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Subjective wellbeing and the political citizen

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INSTITUT DES SCIENCES SOCIALES

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THÈSE DE DOCTORAT
présentée à la
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de l'Université de Lausanne
pour l'obtention du grade de
Docteur ès sciences sociales
par
Annika Lindholm

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« **Subjective wellbeing and the political citizen** »

Marie SANTIAGO DELEFOSSE
Doyenne

Lausanne, le 12 février 2021

This thesis sheds light on the relationship between subjective wellbeing and political behaviour and attitudes in contemporary European democracies. The profound societal changes of the last half a decade and the unanswered questions about why some citizens engage more politically while others do not, and how persons develop into politically efficacious citizens, as well as why a part of the electorate is attracted to right-wing populist parties and ideas, have paved the way for considering citizen's subjective wellbeing as a powerful, yet so far overlooked, predictor of political attitudes and behaviour. Through four empirical studies, this research links several dimensions of subjective wellbeing, including its evaluative, emotional, eudemonic and social components, to a sense of political efficacy (Study 1), to political participation (Studies 2 and 3) and to a right-wing populist vote choice (Study 4). The empirical studies reveal how subjective wellbeing is a significant driver of citizen's political orientations, their participation patterns, as well as their electoral choices, thereby being highly relevant at all stages of the development of the political citizen. The implications of this relationship are profound, both from a scholarly and a policy-making perspective, in order to better understand persisting political inequality in contemporary democracies, to identify the origins of democratic support or instability, as well as to shed light on the development of illiberal political ideas and threats to liberal democracy. In this way, subjective wellbeing emerges as a crucial research agenda for the future of political science.

Cette recherche porte sur le rôle du bien-être subjectif en tant que déterminant du comportement et des attitudes politiques dans l'Europe contemporaine. Les changements profonds de la société durant les dernières décennies et les questions qui demeurent dans les études du comportement politique ouvrent la voie à considérer le bien-être comme un facteur important, pourtant précédemment négligé dans le domaine de la science politique, pour expliquer comment se façonnent les citoyens et citoyennes politiques. Les enjeux concernent notamment les inégalités dans la participation politique et le développement d'un sentiment d'efficacité politique personnelle, et de plus, les interrogations autour des motivations derrière le choix de vote pour la droite populiste. Au travers de quatre études empiriques, nous associons plusieurs dimensions du bien-être, y compris ses composants dits évaluatifs, émotionnels, eudémoniques et sociaux, avec le développement d'un sens d'efficacité politique (Étude 1), la participation politique électorale et non-électorale (Études 2 et 3) et le choix de vote pour la droite populiste (Étude 4). Ces quatre études révèlent que le bien-être peut s'avérer comme un déterminant majeur des orientations politiques, décisions de participation et du choix de vote. Ainsi, avec cette recherche nous exposons le rôle primordial que joue le bien-être à chaque étape du façonnement de l'individu qui s'engage dans la politique et la formulation de ses préférences. Les implications de ces résultats sont majeures, autant pour la discipline que pour la société, en vue de mieux comprendre la persistance d'inégalités politiques dans les démocraties de nos jours, révéler les sources d'instabilité de la démocratie et du soutien aux idées politiques illibérales, ainsi qu'éclairer les origines des menaces à la démocratie libérale contemporaine. De ce fait, le bien-être apparaît en tant qu'un sujet majeur pour l'avenir de la recherche en sciences politiques.

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1 Introduction and research objectives

1.1 Why should political science care about subjective wellbeing?

Citizen participation in politics is widely considered as a cornerstone of a democratic society, and many would argue that political participation is the main avenue through which citizens shape their living environment and create the rules that govern their coexistence with the surrounding society. Understanding what makes citizens engage politically or abstain from participating, as well as understanding the political attitudes and preferences they hold, has therefore intrigued political scientists since the auspices of Western political theory in the works of Plato and Aristotle in Ancient Greece.

Early participation theories emerged from the Tocquevillian ideal of the political ‘supercitizen’ who was informed and committed to democratic ideals. Meanwhile, the proliferation of mass voter surveys since the 1960’s showed the reality of an ‘unsophisticated’ citizen – the non-informed citizen who was influenced by group loyalties and personalistic considerations (Dalton, 2006). What followed was the development of an elitist theory of democracy (Almond and Verba, 1963; Berelson et al., 1954), which conceived political decision-making to be secured by a small, active and interested group of citizens and the political elites. The focus therefore turned to explaining the electoral choices of citizens, which naturally shifted the focus of scholarship to the politically active segments of the population, while paying less attention to the preferences of the non-active segments of the citizenry.

In the United States, the Chicago and the Columbia schools of thought pioneered in studying political behaviour as determined by socio-structural factors (Lazarsfeld et al., 1965) and by

structural cleavages in society (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), while the Michigan school focused on explaining political behaviour through intergenerational transmission of participation habits and partisan preferences (Campbell et al., 1980). An alternative stream of scholarship defines the act of participating as a rational choice of the individual, arguing that the individual participates in political life if the expected utility of participation is higher than its cost (Green and Shapiro, 1994; Whiteley, 1995) and that they make their electoral choices by maximizing the expected utility of their single vote (Farquharson, 1969). Critics of this theory put forth altruistic explanations to participation, which argue that individuals participate and make their vote choices for the expected overall welfare of the society (Caplan, 2011; Fowler and Kam, 2007; Kramer, 1983), or for normative reasons (Blais and Galais, 2016; Campbell et al., 1980; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968), even if the expected utility does not outweigh its cost (Downs, 1957). Furthermore, variation in political behaviour between individuals have been linked to unequal access to resources, which according to the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) would explain why citizens with high socio-economic status (SES) and large social networks participate more in political activities and have distinct preferences compared to persons with low SES and smaller interpersonal networks (Almond and Verba, 1963; Verba et al., 1995; Verba and Nie, 1987).

As informative as these traditional models of political behaviour and attitudes have been for the discipline, scholarship has more recently started moving beyond the traditional models and pay more attention to the *psychological foundations* of citizen engagement and preferences in politics. These psychologically oriented theories aim to complement traditional theories by explaining *how* objective resources matter for the development and the choices of the political citizen, and thereby shed light on the mechanism involved. Already the CVM recognizes the contribution of a sense of motivation for the purpose of political engagement; however the

CVM explains motivation as a predisposition to be understood as a result of the long-term influences of individual structural characteristics or the social context persons are embedded in. In this rationale, resources and socio-contextual determinants should predict the development of key political attitudes in the long-term, notably the sense of political efficacy and political interest, which are widely thought to precede political engagement (Clarke and Acock, 1989; Craig et al., 1990; Prior, 2010; Van Deth, 1990; Verba et al., 1995; Rosenstone et al., 2013).

Yet, and in addition to the predictions of the CVM, internal psychological structures and the short- and medium-term psychological experiences and processes have also been identified as powerful drivers of political attitudes, preferences and behaviour. Acknowledging this, and responding to the gaps left by conventional theories in addressing the psychological drivers of political engagement, recent scholarly work has proliferated notably around the influence of certain personality traits (Mondak, 2010; Gerber et al. 2011; Baker, 2005; Jost et al., 2009; Vecchione and Caprara, 2009; Bakker et al., 2016) and emotional experiences (Marcus, 2000; Valentino et al., 2011; Brader, 2011; Weber, 2013; Capelos et al., 2017; Rico et al., 2017; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013), on citizen behaviour and the development of political attitudes and orientations. Moreover, a literature around health and politics combines structural explanations (the resource theory) with psychological theories of political engagement by notably arguing that poor health causes changes in people's psychological capacity to engage politically, and also affecting their opinions about politics (Denny and Doyle, 2007; Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015; Schur et al., 2013; Mattila et al., 2013; Rapeli et al., 2020).

In spite of the immense efforts that have been made in political science and in the social sciences more broadly to understand the structural, contextual and psychological underpinnings of

political attitudes and behaviour, there is still much we do not know about what makes individuals act or abstain from participating, how individuals form their political attitudes and preferences, as well as how they make their electoral choices. More precisely, the discipline still lacks a sufficient understanding about how the individual's overall psychological state, their experiences and evaluations about themselves and their lives, i.e. *their overall mental state of wellbeing*, is related to the development of the political citizen. This is well illustrated by the gaps that remain unfilled by the resource-model or the existing psychological frameworks for political activity and preferences. Firstly, few would deny the strong influence resources have on the development of the politically active citizen and their partisan preferences, but the CVM strongly focuses on the objective resources individuals have at their disposal, while conceiving the individual's subjective resources primarily as motivation determined by their objective resources. This is problematic, since *subjective resources entail more than motivation* and these resources are not fully predicted by one's objective resources. Secondly, while personality or emotions likely stand behind a part of the variation in political behaviour and attitudes that remains after taking objective resources into account, their limits become apparent when we consider the stability of attitudes, choices and participation patterns. Since personality traits are thought to be rather stable across the adult life span (Conley, 1985; Roberts, 2009; Lucas and Donnellan, 2011), the attitudes and values of the individuals and, by consequence, their political choices and behavioural patterns should not significantly change across time: however, this would be a strong assumption that does not align well with the contemporary trends of voter volatility or the changing patterns of political participation, nor with the account that political attitudes also respond to life situations (Rosenstone et al., 1993) and not only to structural conditions. On the other hand, emotional theories of political attitudes and engagement (e.g. Marcus, 2000; Valentino et al., 2011; Brader, 2011; Weber, 2013) do not sufficiently address how one's psychological state and experiences influence the behaviour and attitudes of the

political citizen in the medium and long-term, given that most established democracies and party systems have remained, despite some increases in voter volatility, remarkably stable over time (Bakke and Sitter, 2005; Tavits, 2005; Schickler and Green, 1997).

The remaining questions surrounding how individuals act and think politically have aroused interest in *extending on* the explanations provided by the resource theory and *complementing* the current scholarship on the psychological drivers of the political citizen. It is in this context that *subjective wellbeing*, defined as “a person’s cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life” (Diener et al., 2002: 187), takes centre stage. In the past decades, which have been characterized by an overall increasing material standard of living in most advanced democracies, human wellbeing has gained momentum among researchers and policymakers in social, economic and behavioural sciences. Today, wellbeing is widely recognized as an indicator of the quality of the society we live in (Diener and Suh, 2003; Samman, 2007), and it has been mobilized to explain various forms of social behaviour (Veenhoven, 2008; Helliwell, 2003; Diener et al., 2018). By consequence, how we feel about ourselves and our lives influences how we behave in the public sphere, including how we behave and think politically. This has paved the way for wellbeing to increasingly being considered as a societal, as well as a *political issue* (Carpenter, 2012).

There are many reasons to believe that subjective wellbeing has been an overlooked predictor of political engagement and attitude-formation. Fredrickson (2004) formulated how subjective wellbeing broadens the individual’s perceptual horizons and facilitates the formation of resources. In a similar vein, it has been argued that only when citizens have reached a certain (high) level of wellbeing will they start looking beyond their personal concerns through societal and political engagement (Flavin and Keane, 2011; Inglehart, 1997). In psychology, being

happy and satisfied makes persons more outward looking, i.e. more likely to engage with the surrounding society and seek more challenges and pursue goals (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2011). Conversely, low wellbeing is likely to dampen motivation and interest to invest one's resources in political activity (Ojeda, 2015; Sahu and Rath, 2003) and negatively impact the sense of self-efficacy, including the belief in oneself as a competent political actor. Low wellbeing is moreover accompanied by negative emotions, perceptions and attitudes that influence the political attitudes and electoral choices of citizens even after they have taken steps to participate in political activities, notably by being fueling political 'anti'-attitudes and support for radical political ideas and parties (e.g. Esaiasson et al., 2020; Rico et al., 2017). The mechanism that relates subjective wellbeing and physical health to political activity and attitudes are similar; just as poor health, low wellbeing also dampens motivation and triggers perceptions and attitudes that shape political attitudes and preferences. However, despite that scholarship on health and political behaviour has also paid attention to mental health, the scholarship has much focused on how ill-being, or poor mental health, influences the political citizen (Bernardi, 2020; Ojeda, 2015). Subjective wellbeing, on the other hand, is *a broader concept than the absence of ill-being*: it also entails the evaluative judgements and emotions that make individuals assess whether they lead a good life or not. By consequence, scholarship on the political consequences of subjective wellbeing is not only concerned with how the absence of wellbeing dampens political engagement and influences attitude-formation, but is equally interested in how high wellbeing spurs participation and affects attitudes.

Acknowledging that subjective wellbeing is an important driver of political behaviour and attitudes has several implications for the discipline, but also for the society at large. From a scholarly perspective, it effectively *extends on the established models and contributes to the emerging psychological literature* of political behaviour and attitudes by introducing subjective

wellbeing as an overlooked, yet powerful, driver of political participation, attitudes and preferences. From the societal perspective, subjective wellbeing matters for better understanding the democratic functioning of societies; if persons who feel well systematically participate more politically it could engender a '*wellbeing bias*' in political decision-making, in a similar way that (physical) health inequalities influence participation and give rise to a health bias in politics (Mattila et al., 2013; Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015), or income inequalities bias policies to the detriment of the poor, who tend to participate less than better-off citizens (Hill and Leighley, 1992). In a similar vein, if low wellbeing influences political attitudes and party preferences, it could shed light on the psychological origins of the gradual transformation of the party spectrums that we have witnessed in many advanced democracies, including notably the wave of right-wing populism sweeping over Europe and beyond, and the challenges it poses to the future of liberal democracy. In this way, the political consequences of subjective wellbeing brings about the question whether the malaise and crisis of democracy that political science is concerned with is actually a *wellbeing malaise* in society? Moreover, could wellbeing constitute a significant *political cleavage* that cuts across traditional political divisions, such as the left-right dimension, and is reflected in whether and how people engage politically and which political attitudes and preferences they hold? Explaining citizen's political attitudes and behaviour through a subjective wellbeing framework has therefore proved itself to be a most promising research objective.

1.2 Research objectives and structure of thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to shed light on the association between subjective wellbeing and political behaviour and attitudes. By explaining how subjective wellbeing influences citizen political behaviour and orientations, we unveil new aspects of the 'black box' that explains why

and how individuals become political actors and make the political choices they do, while also gaining a better understanding of the roots of political inequality and policy biases in society, and gain further insight into the drivers of the widely-perceived crisis of democracy. In this way, we prove the great potential subjective wellbeing has for the development of the discipline.

In the interest of taking a multidimensional approach to subjective wellbeing, four key aspects of subjective wellbeing will be evoked to explain political behaviour, attitudes and preferences: *evaluative* wellbeing (life satisfaction), *emotional* wellbeing (positive and negative emotions), *eudemonic* wellbeing (psychological empowerment, mastery, self-realization, and related perceptions) and *social* wellbeing (the extent of social support, the size of social networks, and related indicators). By considering several dimensions of subjective wellbeing we are able to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between wellbeing and political behaviour and attitudes, as well as shed light on any variation between wellbeing dimensions in their influence on political outcomes. In this way, the present research has an advantage over the majority of existing studies that use unidimensional measures of subjective wellbeing to explain political outcomes (e.g. Flavin and Keane, 2011; Frey and Stutzer, 2010; Liberini et al., 2017; Pacheco and Lange, 2010).

Likewise, a comprehensive approach will be taken to explain political participation. Instead of restricting it to electoral participation only, we take into account a set of non-electoral political activities: contacting, campaign activity, signing a petition, political consumerism, and protest participation (strikes, boycotts and public protesting). As well, in addition to examining actual participatory outcomes, the development of political efficacy, an essential politico-psychological orientation that precedes political engagement, will be examined through a

subjective wellbeing lens. Finally, we look at outcomes beyond actual political participation or the political attitudes that precede it by investigating into the influence of subjective wellbeing on the vote choice of citizens after they have made the choice to participate in politics by showing up at the ballot box. Furthermore, by exploring causality in the relationship between wellbeing and politics, we contribute to the lively scholarly debate concerning whether wellbeing is a cause or a consequence of political activity. With regard to this debate, we expect the relationship to primarily run from wellbeing to attitudes and participation, thus challenging the conventional wisdom about the benefits of participation for individual wellbeing.

The focus of this research will be on explaining the link between subjective wellbeing and political attitudes, choices and activity on the *individual-level*; however, country-level comparisons will be employed in two of the four empirical studies (Studies 3 and 4) in order to shed some light on the cross-country variation in both how subjective wellbeing is understood and evaluated among citizens, as well as how it influences participation patterns and attitudes, both which can be highly context-dependent. To elucidate the contextual influence in the linkages between wellbeing and political outcomes, we will outline how the country context affects political participation (2.3) and discuss how culture affects people's evaluations of their wellbeing (ch. 2.5.5), and how the country's economic, political and institutional context influences wellbeing among citizens (ch. 2.5.6), as well as how it influences the relationship between wellbeing and political behaviour (ch. 2.6.4). It is expected that the context influences the linkages between wellbeing and political outcomes to a certain extent, for instance by having a distinct influence on participation between old and new European democracies, while we do not expect that the context-dependency of the relationship will be strong enough to overrule possibilities to generalize across countries and contexts regarding the overall influence of wellbeing in the development of the political citizen.

The overarching research questions of this thesis can thus be formulated as follows:

1. How do the different dimensions of subjective wellbeing influence participation in political activities, or its intentions?
2. How is subjective wellbeing, and social support in particular, related to the development of a sentiment of political efficacy?
3. Given electoral participation, is low life satisfaction associated with a right-wing populist vote?
4. What is the causal mechanism that connects subjective wellbeing with political attitudes and behaviour? Is subjective wellbeing primarily an antecedent or a consequence of political efficacy and participation?
5. How much does the country context matter for the relationship between subjective wellbeing and political behaviour across Europe? How much does cross-country variation affect this relationship?

Part 2 of this thesis will present the overall theoretical framework we operate in with regards to current scholarship on political attitudes and behaviour and subjective wellbeing, in addition to exposing the main arguments for why subjective wellbeing matters for political attitudes and behaviour. In part 3 we will empirically test the relationship between the four key dimensions of subjective wellbeing (evaluative, emotional, eudemonic, social wellbeing) and the various political outcomes (political participation, political efficacy and vote choice) in the framework of *four empirical studies* (Study 1-Study 4¹). Both comparative, cross-sectional survey data and single-country panel data will be employed to empirically test the hypothesized relationships.

¹ A slightly modified version of Study 1 has been published in a peer-reviewed journal: Lindholm, A., 2020. Does Subjective Well-Being Affect Political Participation? *Swiss Journal of Sociology*, 46(3), 467-488.

