer influence are measured with classroom level variables. As the tracked system differs across countries, with some having only two tracks (Flanders) and others as many as six (Netherlands), we measure it with country-specific measures and will therefore present the analyses by country. The track with the lowest status, i.e. the pre-vocational one, will be the reference category in all analyses. In Luxembourg this is technical modular education, in the Netherlands it is VMBO KBL, in Switzerland it is the basic requirements type, and in Belgium-Flanders it is pre-vocational education.

We first assess whether SES shows the expected differences across tracks. The error bars of Figure 5.3 show that the various tracks indeed differ markedly in their social composition. Without exception students in the more prestigious academic tracks are from more privileged backgrounds, on average, than their peers in the (pre-)vocational tracks, which confirms the findings of other studies (Oakes 2005; Gamoran 2010; Boone and van Houtte 2013). Judging by the confidence intervals, the social gaps are particularly large in Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland, suggesting that students of low SES find it relatively hard to enter academic tracks in these countries.

Figure 5.3 The social composition of lower secondary tracks in four European countries
Are students in the low status tracks also deprived of learning opportunities? Here we see some interesting patterns that take us back to the issue of relative deprivation and limited comparative horizons. As to civic participation, lower status tracks indeed show lower levels of this learning opportunity, but the difference with higher status tracks is small and in one country (Luxembourg) the lowest status track actually shows the highest level of civic participation (Figure 5.4). Strikingly, track does not make a difference for open climate in three of the four countries (only in the Netherlands do we see that the lowest status track has significantly lower levels of open climate). This result is in line with the conjecture stated in
the previous section about student in the prevocational tracks not necessarily being more negative in their appraisals of an open climate of discussion than those in academic tracks. It thus provides further evidence for the idea that the significantly weaker link between social background and open climate in the early selection states is due to relative deprivation including the notion of not looking beyond one’s classroom. The other learning opportunities do not show a consistent pattern across countries. However, as these opportunities showed only a weak link with SES and are therefore relatively unimportant, we do not report further on them.

Figure 5.4. Mean levels of civic participation and open climate by track in four countries

Civic participation
Open climate
Let us now look at the model with track as the sole predictor of the four engagement outcomes, i.e. the unconditional model (Table 5.8). Track appears to be a powerful determinant of electoral participation and legal protest across all four countries. Invariably, the more academic, and thus the more prestigious, the track, the higher the level of engagement. This is in line with expectation. The pattern is quite different for the other two outcomes, however. Only in the Netherlands is the lowest status track associated with significantly lower levels of formal participation. In Flanders and Switzerland track is not related to this outcome, while in Luxembourg there is even a negative link between track status and formal participation. The lack of meaningful links between track and formal participation may be due to the relative unpopularity of this form of engagement, as noted previously. Perhaps the different political activities captured by this outcome are so uncommon that not many students in the academic tracks see themselves as engaging in these activities either. The patterns on illegal protest are the reverse of those on the first two outcomes: the less prestigious the track the higher the level of participation. This should not surprise us in view of the negative link between SES and this outcome noted earlier. Only in the Netherlands are there no significant differences between tracks on this outcome. Because of different patterns on the last two outcomes and because of the contentious nature of illegal protest, we continue with the effect of track on electoral participation and legal protest, as the two most common and relatively uncontroversial forms of participation.

Table 5.8. The link between track and political engagement
Table 5.9 provides the results of Models 0 to 5 for both electoral participation and legal protest. To begin with electoral participation and comparing Model 0 to Model 1, we see that the effect of track is reduced substantially after adding all background variables, but that it remains significant minimally at the 0.01 level in all four countries. This suggests that the impact of track partly reflects a selection effect, with students from more privileged backgrounds and with more engaged parents disproportionally enrolling in the academic tracks, but also partly represents a genuine influence. Can we identify the mechanisms through which track exerts this independent effect and are these the same across the four countries? Models 2 to 5 provide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Electoral participation</th>
<th>Legal protest</th>
<th>Formal participation</th>
<th>Illegal protest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Technical modular</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical education</td>
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<tr>
<td>VMBO KBL</td>
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<tr>
<td>VMBO TL</td>
<td>5.38*</td>
<td>7.09**</td>
<td>5.44*</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO GL</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>6.30**</td>
<td>4.74**</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVO</td>
<td>7.57**</td>
<td>8.48***</td>
<td>6.85***</td>
<td>-2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVO-VWO</td>
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<td>7.44***</td>
<td>5.46**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWO Atheneum</td>
<td>9.58***</td>
<td>9.03***</td>
<td>6.16**</td>
<td>-2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>7.43**</td>
<td>5.42*</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Basic requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced requirements</td>
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<td>1.97***</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4.57***</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>-2.77***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School without selection</td>
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<td>1.08</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>-1.16</td>
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<td>Belgium (Flanders)</td>
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<td>Pre-vocational track</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.64*</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
<td>-3.5***</td>
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</table>

* P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .001
possible answers. The general trend is that as more variables representing the various mechanisms are included in the model so the effect of track diminishes, until it becomes insignificant. This indicates that the argument outlined above is reasonably complete in proposing the ways in which tracking influences political engagement. However, we also see that the impact of track remains strong and significant in Luxembourg after all the variables have been added to the model, suggesting that track exerts an influence in this country through some mechanism we have not captured.
Table 5.9. The effect of track on political engagement as mediated by different mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Electoral participation</th>
<th>Legal protest</th>
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<tr>
<td>Track</td>
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<td>VMBO KBL (ref)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VMBO TL</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>7.08*</td>
<td>4.53</td>
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*Belgium (Flanders)*

<p>| | | |
|                  |                         |               |
| Track            |                         |               |
| Prevocational education (ref) |                 |               |</p>
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<tr>
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<td>1.07</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .001. The full results of all models can be obtained upon request.
NB: a This model includes the track variables and the control variables of (1) mother’s interest in political issues, (2) father’s interest in political issues, (3) talking with parents about political and social issues, (3) talking with parents about events in other countries, (4) language of the test spoken at home, and (5) gender. The full results including the effects of these control variables can be obtained upon request.

b This model includes all the variables of Model 1 and the curriculum variables of (1) CE as separate subject, (2) CE as cross-curricular component and (3) Person responsible for CE.

c This model includes all the variables of Model 2 and the learning through participation variables of (1) civic participation and (2) open climate.

d This model includes all the variables of Model 3 and classroom SES.

e This model includes all the variables of Model 4 and political efficacy.

f Model 2 is not provided for the Netherlands and Luxembourg because of the many missing values on the curriculum variables.
It is further interesting to see that although each of the mechanisms included in the models reduces the effect of track in the other countries, these mechanisms do so at a varying rate. For instance, while civic participation and open climate, as the two indicators for the pedagogy mechanism, diminish the track effect in the Netherlands and Switzerland, it is only in Flanders that they do so to such an extent that track becomes insignificant (compare Models 2 and 3). This indicates that in Flanders students in the academic track are becoming more politically engaged because of the learning through participation pedagogies they are exposed to. Looking at classroom social composition we see that it lowers the effect of track in Flanders and Switzerland but only in the Netherlands does it render this effect insignificant. Thus, track seems to primarily affect political engagement through the influence of peers in this country. In Switzerland track may well exert its influence mainly by boosting or undermining students’ self-efficacy as it is in this country that the effects of the most prestigious tracks (advanced and higher) cease to be significant after political efficacy is added to the model. We state this inference with caution, however, as the lower efficacy levels in the pre-vocational tracks may constitute a selection effect, as noted earlier.

We would like to highlight the extraordinary effect of the integrated track on electoral participation in Switzerland. This track represents the comprehensive schools in 7 of the 26 cantons, as we explained above in the case portraits. What makes this effect so special is that it remains positive and significant after all the variables have been included in the model. In other words, controlling for all background factors and taking all mechanisms into account, students in integrated schools still have higher levels of intended voting than those in the prevocational track. This may point to a certain process prevalent in comprehensive education (CE) that makes this form of education conducive for political engagement. This process concerns the social and ethnic composition of CE. As social and ethnic sorting is less likely to occur in CE systems, the schools in such systems as a rule have a diverse student population both in social and ethnic terms. This diversity is likely to reflect a greater variety of political opinions than that found in schools in a tracked system. Students in integrated schools therefore become more exposed to different views, which will enhance their political awareness and interest and by doing so foster a sense of efficacy and motivation to participate in politics (Campbell 2007; Quintelier and Hooghe 2012). We cannot be sure, of course, whether the higher levels of electoral participation in the integrated schools are indeed due to this mechanism or to some other characteristic that makes integrated education have a positive effect on student political engagement. Whatever mechanism is driving these higher levels,
they are all the more remarkable as they concern a comparison between different systems within a country. The within country comparison means that we can rule out the possibility that the difference in political engagement is due to some unobserved country characteristics (cf. Gundelach and Manatschal 2017). This is important to note because a school system – early selection or comprehensive – is usually a property of a country, and one can thus never be sure whether a difference on some outcome of interest found between countries with comprehensive and those with early selection systems represents a genuine system effect or the effect of some other national property. Switzerland is one of the very few countries where the two systems exist side by side, and in a territorially separated manner (i.e. they do not influence each other). This makes Switzerland ideal for comparing the effects of a comprehensive versus an early selection school system. In our view the higher levels of political engagement in Switzerland’s integrated schools sends a strong signal to policy makers that this form of education helps to foster engagement.

What happens to the effect of track on legal protest when we add ever more variables? (Table 5.9). Interestingly in Belgium and Luxembourg this effect already disappears after adding the individual and family background variables, suggesting that the impact of track merely represents a selection effect. Possibly, the more demanding and less widespread activities included under legal protest are more elitist and more dependent on family socialization and social capital than electoral participation is (cf. APSA task force 2004), making it more difficult for schools to have an effect on them. Yet in Switzerland and the Netherlands the effect of track, though diminished, does not vanish after the inclusion of the background variables. In Switzerland it becomes insignificant once social composition is added to the model, while in the Netherlands it remains significant after all variables have been included. The latter shows an interesting contrast within the low status track (VMBO): the general/academic variety (VMBO GEN) has significantly higher levels of legal protest than the vocational variety (VMBO kaderberoeps – the reference category). This might indicate that some distinct educational processes are happening in the purely vocationally oriented stream that discourage youngsters from engaging in this form of political participation.
Conclusion

How does England compare to various other European states in social inequalities in political engagement among students of lower secondary education? Not favourably, as our analyses show. The effect of social background on various modes of political participation is greater in England than in any other country. These modes include future voting, legal protest, formal participation as the more accepted forms and illegal protest as the more radical and controversial form of participation. In other words, everywhere children of poor backgrounds have lower engagement levels than their middle class counterparts but nowhere is this gap so large as in England. Moreover, the very same pattern applies to learning opportunities for political engagement. In England the difference between low SES children and those of middle class backgrounds is bigger than in other countries in terms of access to civic participation in school and an open climate of classroom discussion (Italy excepting), as learning sources that we found to be particularly effective in enhancing various forms of political engagement. What is more, the social status of the educational environment conditions this access as well. The more you are surrounded by class mates of middle class backgrounds, the more open the climate of discussion and the higher the level of civic participation in school. Also this effect is stronger in England than elsewhere. Thus, particularly in England the school environment enhances the already salient social gaps in access to learning opportunities.

These pronounced inequalities are likely to be related to specific features of the English education system. England is known for its highly diverse school landscape, high level of school autonomy and freedom of parental choice (Green 1990; Ball et al 1996; Green et al 2006). The first two properties have been argued to have social sorting effects and thus produce social segregation between schools (Boudon 1974; Mathis et al 2016). School autonomy is likely to lead to pronounced differences between schools in the learning opportunities relevant for political engagement. In combination these characteristics thus make it likely that working class children receive other educational input than their middle class peers because they go to different schools.

Our comparative analysis provides further support for this conjecture. For instance, Switzerland, a country with a similarly diverse school system due to the prevailing practice of early selection in combination with a highly decentralised system of governance, shows an almost equally strong link of SES with both learning opportunities and engagement outcomes.
In contrast, in countries with more homogenous schooling systems, for instance because of comprehensive education or more centralised rule, the link of SES with both learning sources and outcomes is much weaker (e.g. Sweden, Italy and Poland).

Yet, differences between countries in these social gaps are likely to be related to more than just system variation. In Poland, a country that has only recently become a democracy, the link between SES on the one hand and learning opportunities and political engagement on the other is weakest among the six countries compared, despite this country having a relatively high level of school autonomy. Possibly, the degree to which middle classes make use of different forms of democratic political participation and the different learning opportunities is related to how established and common these forms of participation and learning opportunities are: the more reputable and acceptable they are, the more middle classes seize them. If true, we might expect the link between SES and democratic political engagement to become stronger in Poland as its democracy develops.

Whatever the differences between countries, two learning opportunities show strong positive links to the mainstream and accepted forms of political participation everywhere, namely civic participation in school and an open climate of classroom discussion. One is thus tempted to recommend these forms of learning as panacea to combat disengagement and alienation. However, these forms are also highly skewed socially, meaning that in practically all countries young people of disadvantaged backgrounds have less access to these forms. Perhaps for this reason we do not find that accessing these forms of learning helps to *compensate* for the effect of social background on political engagement (only in England, somewhat surprisingly, do we see that civic participation does have this mitigating effect). Finding ways to increase access to open classroom climate and civic participation in school for all groups through improving teaching and learning opportunities for political engagement in the home may make these forms of learning more effective as compensatory strategies. See the conclusion of our book for our recommendations on policies and practices.