The four empirical studies are related, but also to a certain degree independent to each other regarding their specific theoretical focus, methods for analysis and data use. It is therefore necessary to present the analytical methods, the data sources, and the study-specific conceptual framework separately under each study. Part 4 will conclude this thesis by discussing the implications of the linkages between subjective wellbeing and political attitudes and behaviour both for political science and for the society at large and suggest some avenues for future research. After examining the proposed five research questions in the four empirical studies, we will have learnt how wellbeing is an issue with political relevance, and how paying more attention to citizen's wellbeing could be the key for promoting democratic inclusiveness, ensuring democratic stability and protecting liberal democracy. Subjective wellbeing therefore becomes paramount for the future of democracy and should thus figure prominently on the political research agenda.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 From traditional theories to ‘critical citizens’ and the diversification of political activity and issues

Before revisiting the antecedents of political attitudes and behaviour through a subjective wellbeing lens, it is essential to understand how societal developments since the second half of the 20th century have shaped the political landscape and re-defined the political citizen to the extent that it becomes crucial to extend on the well-established explanations to political participation, choices and orientations. While the classic theories of political behaviour still explain to a large part why and how persons behave as political agents, the emergence of a ‘critical’ citizenry (Norris, 1999) and the changing role of the citizen as a political actor, as well as the decline of the traditional economic left-right dimension in the political spectrum and the related emergence of new political issues and ideological divides, have challenged traditional theories of political behaviour and paved the way for considering alternative explanations to political attitudes, activity and partisan preferences.

The deep-rooted societal changes since the second part of the 20th century have changed the realm of politics and society. An overall cognitive mobilization of the citizenry has taken place through increasing levels of education for the masses and a proliferation of media (Inglehart, 1997; Stolle and Hooghe, 2011). By consequence, access to information has been made easier to the masses, and together with the aggregate higher levels of education, these developments facilitate the educated and interested citizens’ capabilities of seeking and processing political information and turning information into structural knowledge about politics – and possibly leading to a larger gap between informed and uninformed citizens (Rapeli, 2013; Elo and Rapeli 2010; Iyengar et al., 2010). In addition, the economic and social developments that have taken place in the last decades in advanced industrialized democracies have brought with them

significant increases in the material standard of living for a substantial part of the population in developed democracies, while the intra-country economic and social inequality has not decreased between citizen to the same extent, and has even increased in some contexts (World Inequality Lab, 2017).

These societal circumstances have had bearings on the political priorities and preferences of the citizens. The politically more sophisticated citizen responds to new cleavages in society, not only based on employment structures (cf. Lipset and Rokkan, 1967) but also on other socio-economic cleavages in capitalist society, and notably to 'New Politics' issues, such as environmental protection, women's rights, minority rights and multiculturalism. These issues particularly attract the attention of the social groups that are more weakly integrated into the traditional societal cleavages, such as the younger and better educated, the non-religious and the new middle class.

By consequence, and while voting behaviour is still today heavily influenced by socio-structural factors and intergenerational transmission, the societal cleavages that previously gave rise to 'frozen party systems' in societies (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967) have been redefined in the last decades as a *postmaterial value shift* has occurred (Inglehart, 2015, 1997). The postmaterial value-shift is a concept to understand modern culture, since the formative influence of post-war generations has led many of them to take their material security for granted and instead embrace non-material goals identified by New Politics issues. The traditional left-right political conflicts have thus in the postmaterial era been complemented by new polarizations that are anchored in the adherence to either traditional or postmodern value structures, giving rise to new parties and ideologies that cannot always be easily situated in the traditional left-right political axis, such as green parties, feminist parties, pirate parties or, in the other side of the re-defined politico-

ideological spectrum, right-wing populist parties. These polarizations create tensions among social groups, since not all social groups, such as the lower educated, value-conservatives and the older generations, recognize their political priorities and demands among the New Politics issues.

The postmaterial value-shift in society has not only created new dimensions of political polarization, but it has also affected patterns of political participation. The trend of decreasing turnout (e.g. Niemi et al., 2001; Lutz and Marsh, 2007; Garmann, 2017) suggests that the higher aggregate levels of skills and knowledge of citizens has not led to a comparable increase in electoral participation, especially among the younger generations (e.g. Blais et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1996). Instead, it has fostered, concomitant with postmodern values, the development of an all-round participatory citizenry with a greater willingness to challenge authority. Put differently, the nature of citizen participation has shifted away from citizens mainly being responsible for showing up at the ballot box, to continuously engaging in activities aimed at monitoring political decision-making and political elites in today's advanced democracies (Schudson, 1996; Dalton, 2006; Amnå and Ekman, 2014). Thereby, a diversification of political activity has occurred; while electoral participation may have declined in many advanced democracies, other forms of participation have stayed stable over time, or even increased or emerged in recent decades, such as political consumerism or political activism on the Internet (Inglehart, 1997; Stolle and Hooghe, 2005; Earl et al., 2014; Boström et al., 2019). It has even been argued that the increase in political participation that is exercised from outside the political system is one of the "most unambiguous finding" (Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995: 431) in the changing relationship between citizens and the state.

It is within this re-defined political and societal context that it becomes more relevant than ever to consider subjective wellbeing as a catalyst of political action and a barometer of political attitudes. Indeed, the conventional models of the discipline do not fully explain why and how people think and act politically in the 21st century. The trend of diversification of political activity makes it relevant in the next section to discuss a few common taxonomies of participation.

2.2 Typologies of political participation

Classic typologies are based on the nature of the activity, or their relationship with the main political actors or the political system as a whole. One way to look at participation focuses on whether the activities are related to the main institutional political actors (Verba and Nie, 1972; Van Deth, 2001; Ekman and Amnå, 2012), and define *conventional* political participation to include electoral participation, but also campaign activity, political party membership, contacting a politician or government official, or activity in political associations, while *unconventional* activities entail acting outside of the conventional structures of participation; these include public protests, boycotts, occupations or strikes, engaging in political consumerism, signing a petition and committing other confrontational political acts. Another connected (and widely used) distinction has been made between *conflictual* participation, referring to the contentious, sometimes even illegal, and elite-challenging nature of the activities, as opposed to *non-conflictual* participation that essentially constitutes of conventional political acts, i.e. activities made in relation to actors of the political system (Theocharis and Van Deth, 2017; Tarrow, 2013; Barnes et al., 1979; Inglehart, 1990). A third, closely related, distinction has been made based on the distance of the activity vis-à-vis the political system, thereby focusing more on the nature of the activity than the relationship

between the actors involved. It distinguishes between *institutionalized* participation that is closely tied to the electoral process, and *non-institutionalized* participation that entails acting by keeping a distance from, or circumventing altogether, the political system (Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995; Marien et al., 2010; Theocharis and Van Deth, 2017)². Non-institutionalized participation has grown in recent decades as it is compatible with the aspirations and demands of the post-materialist generation of citizens that are prepared to take on the role of monitoring or critical citizens in society (Inglehart, 1997; Norris, 1999), and while most non-institutionalized activities are also identified as being unconventional, it is becoming increasingly difficult to consider non-institutionalized participation in today's societies as unconventional, given how it has proliferated in the last decades (Theocharis and Van Deth, 2017; Ekman and Amnå, 2012). Meanwhile, non-institutionalized participation often has a conflictual nature, although not all contentious political activities are necessarily non-institutionalized, especially since political activities are dependent on the specific context in which they are carried out³. Finally, though not strictly being a typology, scholars have identified political activities by their resource-intensity; in other words, some activities arguably require more initiative and investment (Pollock, 1983; Mannell, 1993; Serrat et al., 2015) notably in terms of time, effort, resources and skills, than others; these include activities such as working in political campaigns, reaching out to politicians or mobilization into political protest. By contrast, signing a petition or casting a vote at national elections are single, sporadic or, in the case of voting especially, even ritualistic acts that arguably require less investment and are carried out on demand, and are therefore less intensive in their use of resources⁴.

² Institutionalized and non-institutionalized activities have also been qualified as parliamentary vs. extra-parliamentary forms of activities (Ekman and Amnå, 2012).

³ An example of the context dependency is petition signing in Switzerland, where it is widely used to initiate popular initiatives in the context of direct democracy, and therefore hardly expresses participation from outside of the political system. Another example is casting a blank vote in elections, which arguably can be called a conflictual act despite that it is exercised within the political system (Ekman and Amnå, 2012).

⁴ In this distinction of resource-intensity, we do not explicitly consider the level of political information or knowledge the acts require. Indeed, the act of voting does suppose that the citizen is politically informed to some

The changing patterns and proliferation of political activities has prompted scholars to question the continued relevance of the traditional dual typologies and extend them to develop more fine-grained classifications⁵. Teorell et al. (2007) proposed a typology that takes into account participation within and outside the political system, distinguishing between voting, party activity, contacting, protest activity (public demonstrations, occupations and strikes) and consumer participation (signing petitions, boycotting a consumer product, and donating money to charity). Recent extensions of the work of Teorell and colleagues (2007) include notably “digitally networked participation” (Theocharis and Van Deth, 2018: 145) and ‘latent’ forms of political participation (Ekman and Amnå, 2012; Amnå and Ekman, 2014), the latter described as multiple forms of interest in and attention to political and societal issues through individual or collective attention and engagement, such as political activity online and on social media, by doing volunteer work or adhering to certain lifestyle-related choices, values, ethics or beliefs⁶. Considering that a part of the population is monitoring the political system in their private sphere instead of taking part in manifestly political acts (e.g. Schudson, 1996), latent political participation is by nature “pre-political” or “stand-by” activity (Amnå and Ekman, 2014; Ekman and Amnå, 2012: 287), but more importantly, it has the potential to become a platform for future (manifest) political mobilization and perhaps even alleviate inequality in participation (Ackermann and Manatschal, 2018; Ekman and Amnå, 2012; Stolle and Hooghe, 2005). In another perspective, van Deth (2014) takes distance from the usual nominal definitions of activity forms, as well as from definitions that “cover almost anything” (van Deth, 2014: 351) and instead emphasizes the aims and intentions of the participants of the activities,

level, but it does not compete with the resource-intensive activities in terms of time, effort and skills of communication, deliberation and cooperation than the more high-investment, high-initiative acts presuppose.

⁵ Already in the 1970’s, Verba and Nie (1972) conceptualized four dimensions of political participation: voting, campaign activity, contacting, and communal or cooperative activities in the local communities; however, their classification exclusively focused on participation from within the political system.

⁶ Taking a too inclusive definition of the concepts of political participation and civic engagement has, however, also been subject to criticism, notably due to a risk of ‘conceptual stretching’ (Berger, 2009; Conge, 1988; Sartori, 1970; van Deth, 2001).

i.e. whether they are targeted (to politics/state/government or community) and politically motivated, or not.

Despite the obvious merits in revisiting the simpler, dual typologies with regards to developing the discipline, the traditional typologies, and especially the distinctions between conflictual/non-conflictual and institutionalized/non-institutionalized participation, still remain useful for the purpose of this research, and empirical studies 2 and 3 in particular, since we are interested in how subjective wellbeing influences the willingness to participate in political contention and how it affects the relationship citizens want to keep with the political system. Moreover, we consider the extended typology by Jan Teorell and colleagues (2007) in the context of study 3, where we have access to data on more forms of institutional/non-conflictual activities compared to study 2, which essentially focuses on voting and protest participation. Study 3 also uses the distinction between less and more resource-intensive activities in order to explain a plausible mechanism that connects subjective wellbeing to participation in both institutionalized and non-institutionalized, including contentious, activities.

Table 1 below provides an overview of participation forms, classified based on the distinctions that are relevant for this research. It is noteworthy that the context-specificity of some participation forms, such as signing a petition, make any distinctions based on the nature of the activity or its relationship to the political system less clear-cut. Likewise, some activities, such as donating to a charity, can be either considered high or low in resource-intensity; while it requires monetary resources, the time and effort invested in donations is usually far lower than, for instance, campaign work. Nevertheless, this overview provides an idea of the main distinctions that can be done between political activities.

Table 1. Classifying political participation

Activity form (non-exhaustive)	Criteria							
	Relationship to main political actors		Nature of activity		Relationship to political system		Resource-intensity	
	Conventional	Unconventional	Non-conflictual	Conflictual	Institutionalized	Non-institutionalized	High	Low
Voting in elections	x		x	x (blank vote)	x			x
Voting in popular votes or referenda	x		x	x (blank vote)	x			x
Membership in political party or organization	x		x		x		x	
Working for a political campaign	x		x		x		x	
Displaying a campaign badge	x		x		x			x
Contacting a politician	x		x		x		x	
Signing a petition or citizen initiative	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Consumer product boycott		x		x		x		x
Donating funds to a charity	x		x		x		x	x
Participation in strikes		x		x		x	x	
Occupying buildings		x		x		x	x	
Taking part in public demonstration		x		x		x	x	
Political activism on the Internet	x	x	x	x		x		x

P q v g < " C w v j q t ø u " q y p " summary of the main dual participation typologies developed by" scholarship (Verba and Nie, 1972; Barnes et al., 1979; Inglehart, 1990; Van Deth, 2001; Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995; Marien et al., 2010).

2.3 Political participation and attitudes in the European context

The nature and the extent of citizen participation in political decision-making processes is affected by the historical, cultural and politico-institutional context of a country. These include the political opportunity structure in country, the institutional context in place, the trajectory of democratization of the country, as well as country-specific traditions of political engagement (Dalton, 2006; Rosenstone et al., 1993; Verba et al., 1987; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004; Tarrow, 1996; Vráblíková, 2014). By consequence, even cross-European differences in participation habits can be substantial: while voting in elections remains the most common form of citizen political participation in virtually all European democracies, there is still substantial variation in turnout across Europe and in the past few decades, the average national turnout rates have fallen to below 50 % in many Eastern European countries and in Switzerland, while attaining over 80 % in the Nordic countries and Malta (Siaroff and Merer, 2002). The lower eagerness to vote in Eastern Europe has been explained by their post-Communist legacy and the struggles this entails for emerging democracies, as its citizens have not internalized to the same degree

the perceptions, knowledge and habits that voter participation entails (Kostadinova, 2003), while the Swiss exception is rather explained by the federal context of the country and the importance of direct democracy in its political system (Ladner, 2002; Lutz, 2007). The European cross-country variation is even stronger for extra-electoral participation: for instance, public protest and strikes are much more common in Southern European countries than in Northern Europe (Quaranta, 2013), while political consumerism is more practiced by Nordic and Central European citizens than Southern Europeans (Ferrer-Fons and Fraile, 2013).

These are just a few examples of how political activity is dependent on the country-specific circumstances, and thus political activity cannot be fully understood without reference to the country context. Nevertheless, certain patterns of participation emerge when we consider groups of European countries together with a shared historical, political and institutional legacy. The *age of democracy*, that is, how long a country has been under democratic, as opposed to authoritarian, rule, is one of the variables that identify groups of countries with a similar past under democratic rule and, by consequence, similar patterns of political participation. According to Samuel Huntington's (1993) seminal works on the 'third wave' of democratization, countries, where democracy was established only starting from the 1970's, i.e. 'new democracies', such as post-Communist and many Southern European countries, share certain characteristics that affect citizen willingness to participate in political life, and distinguish them from earlier established democracies ('old democracies'), such as Central European and Anglo-Saxon countries, and the Nordics. It is thought that as a democracy matures, citizens are better able to "navigate the political system" and "internalize motivations to participate", thereby increasing participation in all forms of political activities (Teorell et al., 2007a: 409; Kostadinova, 2003). As a result, citizens in new democracies have in general lower aggregate levels of political trust and satisfaction (Catterberg and Moreno, 2006), lower internal

and external political efficacy (Torcal, 2006), and weaker party attachments. These perceptions and attitudes should explain why new democracies have lower turnout rates (Karp and Banducci, 2007) and tend to participate less in all forms of political activities (Torcal, 2006; Dalton et al., 2010), compared to older democracies. In sum, the average citizen in a new democracy has a more distant relationship with political decision-making processes than the citizen living in an old democracy, where the citizenry is on average more politically efficacious, more trustful of political institutions, and more politically engaging.

Contextual influences have also been linked to the voter's behaviour at the ballot box, not the least because party spectra and political issues are highly country-specific. For this research, it is especially relevant to consider the contextual drivers of right-wing populist voting. A poor economic state of a country has been associated with voting against the incumbent government (Downs 1957; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000, van der Brug et al. 2007), and more recently with right-wing populist support among the electorate (e.g. Kriesi et al, 2006; Oesch 2008; Guiso et al., 2017; Gidron and Hall, 2017), and especially in situations where the aggregate economic circumstances are favourable for the rest of the population, making the economically insecure voters feel left behind (Rooduijn and Burgoon, 2017). Moreover, a growing presence of immigrants in a society has been linked to more anti-immigrant attitudes among the electorate (Meuleman et al., 2009; Schneider, 2008) that should fuel right-wing populist voting, especially in situations where immigrants have a significantly higher unemployment rate than natives (Markaki and Longhi, 2013). Finally, the particularly strong success of right-wing populism in several Eastern European, post-Communist countries has been explained by, inter alia, the rapid introduction of market-level mechanisms in the aftermath of socialism, the traditional gender order that is under pressure since the adhesion of many of these countries in

the European Union, a particularly weak civil society and a longing for a strong authoritarian leader and state (Enyedi, 2020; Szelewa, 2020).

Despite that the focus of this thesis will be on subjective wellbeing as an individual-level predictor of political behaviour and attitudes, the country context shall be seen as providing the *overall framework* in which this relationship operates, giving additional cues to understanding the specific political, institutional and cultural context in which the political citizen is embedded in. For these reasons, a country-comparative perspective will be employed in studies 3 and 4, where we use comparative European data to test the influence of subjective wellbeing on political activity across old and new democracies (Study 3), as well as its influence on right-wing populist vote choice across the four corners of the old continent, including in a few post-Communist, Eastern European countries (Study 4).

2.4 The individual basis of political attitudes and behaviour

2.4.1 Resources and political participation

Despite that the structural conditions in today's society have in principle made political participation more accessible for the masses, and despite that some of the traditional political divides have decreased in importance, not all segments of the population have benefited from these developments. To the contrary, the gap between the politically active and competent citizens, and the politically passive segments of the population persists in advanced democracies. Therefore, the CVM and resources (Almond and Verba, 1963; Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al., 1995; Verba and Nie, 1987) still remain relevant in explaining political participation.

Since the seminal works of Sidney Verba and his colleagues in articulating the CVM, scholarship has identified a range of structural characteristics related to SES that are associated with the individual propensity to engage in politics. The more educated, wealthy and organizationally involved citizens participate more in political life than their counterparts; in other words, participation requires resources that are linked to SES and are unevenly distributed among the population (Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al., 1995). These resources, notably ‘time, money and civic skills’, are acquired early on but are also developed throughout the life course (Brady et al., 1995; Amnå, 2012; Wasburn et al., 2017). Having free time enables one to invest it into political campaigning or getting involved in a party, action group or take part in a demonstration; and having money makes it possible to donate it to political organizations or campaigns, and to make consumption choices for political reasons. Finally, participating in clubs, associations, and taking part in other social activities not only ensure that individuals are integrated into recruitment networks for participation and increases their social capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Putnam et al., 1994), but also teach them skills of cooperation, mobilization and raise their awareness of political issues. These linkages are corroborated by much empirical evidence. The higher educated, wealthier individuals vote in elections at higher rates and participate more in all other forms of political activities (‘all-round participants’) than the lower educated and less well-off groups (Barnes et al., 1979; Brady et al., 1995; Verba and Nie, 1987; Gidengil et al., 2016), and persons involved in civic associations also engage more politically than their organizationally less-active peers (Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Putnam, 2000; Putnam et al., 1994; Teorell, 2003; Amnå, 2012).