The special position of illegal protest also needs to be highlighted. This is the only form of participation that is more popular among students of disadvantaged backgrounds than among those of more privileged backgrounds and this regularity applies in all the countries included in our analysis. Possibly, this form of participation is more appealing for such students because they have less affinity with the more established forms of participation. In any case, it shows
that working class students are not completely disengaged; they also want to express their voice politically, but they may choose to do so in ways that are not considered proper or acceptable by many. This observation does have to be qualified, however. As illegal protest is also one of the least popular forms of participation in general, there are still many more students of disadvantaged backgrounds who prefer the more established forms of participation, such as voting, over illegal protest. The difference with the middle class students is that the gap between support for established and support for more radical forms of participation is smaller among working class students.

In the second part of this chapter we turned to an important dimension of school differentiation, namely early selection on the basis of ability. We postulated that early selection only enhances segregation between schools in social composition, learning opportunities and engagement outcomes. We also predicted that the social gaps in access to learning sources and in levels of political engagement would be higher in the early selection states. Analyses of ICCS data covering 25 European states by and large confirm these conjectures. Early selection states were indeed more segregated on almost all the variables of interest and particularly on social composition and future voting. Similarly we find that in the former SES is a stronger predictor of two important forms of political engagement, namely future voting and legal protest. These patterns suggest that postponing selection helps to reduce segregation and mitigate social gaps in political engagement.

Surprisingly, however, access to learning sources, particularly to an open climate of classroom discussion, is less socially skewed in early selection systems. We surmised that students’ proclivity to compare themselves to their peers in their immediate surroundings (such as their school class) prevents them to take note of what happens in other schools in order to form judgements about their learning opportunities. Consequently, students in the prevocational tracks, who are disproportionately from lower class backgrounds, could well be as positive about the opportunities for open discussions of political issues as students in the academic tracks, who are mostly from middle class backgrounds. Both groups may well be equally afflicted by this limited comparative horizon, leading students in the vocational tracks to possibly overestimate and those in the academic tracks to underestimate the real degree of open climate (if it were possible to somehow measure this). This supposition was confirmed by more detailed analysis showing that there indeed are no differences between tracks in perceptions of an open climate.
In the last section we zoomed in on four states with early selection systems which have data on the track attended. In all these states, the social composition of the prevocational tracks differs sharply from that of the academic tracks. Moreover, in all of them track happens to exert an independent influence on future voting taking all relevant background influences into account: students in the prevocational track invariably have lower levels of intended voting than those in academic tracks. Looking in greater detail at the mechanisms through which tracking is said to influence engagement, we find that peer influence, lack of self-confidence and learning through participation approaches can explain why track has this independent effect. More precisely, students in the prevocational track are significantly less willing to vote in future elections because they are exposed to different peer influences, have lower levels of political efficacy and do not have the same access to civic participation as students in the academic track. We find little evidence of an independent effect of track on future participation in legal protest, however, suggesting that this form of participation is primarily the product of learning in the home. Nonetheless, the strong genuine effect of track on future voting, as the most widespread form of political participation, should give policy makers food for thought. Our findings strongly suggest that ending early selection helps to reduce the social skew in voting.
References:


Chapter 6. Learning Political Engagement in Further and Higher Education in England

The previous two chapters have tested our hypothesis on access to political learning between the ages of 11-16 and found that there was unequal access to the learning political engagement in the form of social participation. In this chapter we will address the next stage of education, upper secondary and then higher education. The previous chapter, which compared different countries’ education systems, showed that those education systems that branch out at an earlier age are more socially segregated and demonstrate greater social inequalities in political engagement than systems with common schooling in lower secondary. In upper secondary education all systems are selective and allocate students to different tracks according to prior qualifications and choice. This is also the case for, England. Upper secondary education has been identified as a phase when socioeconomic inequalities in political engagement start to widen (Van de Werfhorst 2009; Hoskins and Janmaat 2016). This is the case not only for students who pursue different levels and types of qualifications but also for students of various social backgrounds because options and choices in education are heavily influenced by the social status of one’s family (Van de Werfhorst 2007; Janmaat et al 2014; Hoskins and Janmaat 2016).

In this chapter, we focus on the educational pathways of young people from the age of 16 to 23 in England and examine their effects on political participation. We first examine upper secondary education and then higher education. This enables us to separate the effects of early differences in education pathways from the effects of higher education.

Until now, the majority of research that examines the effect of upper secondary and higher education on political engagement has failed to address the nuances of education trajectories and only taken into account either years of education/educational attainment or the type of education (academic or vocational). Research into the economic outcomes of education (Dearden et al. 2004; Jenkins, Greenwood and Vignoles 2007) has demonstrated the importance of combining both educational attainment and type of education as it enabled the identification of negative effects on earnings of Levels 1 and 2 vocational qualifications and positive ones of Level 3 vocational qualifications. The research on economic outcomes has given weight to policy arguments that many of the low level vocational qualifications were not providing the education needed for the labour market (Wolf 2011). Yet, until now, we do not know whether and to what extent these specific different educational pathways influence participation in the political realm.
Interestingly, scholars have devoted ample attention to assessing the effect of these components (attainment and type) on political participation separately. Those focusing on the effect of educational attainment, for instance, include Dee (2004), Finkel (2003), Galston (2001), Niemi and Junn (1998), Mariën, Hooghe and Quintelier (2010) and Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995), while Ichilov (1991), Lauglo and Øia (2006), van de Werfhorst (2007), Paterson (2009), Hoskins and Janmaat (2016) and Janmaat et al (2014) are examples of studies examining the impact of type or track. However, scholars have rarely examined both components. Van der Werfhorst (2007) and Paterson (2009) used measures that capture some of this precision, but they have not examined which of the two components has the strongest effect on political engagement, and they have not focused on late adolescence as a crucial formative period. As several studies have identified this period as a stage in life when political attitudes and behaviours take on a definite shape (Watts 1999; Jennings and Stoker 2004; Goossens 2001; Amnå et al. 2009; Hooghe and Wilkenfeld 2008), there is every reason to focus in on the educational options available to this age group. The period following lower secondary education is when the vast majority of young people in England undertake study to obtain formal qualifications and these educational outcomes have profound effects on future socio-economic status and earnings (Wolf 2011).

Another shortcoming in the current literature is the scarcity of studies using longitudinal data which include measurements of the dependent variable prior to the educational phase or intervention of interest to explore the effects of education on political engagement. Such studies are in a better position to determine the direction of causality than studies relying on cross-sectional data or on longitudinal data without prior measures of the outcome (Persson 2012). Although studies using experimental designs do generally include such prior measurements (e.g. Sondheimer and Green 2010) the scale of the experiments on which these studies are based is usually very small, which means that the findings of these studies are limited in scope. There is thus a great need for studies based on larger and preferably nationally representative longitudinal samples. Such studies would allow for a better and more wide-ranging, although by no means conclusive, assessment of the net effect of a particular phase of education and of the durability of this effect (Paterson 2009; Janmaat et al 2014). This chapter meets both criteria as it uses data of the nationally representative Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) that includes measures of intentions to politically engage (voting, peaceful protest, membership of political parties and violent protest) prior to the two specific education episodes that we are examining.
This chapter seeks to contribute to the debates on the mechanisms within upper secondary education and higher education system that may well exacerbate social stratification and social inequalities in political engagement in the democratic system. We seek to test if social inequalities in political engagement are widened under different education trajectories. In particular we seek to ascertain whether low level qualifications in vocational tracks are sufficiently supporting young people’s political voice.

**Three Perspectives on the Impact of Educational Pathways on Political Engagement**

According to our review of the literature in Chapters 2 and 3 there are three causal narratives that may be distilled from the political socialization literature, offering different accounts of the effect of educational trajectories on political engagement. These concern the **type of education** (or educational track), the **level of education** (or educational attainment) and the ‘education as proxy’ argument. As these narratives have been discussed at length in the previous chapters, we revisit them here only briefly.

Chapter 3 identified type of education (academic or vocational) as a major influence on political engagement. It proposed that vocationally-educated students are relatively deprived of learning opportunities to become more engaged for reasons to do with the curriculum, pedagogy, peer effects and self-confidence. These reasons have been highlighted by existing studies finding vocationally educated students to have lower levels of political engagement (Ichilov 1991; Eckstein et al 2012; Janmaat et al 2014; Hoskins and Janmaat 2017; van de Werfhorst 2017).

The effect of level of education was discussed in Chapter 2 as part of the argument about the acquisition of knowledge and skills as a learning strategy to enhance engagement. The proposition is that the longer individuals stay in the education system and the higher the qualification that they attain, the more they acquire these resources (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Galston 2001; Campbell 2006). Many studies have indeed found level of education (or educational attainment) to be one of the most important determinants of political engagement (Dee 2004; Finkel 2003; Niemi and Junn 1998; Mariën, Hooghe and Quintelier 2010; Verba, Schlozman, Brady 1995).

In the analyses below we will not only examine whether type and level of education have distinct effects on political engagement but also whether academic and higher level tracks have
compensatory effects for students of disadvantaged backgrounds. We do this because the learning opportunities that have been argued to produce mitigating effects (see Chapter 3) are likely to be offered to a greater extent in the academic tracks by comparison to the vocational ones. In other words, we would expect students of modest social background to benefit more from enrolment in academic and higher level education than those from middle class backgrounds in terms of political engagement.

Lastly, according to the ‘education as proxy’ argument as discussed in Chapter 2, education does not have an independent effect on political engagement: it merely acts as a substitute for social background. Any ‘effect’ of educational track simply reflects the propensity of children of different class backgrounds to enter educational tracks varying in level and type of qualification (Persson 2010, 2013; Kam and Palmer 2008; Burden 2009). If we find no effect of type or level of education once all relevant controls have been added to the models, we will conclude that our findings are mainly in line with the ‘education as proxy’ argument.

Assessing the Effect of Education

The methodological objective of this chapter is to be able to make an additional step beyond the current literature towards the goal of identifying causality regarding the effects of education trajectories on political engagement. The challenges with regard to this are that education can be understood as highly endogenous and is dependent on many factors including socio-economic status (SES), parenting, schooling, personal motivation and capabilities, as highlighted by the education as proxy argument. The researchers associated with this argument posit that much of the previous research that finds a relation between educational attainment and political engagement has been based on cross-sectional data, suggesting that this research has not been able to establish the direction of causality direction and whether another variable is influencing both political engagement and educational achievement. The key to assessing whether the effect of education is genuine or whether it merely represents a selection effect capturing early socialization experiences is to have control measures of political engagement prior to the period of education that one wishes to study, and until now this has not been achieved in an English study. If education merely proxies for these early childhood experiences, political engagement should be well-established before young people go in different educational directions. Statistically this would mean that, once prior measures of
political engagement are added to the model, the effect of educational pathway on political engagement completely disappears.

The focus of the education as proxy research has predominantly been on higher education and political engagement and has yet to explore the earlier education experiences between ages 16 and 19. Perhaps it is not only early childhood socialization that influences political engagement but experiences within the education system during adolescence that influence both political engagement and getting into higher education. Previous analysis on the effect of higher education rarely contain prior measures that enable scholars to isolate the effect of the experience of HE.

We explore in this chapter the effects of education pathways during secondary education and then separately the effect of the experience of higher education on political outcomes, whilst always controlling for prior intentions to participate and other conditions that influence both enrolment in different education pathways and political engagement.

**Education Pathways in England**

The English education system is fairly complex and students from the age of 16 can start to ‘choose’ different levels and types of education qualifications. It is necessary to note that this choice is limited by the standards set and competition for places at each school, college and/or Higher Education institution.

In England about 70% of students undertook academic qualifications and 30% undertook vocational qualifications during their upper secondary education in 2010 (OECD 2010). However, the actual number of students who at some point during their secondary education undertake a VET qualification is considerably higher (Wolf 2011). What is perhaps alarming is that many of the vocational qualifications seem to have little or no benefit regarding employability or further education (Wolf 2011) and that companies often prefer to take graduates with generic skills rather than a student with a lower-level vocational qualification oriented towards the profession (Steedman, Wagner and Foreman 2003). In addition, there are major inequalities in economic outcomes between young people who have top qualifications such as degrees and those with the lowest vocational qualifications (Levels 1 and 2) (Wolf 2011). In fact, research indicates that there is actually a negative economic return to passing a vocational Level 1 or 2 course (Dearden et al. 2004). By contrast there is a positive economic
return to vocational Level 3 qualifications (Jenkins, Greenwood and Vignoles 2007). Considerable research efforts have been undertaken to evaluate the economic returns to undertaking vocational and academic qualifications, but little has been conducted to identify the political outcomes of these different pathways.

Qualifications in England are all assigned an official level within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (this system follows precisely the levels within the European Qualification Framework (EQF)). Higher education, as an academic degree, is a Level 4 qualifications. Level 3 qualifications include A-levels, as the academic track, and a wide range of vocational qualifications including General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) typically in healthcare, retail, leisure services, hair and beauty, construction, food and catering, and management. These courses are job specific and do not include general subjects such as Citizenship Education. Attaining A-levels is the most obvious path into Higher Education and the top-rated universities. It is possible to enrol in higher education with vocational Level 3 qualifications, but this will be at less prestigious universities and courses. Level 2 qualifications for general academic education are GCSEs at Grade A–C, while for vocational education there are a variety of courses including GNVQs and BTECs. The majority of students would need GCSEs before taking A-levels. Level 1 qualifications are GCSEs lower than Grade C, or vocational qualifications such as NVQ Level 1 and Foundation GNVQ. Students need Level 2 qualifications to complete further study.

The qualifications system in England is much more complex than most other countries as awarding bodies are independent from government and education providers are paid by government per qualification obtained from an award body. This has led to a wide proliferation of qualifications and students being advised to take courses that teachers have a certain degree of confidence that the student can pass (Wolf 2011).

**Data Source, Measures and Methods of Analysis**

**Data Source**

We used the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) as the data source for this chapter. The CELS data is unique in that it combines a panel study of adolescents with a questionnaire tapping a wide range of civic attitudes. The study includes data from a cohort of young people aged 11 and 12 (Year 7; first year of secondary school) when they were surveyed for the first time in 2003. This cohort was then surveyed about every two years until 2014.
(Round 6). The data was collected from a nationally representative sample of 112 state-maintained schools in England – representative in terms of region, GCSE attainment and percentage of students on free school meals (Keating and Benton 2013).

For the analysis on secondary education we used data from Round 5, when pupils were aged 19 and 20, for measures of the outcomes of interest on political engagement and for most of the control variables. Data from Round 2 (when respondents were aged 13 and 14) were mostly used for measures of intentions to politically engage – variables that can be seen as ‘prior’ measures of the outcome variables.

For the analysis on Higher Education we used Round 6 when the young people were 22-23 for the dependent variable and used wave 5 when 19-20 for the prior measures of political engagement.

**Measures**

**Dependent Variables**

In this chapter we analyse the four political engagement outcomes investigated in this book: voting, peaceful protest, violent protest and party membership.

Voting and peaceful protest were tapped with items on reported level of actual participation. Voting, in the case of secondary education, referred to participation in the 2010 election ‘Talking with people about the general election on May 6th 2010, we have found that a lot of people didn't manage to vote. How about you, did you manage to vote in the general election?’ [yes, voted; no, did not vote].’ Voting in the case of Higher education was measured in reference to voting in the 2014 EP elections and intentions to vote in the 2015 general election using the questions; ‘Did you vote in the European Parliament elections, on 22nd May 2014?’ [yes, voted; no, did not vote] and ‘There will be a general election in the next year. How likely are you to vote in this election?’ [four point scale from very likely to not at all likely].

Protest activities for the analysis on both period of education were referring to reporting to have engaged in a variety of forms of activism;

‘Have you ever done any of these things? [yes; no]

- Taken part in a public demonstration
- Signed a petition or email/online petition
- Got together with other young people to campaign about an issue
- Joined a Facebook group about a political or social issue.’

The variable has two categories: 0=not done any of these things; 1=done one or more of these things.

Membership political parties and violent protest were measured for the analysis on both period of education using items on intentions to participate in the future;

‘In the future will you - Join a political party’

If you were confronted by something you thought was wrong would you - Take part in a violent demonstration?

The response categories varied in a four point scale from definitely would do this to definitely will not do this. The two positive responses and then the two negative response were combined together in order to create a binary outcome.

Independent variables

For the analysis of secondary education, we use the measure of the highest level of qualification attained by the young people at the age of 20, in either academic or vocational disciplines, as a proxy for their educational pathway. We captured educational pathway with a variable based on items about the type and level of qualification obtained. The variable has the following six categories:

1. Level 1 academic and vocational
2. Level 2 academic (GCSE grades A–C)
3. Level 2 vocational (GNVQs and BTEC)
4. Level 3 academic (A-levels)
5. Level 3 vocational (NVQ and BTEC)
6. Other 8

Constructed this way, the variable allows us to test the three perspectives on educational pathways. If Categories 2 and 4 have higher participation levels than Categories 3 and 5, type of education clearly matters most. If Categories 4 and 5 have higher levels than Categories 2 and 3 and the latter have higher levels than Category 1, then the level of education perspective

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8 This category includes all qualifications with insufficient information to classify them within the assessment framework. Examples include unclassified professional, vocational and apprenticeship qualifications and qualifications from other countries.
is supported. If Category 4 has a higher participation level than any of the other categories, then both type and level of education are important. The ‘education as proxy’ perspective is supported when there are no significant differences between any of the categories. The category of other is not commented on due to the wide diversity of qualifications contained within this group (see footnote 2).

For the analysis of the effect of Higher Education, we used the variable from Round 6. Which of these is the highest qualification you have? And used the response option Degree (for example BA, BSc), Higher degree (for example MA, PhD, PGCE).

Control Variables

We included several control variables in the subsequent models to minimize the possibility that the effect of educational pathway reflects that of other characteristics. The control variables relating to personal characteristics include gender, ethnic background and social background. Socioeconomic background is a strong determinant of both political participation (Ichilov 1988; Teney and Hanquinet 2012) and educational pathway (Loveless 1999; Green et al. 2006), and it is of paramount importance to control for this influence to ensure that the effect of educational pathway is not spurious. Social background is measured by (1) the number of books at home, (2) mother’s educational attainment and (3) father’s educational attainment. This measure focuses on Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) concept of cultural capital that may be understood as individual gain from parental level of education and cultural artefacts such as books. In addition, the number of books at home has been found to be strongly correlated to parental income (Schuetz, Ursprung and Woessmann 2008; Baird 2012), making it a good stand-in for parental income and occupation that, although more obvious measures of social background, are not available in CELS (Keating and Benton 2013). While the number of books at home is taken from Round 2 (as this will reflect the home in which the participant has grown up), father’s and mother’s education are taken from Round 5 as we would expect that young people aged 20 are more knowledgeable about their parents’ level of education than they were at 13.

Doing a degree in Round 5 is used as a control variable in the secondary school analysis. This is to ensure that we are not measuring the same effect of going to university twice. A significant effect of educational pathway on participation in a model with current activity included as control variable would indicate an enduring influence of this earlier educational pathway.
Finally, for all models we have included the relevant prior variables on participatory intentions that we have used as either proxies or as actual prior measures of the dependent variables. For the model on secondary education these were from Round 2 (aged 13-14) and for the model on HE these were taken from Round 5 (aged 19-20).

Method of Analysis

In this chapter we have used binary logistic regression to investigate the effect of secondary education pathways and then Higher Education on four different forms of political engagement. In addition, we investigate the mitigating or accelerating effects of the academic and higher level tracks by including interaction effects of SES with education pathway.

Results: Effects of Pathways in Secondary Education

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for young people when they have completed secondary education, Table 6.1 show that levels of voting (80.3%) and protesting (77.1%) are highest amongst those with academic Level 3 qualifications (i.e. A-levels). For voting there is a step-by-step decline according to level and type of qualification, students with vocational qualifications always showing lower voting levels than their academic peers attaining the same level of qualifications.

For peaceful protest activities there is a considerable gap between academic Level 3 qualifications and the remaining educational pathways, and there appears to be little difference among these other education pathways. It is interesting to note here that participants with academic Level 2 qualifications have a slightly higher protest rate than those with vocational Level 3 qualifications.

Table 6.1: Descriptive statistics for voting and peaceful protest by educational pathway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Having voted</th>
<th>Having engaged in protest activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N= 726</td>
<td>N=734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The intentions of young people who have completed secondary education in the future to join a political party or protest violently are extremely low and are below 5% for each educational pathway (see Table 6.2). In the case of the smaller number of young people undertaking specific education pathways i.e. level 1 and level 2 vocational qualifications the N then is referring to simply one or two people who have these intentions.

Table 6.2: Descriptive statistics for intended joining a political party and intended violent protest by educational pathway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intend to join a political party</th>
<th>Intention to violent protest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N= 718</td>
<td>N= 718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intend to (probably and definitely) (%)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 VOC</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 AC</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3 VOC</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3 AC</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Effect of Education Pathway on Political Engagement for Upper Secondary Education

Voting

172
For the analysis on secondary education we report the effects of different education pathways as probabilities as these are easier to compare between the different education groups and interpret (see Figures 6.1 – 6.3 below). We refer to the logit coefficients provided in Table 6.3 below to establish whether differences in the probabilities are significant or not. Students who have taken Level 3 academic qualifications have a significantly higher chance (80%) to have voted in the 2010 election than any of the other education groups, and there is step by step decrease in these chances as type and level of the qualification change (Fig. 6.1). There is a large drop to only a 25% chance of voting for young people undertaking either academic or vocational level 1 qualifications a 55% lower chance of voting than their peers who undertook level 3 academic qualifications (usually A-levels) (Fig. 6.1). In addition to this, Figure 6.2 shows that the level of education of the individual’s parents influences the chance of voting. The figure shows that the higher the parental level of education, the greater is the chance that their children voted. This effect appears to be stronger for young people who undertook only Levels 1 and 2 qualifications and weaker for those took Level 3 qualifications (Figure 6.3). This would lead us to consider the possibility that young people from less advantaged backgrounds benefit more from higher level pathways than those from middle class backgrounds. We tested this possibility by adding an interaction effect between our measure of SES and each education pathway. This interaction effect was not significant, however, possibly because the same tendency can be seen for each pathway (i.e. of children of privileged backgrounds showing higher levels of engagement).

Figure 6.1 The mean predicted probabilities of voting in the 2010 elections by different education pathways

![Figure 6.1](image1)

Figure 6.2 The mean predicted probabilities of voting in the 2010 elections by different educational achievement of parents

![Figure 6.2](image2)
Figure 6.3 The mean predicted probabilities of voting in the 2010 elections by different educational pathways and educational achievement of parents.
Peaceful Protest

The results of the binary logistic regression (Fig 6.4-6.6 and Table 6.3) show that only really the academic level 3 qualifications support the learning of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for peaceful protest with a just under 80% chance of young people in this academic pathway protesting in the last year. The chance for Level 1 Academic or Vocational students is half of this at just under 40% chance (Fig. 6.4). Vocational Level 3 and 2 and Academic Level 2 are closer to the Level 1 chances at around the 50% mark (Fig. 6.4). The highest level of education of either of the parents influences the probability of peaceful protesting (Fig. 6.5) in a step by step manner with those with the highest educated parent always having a greater chance of protesting. This influence can be seen to be in particularly the case for young people who have taken Level 1 or Level 2 vocational education pathways (see Fig. 6.6) again suggesting that level 3 qualifications provide some mitigating support towards political engagement for young people from less educated families. As for voting, we tested this possibility by adding an interaction effect between our measure of SES and each education pathway. This interaction effect was not significant either, possibly for the same reason as the one for voting.

Figure 6.4. The mean predicted probabilities of peaceful protest in 2010 by different education pathways

Figure 6.5. The mean predicted probabilities of peaceful protest in 2010 by different educational achievements of parents
Figure 6.6 The mean predicted probabilities of peaceful protest in 2010 by different education pathways and educational achievements of parents

Violent Protest

The general patterns observed in terms of legal forms of political participation (voting or protest) are not replicated with violent protest as the chance of young people saying that they will protest violently are very low for all education pathways and under 10%. The patterns between the different pathways are not clear probably due the low numbers of students suggesting that they will do this (Figures 6.7 and 6.8 and Table 6.3). Level 3 Vocational has the lowest probability at about 1% chance of saying that they will violently protest, whilst Level 1 and Level 2 vocational have the highest probability at about 5% (Fig. 6.7). However, these differences are not statistically significant (see Table 6.3). The effect of educational levels
of parents is also not significantly different, nevertheless, interestingly, it is parents with the lowest education level whose children are most likely to say that they will protest violently. Due to the low numbers of young people saying that they would violently protest it is not possible to examine the interaction between education levels and pathways.

Figure 6.7 The mean predicted probabilities of intended violent protest by different education pathways

Figure 6.8 The mean predicted probabilities of intended violent protest by educational achievement of parents

Political Party

The chances of young people saying that they will join a political party are also very low. Nevertheless, the patterns follow that of peaceful political protest with only academic level 3 qualifications showing a higher chance with a 20% likelihood or saying that they will belong to a political party in the future (Fig. 6.9). In contrast, the remaining pathways are at or below 10%. The differences between academic level 3 and the remaining pathways, however, is not
statistically significant at the 5% Level (Table 6.3). This is likely to be due to the low numbers of positive responses in each of the categories. As with other legal forms of political engagement, Education of parents, again has a positive influence on the chance to say that you will join a political party (Fig. 6.10). Nevertheless, the numbers are too low to examine the interaction between education levels of parents and education pathways.