The SES model for participation subscribes to a structural model of participation according to which stratification of status and power in societies determine politics, all the while

acknowledging the role of limited resources in affecting choices of (non-)action. It remains problematic since the lower participation rates of some segments of the society make the preferences of these groups underrepresented in political decision-making, thereby inducing political inequality (Lipjhart, 1997). Moreover, the inequalities in participation have not been attenuated with the diversification of political activity in recent decades, since many of these emerging forms of participation are equally, or more, demanding in terms of skills, knowledge and other personal resources compared to voting (Marien et al., 2010; Norris et al., 2005). In other words, the diversification of political activity has therefore not shown to be a remedy for increasing the political involvement of unrepresented groups, but instead, it may even continue reproducing the existing inequalities, at least with regard to institutionalized participation (Marien et al., 2010). This highlights the need to look beyond the CVM and into additional mechanisms that explain unequal participation in contemporary democracies and suggest possible remedies to these inequalities.

2.4.2 Gender and participation

Other structural characteristics, not directly related to SES, are associated with patterns of (non-)participation: these include age⁷ and gender, of which the latter will be a focus in this research (Study 1). The gender gap in political activity is one of the most widely studied inequalities in scholarship on participation, as well as being one of the most contested ones (Kostelka et al., 2019). The existence of a gender gap has notably been explained by lower levels of involvement in associations, educational differences, social norms that discourage women's political participation, which result in women being disadvantaged in the development of politico-

⁷ In short, political participation increases with age, although its effect wears off at older age (Nie et al., 1974), and younger adults engage more in newer, non-electoral forms of participation, such as signing petitions and protesting (Quintelier, 2007; Strate et al., 1989).

psychological predispositions such as political interest, efficacy, knowledge and the strength of partisanship (Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al., 1997, 1978; Dassonneville and McAllister, 2018; Fraile, 2014). In addition, the politico-institutional context can favour male over female participation in politics, especially to the extent that these political systems provide cognitive cues, facilitate the organization and provide more opportunities for some groups over others, and in this case, male over female participation (Beauregard, 2014; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer, 2012).

Meanwhile, another stream of literature challenges the view of a persisting gender gap by arguing that the gender gap in voting has largely diminished and, in some cases, even been reversed since the 1980's in most advanced democracies (Verba et al., 1997; Norris, 2002; Mayer, 2010). While this might be the case in some electoral contexts, the gender voting gap still persists in some advanced democracies, such as Switzerland (Engeli et al., 2006; Stadelmann-Steffen and Koller, 2014). In addition, studies have shown that the disappearing gender gap in electoral participation has mostly concerned voting in *national* elections, whereas women keep voting less in second-order elections, mainly due to their lower levels of political interest and knowledge, two psychological attributes that are especially important as incentives to engage in second-order elections (Kostelka et al, 2019). Thereby, any evidence of disappearing gender differences in electoral participation has shown to be highly context dependent.

Gender differences in political activity extend beyond what happens at the ballot box: men participate more in various forms of extra-electoral political activities, such as campaigning, political party activity and protesting, than women do, which has been explained by men's higher level of civic involvement, due to social norms making political participation considered

as a male-dominant field, and lower levels of political interest and lower levels of political efficacy (the link between gender and efficacy will be further discussed in ch. 2.4.3) (Beauregard, 2014; Brady et al., 1995; Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010; Verba et al., 1997, 1995). Meanwhile, the trend of diversification of political activity and the changing social mores have not been insignificant for gendered participation patterns, and studies on advanced democracies have even found indication of women taking nowadays more part in certain forms of non-institutionalized political activities than men do, such as political consumerism (Marien et al., 2010; Stolle and Hooghe, 2011). It has been suggested that, since political consumerism is related to the notion of lifestyle politics, it gives stronger political meaning to daily activities and thereby might affect the gender balance of these activities by favouring women's involvement (Marien et al, 2010), although the authors also conclude that further investigation into the gender balance in these activities would be desirable.

Despite the on-going debate in the literature on the gendered patterns of political participation, scholarly evidence is converging around the recognition that gender equality in political influence has grown considerably in the past fifty years or so, yet it has not entirely disappeared, especially when looking into participation beyond voting in national elections and across country contexts. In other words, gender continues to affect participation patterns due to its deeply rooted influence on social norms, attitudes and behaviour among citizens in society. Since important gender differences still persist regarding the main attitudinal determinants of participation, such as political efficacy, the discipline is not yet ready to move past considering gender as a powerful driver of political attitude-formation and the resulting participation patterns.

2.4.3 Political efficacy and participation

Among the traditionally-considered attitudinal drivers of political participation, political efficacy is considered a key political orientation that is strongly correlated with all forms of political activity. Political efficacy has, in fact, been considered among the strongest predictors of political participation⁸ (e.g. Campbell et al., 1954; Lane, 1959; Verba et al., 1995; Karp and Banducci, 2008), and it is therefore particularly important for scholarship to understand the antecedents of this politico-psychological orientation. Political efficacy has been defined as “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have an impact on the political process” (Campbell et al., 1954: 187). In other words, it is the citizen’s perception of one’s powerfulness, or powerlessness, as an actor in the political system (Morrell, 2003). The efficacy-concept in psychology is a perception of oneself, not unrelated to self-esteem (Lane, 1959), and it is moreover a specific dimension of the broader concept of individual self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001; Vecchione and Caprara, 2009) that is acquired under formative years (Easton and Dennis, 1967; Schunk and Meece, 2006) and is further developed over the life course (Caprara et al., 2009).

Political efficacy has both an ‘internal’ and ‘external’ component. While external political efficacy has been defined as is the individual’s perception of the responsiveness of the political system (Finkel, 1985; Pollock, 1983; Morrell, 2003), internal political efficacy, on the other hand, is the individual’s belief in her own abilities, or their “subjective competence” (Marx and Nguyen, 2016: 635) to influence political processes (Morrell, 2005). In other words, it is a sense of being capable “to understand and participate effectively in politics” (Craig et al., 1990: 290),

⁸ In addition to political efficacy, political interest, defined as curiosity over political issues (Van Deth, 1990) or the citizen’s willingness to pay attention and invest time and effort into politics (Lupia and Philpot, 2005; Weatherford, 1992), is considered another key attitudinal predictor of participation.

and it is in addition correlated with motivation to pay attention to politics (Morrell, 2005; Rasmussen and Nørgaard, 2018), as well as with the individual's level of political sophistication (Caprara et al., 2009). The two components of political efficacy are related, but remain conceptually different attitudes, and it is possible for individuals to experience simultaneously very different levels of external and internal efficacy. For instance, a person can feel strongly about their own ability to act as a political agent (high internal efficacy), while having low belief in system responsiveness (low external efficacy), or to the contrary, strongly believe in the political system (high external efficacy) while feeling that politics is hard to understand or carrying out political activities is personally difficult (low internal efficacy). These distinctions matter, since the two dimensions of political efficacy and their combinations have different consequences for patterns of political participation. While high external efficacy is thought to be favourable to participation in elections and other institutionalized political activities, high internal efficacy is additionally correlated with participation in non-institutionalized activities and is thought to be especially conducive to high-initiative, high-investment political participation (Craig et al., 1990; Pollock, 1983). Finally, scoring high on both components of political efficacy is conducive to the development of 'all-round' politically active citizens (Pollock, 1983), while scoring low in both components likely leads to a withdrawal from politics altogether.

There is an important *gender dimension* to the development of political efficacy. Since political socialisation in adolescence and early adulthood, boys and men consistently display higher levels of political efficacy than girls and women (Arens and Waterman, 2017; Cigognani et al., 2012; Paxton et al., 2007; Vecchione and Caprara, 2009; Solhaug, 2006), and furthermore, this tendency is likely to intensify with age (Hill and Lynch, 1983); panel studies has moreover shown that gender-specific trajectories of political efficacy development are likely since males

show higher mean levels of efficacy throughout adolescence and adulthood than females (Arens and Waterman, 2017). Considering how strongly political efficacy is predictive of actual participation, the gendered trajectories of efficacy development may have important and long-lasting consequences on patterns of political behaviour, and shed light on some of the root causes of gender inequality in politics. Gender differences in political efficacy will therefore be a particular focus of Study 1 of this thesis.

While it is the conventional wisdom that political efficacy favours political participation, scholarship has in the past been too little concerned with *where efficacy comes from*. With the exceptions of literature arguing that associational involvement (Putnam, 2000; Brehm and Rahn, 1997), political knowledge (Kenski and Stroud, 2006; Pasek et al., 2008), or political participation itself (Finkel, 1985; Ikeda et al., 2008; Quintelier et al., 2014) favours the development of political efficacy, or recognizing that resources predict efficacy (Verba et al., 1978; 1995), the discipline has often contended to acknowledge that politically efficacious individuals participate more in politics. Lately, however, scholarship has started looking more closely into the psychological conditions in which efficacy is developed, notably in the literatures on personality and politics (Mondak, 2010; Gerber et al., 2011), or health and politics (Denny and Doyle, 2007; Ojeda, 2015; Mattila et al., 2013), yet much remains to be understood about the psychological antecedents of efficacy beliefs. The contribution of subjective wellbeing to this debate will therefore be the focus of empirical Study 1, while also introducing a gender perspective to explain the psychological antecedents of political efficacy.

2.4.4 Vote choice as a utility calculation

In addition to the strong focus in the discipline in explaining political participation or the political orientations that precede activity, political science has been at least equally concerned with explaining the electoral choices of voters. This research is no exception in that regard, since we will link subjective wellbeing to vote choice in Study 4 of this thesis.

Mirroring the rational choice-theories of political participation, a stream of scholarship has explained vote choice by individual utility considerations. Tactical voting is thought to occur when voters aim to maximize the impact of their vote at a particular election by supporting a candidate that they believe has the best chance of winning against another disliked candidate, even though the candidate they vote was not their first choice based on their sincere preferences (Farquharson, 1969; Alvarez et. al., 2017). Although specific electoral systems (such as plurality elections) offer incentives to vote strategically, empirical evidence, however, shows that “in most cases around 15 percent to 40 percent of the voters who are in a position to cast a tactical vote actually do so” (Alvarez et. al., 2017: 189), whereas the remaining voters are motivated by other considerations, including moral judgements, when casting their ballot. Furthermore, the scholarship around economic voting argues that individuals will either punish or reward political incumbents at elections based on the economic performance of the country (Downs 1957; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000, van der Brug et. al. 2007) and by evaluating the success of an incumbent government, either retrospectively or prospectively, based on changes in their personal economic situation (‘pocketbook voting’) or the economic situation of the society (‘sociotropic voting’). Meanwhile, and notwithstanding the abundant evidence showing that economic performance matters for electoral success, scholarship on economic voting still struggles to sufficiently address voter heterogeneity regarding political sophistication, motivation and other psychological factors that explain vote choice beyond the voters’ economic concerns (Stewart and Clarke, 2017). This underlines the pressing need to

more broadly consider the psychological antecedents of vote choice that concern other factors than economic wellbeing only, including overall subjective wellbeing.

2.4.5 Social characteristics, party identification and vote choice

Socio-structural characteristics do not only influence whether or not a person participates in politics, but are also strongly predictive of the electoral choice of voters. Social group adherence has traditionally been one of the strongest bases of vote choice and serve as a reference point for orienting voters to the parties that defend their interests. Social class and employment, religion, and race or ethnicity assemble voters to certain ideological positions over others (Lazarsfeld et al., 1965; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Evans, 2000; Dalton, 2006; Goldberg, 2014; Evans and Northmore-Ball, 2017 and many others). Still today, social class and employment relations align working class voters to the left and capital owners and the new middle class to the right of the traditional left-right party spectrum, and religious voters tend to vote more right than non-religious voters. Furthermore, regional differences and the rural-urban divide continue to persist as a political division in a number of countries, and race and ethnicity is strongly associated with vote choice especially in the United States among the Western democracies (e.g. Ford and Jennings, 2020; Rocha et al., 2010).

It is widely acknowledged that social characteristics are strongly predictive of individual social identities (Tajfel, 1979). The salience of social characteristics and social identity for vote choice is well illustrated by the pervasiveness of individual attachment towards particular political parties and that these attachments stay remarkably stable over time (Campbell et. al., 1954; Niemi and Jennings, 1991; Green and Baltes, 2017). Party identification moreover provides shortcuts for making a vote choice without having to resort to information-seeking on specific

issues, thereby requiring less sophistication from voters than the so-called rational theories of vote choice (Bowler, 2017).

However, and reflecting the discussion in chapter 2.1, the changes society has undergone since the second half of the 20th century have lessened the influence of the traditional social cleavages on vote choice (Franklin et al., 2009; Ford and Jennings, 2020), and ceded influence to new political cleavages based on New Politics issues, such as environmental protection, gender equality and minority rights. In the new reality where Old Politics and New Politics cleavages coexist, the traditional social group cleavages are being transformed and to some extent even replaced by cleavages based on values and issue positions (Kriesi, 1998; Kriesi and Hutter, 2019; Mayhew, 2000; Ford and Jennings, 2020). In addition, the overall trend of weakening traditional cleavages has made voters more volatile and de-aligned from former party attachments that strongly followed social group identities. In other words, the contemporary voter has weaker partisan attachments and loyalties and is more volatile in their party choice from one election to the next. By consequence, political parties are adapting to these changes by positioning themselves vis-à-vis the New Politics issues in their political programmes (*party realignment*, see e.g. Miller, 1991; Kitschelt and Rehm, 2015; Dalton and Flanagan, 2017), and in some cases, giving rise to new parties and ideologies, such as green parties or right-wing populist parties. The connected developments of party realignment and voter volatility set the grounds for considering wellbeing as a trigger of partisan attitudes and choice in Study 4 of this thesis.

2.4.6 Issue positions, campaigns and the media

In addition to structural and rational theories of vote choice, a stream of scholarship focuses on the influence of political campaigns and issues in explaining vote choice, thereby considering the choices of citizens to be embedded in the political context these choices are made in. Theories on *issue voting* argues that citizens make their vote choice based on political issue positions, by comparing the positions of candidates with their own opinions and convictions (Campbell et al., 1980; Carmines and Stimson, 1980; Maurer et al., 2015; Lachat, 2014; Hellwig, 2014). Issue voting theories have, however, been challenged by the recognition that multiple issues may be equally important to voters, which complicates candidate choice and may incline voters to ‘settle’ for voting for the party they feel the closest to irrespective of their specific issue positions (Nie and Andersen, 1974; Dennison, 2019). Issue voting theories have also not sufficiently addressed the occurrence of great variation in voter sophistication, which may compromise the ability of less-sophisticated citizens to understand and position themselves with regards to some of the issues at stake (Goren, 1997; Dennison, 2019; Lachat, 2014).

On a related note, scholarship in political communication highlights the pivotal role of political campaigns and the media in persuading and orienting voters to specific issue positions and electoral choices (Gelman and King, 1993; Farrell and Webb, 2000; Tresch 2012; Tresch and Feddersen, 2019; Semetko and Tworzecki, 2017, Jacobson, 2015), a trend which has only grown stronger in contemporary societies with the proliferation of media. In addition, the more recent emergence of the social media as a powerful tool of political influence, as well as the digitalization and globalization of political campaign strategies, have shown to be powerful means of influencing vote choice beyond the context of a single election in a given country (Semetko and Tworzecki, 2017; Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013), thereby effectively challenging traditional models of voting behaviour.

In the redefined party spectrum and the new political polarizations of contemporary times, as well as due to the pervasive influence of media and the profound changes political campaigning has endured, it becomes pivotal to consider alternative explanations to vote choice beyond those predicted by rationalistic considerations, traditional social cleavages or theories on stable party attachments. More precisely, these developments have given momentum to exploring the psychological underpinnings of political participation, attitudes and choices, including the surge of voting for populist, radical and outsider parties in general. While still being an emerging focus in scholarship, three streams of literature putting the psychological drivers to the forefront of explanations for the political citizen will be discussed below before shifting our focus to subjective wellbeing: these include personality and politics, emotions and politics and health and politics.

2.4.7 Personality and politics

Personality traits have recently started received increasing attention as predictors of political behaviour and attitudes. Personality has been conceived as “a set of dynamic, self-regulatory systems that emerge and operate over the life course” (Caprara et al., 2006: 3), guiding affective, cognitive, and motivational processes, providing continuity in behavioral patterns and preserving a sense of personal identity (Caprara et al, 2006; Bandura, 2001) and thereby explaining the salience of personality to vote choice and political preferences. Some view political attitudes as being inseparable from personality and should be studied as part of it (Jost et al., 2009), while others argue that personality, considered as a highly stable psychological trait, cannot predict political attitudes since attitudes tend to fluctuate across the life span (Baker, 2005; Jonason, 2014). Irrespective of which of these approaches one takes, there is nowadays a growing recognition that personality traits are correlated with political participation

patterns, attitudes and orientations, including general ideological stances (Mondak, 2010; Gerber et al. 2011; Vecchione and Caprara, 2009; Ackerman, 2017 and many others).

Among the ‘Big Five’ personality traits⁹ (Goldberg, 1990), evidence is most consistent regarding conscientiousness, which has been correlated with political conservatism, as well as regarding openness to experience, which has been associated with political liberalism (Carney et al., 2008; Mondak, 2010; Jonason, 2014). In addition, some studies have associated emotional stability with conservative voting and agreeableness with liberal party support (Mondak, 2010; Mondak and Halperin, 2008; Schoen and Schumann, 2007), while findings on extraversion and partisanship are mixed (Gerber et al., 2011). Furthermore, populism scholars and scholars studying radical political opinion-formation have been interested with the personality bases of vote choice, personality being perceived as a significant predictor of both anti-immigrant attitudes and authoritarian views (Ackermann and Ackermann, 2015; Altemeyer and Altemeyer, 1996; Bakker et al, 2016; Hawkins et al., 2012). Notably, populism scholars argue that scoring low on Agreeableness should increase voting for populist parties (e.g. Hirsh et al., 2010; Mondak and Halperin, 2008; Bakker et al., 2016), and others have positively linked authoritarian personality with populist voting (Dunn, 2015), or argued for the existence of a negative relationship between openness to experience and a right-wing ideology (Van Hiel et al., 2000).

However, the mechanism that links personality to political attitudes and party choice has also been contested (e.g. Capelos and Katsanidou, 2018), which is well illustrated by the case of populism. Personality traits, values and attitudes are closely related and not easily distinguishable – such is the case e.g. for authoritarianism, which shares some of the core values

⁹ The Big Five personality traits are defined as: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (Goldberg, 1990).

and attitudes of populism, but without necessarily expressing a manifest desire to turn back to a past time – authoritarian ideology might as well be related to a willingness to preserve the obtained status quo (Jost et al., 2004). In addition, personality traits are widely considered to be highly stable through time – therefore, if low agreeableness increases populist voting, one should assume that countries where populist parties thrive should be composed of less agreeable citizens (Capelos and Katsanidou, 2018), which is a strong assumption and is incompatible with the fact that populist parties have been successful across countries and political contexts. It is therefore unlikely that personality would be a better predictor of populist voting, or party choice more broadly, than other psychologically oriented explanations. Furthermore, with regards to participation, scholarship has mixed findings; while some studies argue that openness to experience and extraversion make persons more politically active, the evidence is inconsistent regarding the other Big Five personality traits (Gerber et al, 2011). Yet, given that personality may influence one’s willingness to seek political information and also be linked to the size of one’s political and social networks (Gerber et al, 2011; Mondak 2010; Mondak and Halperin, 2008), personality may be meaningful for shaping the politically active citizens at least indirectly.

While the personality framework may be useful for explaining certain attitudinal and behavioural patterns that are linked to political participation and some ideological stances, the inconclusive evidence regarding the influence of some personality traits, as well as the inconsistencies surrounding theories on personality and vote choice, suggest that the perceived link between personality and political outcomes could be confounded by other psychological factors, or the link should at the very least be carefully assessed. This highlights the need to look beyond personality in understanding how individuals respond to political stimuli and more

broadly into the psychological antecedents of political attitudes and behaviour, including subjective wellbeing.

2.4.8 Emotions and politics

Another stream of scholarship looks into the political consequences of emotions. While political science has for long been dominated by cognitive accounts, the merits in studying emotions as explanations to political outcomes have been brought to the forefront in recent times, not the least because of the perceived ‘emotionalization’ of politics notably with the help of political campaigns and the media (Richards, 2004; Hameleers et al., 2017; Heaney, 2019). Emotions help to unveil the reactions people have when faced with external events, political symbols or situations. The relevance of emotions for political outcomes has also been explained by how emotions “enables past experience to be encoded with its evaluative history” and because “emotion enables contemporary circumstances to be quickly evaluated” (Marcus, 2000: 221) using one’s memory, judgement or action. In this way, emotions are considered to influence political thought and action.

In the foundational literature of emotions in politics, individual’s emotional response to a situation is thought to depend on the underlying attributions individual’s make of themselves (i.e. how individuals characterize themselves) as well as the individual’s prior experiences (Marcus, 2000; Davies, 1980), or on the other hand, qualify emotions as being manifestations of individual’s summary judgements (MacGraw et al, 1991). For instance, experiencing anxiety, and notably anger, should reduce the role of political predispositions (e.g. partisan identification) and increase the influence of circumstances and contemporary information (e.g. issue proximity, campaigns, candidate traits) in making one’s political choices (Brader, 2011;

Weber, 2013). Moreover, experiencing negative emotions have been found to increase information-seeking, although evidence is mixed regarding whether these emotions also increase the quality of the sought information (Valentino et al., 2008).

Emotions are thus considered as catalysts for the development of political attitudes, especially when these emotions are perceived as negative. This recognition has guided scholarship in linking negative emotions with populist voting (e.g. Demertzis, 2006; Flecker et al., 2007; Magni, 2017; Rico et al., 2017; Salmela and von Scheve, 2018), protest voting (Mileti and Plomb, 2016; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2007) and to ‘anti’-orientations and preferences in politics in general (Capelos et al., 2017; Capelos and Katsanidou, 2018). On the other hand, some scholarship argues that negative emotions are associated with risk aversion and the maintenance of the status quo at the ballot box (Meier et al., 2019), since negative emotions tend to lead to less optimistic judgements about the surrounding society (Schwarz, 2011).

Beyond serving as explanations to political attitudes and orientations, emotions have also been studied as ‘short-term motivations’ (Valentino et al., 2011) for the purpose of mobilization into political activities. The impact of emotions on participation can be led by immediate emotional reaction (Affective Intelligence Theory (AIT), see e.g. Marcus et al., 2000) or by the cognitive evaluation of these reactions (Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT), see e.g. Folkman et al., 1986). From the AIT perspective, both positive and negative emotions should spur participation: positive emotions, such as enthusiasm, reinforce existing attitudes and behavioral patterns, while negative emotions, such as anger or anxiety, serve as a warning about potentially harmful outcomes and increase attention to the surrounding environment (Valentino et al., 2011). By contrast, CAT argues that anger leads to problem-solving behaviour and action-seeking, thus likely spurring participation, while anxiety leads to inward-looking behaviour and

risk aversion, thus possibly dampening participation, especially if the activity is demanding or costly¹⁰ (Valentino et al., 2011). Emotions are not only an interest in social psychology: in social movement studies, negative emotions such as anger, but also fear or anxiety, have become increasingly important explanations to protest (Armingeon, 2007; Barnes et al., 1979; Klandermans, 1984; Lind and Tyler, 1988; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013), qualifying negative emotions as “amplifiers” or “accelerators” for mobilization into protest (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013: 892). Finally, in addition to political preferences and participation, emotions that spur political action-potential, i.e. anger and enthusiasm, rather than anxiety, should also have a positive spillover-effect on the sentiment of political efficacy. In this way, emotions also have the potential to contribute to political participation indirectly and more durably, as a feeling of efficacy contributes to making participation into a habit (Valentino et al., 2009).

Emotional experiences have therefore proven to be highly relevant for explaining political phenomena – at least in the short-term. By contrast, emotional theories of political engagement have not sufficiently addressed how one’s psychological state and experiences influence the behaviour and attitudes of the political citizen *in the medium and long-term*. Put differently, if emotional reactions would account for the psychological drivers of political attitudes and behaviour over other competing influences, should we not be witnessing more unstable democracies, since citizens’ emotional reactions and impulses to political stimuli would continuously challenge, even re-negotiate, political representation in society? Given the evidence that political representation in many established democracies has remained remarkably stable over time (Bakke and Sitter, 2005; Tavits, 2005; Schickler and Green, 1997), it underlines some of the limitations of emotional theories of political behaviour. It is in this

¹⁰ The authors (Valentino et al., 2011) considered attending a political rally, working or donating to a campaign as costly forms of political activity.

context that subjective wellbeing emerges as an alternative framework for explaining the more enduring psychological antecedents of political attitudes and behaviour.

2.4.9 Health and politics

It could be argued that subjective wellbeing and politics is a domain of study within the broader field of health and politics. Health is a concept with multiple dimensions, including both short-term and chronic illnesses, overall physical fitness, and any possible disabilities a person has. While the literature on health and political behaviour has more focused on physical health as the independent variable, mental health has also been studied in relation to political outcomes; however, scholarship has mostly been interested in the influence of mental ill-being, e.g. depression (Bernardi, 2020; Ojeda, 2015; Ojeda and Pacheco, 2019) on political attitudes and behaviour, whereas the influence of a state of feeling well, i.e. subjective wellbeing, is clearly less of a focus of that scholarship.

The dominant view in the scholarship is that good health should spur participation, while poor health dampens it (Couture and Breux, 2017; Denny and Doyle, 2007; Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015; Mattila et al., 2013; Rapeli et al., 2020). The mechanism linking health to political activity implies that good health positively influences efficacy and interest in politics, thereby resulting in participation, while poor health should negatively impact these key political predispositions and become hurdles for the purpose of participation. This view has been corroborated empirically (Peterson, 1990; Nygård and Jakobsson, 2013), finding that poor health negatively influencing participation, even when controlling for many of the conventional explanations of political participation (Peterson, 1987; Bazargan et al, 1991; Schur and Kruse, 2000; Denny and Doyle, 2007; Mattila et al., 2013; Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015; Söderlund and

Rapeli, 2015; Rapeli et al, 2020). In the majority of the above mentioned literature, however, participation has been investigated through voter turnout alone, with a notable exception where poor health was linked to non-electoral activities such as displaying a campaign badge, contacting and protesting (Söderlund and Rapeli, 2015). Interestingly, contacting and protesting can be qualified as resource-intensive; the authors suggest that this can be explained by persons in poor health having ‘much at stake’ and therefore invest so much in exerting political influence (Söderlund and Rapeli, 2015).

The influence of health on political outcomes does not restrict itself to participation: a number of studies have linked health to attitude-formation and party preferences. Individuals in poor health have lower levels of political trust (Mattila and Rapeli, 2018), possibly explaining why poor health is associated with more non-institutional participation (Mattila, 2020). Furthermore, healthy individuals have been found to be more likely to support conservative parties (Subramanian, 2009; Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015), which could be because persons with poor health are more dependent and supportive of strong social policies, and because that left-leaning parties have stronger ownership around the issues of health, social policy and welfare (Rapeli et al., 2020). On the same note, research has shown that depression and poor mental health make persons less likely to identify themselves with, or support, center-right (‘mainstream’) parties (Bernardi, 2020), thus opening up the possibility that poor mental health leads to radical political opinions and, perhaps by extension, radical and populist voting. On the other hand, depression could also favour a vote for keeping the political status quo, since depression tends to make persons wary and inward-looking (cf. theory on emotions and politics) and thus more reluctant to change (Bernardi and Johns, 2020).

The literature on health and politics has prepared the discipline for considering the political implications of personal wellbeing. By extending the focus from *ill-being* to also include *well-being*, the subjective wellbeing perspective effectively complements and extends on the health-related, psychological drivers of the political citizen. Subjective wellbeing is a broad concept that means more than the absence of ill-being: it entails the evaluative judgements, and experienced emotions and perceptions that make individuals assess if they lead a good life. The subjective wellbeing perspective thereby provides a holistic framework to explain how the way we feel affects how we think and behave politically, thereby having great potential of responding to the unresolved dilemmas of other psychological and health-related literatures in explaining what makes a political citizen.

2.4.10 Bringing in wellbeing: objective and subjective wellbeing

2.4.10.1 Objective indicators of wellbeing

In order to understand and define subjective wellbeing, it is important to contrast the experience of being well with the so-called ‘objective’ measures of wellbeing. Many of the conventional, socio-structural predictors of political participation and attitudes that we previously discussed reflect the level of objective wellbeing of the individual, i.e. the structural and material conditions that are thought to allow individuals to lead a good life. In wellbeing research, human wellbeing has traditionally been measured on the individual level by objective conditions, such as personal wealth and SES (Weich et al., 2011), while wellbeing on the aggregate level has been measured by the contextual conditions of a country, such as the economic conditions (e.g. Gross Domestic Product, unemployment rate, social protection expenditure or income equality) (Clark and Oswald, 1994; Easterlin, 1974), environmental indicators (Conceição and Bandura,

2008) or the quality of governance of a country, i.e. political stability, freedom and democracy, effective institutions and the absence of corruption (Frey and Stutzer, 2002; Helliwell, 2003). Scholarship has found some empirical evidence suggesting that material and structural factors indeed affect human wellbeing. On the individual level, being married (Diener, 2000; Helliwell, 2003) and being healthy, as well as having a decent standard of living (Easterlin, 1974, 1995; Veenhoven, 1991a; Rao and Min, 2018), have been associated with higher wellbeing. In addition, education is generally thought to be positively related to wellbeing (Kristoffersen, 2018), although it has been pointed out that this relationship depends on how wellbeing is measured and whether one takes a narrow or a broader definition of education (Michalos, 2008). Meanwhile, the evidence of gender differences in objective wellbeing, as well as on aging and wellbeing, is inconclusive and likely confounded by factors related to SES (Batz and Tay, 2018; Shmotkin, 1990; Veenhoven, 2008). Finally, on the interpersonal level, dense social networks and the individual's level of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) are associated with higher wellbeing. However, as informative as these objective measures of wellbeing are about the conditions in which individuals live their lives, they do not fully account for how well individual's *feel* about themselves and their lives. This highlights the importance of understanding wellbeing also as a subjective experience for individuals.

2.4.10.2 Why does subjective wellbeing matter?

Given that many objective individual and contextual conditions, as shown above, are correlated with human wellbeing, why is it important to consider subjective indicators in addition to objective indicators of wellbeing? One reason goes back to the fundamental nature of human wellbeing. Mariano Rojas (2017) argues that in the experience of wellbeing, the subjectivity emerges from the experience itself, and not from the how it is reported. Therefore, one may

argue that the experience of wellbeing is inherently subjective; objective conditions can certainly contribute to, or trigger, a feeling of being well, however wellbeing remains a subjective experience (Rojas, 2017) that should also be studied as such. The author even postulates that, while most wellbeing research has been conducted from an objective perspective, objective indicators are better used as measures of many of the explanatory factors of subjective wellbeing, however, they should not be equalized with the experience of being well (Rojas, 2017).

The evaluative experience of being well shall thus not be confused with the mechanism that trigger the experience, and objective and subjective wellbeing are not substitutes for each another. For instance, buying a condo apartment can be seen as a great achievement for a person who has been a tenant their entire life, but will not trigger the same feeling for someone who already owns an independent house with a garden. Likewise, adopting a dog is likely to make an animal-lover feel many positive emotions, but may not be experienced with the same enthusiasm by a person who does not want a pet. In this way, the occurrence of an objective event is not sufficient to understand the personal experience that it triggers. The context-specificity of subjective wellbeing is highlighted by the mechanism of ‘adaptation’ to levels of wellbeing and life events. Wellbeing scholarship has recognized that individuals adapt to higher levels of wellbeing, to the extent that they may find themselves on a ‘hedonic treadmill’ (Diener, 2000; Kahneman et al., 1999), where expectations grow together with rising levels of (objective) wellbeing, which is well illustrated in the example above about house ownership. Adaptation takes also place in the opposite direction: for instance, losing a large part of material possession, or living through a traumatic experience will immediately and drastically lower levels of wellbeing, but after an adaptation period levels of subjective wellbeing tend to recover

to, or near to, the pre-traumatic levels ('set-point theory'¹¹ of wellbeing, see e.g. Diener, 2000; Lucas, 2007; Suh et al., 1996; Luhmann and Intelisano, 2018). The completeness and degree of this adaptation, however, is likely to vary depending on whether the shock is due to pecuniary factors (e.g. income loss), where adaptation tends to be better, or non-pecuniary factors (e.g. divorce, death, disability, unemployment) (Conceição and Bandura, 2008), which tend to have longer-lasting effects on subjective wellbeing. Persons have in addition been found to adapt more slowly to negative than positive events, and certain traumatic life events can, in fact, adjust levels of subjective wellbeing in a long-lasting way (Luhmann et al., 2012), and thus possibly having enduring consequences on how we think and act socially.

The shock of a negative life event is thought to be stronger on life satisfaction, which belongs to the evaluative dimension of wellbeing, than on the everyday positive and negative emotions, i.e. emotional wellbeing, we experience (Luhmann et al., 2012). In fact, adaptation may happen more quickly regarding negative emotional experiences due to the biological functioning of the human body (homeostatic factors), whereas people's satisfaction with their lives is likely to be adjusted more gradually (Luhmann et al., 2012). Another stream of literature argues that, following the set-point theory, an individual baseline for subjective wellbeing exists, and any external shock that may affect wellbeing will only make it fluctuate around and finally return to this personal set point (Brickman et al., 1978; Suh et al., 1996). Meanwhile, the set-point theory has also been subject to criticism among wellbeing scholars, notably due to the incompleteness of adaptation when faced with life events that shake up personal wellbeing equilibrium in a long-lasting way (Lucas, 2007).

¹¹ Introduced by Headly and Wearing (1989), the set-point theory (or 'dynamic equilibrium model') of wellbeing suggests that individuals have a baseline level of wellbeing, determined notably by personality and contextual factors, and even after critical life events and individuals eventually tend to return to their set point level of wellbeing (Davern et al., 2007; Dodge et al., 2012).

In sum, objective and subjective wellbeing represent merely two different approaches to defining human wellbeing. Instead of opposing the two approaches, one should see them as complimentary, together revealing a more comprehensive picture of the many factors that affect human wellbeing, whether it be objective factors such as the state of health or socio-economic conditions, or subjective experiences, such as happiness, sense of empowerment, or feeling supported in close relationships. With the rising levels of material security and the gradual transition to postmodern value structures in society, objective wellbeing continues to be important but is no longer a synonym or a condition for universal happiness (Inglehart, 1997). It is therefore crucial to consider subjective wellbeing, in addition to objective wellbeing, when assessing overall human wellbeing and its behavioural consequences. This recognition will guide us in the next chapter, where we shed light on the so far overlooked, yet fundamental, dimension of wellbeing: the subjective dimension of wellbeing.

2.5 Subjective wellbeing

2.5.1 Defining subjective wellbeing

Defining what makes people feel that they live a good life is subject to debate among disciplines, not only because of the inherently personal experience of feeling well, but also due to the methodological and conceptual challenges involved in measuring and understanding wellbeing. The pioneering works of Richard Easterlin (1974) and Bruno Frey (Frey, 2008; Frey and Stutzer, 2002) debuted a stream of happiness research in economics viewing subjective wellbeing, then essentially measured as happiness, as utility for individual behaviour (Dolan et al., 2008; Dorn et al., 2008; Liberini et al., 2017; Ward, 2015). In sociology, subjective wellbeing is not only measured by happiness, but instead considered as a more complex,

cognitive and social construct of the “collective notions of the good life” (Veenhoven 2008: 3), thus notably including how we evaluate our lives and feel in our social relationships, while happiness is understood as a fluctuating sensation and the sum of pleasures and pains (Bentham, 1970). Moreover, subjective wellbeing and mental health are at the core of research interests in positive psychology, and similarly to sociologists, psychologists consider happiness as a volatile sensation, while subjective wellbeing is the combination of an individual’s cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives and is, by consequence, drawn from the balance between pleasant and unpleasant affective feelings (Diener, 2000; 2012). In addition to emotions, psychologists emphasize eudemonic wellbeing (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryff and Keyes, 1995), i.e. the universal human needs such as empowerment, autonomy, mastery, self-realization, or having a purpose in life, in contributing to feeling well in life, all the while acknowledging the limited roles of personality and temperament in affecting evaluations of wellbeing, emphasizing that some people are more prone to being optimistic, while other have a tendency to moan and be dissatisfied or depressed more easily (Cheng and Furnham, 2003; Diener, 2000; Furnham and Brewin, 1990).

With the growing scholarly interest and cross-disciplinary approaches to subjective wellbeing research, it is increasingly recognized that the drivers of wellbeing are several and that there is no inherent hierarchy between wellbeing experiences, dimensions or measures, nor is there a single path to wellbeing. In other words, subjective wellbeing is a multidimensional concept and individuals consider these dimensions together when making a synthesis of their wellbeing, although persons may attach different degrees of importance to each of the wellbeing dimensions (Rojas, 2017).