Figure 6.9 The mean predicted probabilities of intended joining a political party by different education pathways

![Bar chart showing mean predicted probabilities of intended joining a political party by different education pathways.](image)

Figure 6.10 The mean predicted probabilities of intended joining a political party by educational achievement of parents

![Bar chart showing mean predicted probabilities of intended joining a political party by educational achievement of parents.](image)

All the four models used in the analysis of the effect of the experience of upper secondary education explained between 20-30% of the variation in the data which is very reasonable for social science research (see Table 6.3). This suggest that our findings are fairly robust.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>logit coefficient</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Protesting</th>
<th>logit coefficient</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>logit coefficient</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Violent protest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level1 or below</td>
<td>-1.964***</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td>Level1 or below</td>
<td>-1.222**</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>Level1 or below</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.553</td>
<td>Level1 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level2 academic</td>
<td>-0.571</td>
<td>0.372</td>
<td>Level2 academic</td>
<td>-0.956**</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>Level2 academic</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>Level2 academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level2 vocational</td>
<td>-1.092**</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>Level2 vocational</td>
<td>1.285***</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>Level2 vocational</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.541</td>
<td>Level2 vocational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level3 vocational</td>
<td>-0.361</td>
<td>0.3176</td>
<td>Level3 vocational</td>
<td>1.258***</td>
<td>0.366</td>
<td>Level3 vocational</td>
<td>-312</td>
<td>.450</td>
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<td>Other qualifications</td>
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<td>Other qualifications</td>
<td>-0.530*</td>
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<td>Other qualifications</td>
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<td>Other qualifications</td>
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<td>Mother college/sixth form</td>
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<td>.227</td>
<td>Mother college/sixth form</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>Mother college/sixth form</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>Mother college/sixth form</td>
</tr>
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<td>.103</td>
<td>.302</td>
<td>Mother Degree</td>
<td>.439</td>
<td>.295</td>
<td>Mother Degree</td>
<td>-.121</td>
<td>.354</td>
<td>Mother Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father college/sixth form</td>
<td>.448</td>
<td>.259</td>
<td>Father college/sixth form</td>
<td>-.082</td>
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<td>-.020</td>
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<td>.329</td>
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<td>.156</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>Father Degree</td>
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<td>Citizenship Education in school (up to 18)</td>
<td>-.507**</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>Citizenship Education in school</td>
<td>-.330*</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>Citizenship Education in school</td>
<td>.424*</td>
<td>.209</td>
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<td>Books in home</td>
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<td>.079</td>
<td>Books in home</td>
<td>.289***</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>Books in home</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>Books in home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting intentions (prior round)</td>
<td>.300*</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>Voting intentions (prior round)</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>Join a political party (prior round)</td>
<td>.381*</td>
<td>.154</td>
<td>Join a violent protest (prior round)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
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<td>.186</td>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>-.171</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Asian</td>
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<td>.896</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>.897</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-.207</td>
<td>.931</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-2.620</td>
<td>1.301</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>.657</td>
<td>.713</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-.070</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>-.614</td>
<td>.762</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>.341</td>
<td>.295</td>
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<td>-.711*</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>1.164</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-.293</td>
<td>1.232</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>At college/sixth form</td>
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<td>.357</td>
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<td>.253</td>
<td>.343</td>
<td>At college/sixth form</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.447</td>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
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<td>------</td>
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<td>.786</td>
<td>Training course at training provider</td>
<td>.864</td>
<td>.869</td>
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<td>1.430</td>
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<td>.591</td>
<td>.606</td>
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<td>.201</td>
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<td>Job with training</td>
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<td>.339</td>
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<td>.219</td>
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<td>-1.016**</td>
<td>.351</td>
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</tr>
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<td>looking after family</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>.679</td>
<td>looking after family</td>
<td>-.407</td>
<td>.624</td>
<td>looking after family</td>
<td>-1.152</td>
<td>1.138</td>
<td>looking after family</td>
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<td>break from work/study</td>
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<td>.958</td>
<td>break from work/study</td>
<td>-.143</td>
<td>.781</td>
<td>break from work/study</td>
<td>.530</td>
<td>.882</td>
<td>break from work/study</td>
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<td>looking for college courses</td>
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<td>1.106</td>
<td>looking for college courses</td>
<td>-.336</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>looking for college courses</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>1.227</td>
<td>looking for college courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.334</td>
<td>looking for a job</td>
<td>-.376</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>looking for a job</td>
<td>-1.355</td>
<td>.577</td>
<td>looking for a job</td>
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<tr>
<td>something else</td>
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<td>.659</td>
<td>something else</td>
<td>-.1306*</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td>something else</td>
<td>-1.199</td>
<td>1.109</td>
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<td>Nagelkerke R</td>
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<td>Nagelkerke R</td>
<td>.225</td>
<td>Nagelkerke R</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>Nagelkerke R</td>
<td>Nagelkerke R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3 Determinants of having voted in the 2010 election, protested in 2010, joined a political party, participate in a violent protest.
**Results: Higher Education 19-23**

Having established the effects of upper Secondary Education in the UK on inequalities in political engagement it is then necessary next to establish if there is an additional effect for young people of doing a degree on top of the earlier effect in the education system.

*Descriptive Statistics*

Similar to actual turnout rates, the level of reported participation of young people aged 22-23 in European Parliament election in 2014 is lower than that of their intentions to participate in the 2015 general election. In the EP election young people who had undertaken a degree were more or less split in half as to whether they voted in the 2014 EP election (see Table 6.4). Whilst less than one third of young people who did not undertake a degree reported voting. These figures increase significantly for the intention to participate in the 2015 general election for both groups and those with a degree continue to have higher rates of participation. Almost 90% of those with a degree intended to vote in the 2015 general election and almost 70% of those without a degree also said that they would vote in the 2015 general election (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4. Levels of reported participation of 22-23 years olds in the EP election in 2014 and intended participation in the 2015 general election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Having voted 2014 EP elections</th>
<th>Intending to vote in the 2015 general election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N= 786</td>
<td>N=811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Degree or Higher</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without a degree</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With reported protest there continues to be differences between the two groups. Almost 70% of young people with degrees said they protested whilst almost 50% of those without degrees also said that they had.

Table 6.5. Levels of reported participation of 22-23 years olds in different political activities.
Very few young people intended to participate in a violent protest (see Table 6.5). Only one student with a degree thought that they would protest violently and 19 (3.7%) without a degree had this intention. The pattern between education levels and levels of participation are different here with those without degrees wanting to participate more even if the numbers are still very low.

The figures for intentions to be a party member were slightly higher for member of a political party with almost 20% of those with a degree intended to be a member of a political party in the future and almost 10% of those without degrees also intending to (Table 6.5). The patterns between education level and intended participation match that of voting and peaceful protest with the higher the education level the more likely you were to participate.

The Effect of HE Education Pathway on Political Engagement among Young Adults

As we can see from Table 6.6, even when controlling for prior intentions to politically engage when the young people were 19-20, completing a degree by the age of 22-23 in 2014 has an additional significant (0.01 level) and positive effect on voting in the EP elections in 2014 and intending to vote in the 2015 general election (0.001 level). This effect is stronger and almost doubles for intended voting in the 2015 general election. Obtaining a degree also has an additional significant and positive effect for reported peaceful protest (0.05 level) and intentions to be a member of a political party (0.001 level) (Table 6.6). In contrast, the effect of doing a degree has a significant and negative effect for intentions to protest violently (0.05 level).
These models were scientifically sound as the levels of explained variance were fairly high for social science research. Three of the models on intending to vote, party membership and reported protest all explained around 25\% of the variation (Table 6.6). Reported voting in the EP election and violent protest were lower at about 15\% but this is still very reasonable for social science research.
Table 6.6 The results of the logistic regression identifying the determinants of different forms of political engagement in 2014 and 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting 2014 EP election</th>
<th>Intended voting in 2015 general election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logit co-efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td><strong>-0.549</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books in home</td>
<td><strong>0.157</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5Vote</td>
<td><strong>0.758</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td><strong>0.452</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nag R</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014 peaceful protest</th>
<th>2014 Intended violent protest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logit co-efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books in home</td>
<td><strong>0.264</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>R5protest</td>
<td><strong>1.541</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td><strong>0.414</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nag R</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intended party membership**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Logit coefficient</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Explained variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>-0.487</td>
<td>0.275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books in home</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5partymembership</td>
<td><strong>2.041</strong>*</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td><strong>0.791</strong>*</td>
<td>0.238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nag R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

This chapter’s strength rests in the fact that the data used for this purpose are longitudinal, which enabled our models to include controls for participants’ intentions towards political engagement before they embarked on different educational pathways. This means that the early socialization period and transmission of attitudes and values towards political engagement (Persson 2012, 2013; Kam and Palmer 2008; Burden 2009) have been taken into account. Controlling for these prior attitudes and, in addition, for social background and received citizenship education, we found the educational pathway between ages 14–19 to have an independent effect on political engagement and then an additional effect of undertaking a degree on top of this. Young people with both academic and higher levels of qualifications reported markedly higher voting and protesting levels. We also found that obtaining a degree significantly enhanced many forms of political participation taking prior (age 19) levels of participation into account. These findings contrast manifestly with those of Persson (2012), who found the post-16 educational track in Sweden not to have an independent impact on political engagement, and of Kam and Palmer (2008), who found no independent effect of a college degree on political participation. Our findings are thus inconsistent with the education-as-proxy perspective that assumes that education merely reflects early socialization influences and does not exert an effect by itself.

By bringing together the complexity of both the level and the type of qualifications achieved in late adolescence into the same piece of research we were able to show that both play a role in enhancing inequality in political voice. Both type and level impacted on reported participation in voting and protest activities. Thus these results support both the perspective that sees type/track as a major influence on political engagement (e.g. Ichilov 2002) and the perspective that highlights the importance of educational attainment (e.g. Nie et al. 1996). This chapter adds to this literature by showing how level and type of qualification interact in their effects on political participation. It further adds weight to the literature demonstrating the limited economic returns of low level vocational qualifications (Levels 1 and 2) by showing that these qualifications are also failing to support young people’s political voice.

Social Reproduction of Levels of Political Engagement

Without undertaking additional analysis it was already possible to identify a social effect on levels of political engagement. The vast majority of students in the vocational and lower-level pathways tend to come from low SES families, and thus the undermining influence of these
pathways on peaceful forms of political engagement will be felt disproportionally within the community of socially disadvantaged students.

To observe the differing effects of education for different social groups we examined the interaction between social background and educational pathway. Due to the low levels of intended political engagement in membership of political parties and illegal protest we only found some meaningful patterns on voting and peaceful protest. Although we did not find significant interaction effects, descriptive analyses clearly revealed that differences between social groups in these engagement outcomes were smaller in the academic and higher level pathway, suggesting that this pathway has some of the compensatory effect as postulated earlier.

Explanations

We suggest two reasons for our findings. First, late adolescence is when young people are most receptive towards learning about political engagement (Amnå et al. 2009); The second reason concerns the education experience itself. Educational research (see Chapters 2 and 3) has established that learning citizenship is a social process learnt across the school curriculum and that it takes place through interaction, debate and identity formation within communities such as the school community (Hoskins, Janmaat and Villalba 2011). Taking this into account, we hypothesize that the higher level academic qualifications offer more opportunities for these experiences by promoting a greater openness for debate, and providing more chances to influence decision making and to gain a sense of belonging in the class, the school and the university community as a whole. These experiences will have afforded the opportunity to learn the skills, the attitudes (such as self-efficacy) and the dispositions to protest and vote.

As we have seen, protesting is influenced by level 3 and level 4 academic qualifications, while voting is enhanced by both level 3 qualifications and academic level 2 qualifications. This leads us to surmise that the academic level 3 and level 4 tracks foster skills and attitudes that are particularly conducive to protesting such as critical thinking, political efficacy and the capacity to argue and propagate one’s case, while these matter less to voting. Possibly a sense of duty and a feeling of belonging to the political community are more important for voting, and these qualities may well be developed equally within academic level 2 and 3 and vocational level 3 courses. We could also suggest that the lowest level and level 2 vocational courses due to their low status may perhaps fuel a sense of individual failure, a feeling of not being clever enough
to understand politics and a sense of isolation from the political community. Further and more in-depth research is needed on 16–23 educational pathways to find out more about the differences in the cross-curricular experiences for learning citizenship.

The next chapter will address the extent to which these findings also apply in other European countries.
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Chapter 7. The influence of post 16 education on political engagement: England compared to other states

This chapter focuses on the impact of education after lower secondary on young people’s political engagement. In doing so it first of all seeks to assess whether the findings of the previous chapter have a wider relevance across Europe. The previous chapter examined the influence of both upper secondary and higher education on political engagement in England. Regarding upper secondary education, it found that both the level and type (academic or vocational) of qualifications mattered for political participation. Young people with lower levels of education and vocational qualifications showed notably lower levels of voting and peaceful protest. In terms of higher education, we found people with degrees to not only be more engaged in terms of voting and protest but also in terms of political party membership controlling for many background characteristics including prior engagement levels. People with degrees were significantly less inclined to engage in violent protest, however.

In this chapter we will review the existing empirical literature to assess whether other European countries show the same pronounced differences between educational trajectories or whether these differences vary across countries depending on the institutional characteristics of their systems of upper secondary education. Secondly, this chapter investigates the influence of post 16 education more broadly by also examining higher and adult education and assessing the impact of these phases on adult political participation. We will review the evidence of existing research as to this impact and identify omissions in the literature.