Despite that different taxonomies of wellbeing have been presented across disciplines¹², most recent literature taking an interdisciplinary perspective have converged around four central dimensions of subjective wellbeing that taken together illustrate the different aspects that individuals can consider when assessing their wellbeing. By considering all four dimensions research does not only focus on how persons feel (happiness or satisfaction) but also “how well they function” (Huppert et al., 2009: 301), i.e. from a eudemonic and social perspective. The four dimensions have since then been operationalized by the European Social Survey (ESS) (Jeffrey et al., 2015) and will also guide us for the conceptualisation and measurement of subjective wellbeing¹³.

2.5.2 Dimensions of subjective wellbeing

2.5.2.1 *Evaluative wellbeing*

A first and perhaps the most widely used dimension of subjective wellbeing relates to evaluative wellbeing (sometimes called ‘cognitive’ wellbeing). Evaluative wellbeing builds on a cognitive construct of an overall judgement of the quality of life (Veenhoven, 2008). It is most often measured as the degree of general satisfaction with life or overall happiness, and the former measure is central in empirical studies 2 and 4 of this thesis. By evaluating how satisfied or happy one feels about their life in general, respondents draw a balance between the good and the bad in their lives and make an overall assessment of their wellbeing. It is therefore by nature

¹² Examples of these taxonomies include e.g. Diener’s tripartite model, which entails 1) frequent positive feelings 2) absence of negative feelings, and 3) high life satisfaction (Diener, 1984) and Ryff and Keyes’ (1995) six-factor model, which strongly focuses on eudemonic wellbeing and includes experiences of self-acceptance, purpose in life, personal growth, environmental mastery, autonomy, and having positive relations to surrounding persons.

¹³ Although the ESS in fact separates between community wellbeing and supportive relationships in relation to social wellbeing; and functioning and vitality with regards to eudemonic wellbeing, the overarching dimensions follow the division that is also used in this research: evaluative, emotional, eudemonic (functioning & vitality) and social wellbeing (supportive relationships & quality of community) (Jeffrey et al., 2015).

a retrospective assessment, although, as any measure obtained by surveying human subjects, it is also to some extent influenced by the respondent's current mood and memory, and by the immediate context in which it is asked (Kapteyn et al., 2014).

Evaluative measures of wellbeing have many merits, such as capturing a global assessment of the quality of life, as opposed to any domain-specific evaluations of life (such as job satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, etc.). Life satisfaction has even been considered by some as a fairly precise indicator of overall wellbeing in a long-term perspective (Veenhoven, 2008), and therefore being highly useful for scholarship that aims to understand the causes and consequences of wellbeing. Moreover, evaluative wellbeing is an assessment that is inherently constructed from a personal comparison to a self-set standard, instead of being externally imposed (Diener et al., 1985; Diener et al., 2013). This has made some view that evaluative wellbeing is essentially the gap between perceptions about one's life and the notion of how one's life should be (Michalos, 1985; Veenhoven, 2008).

As a drawback, evaluative wellbeing is considered to be heavily influenced by comparison to peers in the surrounding society, to the extent that some consider it to express a "reflective appraisal" (Veenhoven, 2008: 3), meaning that we evaluate our lives in a positive light when people around us view us as doing well and in a more negative light when we do not receive positive recognition from our peers. In this way, evaluative wellbeing is influenced by social constructions to a larger extent than the other wellbeing dimensions. Whereas life satisfaction could arguably be viewed as fairly representative of overall subjective wellbeing, it cannot be considered as a sum of all dimensions that affect our subjective wellbeing (Jeffrey et al., 2015; Veenhoven, 2008; Diener et al., 2000; 2013). This highlights the need to gain a more detailed

understanding of the interrelated cognitive, emotional, psychological and social processes that affect our wellbeing.

2.5.2.2 *Emotional wellbeing*

The study of emotions has traditionally been among the core interests in psychology. Emotional wellbeing stems from the pleasant and unpleasant emotions, or negative and positive ‘affect’, we experience in our daily lives. Emotional wellbeing has been described as a measure of the “emotional quality of an individual’s everyday experience” (Kahneman and Deaton 2010: 16’489), as well as their frequency and intensity, and is therefore inseparable from the experience of feeling well in life.

Emotional wellbeing has typically been measured in surveys by the reported frequency of negative and positive emotions, such as (but not limited to) happiness, joy, or enthusiasm, or on the other hand, sadness, anxiety, anger or depression. Scales for measuring emotions vary, although the Positive and Negative Affect-Schedule (PANAS) (Watson et al., 1988) is one of the most comprehensive scales, identifying over 50 negative or positive emotions and mood states and serving as a basis for many shorter items that measure emotions. Typically, the occurrence of emotions is reported by individuals in the short or medium time span. On this note, research has underlined the relevance of measuring both negative and positive affective feelings, since these are not polar opposites but constitute separate factors of emotional wellbeing that correlate with different variables; in other words, high emotional wellbeing is not only the absence of negative emotions but also entails often experiencing many positive emotions (Diener, 2000; Cacioppo et al, 1999; Bradburn and Caplovitz, 1965). In this way, an accumulative effect is assumed when measuring emotional wellbeing, whereby higher levels of

wellbeing are experienced by increasing the frequency of pleasurable feelings (Fredrickson, 2004).

As informative as emotions are about the state of wellbeing of the individual, it has some drawbacks that are related to measurement. Since emotions are recalled at a specific point in time, they are more strongly influenced by mood and other situational factors than other wellbeing dimensions, and therefore have a stronger tendency to fluctuate even in the short term (Diener, 2000; Diener et al. 2003). It can therefore become problematic to assess the causes and consequences of positive and negative emotions in the long-term, although carefully designing the question wording in surveys can significantly increase the reliability of these measures, by e.g. asking for the *usual* frequency of experiencing positive and negative emotions in the *recent past* (Watson et al., 1988; Diener et al., 2018). These aspects are also reflected in the design of the measures used in Study 2 of this thesis.

2.5.2.3 *Eudemonic wellbeing*

A third approach to subjective wellbeing stems from scholarship in positive psychology and is based on the existence of underlying psychological needs that affect our wellbeing, independently from the respondent's life satisfaction or any positive affect they can give rise to (Kapteyn et al., 2014), emphasizing the reasons why these dimensions should be studied separately. Drawing from the work of Maslow (1943, 1987), Ryan and Deci (2000) and Ryff and Keyes (1995) suggested that there are universal human needs that contribute to personal wellbeing, such as autonomy, mastery, as well as a sentiment of 'flourishing', or having a purpose in life. Eudemonic wellbeing has also been called the aspect of wellbeing stemming from personal 'functioning' and vitality in life (Jeffrey et al., 2015; Peterson, 2000).

Moreover, psychological empowerment¹⁴ is a prominent indicator of eudemonic wellbeing (Peterson, 1999; Zimmerman, 1990) and is particularly relevant to political participation, which is why it will be used to explain the linkages between eudemonic wellbeing and political participation in Study 3 of this thesis. Empowerment is a psychological state that stems from many diffuse feelings and perceptions, such as a state of being in control of one's life, having an optimistic view of oneself and one's life, and the ability to affect the future (Zimmerman, 1990; Tengland, 2008; Beaumont, 2010). Empowerment is also the feeling of living a life that is worthwhile and valuable (i.e., having a purpose in life) and feeling accomplishment of one's actions (i.e. self-realization) (Tengland, 2008). Conversely, low empowerment has been described as a feeling of alienation, helplessness or powerlessness in life (Zimmerman, 1990). While empowerment is closely related to the concept of efficacy, these two are separate constructs. Efficacy is domain-specific, and can concern aspects such as views of oneself and the societal institutions in the process of political decision-making (*political efficacy*) (Clarke and Acock, 1989; Finkel, 1985), cohesion in society and the willingness to take action for the common good (*collective efficacy*) (Sampson et al., 1997), or a teacher's ability to convey information and motivate pupils to learn (*teacher efficacy*) (Gibson and Dembo, 1984). Therefore, instead of being synonymous to empowerment, efficacy is a *driver* of the feeling of empowerment, while the latter concerns holistically a feeling of empowerment in the various domains of one's life (Edwards et al., 2002). Therefore, in addition to considering how efficacy in the political domain is conducive to participation, it becomes salient to consider how the broader feeling of empowerment favours individual political activity.

¹⁴ Psychological empowerment refers to empowerment at the individual level (Zimmerman, 1995) (from now on, we refer to it simply as 'empowerment').

In sum, eudemonic wellbeing can be described as the clusters of feelings, perceptions and needs that contribute to the optimal functioning of a human being. It is achieved by being holistically and fully engaged in one's life activities (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993), in other words, when intrinsic human needs are realized (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). Research has furthermore described how eudemonic wellbeing is the outcome when a person functions optimally in relation to others and as a member of society (Gable and Haidt, 2005; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Its central role in making individuals feel well in life, independently from life satisfaction or pleasant emotional experiences, thereby becomes evident. Nevertheless, critics of the eudemonic approach to wellbeing have pointed out that a state of being well cannot alone stem from eudemonia, and it is possible for persons to take eudemonic experiences to excess, to the extent that too much eudemonia dampens overall wellbeing; this is illustrated by how excessive eudemonic pursuit may lead to a workaholic lifestyle, exhaustion or self-sacrifice (Huta, 2015). Eudemonic wellbeing should therefore be viewed as an integral component of subjective wellbeing, while not being a single benchmark for it.

2.5.2.4 Social wellbeing

A fourth dimension of wellbeing is socially anchored, thereby distinguishing itself from the other wellbeing dimensions that are cultivated individually. Research has shown the importance of the quality and the quantity of social connections for the purpose of fostering wellbeing on the individual level (Diener and Seligman, 2002; Helliwell and Putnam, 2004; Atkinson et al., 2020). Social wellbeing expresses how an individual relates to others and to the surrounding society, therefore including both interpersonal experiences and experiences at the societal level. It has been defined in literature as the extent of individual social participation (Larson, 1993;

McDowell, 2006), as well as the extent that a person ‘belongs’ to society (*social integration*), and their perception of their value in society (*social contribution*). Others have included the individual’s views of the surrounding society into the definition of social wellbeing, such as the perception of the quality and functioning of the society (*social coherence*); the perception of others in society as a generalized category (*social acceptance*) and the belief in the potential of society as a whole (*social actualization*) (Keyes, 1998).

A final, key indicator of social wellbeing is *social support*, which will also be the focus of Study 1 of the empirical part of this thesis. The importance of social support for physical and mental wellbeing has been widely recognized in psychology as well as by health practitioners (Krause, 2001; Turner, 1981; Vaux, 1988; Harandi et al., 2017; Uchino et al., 2018). Social support has been, broadly speaking, defined as the availability (the quantity) and the quality of close, trustful and reliable relationships with surrounding persons (Larson 1993). While social support can also be viewed as a contributor to social wellbeing (e.g. Vaux, 1988; Krause, 2001; Harandi, 2017), its relevance as an indicator of social wellbeing itself is underlined by how social support is the “subjective feeling of belonging, of being accepted, of being loved, of being needed, all for oneself” (Moss, 1973: 273; Langford et al., 1997), thus not only being vehicular to wellbeing. This has also been shown empirically, since social support is not necessarily correlated with higher wellbeing (e.g. Utz and Breuer, 2017).

Social support can either be practical or psychological; while its practical dimension entails help and support in concrete tasks, its psychological dimension involves caring, empathy, love, and trust in one’s social relationships, as well as a feeling of belonging, of being accepted and needed in these relationships (House et al., 1988; Krause, 2001; Langford et al., 1997). Despite that social support scholars have more recently started to explore the positive influence of the

act of giving (practical or psychological) support on individual wellbeing (Brown et al., 2003; Inagaki and Orehek, 2017), traditionally the scholarship in the domain focuses on the subjective experiences of *perceived* support (Sarason et al., 1983; Krause, 2001; Utz and Breuer, 2017) or on the transactional process of giving and receiving support (Vaux, 1988; Liu et al., 2020). How much is enough social support is highly personal; some people prefer to have several people to rely on for support, others are satisfied with just one close relationship (Sarason et al., 1983; Cohen et al., 1985, 2000). Satisfaction with the available support is also highly personal, and partly influenced by self-esteem and the level of control one has over their surroundings (Sarason et al., 1983; Silverstein et al., 1996)

Social wellbeing is not synonymous to social capital, nor is it merely an indicator of it, but instead social wellbeing takes a distinct focus from the common conceptual definition of social capital. Although informal networks are not estranged from social capital theory, and many of the indicators of social wellbeing can contribute to building social capital (e.g. Ryan et al., 2008; Coleman, 1988) the focus of the social capital literature is still stronger on the influence of recruitment and mobilizing (formal) networks (Armingeon, 2007; Lin, 2008; Teorell, 2003; Verba et al., 1995), civic norms (Dalton, 2008; Putnam, 2000, 1995) and civic skills (Teorell, 2003; Verba et al., 1995) that are developed within these networks, as well as on other factors stemming from the broader socio-political environment that individuals are surrounded by (Campbell, 2013). By contrast, social wellbeing focuses on how the social relationships a person is embedded in affects their views of oneself and the life they are living, as well as a person's role in relation to the surrounding society. Social capital theory is therefore more useful for explaining the *structures* where social wellbeing can be cultivated (or not), while not being an indicator of social wellbeing *per se*. In sum, social capital and social wellbeing are

related, yet not synonymous constructs that both merit to be examined separately from one another. This distinction will be further discussed in Study 1 of this research.

While being cultivated in relation to others in society, social wellbeing is measured at the individual level and therefore it belongs to the individual-level dimensions of wellbeing. Its importance, independently from other wellbeing dimensions, becomes paramount when considering how the quality of our interpersonal relationships contribute to how we feel about ourselves. Furthermore, at the population level, the social dimension of wellbeing acts as an indicator of the wellbeing of society as a whole (Helliwell, 2003; Helliwell and Putnam, 2004), not the least because the quality of interpersonal relationship foster wellbeing for all parties involved, thus creating positive synergies for the aggregate wellbeing in a society. Meanwhile, since the state of feeling well is a highly personal experience, as well as the extent that persons grant importance in life to each dimension of wellbeing, the extent that social wellbeing can contribute to overall wellbeing is also likely to vary between persons. This is well illustrated by how some individuals thrive when being integrated in many social relationships, while others are more introvert and enjoy being, even extensive times, alone. Social wellbeing is therefore an important driver of wellbeing with a unique contribution that is not well covered by the other dimensions, while not being a panacea for the wellbeing of everyone.

2.5.3 The relationship between wellbeing dimensions and with related constructs

With the development of wellbeing scholarship, it is becoming increasingly recognized that the evaluative, emotional, eudemonic and social wellbeing constitute four pillars (see Figure 1 below) that summarizes quite well the different aspects that affect subjective wellbeing. However, these dimensions are not unrelated to each other. To the contrary, many studies show

that the wellbeing dimensions are moderately to strongly correlated with each other (e.g. Kahneman and Riis, 2005; Sandvik et al., 2009; Huta, 2015; Huta and Waterman, 2014). This can also be recognized intuitively; for instance, persons with high life satisfaction likely experience many positive emotions in their daily lives, and being dissatisfied is likely accompanied by recurring negative emotions. Likewise, receiving support in close personal relationships likely fosters eudemonia, e.g. in terms of a higher sense of mastery, empowerment and self-efficacy beliefs, and these perceptions, in their turn, can positively contribute to one's cognitive assessment of their lives, i.e. their life satisfaction.

Then why is it important to focus on several wellbeing dimension simultaneously, since subjective wellbeing dimensions are not orthogonal to each other? Because multidimensionality matters in people's judgement of their wellbeing. Studies have shown that persons are able to experience many of the different wellbeing dimensions simultaneously and are also able to distinguish between the different dimensions when assessing their overall wellbeing (Kapteyn et al., 2015; Ryff and Keyes, 2005; Dolan et al., 2011). For instance, a person can feel angry or sad during an argument but still evaluate their life satisfaction highly, or feel that they have a lack of control or autonomy in some aspects of life, but still feel supported in their interpersonal relationships. Subjective wellbeing dimensions are therefore not interchangeable, and one cannot fully compensate a decrease of wellbeing in one dimension, such as a loss of social support, by compensating it with another dimensions, such as seeking more pleasurable emotions. Although researchers may be compelled to combine different dimensions of wellbeing for the purpose of creating a global score of wellbeing, by doing so one would lose valuable information about the different experiences that makes life worth living, as well as fail to detect the potential variation between the different wellbeing dimensions in influencing attitudes and social behaviour.

The different dimensions of subjective wellbeing are also related to other internal, psychological constructs, such as personality or mental health. While personality affects to some extent how individuals evaluate and express their wellbeing (Cheng and Furnham, 2003; Diener, 2000; Furnham and Brewin, 1990), by e.g. setting standards for reporting positive and negative emotions, personality is not related to cognitive assessments of wellbeing (Jovanovic, 201; Schimmack et al., 2008). Moreover, subjective wellbeing measures show discriminant validity from common personality-related constructs, such as optimism/pessimism (Lucas et al., 1996), highlighting why wellbeing is not conditional on personality. In addition, subjective wellbeing and mental health are intimately related constructs, although the latter is a narrower medical concept that focuses on ill-being, while the former expresses an overall assessment of life, including the good aspects. In other words, poor mental health is symptomatic of low subjective wellbeing (Cummins and Lau, 2006; Gargiulo and Stokes, 2008), but low wellbeing does not necessarily imply the occurrence of clinical depression. Therefore it is theoretically relevant to take an integrative approach to subjective wellbeing by understanding the concept of good life as a *combination* of the different dimensions of subjective wellbeing, viewing them as much distinct from each other as from other related constructs, such as personality or mental health (Diener, 2000, 2012; Veenhoven, 2008). Acknowledging this emphasizes even further the great potential subjective wellbeing has on further unveiling how the state of mind affects people's motivations, attitudes and behaviour.

Figure 1. Dimensions of subjective wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing			
Evaluative wellbeing	Emotional wellbeing	Eudemonic wellbeing	Social wellbeing
life satisfaction, general happiness	joy, happiness, anger, sadness, anxiety, depression etc....	empowerment, mastery, autonomy, purpose in life etc...	social support, social coherence, social integration etc...

2.5.4 Measuring subjective wellbeing

While in theory there is a growing consensus about the multidimensionality of subjective wellbeing, there is still room for improvement in fully operationalizing its various dimensions in empirical research. It was mentioned how most empirical research so far has predominantly used self-reported happiness or life satisfaction as the only indicators of subjective wellbeing. Data availability has for long been an issue, as the majority of available survey data only include life satisfaction or happiness scales as the only measures of subjective wellbeing, although this trend is gradually evolving with the advancements that have been made to take a multidimensional approach to subjective wellbeing in large flagship surveys such as the ESS. Today a consensus is growing around the clear need to address the multidimensionality of subjective wellbeing in data collection efforts, even if extending the definition of wellbeing reveals complexities involved in measuring it.

Due to the inherently personal nature of the construct, subjective wellbeing has predominantly been measured through survey self-reporting. The use of survey instruments to measure

subjective wellbeing goes back to the work of Hadley Cantril in the 1960's (1965), which surveyed the expectations, aspirations and fears of the population across 13 countries using a standardized questionnaire and a 11-point 'ladder-of-life' scale. This early version of the quality of life scale has since then become a standard measure of subjective wellbeing in the form of the life satisfaction scale (Kristoffersen, 2017; Møller and Roberts, 2017).

The life satisfaction scale, just as any scale measurement, assumes cardinal comparability (i.e. equidistance across measurement points) and ordinal comparability across individuals and contexts (Kristoffersen, 2017). Life satisfaction is thought to be a relatively stable measure of wellbeing, and its stability is likely greater in the short and medium-term than positive and negative emotions, which tend to fluctuate more even in a short time span (see e.g. Diener, 2000). However, research has demonstrated that life satisfaction measures can also be influenced by mood, memory and other situational factors that reign at the time that wellbeing is reported by individuals (Diener et al., 2000), although the situational influence has also been described to "pale in comparison with long-term influences" on the individual's subjective wellbeing (Diener et al., 2000: 35).

Critical scholars could question the reliability of *any* measure of subjective wellbeing, due to the inherently personal nature of the construct and the strong semantic dimension involved in understanding it. This is underlined by the fact that people can associate different experiences and factors with words and constructs such as 'satisfaction', 'happiness' or 'wellbeing'. However, while it might not be possible to *exactly* know how individuals evaluate and express their wellbeing, for most research purposes it suffices to know *approximately* how they feel – an objective that can most likely be fulfilled through self-reported wellbeing. Furthermore, though the reliability of subjective wellbeing measures is arguably lower compared to objective

measures of wellbeing, their reliability can greatly be improved by using multiple indicators of subjective wellbeing that tap on the different dimensions of wellbeing, or by carefully designing question wording to ask about the usual frequency of different feelings instead of which feelings the respondent is currently experiencing (Conceição and Bandura, 2008; Watson et al., 1988; Diener et al., 2018).

Moreover, it is not insignificant for the purpose of measurement whether the *frequency* or the *intensity* of wellbeing experiences is reported. How often people feel happy and satisfied has been deemed a better predictor of wellbeing than how strongly happy and satisfied they are, especially since most people report being in a neutral mood or experiencing moderately positive emotions most of the time, and strongly intense positive or negative emotional experiences are relatively rare even among individuals with highest self-reported wellbeing (Diener et al, 1991). This reflects the adaptation mechanism in wellbeing (see ch. 2.4.10), since intense positive experiences risk becoming a self-set benchmark against which individuals tend to compare subsequent positive experiences, thus making these less pleasurable (Parducci, 1995).

In addition, the influence of self-selection cannot be ignored when measuring subjective wellbeing with survey data. It is possible that persons with higher wellbeing self-select into participation in surveys; this has been explained by their stronger patterns of pro-social behaviour, their higher levels of trust in authorities, and simply their stronger motivation to participate in surveys (Stoop, 2005; Voorpostel, 2010). By contrast, not feeling well is likely to make persons more inward-looking, to reduce available energy to invest into surveys, and fuel distrust in institutions and authorities, which may negatively influence the willingness to participate in surveys. Furthermore, wellbeing does not only positively influence participation, but it is also a positive discriminant in keeping respondents in surveys, since attrition affects

proportionally more persons with low wellbeing (Watson and Wooden, 2009; Mirowsky and Reynolds, 2000). While targeted efforts in data collection can alleviate the effects of self-selection and attrition biases, it is still important to keep in mind the influence of wellbeing on the characteristics of the sample population when analyzing wellbeing and its outcomes with survey data.

Another challenge involved in measuring subjective wellbeing in surveys is its sensitivity to social desirability bias. This entails that respondents might self-assess their subjective wellbeing to a level that they believe is normatively appropriate instead of expressing their actual experience of wellbeing in day to day life (Diener, 2000). Related to this, research has found that negative emotions are moderately underreported in surveys due to influences of social desirability (Kozma and Stones 1987; Diener 1994). Some argue that social desirability concerns could be more influential on wellbeing measures collected during face-to-face interviews due to heightened pressure to socially desirable reporting (Richman et al., 1999), while others have found evidence to the contrary (Dolan and Kavetsos, 2016). Social desirability should moreover be attenuated in web-based surveys, where there is a heightened perception of anonymity involved (Dwight and Feigelson, 2000; Caputo, 2017). Meanwhile, a number of studies have found that irrespective of the mode of data collection involved, social desirability has rather little impact on wellbeing in a sample when a survey is well designed (Kozma and Stones, 1988; Veenhoven, 1991b; Caputo, 2017). The risk of social desirability bias in wellbeing research shall nonetheless be kept in mind when analysing wellbeing with survey data.

Since subjective wellbeing is a personal experience, measuring it through other means than self-reporting is challenging to say the least; survey data might therefore still be the most

appropriate way to measure and compare wellbeing between individuals, although scholars have also called for exploring the potential of other methods, notably experimental methods and physiological measures, in wellbeing research (e.g. Diener et al, 2000). Considering the great potential of exploring the attitudinal and behavioural consequences of subjective wellbeing, strengthened efforts to develop new measurement and test alternative methodologies in wellbeing research should be called for in order to enhance the reliability of wellbeing measurements. With regards to comparability across individuals, however, the challenges are as much conceptual as they are methodological, as context matters for how individuals understand wellbeing. Two main contextual influences – cultural and country adherence – will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.5.5 Culture and subjective wellbeing

Taking a multidimensional approach to wellbeing opens up the possibility of unveiling cultural variation in assessing and understanding wellbeing (Jeffrey et al., 2015). Subjective wellbeing is to a certain extent culturally bound, since persons from distinct cultures rely on different feelings when judging their state of wellbeing (Diener, 2000; Jeffrey et al., 2015). An influential stream of scholarship in cross-cultural psychology identifies cultures as *individualist* or *collectivist*, a distinction that has bearings on the priorities, attitudes and values of the persons embedded in these cultures (e.g. Green et al., 2005). Whereas persons in individualist cultures, such as Western European and North American cultures, tend to more often consult their affect and pleasant emotions in assessing their wellbeing, people in collectivist cultures, such as East Asian and Eastern European culture, more often consult social norms and appraisals by their peers to evaluate how well they are doing in life (Diener, 2000, 2012). Therefore, in general terms, autonomy and freedom (i.e. eudemonic wellbeing) are highly valued by individualist

cultures, while a person's role in their social relationships (i.e. social wellbeing) is more highly esteemed by persons in collectivist cultures.

The individualism versus collectivism dimension also affects how respondents express wellbeing. Persons in individualist cultures tend to see themselves in a positive light (the so-called 'positivity bias') and are more prone to report higher life satisfaction (Diener and Lucas, 2000; Lee et al., 2017) than individuals in collectivist cultures. Persons in individualist cultures also seek more often to stand out from the crowd by personal accomplishment, meanwhile, individuals in collectivist cultures draw more often their wellbeing appraisals from social comparison ('the reference group effect') (Diener, 2012; Lee et al., 2017; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Moreover, it is thought that the self-concept and the evaluation of life satisfaction stay more stable across time in individualist cultures than in collectivist cultures (Lee et al., 2017), whereas external factors, such as social pressure, are more influential on life satisfaction judgements in collectivist cultures. On the other hand, persons in individualist cultures also tend to express their wellbeing in more extreme terms than persons in collectivist cultures ('extreme response tendency') (Chen et al., 1995; Lee et al., 2017), since they draw their wellbeing more strongly from internal standards instead of comparison with peers.

Finally, standards for expressing wellbeing as well as the value put on the different characteristics in life are culturally bound (Diener, 2012). Also, semantic differences may complicate efforts to compare wellbeing cross-culturally, since concepts such as wellbeing or satisfaction can be understood in different ways across countries. These circumstances have made some researchers to question whether subjective wellbeing can under any circumstances be compared interpersonally (e.g. Rojas, 2017); on the other hand, others view that it is rather safe to assume that two individuals, who have the same cultural and linguistic background, and

score the same on a wellbeing scale, experience the same (or very similar) level of subjective wellbeing (Van Praag, 2007). In sum, while there are non-negligible cross-cultural differences in evaluating and expressing subjective wellbeing that influence comparability across countries and cultures, these differences are not decisive enough to invalidate any cross-cultural analysis of wellbeing (Conceição and Bandura, 2008; Diener et al., 2009; Frey and Stutzer, 2002). It is due to these reasons that we are able to examine patterns of wellbeing and their consequences on political attitudes and behaviour using comparative European survey data in studies 3 and 4, while taking into account the cultural context individuals are embedded in.

2.5.6 Subjective wellbeing and the country context

Not all contextual influences of wellbeing go back to culture; in fact, besides the cultural patterns in evaluating wellbeing, the country circumstances are likely to promote, or dampen, the wellbeing of their citizens. Already early cross-country studies on wellbeing found that national wealth and the material standard of living are moderately to strongly correlated with mean life satisfaction among its citizens (Clark and Oswald, 1996; Easterlin, 1974, 1995; Diener, 2000, 2012), since wealthier nations are more likely to fulfil basic human needs for food, health and security, as well as have a stronger record for respecting human rights, which should increase average wellbeing in a country. However, data also suggests that further income increases in already wealthy countries do not translate into equivalent increases in life satisfaction (Easterlin, 1974, 1995), partly because of raising expectations among the population as the standard of living increases (cf. theory of adaptation in chapter 2.4.10). Meanwhile, besides these general patterns connecting wealth and wellbeing, some countries rank higher or lower in wellbeing in cross-national studies than what is to be expected; for instance, Eastern European countries rank low and Latin American countries rank high in

average life satisfaction even after controlling for income or human development (e.g. Bonini, 2008; Diener, 2012, 2000). While some of these differences have been explained by cultural standards in expressing positive emotions and experiences (see ch. 2.5.5), others have been traced back to the historical and political context of a country; this is notably the case of Eastern Europe, where patterns of lower wellbeing could stem from the shared post-Communist legacy of these countries and the bearings this heritage has on the political, institutional and social structures of these countries (Djankov et al., 2016).

Therefore, in addition to wealth, aggregate subjective wellbeing is likely to be higher in countries where also other macro-level indicators are favourable: these include e.g. political democracy and good governance, freedom and security, and a cultural climate of trust (Veenhoven, 2008; Veenhoven and Ehrhardt, 1995). Others have extended the list of contextual predictors to include low unemployment (Clark and Oswald, 1994; Frey and Stutzer, 2002), low inequality (Conceição and Bandura, 2008) strong social protection safety nets¹⁵, political stability and government accountability (Harrison et al., 2016). Moreover, the extent and strength of democracy as well as political freedom are strong correlates of happiness and wellbeing in a country (Frey and Stutzer, 2002; Dorn, 2008), although Veenhoven (2003) shows this to be the case in rich, but not poor, nations. Empirical evidence of wellbeing across Europe underlines the salience of the politico-institutional predictors of aggregate wellbeing in a country; in general terms, the average self-reported life satisfaction is lower in Eastern Europe than Western Europe (Djankov et al., 2016), as well as lower in Southern Europe than Northern Europe (Pedersen and Schmidt, 2009).

¹⁵ Although the welfare state is frequently thought to favour the wellbeing of their citizens, research has shown mixed empirical evidence of this claim (see e.g. Veenhoven, 2008).

There is therefore wide agreement on a certain number of societal conditions that promote citizen's abilities to live a good life, and empirically, the contextual influence is not negligible. Using World Values Study data, Bonini (2008) found that almost 20 percent of variation in mean life satisfaction is explained by the country context, of which the majority was due to regional differences, national wealth (GDP per capita), the level of human development (Human Development index) and environmental sustainability. Yet it is equally important to remember that the remaining 80 % - the vast majority – of variation in wellbeing can be traced back to individual-level differences. Despite the undeniable contextual influences, subjective wellbeing remains first and foremost, an individual matter, and should be primarily studied as such.

2.6 Linking subjective wellbeing to political attitudes and behaviour

In this chapter we link the different dimensions of subjective wellbeing with political attitudes and behaviour by reviewing the existing scholarship in the domain and shedding light on causality issues in the relationship. By contrast, an in-depth discussion of the mechanism that links the different wellbeing dimensions to the specific political outcomes under analysis will be had in the framework of the four empirical studies in part 3 of this thesis.

2.6.1 Subjective wellbeing and political efficacy

Previous research suggests that subjective wellbeing could be an essential predictor of the attitudes and orientations that shape the politically active citizen. A state of feeling well positively influences efficacy beliefs and given the pivotal role of political efficacy as a predictor of actual participation, the importance of wellbeing for political engagement becomes

apparent. Research has underlined how subjective wellbeing favours an overall feeling of self-efficacy (Sahu and Rath, 2003), which includes efficacy as a political agent (Vecchione and Caprara, 2009). Conversely, feeling sad or depressed, i.e. low emotional wellbeing, has been linked to a lower feeling of political efficacy and self-efficacy in general (Ojeda, 2015; Maciejewski et al., 2000), and by consequence, should dampen political participation.

The linkages between wellbeing and efficacy become even more apparent when considering the social dimension of wellbeing. In social wellbeing scholarship, having dense social relationships favors individual openness and self-efficacy (Ohmer, 2007), including political efficacy (Vecchione and Caprara, 2009), while a withdrawal from social networks dampens political efficacy beliefs (Marx and Nguyen, 2016). Furthermore, receiving support in these relationships strengthens perceptions and beliefs in individual political agency, since social support enhances a sense of control (Langford et al., 1997; Thoits, 2011) and capabilities of problem-solving (Sarason et al., 1983; Langford et al., 1997; Whitfield and Wiggins, 2003) as well as increases personal competence (Krause, 2001). Conversely, a lack of support in social relationships has been associated on the individual level with external locus of control and the difficulty of persisting with a task that does not deliver an immediate and ready solution (Sarason et al., 1983), which is a characteristic of any activities that are aimed at exerting political influence. Finally, social wellbeing reinforces a sense of belonging, which is conducive to the development of political efficacy (Anderson, 2010; Talò et al., 2014; McDonnell, 2020). All in all, social support, and social wellbeing more generally, positively influence the development of the politically efficacious citizen.

Meanwhile, the impact of social support likely has a gender dimension, being particularly important for women's efficacy beliefs, to the extent that social support has been described as

a means to promote political efficacy among female adolescents in their formative years (Arens and Watermann, 2017). The positive influence of social support for women is especially powerful in domains that are traditionally seen as male-dominant and where women in general have lower efficacy beliefs (Vekiri and Chronaki, 2008; Arens and Watermann, 2017; Guan et al., 2017; Molino et al., 2018). Politics is arguably a male-dominant field due to the deep-rooted influence of socialization and social norms on gender roles (Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al., 1997, 1978; Dassonneville and McAllister, 2018; Fraile, 2014). It is therefore plausible that social support matters more for women's political efficacy than for men.

In summary, past research has indicated that subjective wellbeing, and social wellbeing in particular, enhances political efficacy beliefs, which makes it all the more surprising that indicators of social wellbeing, such as social support, have not received more systematic attention in scholarship next to the other, socially-oriented explanations of political efficacy, such as social capital. Furthermore, considering the plausible gender differences in the mechanism that links social support to efficacy, the gaps in the literature on the antecedents of political efficacy become even more prominent. Finally, considering how political efficacy is strongly predictive of actual political participation (Campbell et al., 1954; Lane 1959; Craig et al., 1990; Pollock, 1983), better understanding the wellbeing antecedents of political efficacy become essential in view of extending current scholarship on inequalities in participation. These considerations will guide is in Study 1, which proposes to explain the development of efficacy from a social support perspective while putting gender differences in the forefront of this relationship.

2.6.2 Subjective wellbeing and political participation

As earlier discussed, most research in the linkages between wellbeing and political participation have focused on objective measures of wellbeing. In recent years, however, a number of studies have emerged that link subjective wellbeing to participation and, in particular, to electoral participation. Flavin and Keane (2011) studied the US electorate and found that persons reporting high life satisfaction were more likely to vote than persons who were less satisfied with their lives. Notably, the authors found that the magnitude of the effect of life satisfaction rivalled to that of education, a characteristic that has consistently been found to strongly predict participation (e.g. Verba et al, 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Gallego, 2010). Similar findings have been presented by Weitz-Shapiro and Winters in the Latin American context (2011). Reflecting this, happier people are thought to use their voting rights more often than less happy persons (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Pirralha, 2017), and in economics, happiness is a proxy for utility, and can therefore explain voting behaviour (Liberini et al., 2017; Ward, 2015; Dolan et al., 2008). What these studies have in common, other than studying electoral participation per se, is that they explain voting exclusively through the evaluative dimension of subjective wellbeing, i.e. life satisfaction or overall happiness, while ignoring the other dimensions of wellbeing.

Beyond explaining electoral participation, other participation forms have also received some attention among wellbeing scholars. Persons who report the highest levels of happiness (i.e. high evaluative wellbeing) participate more in volunteer organizations, including political parties, than their less happy counterparts (Oishi et al., 2007). Moreover, also other dimensions of wellbeing have received some attention in connection to non-electoral activity. Eudemonic wellbeing, measured as having a meaning in life, being efficacious, and ‘flourishing’ in one’s activities, has been positively associated with political activism, such as participation in political action groups and public demonstrations (Klar and Kasser, 2009), although the authors

found no effect for ‘high-risk’ activism, e.g. illegal protesting and acts of political violence. Moreover, eudemonic wellbeing has been positively associated with party activity and petition signing (Bühlmann, 2016); strikingly, eudemonic wellbeing was considered in both studies as the outcome, instead of a precedent, of political participation (Klar and Kasser, 2009; Bühlmann, 2016).

The relevance of subjective wellbeing for various forms of social and public engagement has led some research to describe it as a *psychological resource* for the purpose of various sorts of political and social involvement (e.g. Sahu and Rath, 2003). On this note, wellbeing makes persons more outward looking, more likely to engage with the surrounding society and seek more challenges and pursue goals (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2011), while conversely, depression, i.e. low emotional wellbeing, has a tendency to dampen participation (Ojeda 2015; Bernardi, 2020). The influence of subjective wellbeing can be compared to the effect of physical health on participation (see chapter 2.4.9); even if low wellbeing does not create a physical obstacle to participate in the way poor physical health does (Denny and Doyle, 2007; Mattila et al., 2013; Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015), not feeling well in life is psychologically burdensome and energy-consuming to deal with for the individual, and consequently affects the ability to engage in various societal activities, such as political acts. In other words, persons with low subjective wellbeing are not as ‘well-equipped’ to engage in political activities as their better-feeling counterparts.