In the third part we will address two of these omissions. First, we will assess how similar the social gaps in political engagement are between 13 and 14 year olds and young adults. Are countries where this gap is largest among the youngest age group also the countries with the greatest disparities among young adults? In other words, are the social gaps at ages 13 and 14 a good predictor of the gaps among young adults? If that is the case, then that could be an indication that social differences in political engagement are already well-established early in life and that later phases of education or other post 16 experiences have little influence. However, if the social gaps among the two age groups are not related at the country level, then that suggests that educational experiences post 16 are important in diminishing or exacerbating the effect of social background on political engagement.
We will show that the relationship between the gaps at age 14 and the gaps among young adults is only weak. As this indicates that post 16 conditions matter, we proceed by investigating whether certain institutional characteristics of education systems can be associated with a smaller gap among young adults. Properties we will examine in detail are curriculum tracking and academic versus vocational orientation in secondary education. If these properties are related to social disparities in engagement amongst early adults, they would appear to have enduring effects.

This chapter makes a significant contribution to the literature on the development of political engagement among mid-teens and young adults and the educational conditions influencing it. Existing research on this particular age group is relatively sparse, which is surprising as late adolescence has been identified as a key formative period for political engagement: young people become interested in political matters, a disposition to participate is taking shape and political preferences are crystallizing (Flanagan and Sherrod 1998). Before that age political attitudes and dispositions are likely to still be unsettled. Indeed, while Hooghe and Wilkenfeld (2008) found no relation between voting intentions at age 14 and voting behaviour of young adults aged 18 to 30, they found a positive link between voting intentions during late adolescence and actual voting in early adulthood, suggesting that dispositions formed in the late teen years have lasting effects. According to Keniston (1968), the reason why late adolescence is a politically defining period is that young people at this age begin to turn to society as a source of exploration after having examined family membership and questioned parental authority in early adolescence. Young people are therefore likely to be particularly receptive to educational influences on political dispositions during this life stage (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Sherrod et al., 2010).

**England in a comparative light: the effect of track on political engagement in upper secondary**

Do we have reasons to presume that the gap between tracks in political engagement differs across Europe in the upper secondary phase? On the one hand, one would not expect this gap to vary much between countries as no state has an undifferentiated system anymore in this phase of education (Janmaat 2013). Thus, in every country there are one or several academic and vocational tracks into which students are enrolled on the basis of their performance in
lower secondary. On the other hand, systems of upper secondary education differ on at least four dimensions which may well have consequences for cross-track disparities in political engagement.

First, they vary in the degree of separation between academic and vocational tracks in the curriculum relevant for political engagement. As noted in the previous chapter, England has a rigorously separated system that offers only practical, job-related training in the vocational tracks. This contrasts markedly with Germany, where students in the vocational track are also offered a number of general courses such as citizenship (Greinert 1994; Dehmel 2005), and even more so with Sweden, where subjects relevant for active citizenship have been standardised across tracks (Lindberg 2003; Persson and Oscarsson 2010). One would thus expect the cross-track gap in political engagement to be greater in countries where this separation is stronger.

Second, countries vary in the degree of centralization. Previous research found that countries with a high degree of standardization, as expressed by central examinations, a national curriculum and standardized school resources, have lower between school and between student disparities in achievement and a weaker effect of SES on achievement (Mons 2007; van de Werfhorst and Mijs 2010). If school autonomy, i.e. the reverse of a centralized system, is expressed as large cross track differences in the curriculum and exams, one might anticipate larger cross-track gaps in political engagement in countries with high levels of school autonomy.

Third, as we noted earlier, the time of first selection varies greatly between countries. While students in countries with comprehensive systems may well have experienced selection for the first time in their educational careers when they enter upper secondary education, those from states with early selection systems have been accustomed to tracked education for many years. If the upper secondary system in early selection states merely reinforces the existing divide between tracks and offers student little opportunity to change track, the cross-track engagement gap can be expected to be particularly large in such states.

Fourth, the prestige afforded to the different tracks varies between countries. In some countries vocational education is highly institutionalised, as characterized by agreements between employers, unions and the state regarding apprenticeships, and offers good job prospects. In
such countries vocational education has some social status, which means that selection into vocational tracks is not just on the basis of poor performance. Enrolment in the vocational track as a percentage of the 16-19 age group tends to be relatively high. In other countries, usually, but not always, the ones with comprehensive systems, the function of vocational tracks is little more than offering a place to those who did not manage to enter the academic track. As vocational education is seen as a measure of last resort, enrolment in such tracks tends to be low (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011; Dumas et al 2013; Verdier 2013). One may propose that the stigma associated with vocational education in the latter negatively affects students’ feelings of efficacy and involvement with the wider society more broadly and that, consequently, cross-track differences in political engagement are larger in such countries by comparison to those where vocational education is more prestigious (Hoskins et al 2016; van de Werfhorst 2017).

Only a few studies appear to have investigated comparatively whether European states differ in the effect of curricular tracking in upper secondary on students’ political engagement and whether this effect is in line with any of the four dimensions of difference discussed above. This no doubt is due to the paucity of appropriate data to address this question. The IEA Civic Education Study among 16 to 19 year olds conducted in 2000 (henceforth Cived 16-19) includes a wealth of data on young people’s civic competences and attitudes from 16 countries worldwide. Crucially, however, this data source lacks information on the track attended, making it unsuitable to investigate cross-track differences. Hoskins et al (2016) is one of the few studies that examined the afore-mentioned question. This study relied on data drawn from a small scale cross-sectional sample of schools in England, Denmark and Germany, which limits the generalisability of its findings. It found enrolment in vocational tracks to be associated with lower levels of political efficacy and intended voting in all three countries. Countries however varied in the strength of the effect of track on intended voting. In Germany, where vocational education has some prestige and offers good employment prospects, this effect was weakest, while in England, where vocational education is associated with failure, it was most pronounced. The study thus found support for the fourth conjecture stated above. Moreover, England also showed the strongest effect of social background on track enrolment and political efficacy, suggesting that among the three countries the English system of upper secondary education is least capable of enhancing both access to prestigious tracks and levels of political participation for students of low SES backgrounds.
A recent publication by van de Werfhorst (2017) explored this question further. Using data on highest qualification achieved amongst 18 to 45 year olds from the European Social Survey, a data source with nationally representative samples, van de Werfhorst also found students with upper secondary vocational qualifications to lag their peers with academic qualifications in levels of political interest, electoral participation and political activism. However, in contrast to Hoskins et al (2016), van de Werfhorst found this gap not to be related to the “vocational orientation” of a system (i.e. the prestige accorded to vocational tracks) but to the time of first selection. In other words, in those countries that started soonest with allocating students to different tracks on the basis of school achievements, the difference between the vocational and academic tracks in students’ political engagement levels was greatest. These results are in line with the third conjecture stated above and more broadly support the findings from the previous chapter in that they highlight the inequality enhancing propensity of tracking on the basis of ability. Van de Werfhorst, however, has not explored whether either vocational orientation or time of first selection also have consequences for the effect of social background on political engagement.

Janmaat (2013) did examine cross-national differences in the effect of SES on civic and political engagement (CPE), using the aforementioned Cived 16-19 data and drawing on five indicators of CPE. He explored whether this effect was related to a system’s degree of ability grouping and level of school autonomy. He also assessed whether these institutional characteristics mattered for between school differences in CPE and the link between family background and CPE. In line with the aforementioned expectations he hypothesized greater school segregation in CPE and stronger effects of social and ethnic background in countries with more pervasive use of ability grouping and greater degrees of school autonomy. In agreement with this hypothesis, he found that countries with pervasive ability grouping systems tended to have greater between school gaps in CPE and a stronger effect of social background on CPE, although the differences with countries with a more comprehensive system were not significant. No link could be found between school autonomy and inequalities of CPE. This lack of clear results could be related to the limited number of observations at the country level (N = 11), which is another limitation of the Cived 16-19 dataset.

**The effect of higher and adult education on political engagement**
Studies examining the impact of HE and adult education tend to concentrate on the question whether these educational phases are influential in the first place, and if so, how. The findings of these studies appear to vary quite dramatically, which is largely due to differences in data sources and methods of analysis used.

One school of thought argues that educational attainment, as most visibly expressed with a degree of HE, does not have an independent influence on political participation but merely proxies for other experiences and influences, such as those of social background, cognitive and verbal ability, and personality (Schonbach et al., 1980; Herrnstein and Murray 1994; Klandermans, 1997). Studies that provide empirical support for this view include Kam and Palmer (2008), who investigated the effect of a college degree in the United States using Jenning’s and Niemi’s Political Socialization Panel Study, and Persson (2014), who used the British Cohort study to assess the effect of obtaining a higher education degree including a masters and PhD. Persson (2014: 882) provides a useful overview of studies taking different sides in the debate on whether the influence of education is real. He wryly concludes that currently “there is no agreement on whether education is a direct cause or a proxy for political participation and the debate remains unsettled”.

Among those who believe that higher education does make a difference for political engagement another two perspectives can be identified. The first argues that education has a direct positive effect on political engagement (a.k.a. the absolute effects thesis). Education has this effect by equipping people with the knowledge to understand politics and the skills to navigate the political process, to cooperate with other people and thereby to participate effectively in it (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Rosenstone et al 1993; Galston 2001). It also socializes people into attitudes and values, such as political interest, political efficacy, and norms of engagement, that in turn foster political participation (Emler and Frazer 1999). Empirical support for this thesis is offered by Yang (2017). Using CELS waves with measures of political engagement before, during and after university attendance, they find that experiencing HE has an independent positive impact on voting and volunteering taking prior levels of these outcomes into account. Analysing ESS and thus cross-sectional data, Hoskins et al (2008), moreover, find that the education level that makes the most difference in terms of boosting levels political participation (voting, party membership and peaceful protest) is a degree of higher education.
The argument that education has a direct effect on political engagement has not only been made with regards to educational attainment (i.e. level of education), but also, more specifically, in relation to civic education. Civic education, both in terms of a traditional programme geared at knowledge acquisition and a pedagogical approach aimed at learning through participation, promotes political participation by familiarizing students with the terminology of politics, imparting debating skills and other competencies to be politically active, and by cultivating an identification with the political process (Niemi and Junn 1998; Hillygus 2005; Torney Purta 2002; Campbell 2008) (see also Chapter 2). Empirical support for this argument is offered by Nie and Hillygus (2001) and Hillygus (2005) who find college students majoring in the social sciences and humanities to have significantly higher levels of voter turnout, active political participation and participation in community service, controlling for rivalling explanations. Other support comes from Beaumont et al (2009). Using a survey that queried American college students at the beginning and at the end of courses, they find that enrolment in courses with a focus on political involvement was associated with significantly higher levels of democratic engagement, including intended future political participation. Finkel (2014) provides further evidence for the direct effects thesis as he found participation in adult civic education programmes to have a lasting positive impact on political engagement, feelings of empowerment and political knowledge.

However, others have argued that education can also, or even mainly, influence political engagement in an indirect manner. The argument here is that qualifications provide access to certain social positions on the labour market and that the status of these positions ultimately drives political engagement. This is the positional effects thesis that has already been explained in Chapter 2. We thus do not need to repeat it here.

This short review of the literature on the effect of higher and adult education reveals two conspicuous omissions. First, existing studies in this field only seem to engage with the debate on the impact of education in general. This debate is not just confined to higher education, as shown by studies that have addressed it while exploring the impact of citizenship education and tracking in upper secondary (e.g. Persson and Oscarsson 2010; Persson 2012) or that of educational attainment in general (e.g. Milligan et al 2004, Dee 2004; Tenn 2007; Stubager 2008). Even studies that advocate higher education as a particularly effective site for the cultivation of participatory dispositions are not highlighting mechanisms and processes that are unique to higher education (e.g. Boland 2005; Colby et al 2007; Sondheimer et al 2010). They
emphasize mechanisms such as the transmission of knowledge and skills, values socialization and partaking in decision-making, which we know from the literature on educational attainment and citizenship education more generally.

As far as we could establish, no studies have engaged with particular institutional features of higher or adult education that could be related to political engagement. Features that come to mind include admission rules, HE participation rate and status differences among HE institutions. One could hypothesize that the more challenging the criteria of admission are and the lower the HE participation rate is, the higher the levels of political engagement of HE students are and the more they differ from those with lower levels of qualifications, following the logic of the positional effect argument. If it is more difficult for students of disadvantaged backgrounds to enter HE in countries with stricter admission criteria and lower participation rates, one might also expect that the social gaps in political engagement are larger in such countries. It could further be postulated that the greater the status differences between universities are, the more unequal are the levels of engagement among HE students or the stronger is the effect of social background on engagement among university graduates.

These conjectures can only be assessed by engaging in comparative research, which, and this is the second conspicuous omission, seems not to have been carried out either. All the studies examining the link between HE and political engagement that we have identified represent single country studies (e.g. Hilligus 2005; Yang et al 2017). Hoskins et al (2008) used ESS data but their analysis focused on the pooled data and did not examine differences between countries in the effect of tertiary education on active citizenship behaviour. Undoubtedly, the lack of comparative studies reflects limitations in the available data to explore the impact of institutional characteristics, but taking this caveat into account it is revealing that no scholar working within HE, as far as we know, has even highlighted this issue as a serious omission.

In view of the shortcomings of existing data we cannot explore the effect of distinct features of HE systems comparatively, aside from the participation rate which we will therefore do. We can, however, use ICCS 2009 and ESS data to broadly assess changes in the effect of social background on political engagement between ages 14 and 28, as already mentioned in the introduction. If the effect changes between these age groups, it is likely that post 14 education has had some impact on political engagement. As a second step we will use ESS data to investigate whether cross-national variation in the effect of social background among young
adults can be related to institutional features such as the degree of ability grouping, the vocational orientation of upper secondary and the HE participation rate.

Data and measures

We use ICCS and ESS to compare early adolescents (13-14 year olds) to young adults (18-31 year olds) in the strength of the social background effect on political engagement. 22 European countries participated in both dataset and consequently we can make comparisons across this number of countries. From the ESS we selected the data of Round 4 (2008) to 7 (2014) because these rounds have the same variables for parental educational attainment and occupational status. Our analytical sample consists of 18 to 31 year olds who participated in these rounds. We only included those born after 1983 to ensure that the respondents have been subjected to the same institutional conditions as much as possible. Although education systems are quite stable in terms of institutional characteristics (van de Werfhorst 2017), the post-communist countries have witnessed some dramatic reforms. For instance, as noted in Chapter 5, Czechoslovakia and Hungary introduced early selection shortly after the fall of communism in the early 1990s. We can be fairly sure that those born after 1983 have all experienced the same post-reform education system in these countries.

In order to compare the two age groups in the effect of SES, it is essential that our measures of SES and political engagement are as equivalent as possible across the two datasets. Consequently, we constructed a measure of SES that is based on mother’s and father’s educational attainment and occupational status as these variables are available in both datasets. The SES measure that we created in each of the two datasets represents the factor score of these four variables. We also used similar items in the two datasets to construct two equivalent measures of political participation: voting in national elections (based on a single item with values ‘no’ and ‘yes’) and legal protest. The latter is similar to the legal protest measure of Chapter 5 and thus consists of a summative scale capturing the responses to four items:

9 In ICCS we used the variables MSEI FSEI MISCED FISCED; In ESS we used the variables EISCEDF FATHOCC EISCEDM MOTHOCC. An additional benefit of the ESS variables is that respondents were asked to state the occupation and highest qualification of their parents when they (i.e. the respondents) were 14, which is precisely the age of the ICCS respondents. The variables capturing SES in the two datasets therefore could not be more equivalent. Note that the ICCS SES measure for this chapter is slightly different from the one used in Chapter 5 as the latter also included the number of books at home.
contacting a politician, signing a petition, taking part in a lawful demonstration, boycotting products. The values of the ESS measure range between 0 (not having done any of these activities) and 4 (having done all of these activities). The only difference between the two datasets is that ICCS asked about intended participation while ESS asked respondents whether they had done these activities in the last 12 months. However, as noted in the previous chapter, while intended participation overestimates reported participation, the two are strongly correlated (Achen and Blais 2010), giving us some basis to consider the measures in ICCS and ESS as equivalent.

As noted above, the institutional characteristics we are going to examine are the degree of ability grouping, vocational orientation in upper secondary and participation in higher education. In fact, the first of these characteristics is as much a feature of pre- as of post 14 education as it concerns the organization of education in lower secondary. Nonetheless, we consider it worthwhile to examine as ability grouping may set children on a certain trajectory, the effects of which may only emerge after age 14. Similar to van de Werfhorst (2017) we relied on PISA (Programme of International Student Assessment study), and notably on the 2015 PISA report (OECD 2016), to construct a composite index of comprehensivisation (i.e. the reverse of ability grouping). Unlike him, we did not just include age of first selection and number of different school types in the index but also two indicators of ability grouping within schools, namely (1) the percentage of students in schools with no ability grouping for any subject within classes and (2) the percentage of students in schools with no ability grouping for any subject between classes (ibid. pp 167, 382). The latter two are important as ability grouping can be a regular practice in an otherwise comprehensive system. It is difficult to know beforehand whether the first two indicators are more important than the latter two. If in a comprehensive system all the schools practice ability grouping the degree of segregation by performance may well be as strong as in a system that selects early but does not practice grouping by ability within schools. For this reason we constructed the index in such a way that all four indicators contribute equally to index. The index represents the sum of the standardised scores (Z-scores) of the indicators. Thus, countries which select early, have many different types of schools and practice grouping by ability on top of that have very low values on the index. Countries with comprehensive systems and minimal grouping by ability within schools have very high values.
Following van de Werfhorst (2017) we also looked at the vocational orientation of upper secondary education. The reason is that in countries where vocational education has strong institutional embedding, has some measure of esteem and offers good job prospects for its graduates, enrolment into vocational tracks is less (negatively) determined by school achievement and SES (ibid.). In such countries, vocational education tends to generate strong occupational identities and involvement in professional organizations, which may well enhance trust in the system, civic engagement and political participation more generally (Mostafa et al 2011; Hoskins et al 2016). Therefore, the difference in political engagement levels between vocationally and academically educated students may well be smaller in countries with strong vocational systems. We measured vocational orientation with the percentage of 15-24 year olds enrolled in vocational secondary education, which is available in the online database of Unesco (Unesco 2017).

Participation in higher education was measured with the percentage of 30-34 year olds with a degree of higher education (Eurostat 2016). Eurostat compiled these statistics as one of the main targets of The Europe 2020 Strategy is that at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds in the EU should have completed tertiary education by 2020. We chose a measure reflecting completed HE rather than enrolment in HE to ensure that participation in HE represents at least three years of HE experience.

As countries with a strong institutionalization of vocational education also tend to be the countries with highly tracked systems (van de Werfhorst 2017) and a somewhat lower participation in HE (precisely because vocational education offers an alternative route into the labor market), we check whether the institutional variables are interrelated. As expected, comprehensivization is negatively related with vocational orientation at the country level, but this correlation is not significant (r = -0.22; p = 0.28; N = 27). Vocational orientation is also negatively linked with HE participation but again this link is not significant (r = -0.17; p = 0.39; N = 27). Comprehensivization practically shows no link at all with HE participation (r = -0.06; p = 0.76; N = 27). Thus, the three variables reflect quite distinct properties of education systems.

We also added a number of control variables to the analyses of ESS data to explore the influence of the institutional characteristics on young adults’ political engagement (see further below). These controls involve gender, place of birth, current activity and educational

Results

Social gaps in participation among 14 year olds and young adults

As a first step we correlated SES with the two political participation outcomes at the individual level for each country to establish the social background effects per country. This gave us a set of 22 correlations for each outcome in the two datasets. Next, we analysed the associations between the correlations of the youngest age group with those of the young adults at the country level in order to assess how well the social background effect among the former would predict the social background effect among the latter. The SES effect on voting among 14 year olds shows a positive and significant correlation with the SES effect on this outcome among the young adults ($r = 0.44; P = 0.04; N = 22$). There is thus some continuity in the impact of social background across the two age groups: those countries where this impact is largest among 14 year olds (or, put differently, where the social gaps are largest) are broadly also the countries where this impact is relatively strong amongst the young adults. However, the SES effect among 14 year olds explains only 19% of the variance in the SES effect among 18 to 31 year olds, which suggests that experiences and educational conditions post 14 still have a lot of potential to reduce or inflate the social gaps in voting among young adults. Remarkably, there appears to be no relation between the two age groups in the SES effect on legal protest ($r = 0.18; P = 0.42; N = 22$). Thus, the social gaps in legal protest at age 14 are not predictive at all for such gaps at later ages, making it highly likely that post 16 education has differential effects on the political engagement of youngsters from diverse social backgrounds.

The scatter plots of Figures 7.1 and 7.2 allow us to look at these relationships in greater detail. Regarding voting, we can conclude that the countries falling below the regression line have smaller social gaps amongst young adults than one would expect on the basis of the social gaps among 14 year olds (see Figure 7.1). This applies particularly for Russia, Italy, Greece and Sweden. We even see a reverse gap among the young adults in these countries. In other words
young people of disadvantaged backgrounds report slightly higher voting levels than young people of more privileged backgrounds. Conversely, the countries above the regression line show higher than expected social gaps among the young adults, and this is particularly evident for the United Kingdom, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Estonia as these countries are located furthest from the regression line. The United Kingdom has the dubious honour of showing the strongest social background effect of all countries and this applies to both age groups. In Russia the social gaps are smallest amongst both 14 year olds and young adults.

The pattern for legal protest is not that dissimilar (see Figure 7.2). Again we see that Russia and particularly Sweden record much smaller social gaps among young adults than you would expect judging from the social gaps amongst the youngest age group. In Sweden we again see a reverse gap among the former. Russia and Sweden are joined by Finland, Norway, Spain and the Czech Republic which also show relatively small social gaps among the 18 to 31 year olds. We also see that the UK, Poland and Austria are once again the countries with higher than expected social disparities. They are joined this time by Switzerland, Italy and Greece. As before the UK shows the largest gaps for both age groups. Russia shows very small gaps but the gaps are smallest for the adults in Sweden and for the 14 year olds in Estonia.

Figure 7.1. The effect of social background on voting among adolescents and young adults
At first sight it is rather difficult to speculate about possible educational conditions that might explain these patterns since the countries showing either smaller or larger than expected social gaps among the adults constitute such diverse groups. After all, what could Sweden and Russia, as the two countries consistently showing much smaller gaps, have in common? Vice versa, what are the crucial similarities between the otherwise very different countries of UK, Austria and Poland that could explain why they time and again show much larger gaps among the young adults? Yet on close inspection, these patterns do make sense in terms of what we know about the countries’ education systems. Sweden combines a strict comprehensive system with a standardised curriculum of citizenship education and social studies in upper secondary education, features that one would expect to result in smaller social disparities in engagement. In similar vein, the relatively large social gaps in Austria are not that surprising in view of that country’s system of early selection, which slots children into certain educational trajectories and thereby determines their social destinies from as early as age 10. Equally, the very large social gaps in the UK are perfectly understandable considering the diverse school landscape in lower secondary, the rigorous separation between tracks in upper secondary and the status differences between universities in higher education that characterise the country’s education.
system. Still, the position of some countries is difficult to explain. Why, for instance, does the Czech Republic with its early selection system show such small social gaps in political activism among the young adults? Conversely, why are these gaps so large in Greece when that country combines a comprehensive system with strong central control over the curriculum?

**System characteristics and inequality of engagement**

Let us now examine the ESS data to see whether institutional features are related to social gaps in political engagement among young adults. In view of the hierarchical structure of the data, with individuals nested in countries, and the binary and count nature of the dependent variables, we used multilevel analysis with logistic and poisson regression models. We included cross-level interaction terms to see whether some institutional property magnifies or mitigates the effect of SES on political engagement. If it mitigates it, this property might be helpful in reducing social disparities in political participation. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 present six models (see below). The first three models present analyses without interaction terms and for each of institutional variables separately (Models 1 to 3). The last three models include the interaction effect with SES (Models 4 to 6). All the independent variables have been standardized to a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one.

As expected young adults of working class background do not participate to the same degree as their middle class peers (see the effect of SES in Models 1 to 3 in both tables). This tendency is particularly strong for legal protest. Thus, the more demanding forms of participation are also the more socially elitist ones, as noted previously.

Does the effect of social background depend on institutional characteristics? We see that the interaction effect of comprehensivization with SES is negative and significant for both voting and political activism (Model 4 in Tables 7.1 and 7.2). In other words the earlier and the more pervasive the use of grouping by ability (i.e. the opposite of comprehensivization), the greater are the social disparities in political engagement among young adults, both concerning conventional forms of participation (voting) and more alternative and demanding modes of participation (legal protest). The size of this effect is considerable, particularly for voting: as comprehensivization decreases by one SD from its mean (zero), so the effect of SES on voting increases from 0.15 to 0.24 (0.15 - 0.09) and the effect of SES on legal protest grows from 0.20 to 0.24 (0.20 - 0.04). Contrary to expectation, vocational orientation appears to increase.
the social disparities in voting, as shown by the positive interaction effect of vocational orientation x SES (Model 5). Evidently, the more positive image of VET in countries with strong vocational systems does not help young people from working class backgrounds (who are more inclined to be in vocational education as their peers from middle class backgrounds) to become more politically engaged. The remaining interaction effects are all insignificant, suggesting that participation in HE is not able to mitigate social gaps in political engagement. These results thus not only suggest that ability grouping practiced in lower secondary leaves a lasting imprint in terms of greater social inequalities of political participation, but also that conditions in upper secondary and higher education are not able to disrupt this pattern. Indeed, these inequalities seem only to be reinforced at the upper secondary stage in countries with pervasive ability grouping in lower secondary. Our findings echo those of van de Werfhorst (2017) who found that the difference in political engagement between vocationally and academically educated young adults is greater in strongly tracked systems. We essentially find that in such systems young adults of working class backgrounds also face greater obstacles to become politically engaged.

Table 7.1. The influence of institutional characteristics on young adults’ electoral participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.15**</td>
<td>0.13**</td>
<td>0.15**</td>
<td>0.15***</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
<td>0.15**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensivization</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational orientation</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE participation</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES x comprehensivization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.09*</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES x Vocational orientation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.12**</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES x HE participation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* P < 0.05; ** P < 0.01; *** P < 0.001. N = 31233 at the individual level; N = 31 at the country level

Note: These analyses also include controls for educational attainment, date of birth, gender and current activity. The full results of these analyses can be obtained upon request.
Table 7.2. The influence of institutional characteristics on young adults’ legal protest activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.19***</td>
<td>0.21***</td>
<td>0.19***</td>
<td>0.20***</td>
<td>0.21***</td>
<td>0.20***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensivization</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational orientation</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HE participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES x comprehensivization</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.04*</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES x Vocational orientation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES x HE participation</td>
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<td>-0.01</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* P < 0.05; ** P < 0.01; *** P < 0.001. N = 31233. N = 31233 at the individual level; N = 31 at the country level

Note: These analyses also include controls for educational attainment, date of birth, gender and current activity. The full results of these analyses can be obtained upon request.