Since not feeling well in life should dampen activity, high wellbeing should, conversely, drive participation. Considering political participation from the perspective of Maslow’s motivational theory (1987, 1954, 1943), while the fulfilment of any aspect of human needs contributes to overall wellbeing, self-actualization tends to only be achieved at moderate to high levels of

wellbeing (Hagerty, 1999; Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Tay and Diener, 2011). Since pursuing higher societal and personal goals through political engagement can be considered as a form of self-actualization, it is more likely to take place when individuals are feeling well and satisfied about the other, arguably more ‘fundamental’ aspects of their lives (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Veenhoven, 2008). In this logic, only when citizens have reached a sufficiently high level of subjective wellbeing will they start looking beyond their personal concerns through societal and political engagement (Flavin and Keane, 2011; Inglehart, 1997).

Meanwhile, another stream of scholarship subscribes to the view that *too much wellbeing* may be detrimental for the purpose of political engagement. Oishi and colleagues (2007) show that persons who are satisfied (scoring 8-9 on a 10-point life satisfaction scale), but not fully satisfied (i.e. scoring 10/10 on the same scale), with their lives also have the highest levels of conflictual political participation (i.e. petition signing, joining a boycott, attending demonstrations, joining strikes, or occupying buildings or factories), thereby explaining why full satisfaction might be detrimental to activities that require motivation for self-improvement or a vocation to change personal or social conditions. In other words, a certain level of discontent is needed in order to for a person to feel motivated to engage in political action. Following this logic, participation should be highest when subjective wellbeing is high but not complete, since being fully and completely satisfied provides little motivation for changing politics in society or changing the status quo (Schlenker et al., 2012). A similar stance is taken in the literature on emotional theories of protest. *Grievance theories* see personal dissatisfaction, frustrations and perceptions of injustice as instigators of participation in politics through conflictual forms of activity (Armingeon, 2007; Barnes et al., 1979; Klandermans, 1984; Lind and Tyler, 1988; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013), such as protests or strikes, as well as being predictive of a withdrawal from politics altogether. Similarly in social

psychology, emotions and appraisals have become popular explanations to why persons protest (Van Troost et al. 2013; Van Zomeren et al., 2008); they have been described as “accelerators” in the process of joining protest movements and as “amplifiers” of motivations to protest (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013: 892), due to their influence on social perceptions and information-processing (Bodenhausen et al. 1994; Clark 2014).

Despite an emerging literature on wellbeing and participation, many of the potential wellbeing consequences on political activity are still overlooked by scholarship; for instance, while positive emotions should favour participation in the short-term (Valentino et al., 2011), the influence of emotional wellbeing on participation in the medium and long term remains relatively understudied. Likewise considering the strong focus on explaining electoral participation, on the one hand, and using single indicators of subjective wellbeing, on the other hand, an integrative approach to explaining political participation from a wellbeing perspective is still missing from current scholarship in the field. More precisely, considering the somewhat mixed evidence of extant research in the field, it is relevant to consider whether different dimensions of subjective wellbeing can divergently influence on participation. Could subjective wellbeing be mostly favourable for voting and non-conflictual political activity, while lowering conflictual political participation? Better understanding the various ways and the different conditions under which subjective wellbeing relates to political participation is an important objective of this research and will be further elucidated in studies 2 and 3 of this thesis.

2.6.3 Subjective wellbeing and vote choice

A third avenue of influence of subjective wellbeing is its impact on vote choice and the political orientations of citizens. Reflecting scholarly findings in the political consequences of emotions

(e.g. Marcus, 2000; Brader, 2011; Weber, 2013), subjective wellbeing equally affects our perceptions about the surrounding society and influences how we process information and interpretate it. It has been argued that voters use changes in their life satisfaction as a benchmark when making their vote choice, and that voters either ‘punish’ or ‘reward’ incumbent politicians based on changes in their life satisfaction during the time the incumbents have held office (Esaiasson, 2020; Ward, 2019; Liberini et al., 2017). In this way, life satisfaction serves as utility for voters when they make their partisan choices. In addition, research has identified subjective wellbeing, and life satisfaction in particular, as a determinant of party support and, to some extent, also ideology. A few studies suggest that life satisfaction influences conservative party preferences (Flavin and Keane, 2011; Napier and Jost, 2008) and especially support for the status quo in society (Schlenker et al., 2012), thus echoing the conclusions of literature on health and politics that found healthy voters to be more inclined to vote for the political right (Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015; Rapeli et al., 2020). In a similar vein, happier people tend to be less radical in their political opinions than less happy persons (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005), whereas low wellbeing make persons more open to changing their predispositions and (political) opinions (Valentino et al., 2008). Consequently, low wellbeing could be conducive to radical, including right-wing populist party support, as it is already argued in the literature on emotions and politics (Demertzis, 2006; Magni, 2017; Rico et al., 2017; Salmela and von Scheve, 2018, 2017).

Finally, beyond its direct influence on party choice, subjective wellbeing has been linked to political attitudes that are in their turn strongly predictive of party choice, including right-wing populist support. Esaiasson et al. (2020) argue that individuals consult their life satisfaction in evaluating how political incumbents and the political system is performing. In this way, life satisfaction is positively related with satisfaction with the output of political institutions (Tella

and MacCulloch, 2005), and trust in the democratic institutions (Esaiasson et al., 2020; Habibov and Afandi, 2015; Leung et al., 2013; Zmerli et al., 2007), while a dissatisfaction with life should negatively influence these political attitudes. In addition to perceptions of the political system, dissatisfaction and low wellbeing in general are associated with the development of anti-establishment sentiments and a tendency for blaming outgroups in society for one's grievances (Flecker et al., 2007; MacLaren, 2003), thereby likely making radical and populist parties particularly attractive to voters with low wellbeing. Perceptions and experiences such as relative deprivation and status anxiety, both of which are conceptually related to life dissatisfaction and low wellbeing, have moreover been identified as antecedents of right-wing populist voting among the electorate (Gidron and Hall, 2017; Mols and Jetten, 2016; Rooduijn and Burgoon, 2018). In this way, previous research indicates that low wellbeing, and life dissatisfaction in particular, could be overlooked, yet powerful, drivers of political 'anti'-attitudes, a desire to change the status quo, and finally, right-wing populist preferences. Empirically investigating the relationship between life dissatisfaction and right-wing populist support will therefore be the objective of Study 4 of this research.

2.6.4 Subjective wellbeing, political outcomes and the country context

We have discussed how the country context influences patterns of political participation (ch. 2.3) as well as the aggregate levels of wellbeing in a population (ch. 2.5.6). Additionally, this research argues that in certain situations, the country context *influences the mechanism* that links subjective wellbeing to political participation across Europe. Despite that political activity is subject to country-specific circumstances, certain patterns of participation emerge on the European level when we consider their political and historical legacy expressed as the *age of democracy*; that is, how long a country has been under democratic, as opposed to authoritarian,

rule. Countries, where democracy was established only starting from the 1970's (Samuel Huntington's (1993) famous 'third wave' of democratization, or 'new democracies'), share certain characteristics that affect citizens' willingness to participate in political life, distinguishing them from earlier established democracies ('old democracies'). It is thought that as a democracy matures, citizens are better able to "navigate the political system" and "internalize motivations to participate", thereby increasing participation (Teorell et al., 2007a: 409). As a result, in general terms, citizens in new democracies are disadvantaged in many politico-psychological resources compared to citizens in old democracies; they have lower aggregate levels of political trust and satisfaction (Catterberg and Moreno, 2006), lower internal and external political efficacy (Torcal, 2006), weaker party attachments and lower turnout rates (Karp and Banducci, 2007) and tend to participate less in all forms of political activities (Torcal, 2006), compared to older democracies. In addition, the lower political implication of citizens in new democracies has been traced back to less political opportunities in these democracies ('political opportunity structures', see e.g. Meyer and Minkoff, 2004; Tarrow, 1996). While affecting all forms of participation, the politico-institutional context is thought to be especially influential on non-electoral participation in a country (Dalton et al., 2010; Vráblíková, 2014), possibly because non-electoral activities depend more on the opportunities (Vráblíková, 2014) and are more demanding in terms of politico-psychological resources, and trust and efficacy in particular (Torcal, 2006; Pollock, 1983), which are unevenly developed between old and new democracies.

The common democratic legacy of a country thereby entails that citizens in new democracies have, on average, a more distant relationship with political decision-making processes than citizens in old democracies, a circumstance which may affect how subjective wellbeing influences participation across democracies. The age of democracy could influence the

mechanism between wellbeing and participation in two opposite, yet equally possible, ways: a first one suggests that the participation gap across old and new democracies is so profound that it cannot be meaningfully attenuated by wellbeing increases among citizens in new democracies. Put differently, it entails that wellbeing has a weaker influence on citizens' participation in new democracies, due to the pervasiveness of the influence of the politico-institutional legacy in these countries (*'the path dependency mechanism'*). On the other hand, it is also possible that the positive influence of wellbeing on participation is stronger in new than old democracies; since citizens in new democracies already encounter many hurdles for the purpose of participation, such as lower efficacy, lower trust, weaker party attachments, and so forth, wellbeing could matter quite much for their participation (*'the compensation hypothesis'*) while wellbeing differences among citizens in old democracies are considerably smaller and thus wellbeing would not be decisive for the purpose of political participation in old democracies. The relationship between wellbeing, participation and the country's democratic legacy is therefore far from being straightforward, and will thus be an additional focus in Study 3, where we empirically test the association between empowerment wellbeing and political activity across old and new European democracies.

2.6.5 Causality between subjective wellbeing, political attitudes and behaviour

There is a lively scholarly debate regarding causality issues in the relationship between subjective wellbeing, political behaviour and attitudes, and this research will also contribute to the discussion. The traditional view in political theory postulates that political participation should first and foremost increase wellbeing; this reflects a long-standing tradition in political theory that views the act of participating in the political process as valuable in creating procedural utility to the individual citizen and thereby having a positive effect on quality of life.

Among the psychic benefits of participation, an increased feeling of political efficacy, heightened individual competence, feelings of empowerment (eudemonic wellbeing), and a sense of belonging and contributing to society (social wellbeing) have been put forth as likely outcomes of participation (Bühlmann, 2016; Dorn et al., 2008; Dreze and Sen, 2002; Frey and Stutzer, 2002; Klar and Kasser, 2009; Pacheco and Lange, 2010). This stream of scholarship also argues that participation produces procedural utility in the way persons receive personal satisfaction from participating, or even from merely having the opportunity to participate, in the decision-making processes (Dorn et al., 2008; Frey et al., 2004). Strikingly, many of these researches rely on cross-sectional methods to support their conceptual claims, despite that inferring causation with cross-sectional data and methods is problematic. Despite the many merits of previous efforts to shed light on the linkages and synergies between subjective wellbeing and political participation, research on the causal mechanism involved is still in its infancy.

The uncertainties surrounding the causality between wellbeing and participation has led another stream of scholarship to challenge, both theoretically and empirically, the view that participation would in all circumstances lead to higher wellbeing. Firstly, empirical testing of the relationship between participation and wellbeing has much focused on certain advanced democracies instead of taking a broader, country-comparative approach, and has mixed individual and country-level indicators when testing the relationship, thus finding that aggregate wellbeing is higher in countries with a high level of political freedom (Radcliff, 2001; Veenhoven and Ehrhardt, 1995). As a response to the latter, the influential works of Bruno Frey and Alois Stutzer (2010, 2000) looked at the relationship directly on the individual level and concluded that having the opportunity of participation in political decision-making was associated with higher happiness and life satisfaction in a setting with widespread use of direct

democracy. Meanwhile, Weitz and Shapiro (2011) pointed out the ecological inference problem in this approach as greater happiness in a context of political freedoms does not mean that individuals who participate more are happier than others.

At present, only a few studies explicitly test the causal relationship on the individual-level between subjective wellbeing and political participation, finding that the evidence is mixed (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters 2008, 2011; Pirralha 2017; Lindholm, 2020). By using Dutch panel data, Pirralha (2017) discovered that life satisfaction and participation were not significantly related, whereas Weitz-Shapiro and Winters (2008, 2011) tested the relationship¹⁶ in several Latin American countries and showed that the association is more likely to go from life satisfaction to participation than the other way around.

Beyond empirical evidence of the relationship, the alternative scholarship on wellbeing and participation argues that it is not conceptually straightforward to assume that causality would necessarily run from political participation to wellbeing. Why would the sole act of participating in a political act, which most people only do by voting on occasion, have such general effects on subjective wellbeing? And why would a political act lead to higher wellbeing when the objective of the activity is in many cases not fulfilled (Bühlmann, 2016)? In addition, considering the extant evidence of how poor (physical) health decreases political activity (Denny and Doyle, 2007; Mattila et al., 2013; Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015; Söderlund and Rapeli, 2015), one may draw parallels with the influence of subjective wellbeing on political participation. Since the inverse relationship (i.e. that abstention from political activity would deteriorate health) hardly seems plausible, it is just as pertinent to wonder if opting out of political activities would really decrease subjective wellbeing in a long-lasting way. Claiming

¹⁶ The authors used quasi-experimental methods and sophisticated regression modelling, contrary to panel data.

that political participation necessarily precedes subjective wellbeing does not only leave these questions unanswered, but it also ignores the psychological processes that precede the choice to participate in political activities. Due to these conceptual and empirical considerations, this thesis subscribes to the alternative and emerging scholarship in arguing that subjective wellbeing should first and foremost be considered as an *antecedent* of political behaviour. It is possible that the relationship is to some extent characterised by reciprocal effects; however, while political behaviour can enhance subjective wellbeing through positive externalities on, for instance, sentiments of efficacy and belonging to the society, it is highly likely that subjective wellbeing affects whether or not persons participate in the first place.

Similar considerations can be put forth regarding causality between subjective wellbeing and vote choice. Some studies have argued that voters are likely to adopt the attitudes their parties represent (e.g. Hartevelde et al., 2017; Rooduijn et al., 2016; Van der Brug, 2003 for a discussion on party positions, populist attitudes and voting), however, while recursive effects are likely to emerge between party positions, individual attitudes and party support, considering the established scholarship on issue positions influencing vote choice (e.g. Carmines and Stimson, 1980; Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989; Mauerer et al., 2015; Lachat, 2014; Hellwig, 2014), we argue that prior attitudes, perceptions and preferences remain key to understanding how voters orientate to certain parties. Finally, causality remains debated between subjective wellbeing and political efficacy beliefs. While past research has more often used political efficacy as an independent variable, for instance in explaining its influence on behavioural outcomes and, from a self-development perspective, also on subjective wellbeing (Peterson, 1999; Pirralha, 2017), the discipline has until today paid less attention to where efficacy comes from, despite that it is highly relevant and theoretically interesting to employ political efficacy as a dependent variable for the purpose of uncovering the psychological origins of this essential

politico-psychological resource. Evidence from earlier research connecting the social dimension of wellbeing and efficacy beliefs suggest that exploring this relationship is of value. A sense of community (i.e. social wellbeing) fosters political efficacy at both the individual and community-levels (Anderson, 2010; Talò et al., 2014; McDonnell, 2020), and social support has on the conceptual level been clearly more often considered as a source (e.g. Krause, 2001; Langford et al., 1997; Sarason et al., 1983; Vekiri and Chronaki, 2008) than an outcome of efficacy, although Schwarzer and Leppin (1991) argue that individual coping could also affect the likelihood of receiving social support, thereby having bearings on the behaviour of others, but not necessarily on the behaviour of the individual itself. Former research thereby indicates that it is relevant to carefully consider – and whenever possible, also empirically test – the assumed causal relationship that connects wellbeing and political efficacy.

It is within this context that we position this research in the scholarly debate on the causes and consequences of wellbeing, political attitudes, behaviour and choices. More precisely, we will empirically show in studies 1 and 2 of this thesis that the conventional wisdom about the happiness-enhancing effects of a politically active citizenry may only be partially true, since in reality, the origins of the political citizen can be traced back to their wellbeing.

2.7 Conceptual map and introduction to the empirical studies

The current knowledge about the relationship between subjective wellbeing and political attitudes and behaviour, as well as the questions that remain unanswered by previous scholarship, will guide us in the upcoming empirical part of this research. Figure 2 below illustrates the conceptual map which we follow in linking subjective wellbeing to political outcomes in the empirical studies.

The upper part of Figure 2 illustrates how we conceive subjective wellbeing; we will study the influence of subjective wellbeing through its four main dimensions: evaluative, emotional, eudemonic and social wellbeing. However, not every indicator that belongs to the relevant dimension will be tested on our dependent variables, i.e. the political outcomes. The specific indicators we use in the empirical studies are listed in the lower part of the boxes: for social wellbeing, we use *social support*; for emotional wellbeing, the *frequency of positive and negative emotions*; for evaluative wellbeing, the level of *life satisfaction*; and for eudemonic wellbeing, the *level of empowerment*. These four wellbeing indicators will be linked to three different aspects of political attitudes and behaviour, as depicted in the lower part of Figure 2: a sense of *political efficacy*, taking part in *political activities* (both electoral and extra-electoral participation, the latter for which we consider institutionalized / non-conflictual and non-institutionalized / conflictual activities) and, for the persons who cast a ballot at elections, whether their *vote choice* concerns a right-wing populist party, or any other party. The vertical arrows between the upper (subjective wellbeing) and the lower (political outcomes) part of the figure show the presumed direction of the relationship: we position ourselves with the stream of scholarship that argues that wellbeing precedes behaviour, and whenever we have the possibility of using panel data to answer our research questions we will also empirically test this assumption (this is possible in empirical studies 1 and 2).

The political outcomes in the lower part of Figure 2 are noted with a *positive or negative sign*. This illustrates the nature of the expected association between subjective wellbeing and the behavioural outcome¹⁷. Firstly, social support, an indicator of social wellbeing, is expected to favour (+) the development of political efficacy (Study 1). Furthermore, and echoing previous

¹⁷ The exact hypotheses will be formulated in the empirical chapters in which they are tested.

research on gender differences in the development of political efficacy, social support is expected to be more important for women's sense of political efficacy than men's, which is why *gender is a moderating variable* in the mechanism that connects social support to political efficacy in Figure 2. Secondly, when it comes to actual political participation, we link life satisfaction (evaluative wellbeing) and the occurrence of more positive than negative emotions (emotional wellbeing) with voting (+), whereas we expect the absence of negative emotions (high emotional wellbeing) to be negatively correlated with intentions of non-institutionalized (or conflictual) political activities (-) (Study 2). For this purpose, we will make use of panel data from Switzerland and test how evaluative and emotional wellbeing affect intra-individual trajectories of political behaviour.

Thirdly, subjective wellbeing will also be linked to political participation in a cross-European perspective through empowerment, a key indicator of eudemonic wellbeing (Study 3). A sense of empowerment is expected to favour participation in all types of political activity (+), although the influence is thought to be stronger for high-initiative and high-investment participation forms (++), such as campaigning, contacting and protesting, than for less demanding participation forms, such as casting a ballot in elections. Furthermore, and due to the advantage of having access to comparative, cross-country data on empowerment and political participation, we take a comparative perspective and test both plausible mechanisms ('the path dependency mechanism') and ('the compensation mechanism') in linking empowerment to political activity; which is why *the age of democracy is a moderator* in the expected association. Fourthly, we will shed light on the influence of subjective wellbeing on the political attitudes and party preferences of the electorate (Study 4). Using comparative, cross-European data, we link life satisfaction (evaluative wellbeing) with a vote choice and argue that a dissatisfaction with life positively influences the likelihood of voting for right-wing

populists in elections, or conversely, that high evaluative wellbeing dampens right-wing populist voting (-).

It shall be noted that not all wellbeing dimensions are systematically considered for each political outcome, and the reasons for this choice are both theoretical and empirical. Firstly, we explain political outcomes by using the particular indicators of wellbeing which have the strongest theoretical bases to be linked to the specific political outcome under analysis, a condition which has been brought to evidence in the previous research that has been reviewed in part 2 of this thesis. For instance, social support has more consistently been linked to efficacy-beliefs than life satisfaction, while life dissatisfaction has prominently been identified, by contrast to social support, as an antecedent of a right-wing populist vote choice. Moreover, from an empirical point of view, since self-efficacy beliefs can be considered as building blocks of a sense of empowerment specifically, and eudemonic wellbeing in general, it hardly makes sense to test the influence of empowerment on political efficacy, as there is expected to be high simultaneity between these two constructs. In some cases, the choice of focus is also driven by data availability. For this reason, we are unable to test the influence of empowerment on the intra-individual trajectories of political participation in the Swiss context, or its influence on a right-wing vote choice in a cross-European setting. However, and despite that not all wellbeing indicators will be explicitly linked to every political outcome in the empirical studies, taken together the findings of the studies and this thesis illustrate in an extensive manner how the different dimensions of subjective wellbeing are related to various political outcomes, thereby elucidating the intrinsic relationship between subjective wellbeing and political attitudes and behaviour in general.

The abovementioned and underexplored, yet strongly relevant, angles of research in wellbeing, political attitudes and behaviour will guide us in the elaboration of the study-specific research questions and hypotheses in the next section of the thesis. Four empirical studies will be presented; the first two will test the causal relationship between subjective wellbeing, political attitudes and behaviour using single-country panel data, while the last two studies explore cross-sectional relationships in wellbeing and political activity and vote choice a cross-European context. Table 2 below summarizes the associations that will be empirically tested in the four upcoming empirical studies.

Figure 2. Mapping the relationship between subjective wellbeing and political outcomes in the empirical studies

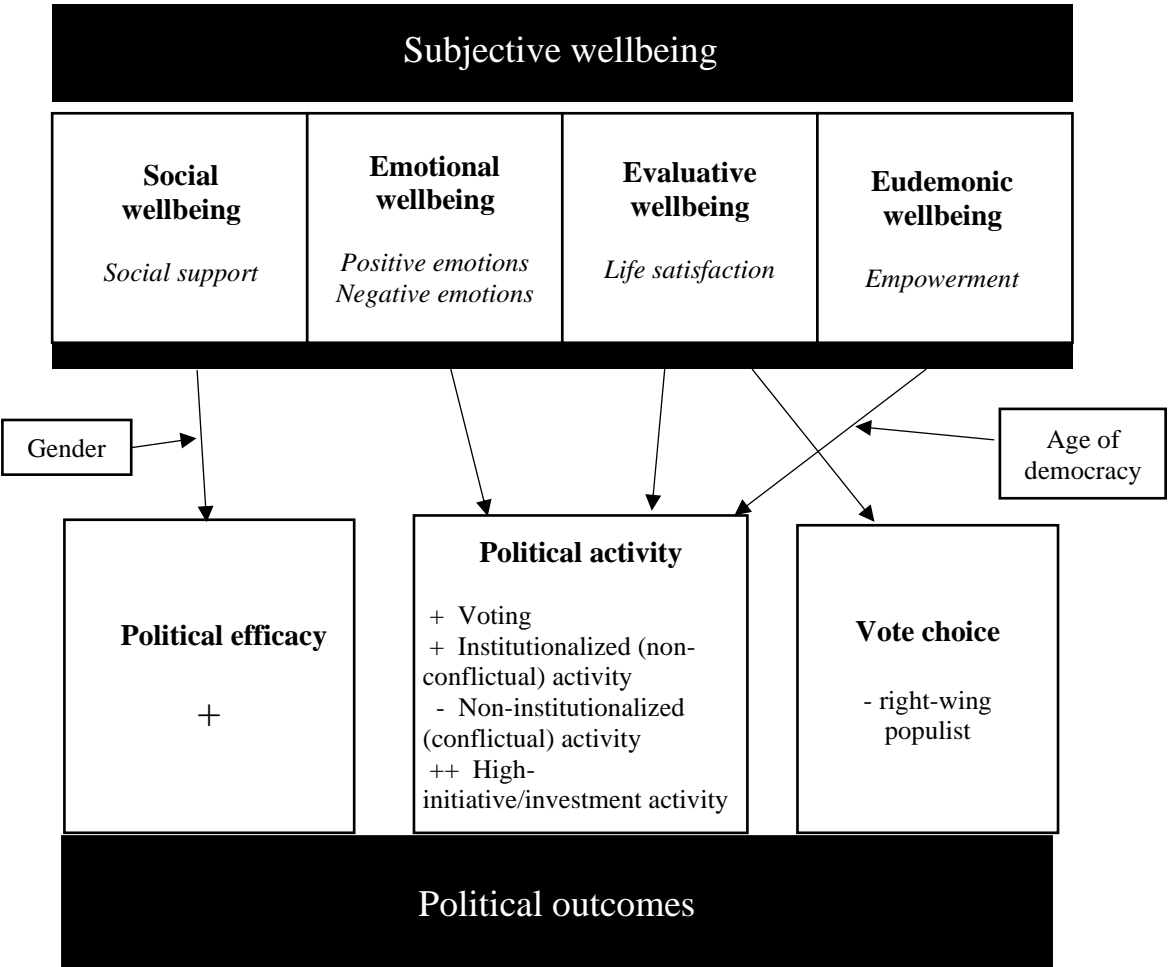


Table 2. Summary of main analytical constructs in empirical studies

Constructs	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4
Dependent variable(s)	Political efficacy	Political participation -voting -conflictual action	Political participation -institutionalized and non- institutionalized	Right-wing populist vote
Independent variable(s)	Social support	Life satisfaction Negative and positive emotions	Empowerment	Life satisfaction
Moderator variable	Gender	-	Age of democracy	-
Wellbeing dimension considered	Social wellbeing	Evaluative wellbeing Emotional wellbeing	Eudemonic wellbeing	Evaluative wellbeing

3 Explaining political attitudes and behaviour through a subjective wellbeing framework

3.1 Study 1: Linking social support to political efficacy: gender differences

Chapter summary

We explore in this study the effect of social support, defined as the quality and the quantity of close personal relationships, on the development of political efficacy beliefs. Earlier research on the social determinants of political attitudes and engagement has strongly focused on social participation and associational activity, as argued by the influential social capital theory, while the influence of social support, an indicator of social wellbeing, has not received the attention it deserves. Using Swiss Household Panel data (20 waves, 1999-2018, n=1'538), we argue that social support increases an individual sentiment of political efficacy, even more than associational involvement or social trust, two key indicators of social capital. Strikingly, we find important gender differences in this relationship as social support strongly predicts women's political efficacy, while having no significant effect for men. Our study suggests that social support should systematically be considered by future research looking to explain where political efficacy comes from, especially for women who are still disadvantaged in the development of this essential politico-psychological resource.

3.1.1 Introduction and aim

In this first empirical study, we explore how social support, a key indicator of social wellbeing, influences an essential political orientation that is linked to the politically active citizen: a sense of political efficacy. The socially-oriented antecedents of political attitudes and engagement is not a novel aspect of participation research, but it has for long been dominated by the strong focus on recruitment and mobilizing networks (Armingeon, 2007; Lin, 2008; Teorell, 2003; Verba et al., 1995), civic norms (Dalton, 2008; Putnam, 2000, 1995) and skills (Teorell, 2003; Verba et al., 1995) that are developed within these networks, as well as on other factors stemming from the broader socio-political environment that individuals are surrounded by (Campbell, 2013). These explanations find their theoretical core in the social capital literature

(Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995; Putnam et al., 1994; Portes, 1998, 2000; Morales and Giugni, 2016; Hays, 2015).

Building on the scholarship that links social capital to political engagement, we re-focus the debate to the individual's level of social wellbeing – and social support in particular – and argue that social support favors the development of political efficacy on the individual level, independently of the influence of formalized social networks, norms, social trust or other key indicators of social capital. A sense of political efficacy is widely viewed as a cornerstone of participation in political activities (Almond and Verba, 1963; Barnes et al., 1979; Verba et al., 1997; Karp and Banducci, 2007), making the antecedents of efficacy a primary concern for scholarship aiming to explain variation in political activity among the citizenry. If we acknowledge that citizen's political engagement is an indicator of a well-functioning democratic societies (Barnes et al., 1979; Dalton, 2008; Verba and Nie, 1972), the importance of social support for individual political agency becomes paramount at the collective level and for the wellbeing of society.

Furthermore, we argue that the mechanism that links social support to political efficacy is very different between women and men, making social support a powerful driver of women's political efficacy, while being less decisive for men. In this way, not only do we contribute to unveiling an important, yet overlooked, question in the discipline, i.e. *where efficacy comes from*, but also we shed light on how the development of political efficacy can be driven by very different factors for men and women. Given that women are, on average, disadvantaged in the development of political efficacy compared to men (Arens and Waterman, 2017; Cigognani et al., 2012; Paxton et al., 2007; Vecchione and Caprara, 2009; Solhaug, 2006), the potential of

social support in fostering women's efficacy beliefs in particular becomes a highly relevant research objective.

While at present time, the majority of research on the individual determinants of political engagement remains cross-sectional, our study examines the consequences of individual change in social support on political efficacy over time using Swiss Household Panel (SHP) data (20 waves, 1999-2018). The Swiss case is appropriate for testing this relationship, due to direct democracy and the federal structure of the country that encourage active citizen involvement in monitoring political processes (Frey and Stutzer 2000; Dorn et al. 2008; Lutz, 2006) and therefore may have a positive impact on the aggregate levels of political efficacy among the Swiss population. Furthermore, the gender gap in politics is particularly persistent in Switzerland compared to other Western democracies (Engeli et al., 2006; Stadelmann-Steffen and Koller, 2014), which makes it an ideal context for testing how the psychological antecedents of political engagement develop differently for women and men. Moreover, access to high-quality, longitudinal data on patterns of social support and political efficacy brings a clear advantage to the present study in examining causal effects compared to previous research efforts in the domain.

3.1.2 Linking social support to political efficacy

3.1.2.1 Moving from social capital to social wellbeing

Previous research on the socially-oriented determinants of individual political engagement has heavily focused on social capital, broadly defined as the level of involvement in more or less formalized social networks and the extent of interpersonal trust which may or may not extend

to strangers (Coleman, 1988; Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Newton, 1999). Robert Putnam (1995, 2000) famously extended the definition to include civic norms, as he defined social capital as “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam 1995: 67). Among its many consequences, social capital is thought to favor political activity and civic engagement more generally (Putnam 1995; Stolle & Hooghe 2005; Hays, 2015), on the individual (Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Portes, 1998) and the group-level (Putnam 1995). In this rationale, frequent social contacts teach civic skills, transmit norms of civic duty, and increase social trust extending beyond the networks an individual is embedded in, thereby favoring political efficacy (Stolle and Rochon, 1998) and political activity (Armingeon, 2007; Campbell, 2013; Putnam, 2000, 1995; Verba et al., 1995; Hays, 2015). In other words, when people get together in clubs, associations or other social activities they can learn and improve interpersonal skills, such as listening to people with different opinions and forming their own opinions, learn to cooperate, discuss their views with others, build networks with other people, and, as a result, learn to exert influence on (political) institutions.

Notwithstanding the remarkable contribution social capital theory has made to the advancement of our understanding of the social mechanisms that favor political engagement, there are good reasons to believe that social support is conceptually closer to the *social wellbeing* construct, which is one of the four main dimensions of subjective wellbeing. Although social support is not estranged from social capital literature, as it has been described as a source of the social capital that is cultivated in various forms of social networks (e.g. Ryan et al., 2008; Coleman, 1988), the social capital scholarship in relation to political engagement still focuses more on the influence of ‘thin’ social relationships (or ‘bridging’ ties). These thin relationships extend to the wider circle of social contacts and include notably contacts through associational

involvement and participation in other social networks. By contrast, social support is cultivated in ‘thick’ social relationships (or ‘bonding’ ties), and entails the number and the quality of the close, personal relationships individuals are embedded in. Due to its focus on thick relationships, this study argues that social capital theory is more useful for explaining the *structures* where social support can be cultivated (or not), while not fully addressing the potentially strong influence of social support *per se* on the development of individual political perceptions and attitudes, among them political efficacy. This distinction is well illustrated when considering that a person could have small social networks, for instance because they do not belong to any clubs or associations, and take very little part in informal social activities, yet it is possible that they cultivate one or a few strong personal relationships with close friends or family and be fully satisfied with the support they receive in these relationships. Being related yet conceptually distinct constructs, social support cannot be understood through social capital alone.

3.1.2.2 Defining social support

Social support is one of the key indicators of social wellbeing (see ch. 2.5.2) and will be the focus of this study. The importance of social support for physical and mental wellbeing has been widely recognized in psychology as well as by health practitioners (Krause, 2001; Turner, 1981; Vaux, 1988; Harandi et al., 2017; Uchino et al., 2018). Social support has been, broadly speaking, defined as the availability (the quantity) and the quality of close, trustful and reliable relationships with surrounding persons (Larson 1993). How much is enough social support is highly personal; some people prefer to have several people to rely on for support, others are satisfied with just one close relationship (Sarason et al., 1983; Cohen et al., 1985, 2000). Satisfaction with the available support is also highly personal, and partly influenced by self-

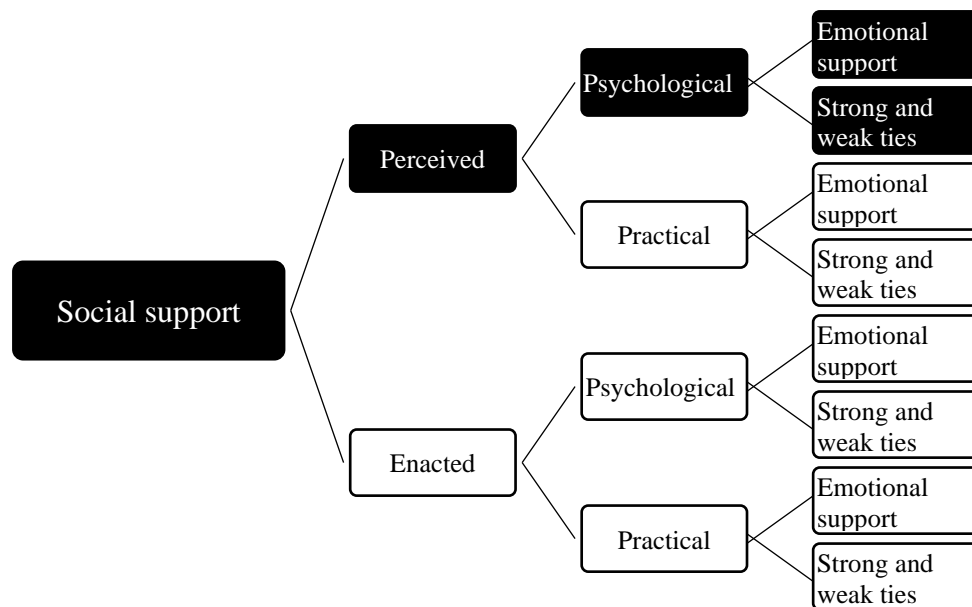
esteem and the level of control one has over their surroundings (Sarason et al., 1983; Silverstein et al., 1996). These circumstances further underline the appropriateness of studying individual-level trajectories of social support and their outcomes compared to alternative analytical strategies that would mainly rely on between-individual variation.

Social support can either be practical or psychological; while its practical dimension entails help and support in concrete tasks, its psychological dimension involves caring, empathy, love, and trust in one's social relationships, as well as a feeling of belonging, of being accepted and needed in these relationships (House et al., 1988; Krause, 2001; Langford et al., 1997; Moss, 1973). Despite that social support scholars have more recently started to explore the positive influence of the act of giving (practical or psychological) support on individual wellbeing (Brown et al., 2003; Inagaki and Orehek, 2017), traditionally the scholarship in the domain focuses on the subjective experiences of perceived support (Sarason et al., 1983; Krause, 2001; Utz and Breuer, 2017) or on the transactional process of giving and receiving support (Vaux, 1988; Liu et al., 2020). As important as receiving practical help may be for individual coping and wellbeing, since our interest is in explaining the effect of receiving care, empathy, love and acceptance on political efficacy beliefs, we will focus in this study on the *psychological* dimension of *perceived* social support (simply called 'social support' from now on).

Participation in social activities (associations, clubs or other organizations) and enjoying social support are likely positively correlated. Taking part in social activities has been described as the structure through which the latter may (or may not) be provided (Cohen et al., 1985; Ryan et al., 2008), while others understand the size of social networks as vehicular to social support, rather than an indicator of the support itself (Langford et al., 1997). In other words, a person may be integrated in social relationships without receiving sufficient social support, but one

cannot receive social support without having social contacts (Larsen, 1993). Studies have also found that the *quality* of personal relationships, or *emotional support*, is more important for personal wellbeing than the number of personal relationships (*weak and strong social ties*¹⁸) individuals maintain (Ishii-Kuntz, 1990; Krause, 2001). It is therefore necessary to consider social support as a socially-oriented resource that is broader than only an embeddedness in social relationships.

Figure 3. Study 1: Conceptualizing social support



P q v g < " C w v j q t ø u " q y p " k n n w u v t c v k q p 0 " V j g " u j c f g f " d q z g u " k p "
focus on in the present research.

3.1.2.3 Defining political efficacy

The dependent variable of this study is the personal sense of political efficacy. Political efficacy is a particular dimension of an individual sense of self-efficacy, and it has been defined as “the

¹⁸ The terminology of weak and strong ties is borrowed from social network theory that studies extensively the structures of interpersonal relationships and their influence on individual and group social capital and behaviour. See e.g. Granovetter (1977).

feeling that individual political action does have, or can have an impact on the political process” (Campbell et al., 1954: 187). In other words, political efficacy is the individual’s belief in her own abilities to influence political processes. It is the perception of one’s capacity as an actor in the political system (Morrell, 2003; 2005; Marx and Nguyen, 2016) and a sense of being capable “to understand and participate effectively in politics” (Craig et al., 1990: 290). Scholarship has furthermore refined the concept by having an *internal* component, i.e. the individual’s belief in her own abilities to influence political processes, and be capable “to understand and participate effectively in politics” (Craig et al., 1990: 290), while the *external* component has been defined as is the individual’s perception of the responsiveness of the political system to the citizen’s exertion of political influence (Finkel 1985; Pollock