The picture that seems to emerge from these findings is that ability grouping (in those countries where it is prominent) sets young people on a certain trajectory that begins to influence teenagers at ages 15 and 16 regarding political dispositions and predisposes enrolment into distinct tracks in upper secondary and participation in HE. In other words, ability grouping locks young people up in a certain trajectory that determines the remainder of their educational career. Once enrolled in different tracks young people start to develop different attitudes and dispositions towards the political system, irrespective of the prestige accorded to the vocational and academic tracks. As social background is so strongly related to track placement in lower secondary, young people of different social backgrounds are likely to have their educational routes mapped out for them early in life in countries with highly stratified systems. Vice versa, in comprehensive systems with practically no ability grouping, teenagers at ages 15 and 16 are not exposed to different learning environments and the link between social background and educational trajectories post 16 is therefore likely to be much more fluid. Existing research provides support for this conjecture. In a cross-national study Brunello and Checchi (2007) find that school tracking magnifies the impact of social background on enrolment in higher education.
education and labour market outcomes. Single country studies examining the effect of educational reforms similarly find that prolonging the period of common schooling (and thus deferring the moment of selection) enhances the chances of students of disadvantaged backgrounds to enter tertiary education (Aakvik et al 2010; Malamud and Pop-Eleches 2011; Van Elk et al 2011).

It is interesting to note that while HE participation does not seem to help in reducing social gaps in engagement, it does seem to promote alternative forms of political participation in general (as shown by the positive main effect of HE participation on legal protest). Vocational orientation also has this effect. In contrast comprehensivization is neither directly related to voting nor to political activism. Thus, even if conditions relating to later phases of education (that is, the conditions that we have assessed) may not be able to reduce social disparities, they do seem to be able to enhance political engagement in general. For HE participation this is an interesting finding as it provides support for the absolute effects thesis. Apparently, the experience of HE by itself enhances political participation regardless of how many other young adults have degrees in the country. If HE participation had shown a negative main effect, the positional effect thesis would have been supported.

**Conclusion**

Our short review of literature on the impact of post 16 education on political engagement showed that there are hardly any comparative studies relating distinct features of upper secondary or higher education to political outcomes. The studies assessing the influence of higher education practically all focussed on the effect of educational attainment in general. We argued that the scarcity of such studies constitutes a serious omission in the literature on the development of political engagement among young people. This omission is all the more critical as we found that social gaps in engagement at ages 18 to 31 were only weakly related to those at ages 13 and 14. This suggests that between early adolescence and early adulthood educational conditions influence the participatory inclinations of different social groups to a considerable degree. Testing the effect of three of such conditions we found that the more pervasive the use of ability grouping is in lower secondary the larger are the social gaps in engagement among young adults. This result suggests that an undifferentiated system with
mixed ability classes is a good strategy to arrive at a more even distribution of political participation among young adults.

**References**


Yang, J (2017) "Young People’s Citizenship in Higher Education in the UK", University of Southampton, Faculty of Social and Human and Mathematical Sciences, PhD Thesis, 1-149.
Chapter 8. Conclusions and Implications for Policy and Practice

The social gap in political participation is an endemic problem in liberal democratic societies. Nearly everywhere people of disadvantaged backgrounds do not participate to the same degree as people of more privileged origins and this disparity has remained stubbornly large despite the massive educational expansion of the last 50 years. The participation gap can have all kinds of undesirable consequences. It leads to the disadvantaged having a weaker voice in politics, which may well make the government less responsive to their needs, interests and demands. This, in turn, may fuel feelings of alienation and erode public support for democracy, or, in contrast, induce the disadvantaged to support populist parties that destabilize the democratic system.

This book examined whether schools can help in reducing the social gap in political participation. As already mentioned, the fact that consecutive generations of young people spend an ever-greater part of their lives in the education system has not helped to reduce this gap. Put differently, while educational expansion has been beneficial to some extent for social mobility in terms of offering access to a wider range of employment and careers (Breen 2010) (although top professions such as law, journalism and medicine are still largely exclusively middle class professions - for a more critical assessment of educational expansion, see Hoskins et al 2018), it seems not to have resulted in greater social mobility in political engagement (i.e. young people of working class backgrounds showing higher levels of participation than their parents). One may thus be tempted to conclude that education is ineffective in promoting political engagement altogether, particularly that of the working classes. One school of thought indeed holds that we cannot expect education to have much influence since a disposition to participate is formed, allegedly, at the pre-education stage, in early childhood through parental rearing practices. Another posits that it only enlarges disparities and reproduces social divisions because of the propensity of public education to treat children of working class backgrounds differently (see Chapter 3).

It is our position, from our findings from the analysis conducted for this book, that the situation is more complex than either of the above positions would suggest and schools are playing an
additional, more complex and sometimes contradictory role in influencing social inequalities in political engagement. Our key message is that distinct learning opportunities provided by schools do help young people to become more engaged. This is the case for all young people including those from a more disadvantaged background. The crucial issue, however, is unequal access to these learning opportunities. We posit that the main reason why social disparities in political participation are still so pronounced is that working-class children do not get to experience these learning possibilities to the same degree as middle class ones.

We proceed by decomposing this argument in several steps. First, we turn to social gaps in political engagement. We showed that children of disadvantaged backgrounds are indeed less politically engaged. Measuring political engagement with a mix of activities, including common and rarer, and legal and illegal ones, we found that these children are less likely than their middle class peers to say that they will vote in elections, join a political party and engage in peaceful demonstrations as adults. Importantly, focussing on England, we established that the social disparities in these outcomes became more salient between ages 12 and 20, which suggests that school education only reinforces the divisions resulting from differential upbringing. We also found that England was not unique in showing lower levels of engagement among disadvantaged youth. Practically the same regularities were apparent across Europe. Yet, there were also conspicuous differences between countries. While social disparities in engagement were large in England and Switzerland, they were much smaller in many southern and eastern European countries. This pronounced cross-national variation suggests that the link between social background and political engagement does not represent some preordained natural state of affairs but is dependent on the social, institutional and cultural characteristics of societies, including features of education systems. Moreover, zooming in on electoral participation (both as intended and as reported) as the most common form of political participation, we found that countries where the link between social background and voting was strongest among 14 year olds were not necessarily the countries where this link was also strongest among 18-31 year olds. In other words, the effect of SES on voting at age 14 was not a good predictor of this effect at a later age. This suggests that young people’s experiences in late adolescence and early adulthood differ substantially across countries and that these experiences make a difference in terms of encouraging (or discouraging) young people of disadvantaged backgrounds to vote. Thus, simply by looking, cross-nationally, at how the effect of SES on voting changes between two age groups, we can provisionally conclude that
the early childhood socialization argument is unlikely to explain the full story between the relationship between social class and political engagement.

We also found, however, that low SES children were more likely than their middle class peers to say that they would take part in illegal protest, and this regularity applied across the board as well. This is not to say that this form of participation is also more popular among low SES children than the established ones. Similar to their middle class peers they much prefer legal over illegal forms of participation in absolute terms, but the difference in support for these forms is smaller among low SES children. By expressing their voice in ways that society deems unacceptable, rather than not participating at all, the low SES children supporting illegal forms of participation show that they are not a-political and disengaged. This particular group may shun the accepted ways of participation because they distrust them or do not feel confident in taking part in them. Indeed, time and again research has found that people from working class backgrounds think that their concerns are ignored by politicians (and thus express low levels of *external* political efficacy). In addition, they believe that they lack the skills to participate effectively (and thus to show low levels of *internal* political efficacy) (Hoskins et al 2016). Worryingly, we found a connection between social disparities in legal forms of participation and social gaps in illegal ones: the stronger the *positive* effect of SES on legal forms of participation, the stronger the *negative* effect of SES on illegal ones. Again, England stood out in this respect as it showed both the strongest positive effect on legal forms and the strongest negative effect on illegal forms of participation. We use the term “worryingly” because the finding suggests that the established ways of participation can be understood to be so imperfect and exclusionary that the disadvantaged either do not participate at all or resort to illegal means to make their voices heard.

Second, we discuss the learning opportunities and their effects on the political engagement outcomes. In Chapter 2 we identified two paradigms in which researchers conceptualise the process of how young people learn to become more engaged, characterised by the metaphors of participation and acquisition. The acquisition paradigm positions the transmission of political knowledge from teachers to students as the first step in learning to become politically engaged. This helps young people to have a better understanding of politics and a better set of skills to navigate it as they become older. The participation paradigm, conceptualises political
knowledge and skills to be co-created through participatory learning processes including discussions and debates within diverse communities. It is this experience of participation and co-creation of meaning that develops in young people the qualities that lead to future engagement, for example, a political identity, political efficacy and sense of belonging to a political community.

We presented these two understandings regarding the processes of learning as complementary and suggested that schools ideally provide both of them in the taught curriculum. We measured the concept of learning through participation with two variables, political activities, which represents the participation of students in a range of political activities organised by the school, and open climate, which refers to student perceptions of how freely they can discuss political issues in class. Learning through knowledge acquisition was broadly tapped with variables on the volume of citizenship education (CE) experienced, on the mode of delivery of CE, and on whether the school had teachers with special responsibility for CE. We presumed that the greater the volume of CE experienced, the more knowledge acquired. We also assumed that having CE as a discrete subject in the curriculum and having a teacher with special responsibility for CE indicate a greater weight given to CE and thus a higher level of knowledge acquisition.

Taking part in political activities in school and experiencing an open climate of discussion turned out to be powerful modes of learning for political engagement. These participatory forms of learning showed strong positive associations with voting, joining a political party and participating in a peaceful demonstration in all European countries. They were negatively related to illegal protest, which further underlines the special character of this form of political engagement, as highlighted earlier. The volume of citizenship education experienced, as one of the measures broadly tapping knowledge acquisition, also seems to be a promising form of learning as it showed the exact same pattern of relationships to the four engagement outcomes as the two participatory learning variables. However, volume of CE was only available for England. The mode of delivery of CE and whether teachers had special responsibility for CE appeared to make little difference for students’ political engagement.
We thus continued with political activities, open climate and CE volume as the most effective learning opportunities. Does experiencing these forms of learning help to reduce social disparities in political engagement or does it only exacerbate the pre-existing social divide in such engagement? We find a mixture of either compensatory effects or no effects. In England the learning opportunities indeed appear to help in compensating for the inequality enhancing influence of social background. This is particularly the case for CE volume. The compensatory effects of this form of learning are most pronounced for voting as the most common form of political participation. In other words, experiencing a high volume of CE helps children of disadvantaged backgrounds to catch up with their peers of more endowed backgrounds in political engagement. In other European countries partaking in political activities in school and experiencing an open climate of discussion did not reduce or enhance social disparities in political engagement, suggesting that these learning opportunities have the same effect for all social groups. We speculated that the absence of an interaction effect with social background might be due to the voluntary nature of participating in these learning opportunities. This voluntary nature might lead to relatively more low SES children choosing not to take part or not being chosen to participate in these learning opportunities. As a result, the children that could benefit the most from these opportunities are not experiencing them.

Whatever the reason for the lack of interaction effects, the key point to note is that none of the influential forms of learning worsen the social divide in engagement. Thus, the learning opportunities that schools provide do not have discriminatory side effects for students of disadvantaged backgrounds. This means that it is not through the influence of the specific learning opportunities on political engagement that social disparities in political engagement continue to grow during lower and upper secondary education (as happened in England – see above).

Our central claim in this book is that such growing disparities are primarily the result of unequal access to learning opportunities. In the third and last step to complete the argument outlined above we present the evidence for this claim. We found that children of disadvantaged backgrounds had significantly lower levels of participation in school activities and reported markedly lower levels of an open climate of classroom discussion than children of more privileged backgrounds in all of the six European countries that we investigated. Thus, there
was a strong social skew in access to the learning through participation opportunities. Moreover, these inequalities emerged within classrooms. This is significant as one may assume that the offer of these learning opportunities does not differ within this smallest unit of aggregation in an education system. The fact that SES nonetheless shows a strong positive link to the learning opportunities therefore strongly suggests that the voluntary nature of these opportunities somehow prevents students of disadvantaged backgrounds from participating. In other words, the optional character of these opportunities gives rise to a strong selection effect.

Interestingly, in England children of disadvantaged backgrounds also experienced significantly lower amounts of citizenship education, even within the same grade. At first sight, this is quite surprising as the amount of citizenship education is unlikely to vary within a school or grade. However, on second reflection the volume of CE may differ after all within grades if CE is offered in a cross-curricular fashion or is integrated wholly in PSHE and not all students take the subjects in which it is embedded. As students in England already choose subjects at the end of Year 9 (at ages 13/14), this possibility cannot be ruled out. Early specialization can thus lead to social disparities in access to CE if social background is also influencing subject choice in Key Stage 4 (the last two years of lower secondary). It would be interesting to see if SES still determines amount of CE received within classrooms, but as there are no such data available for England, we could not test this.

Importantly, however, schools in England with a relatively high intake of low SES children appeared to offer more citizenship education than schools with more middle class children. This tendency was so pronounced that it completely compensated for the lower levels of citizenship education experienced by low SES children within schools. In other words, while low SES children report lower levels of citizenship education than middle class ones, as they are concentrated in schools that on average provide more citizenship education, they on balance experience the same amount of citizenship education as their middle class peers. This is an important result as it shows that schools do have the ability to redress inequalities of access, in this case by offering more of the learning source to classes with a concentration of low SES children.

Going back to the learning through practice opportunities, we also found social disparities in access to these forms of learning to differ substantially across countries, even though low SES
children had lower levels of access in all of them (as noted above). Once again, these disparities proved largest in England. In Switzerland they were smallest, and the other countries showed values between these two extremes. This cross-country variation shows that inequalities of access depend on the wider social context and thus do not reflect something that is natural and universal. In this respect it is worth noting that countries do not only differ in how individual SES relates to the learning opportunities but also classroom social status (i.e. the classroom mean of individual SES). We found classroom social status to be positively related to the learning opportunities in Ireland, England and Sweden but not in the other countries. In other words, in these countries not only does your own social background matter for access to important learning opportunities but also the social background of your classmates. If you are of working class background and so are most of your peers, you are doubly disadvantaged in terms of access to relevant learning sources. Interestingly, the three countries just mentioned have quite different education systems. For instance, the strict mixed-ability schooling in Sweden’s system of lower secondary contrast strongly with England’s diverse school system where streaming and setting is pervasive and students can specialize early. What they have in common is that they are prosperous post-industrial countries with established democracies. The marked disparities in Sweden are surprising in view of the comprehensive character of its education system and the strong egalitarian traditions in the country’s politics. Our findings thus show that even countries with vibrant democracies, progressive education policies and the means to implement reforms are still (or even particularly) plagued by social inequalities in learning to become engaged citizens.

Given the pronounced variation between countries in unequal access to important learning opportunities, we decided to explore whether this variation is connected to one major aspect of institutional variation across countries – the onset and degree of tracking in lower secondary. We postulated that tracking, i.e. the allocation of students to different tracks on the basis of prior achievement, has major consequences for disadvantaged students’ access to learning opportunities. Theorizing that the low status tracks present obstacles in terms of access to learning to become more engaged, we hypothesized that low SES students, who invariably end up disproportionately in the vocational / low status tracks, would have more limited access to relevant learning opportunities in countries with early and pervasive tracking. By implication, we also expected social inequalities in the political engagement outcomes to be larger in such countries.
In agreement with the last conjecture, we indeed found that social disparities in voting and in engaging in legal protest were significantly larger in countries with early tracking systems than in those with comprehensive ones. Interestingly, we did not only find this pattern among students in lower secondary but also among young adults. The latter is a finding of major significance as it suggests that the tracking experienced by early adolescents in lower secondary leaves traces in adulthood and thus contributes to the perpetuation of social inequalities in political engagement.

Contrary to expectation, though, social inequalities in the learning opportunities experienced were significantly smaller in the states with early tracking systems. This pattern could be seen for participation in school political activities, open climate of classroom discussion, and having CE as a discrete subject. Social disparities were only greater in such states with respect to having teachers with a special responsibility for CE. How can social disparities in engagement outcomes be greater in early tracking states but social disparities in learning opportunities be smaller?

Although we can only speculate about the reasons, one explanation is simply to take the responses of underprivileged students at face value and believe that young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds are more able to politically engage within a selective system where they have less competition for access. Another possibility could be that children in early tracking systems have limited comparative horizons. Due to lack of information about the opportunities offered in other schools, these students may well base their judgements about their learning opportunities on how well they make use of them compared to their peers in their immediate environment (such as their school class). Thus, even if the learning opportunities in some school are judged to be very limited by a neutral observer, students in this school may be very positive about them if they feel they stand out among their class mates in utilizing them. In other words, perceptions of learning opportunities might well mainly be shaped by the so-called ‘big fish in small pond’ mechanism (Marsh et al 2008; Crosnoe 2009). If this mechanism indeed applies, it has important implications for how social background is related to learning opportunities in early tracking systems. In such systems, students in the prevocational tracks, who are disproportionately from lower class backgrounds, will then be as positive about the
learning opportunities as students in the academic tracks, who are mostly from middle class backgrounds. Both groups may well be equally susceptible to this big fish in small pond effect, leading students in the prevocational tracks to possibly overestimate and those in the academic tracks to underestimate the real degree of open climate (if it were possible to somehow measure this). Detailed analysis showed that there indeed are no differences between tracks in perceptions of an open climate. The ultimate result of the limited comparative horizon effect is then that SES is unrelated to learning opportunities in early selection states.

However, as already noted, we can only posit the notion of limited comparative horizons as a conjecture and we do not wish to dismiss the possibility that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds may actually be able to participate more politically when there is less competition, as is likely to be the case in states with early selection systems. In addition, any overestimation of the learning opportunities in the vocational track could equally well result from a pressure to provide socially desirable answers (recall here that the questions tapping an open climate of discussion asked students to state how well their teachers facilitated open discussions). In view of the emphasis on consensus, conformity and social manners in the prevocational track, as noted by many researchers (e.g. ten Dam and Volman 2003; Leenders and Veugelers 2008; Nieuwelink, ten Dam, and Dekker, 2018), this possibility cannot be ruled out. Students in the prevocational tracks may thus have felt a greater pressure to provide positive answers about the learning climate in their school than those in the academic tracks.

The minimal cross-track differences in learning opportunities in the early tracking systems could of course also be genuine. However, if this is true, it raises the question why there are such pronounced cross-track differences in the political engagement outcomes. In other words, if students genuinely experienced the same learning opportunities across tracks, one would also expect them to show similar levels of political engagement.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**
As unequal access to learning opportunities is the key driver of social disparities in political participation, can we improve access for children of disadvantaged backgrounds? The results of our research as described above suggest we can. They suggest that making these opportunities compulsory and providing *more* of them in schools with a high concentration of low SES children can eliminate social disparities in access. To do this the first challenge is to address the belief that schools are primarily about employability and to challenge the pretence that schools provide a value neutral system. Challenging this assumption is necessary as high stakes testing, ability grouping, ability-focused teaching practice and a focus on attainment actually enhance the values of competition and individualisation of success and nourish the belief that ability as fixed (Swann et al 2012 and Ainscow et al 2006). Schools, especially those with large numbers of disadvantaged students, need to pay as much attention to supporting the learning of political engagement and the values of democracy and Human Rights (Ainscow et al 2006). It will not be easy to convince schools serving disadvantaged communities to do so as they often, for the best of intentions, maintain a disciplined pedagogical approach focusing on eliminating deficits in literacy and numeracy (Ben Porath 2013; Bisschop 2016). However, such an approach can be restrictive in terms of learning opportunities for political engagement, and schools need to be aware of this. Our findings for England suggest that schools with high numbers of low SES students should step up their effort to organise activities that allow students to practice democracy, as they clearly trailed schools with a more privileged intake in providing this important learning opportunity. In addition, there is an important assignment for all schools to encourage students of disadvantaged backgrounds to make use of the learning opportunities provided, as our findings reveal that, even when offered the same learning opportunities *within* the classroom, such students are not able to access these opportunities to the same degree.

The question is then how do we tackle the issue of access by social class. The first place to start is with school leaders and teachers. The initial and continuing professional development of teachers and school leaders needs to include substantive content on social class, on how to include young people from disadvantaged communities within the school and on how social class influences classroom interaction. Social class is a topic that has been severely lacking in teacher education in the UK in recent years (Reay 2006). Inclusive teaching involves

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10 Ethnicity, Sexuality, Gender and disabilities and intersectionality between these groups are equally necessary to take into account.
developing a learning environment whereby all students have the right to be included in the school community (Carrington et al. 2014). It requires a deep knowledge and exploration of the students involved in these settings and analysis of the reasons of difficulties in access (Ainscow et al 2006). This will enable teachers to rethink how to address student defiance and non-conformity within the school environment. These moments can, at times, be reinterpreted as potential moments to start a discussion on how to take action and create change in the school and in the wider community (Nolan 2011; Nolan 2018). Thus, they can become a moment to plant the seed for future political engagement. Successful examples of teacher training on inclusive teaching practice have used critical service learning programmes that are set within disadvantaged communities and represent the diverse and challenging environments that children face so that teachers fully comprehend and understand the range of students in their classroom (Carrington et al. 2014).

Inclusion would not focus purely, as it does in the English education system, on the narrow scope of attainment on literacy and numeracy tests (Ainscow et al 2006). Instead an inclusive school would then make sure to focus on including less advantaged students in decision making processes in the school and further opportunities for learning political engagement activities within the school such as school councils, debates and mock elections. Research undertaken in the schools would be beneficial to ensure that all students are supported to take part and inspections of school would help to monitor the success in these broader understandings of the levels of inclusivity.

What is decidedly not helpful in ensuring equal access is early specialisation, ability grouping (either within otherwise comprehensive schools or between schools as seen in early selection systems), a diverse school landscape and parental choice of schools. The social sorting effects of these conditions invariably cause children of disadvantage backgrounds to be exposed to different learning opportunities – and often inferior ones from the perspective of fostering political engagement. In this sense England has ample room to improve its education system.

It stands out for its pervasive use of ability grouping (streaming and setting) in lower secondary education, its early specialization (from age 14 subjects that are relevant for political socialization such as history and geography are optional (Department for Education 2014), and its rigorous separation of tracks in upper secondary education (Janmaat et al 2014). The social
gaps in learning experiences that these practices generate are compounded by the diversity of schools in combination with parental choice (Green et al 2006). It comes as no surprise then that the social disparities in political engagement are greatest in England, both among 14 year olds and among young adults. Reforming the education system to achieve greater equality of access is thus entirely possible. If the political will is present, such reforms can be implemented. However, as long as principles such as parental choice, a diverse school offer catering to everyone’s needs, and school autonomy are considered more important than social inequalities in participation, little action can be expected from the government.

This is not to say that schools cannot do anything in such a policy environment. Indeed, their very autonomy means that they can play a key role in minimizing social gaps in access in learning opportunities. It is up to schools whether to group students by ability, whether to offer citizenship education as a standalone subject or not, and whether to devote ample time to it. It is up to teachers to decide on the topics to be covered and on the pedagogical strategies to follow. What is more, the prevailing “progressive idealism” among teachers in England (Alexander 1999) is likely to make the school environment much more receptive to calls for enhancing equality of access. In this sense, it may be more productive for scholars to bypass the legislature and approach educational professionals directly with appeals for greater social justice. Yet at the same time we need to recognise that external policy pressures and the limited time and energy left for teachers to innovate may curb the potential for success (Drummond et al 2013). In this respect, it is with some trepidation that we witness the process of ever more schools turning into academies. Academies are not obliged to follow the National Curriculum, which means they are also exempt from teaching citizenship education as a statutory component of the NC. We can only hope that the many pressures put on the school system does not prompt academies to abolish citizenship education.
References


Appendix 5.1 ICCS items used in analyses

Items included in scales

1. Expected adult electoral participation

Listed below are different ways adults can take an active part in political life. When you are an adult, what do you think you will do?

a. Vote in local elections
b. Vote in national elections
c. Get information about candidate before voting in an election

2. Expected participation in future legal protest

There are many different ways how citizens may protest against things they believe are wrong. Would you take part in any of the following forms of protest in the future?

a. Taking part in a peaceful march or rally
b. Collecting signatures for a petition
c. Choosing not to buy certain products
d. Contacting an <elected representative>

3. Expected adult participation in political activities

Listed below are different ways adults can take an active part in political life. When you are an adult, what do you think you will do?

a. Join a political party
b. Join a trade union
c. Help a candidate or party during an election campaign
d. Stand as a candidate in <local elections>

4. Expected participation in future illegal protest
There are many different ways how citizens may protest against things they believe are wrong. Would you take part in any of the following forms of protest in the future?

a. Spray-painting protest slogans on walls
b. Blocking traffic
c. Occupying public buildings

5. Civic participation at school

At school, have you ever done any of the following activities? Please think about all schools you have been enrolled at since the first year of ISCED level 1.

a. Voting for <class representative> or <school parliament>
b. Becoming a candidate for <class representative> or <school parliament>
c. Active participation in a debate
d. Taking part in discussions at a student assembly
e. Taking part in decision-making about how the school is run

< No I have never done this; Yes I have done this but more than a year ago; Yes I have done this within the last 12 months>

6. Open climate of classroom discussions

When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons, how often do the following things happen?

a. Students feel free to disagree openly with their teachers about political and social issues during class
b. Students are encouraged to make up their own minds about issues
c. Teachers respect our opinion and encourage us to express them during class
d. Students feel free to express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students
e. Teachers encourage us to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions

< Never; Rarely; Sometimes; Often>

7. Internal political efficacy

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about you and politics?

a. I know more about politics than most people my age
b. When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say
c. I am able to understand most political issues easily
d. I have political opinions worth listening to
e. As an adult I will be able to take part in politics
f. I have a good understanding of the political issues facing this country

< Strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree>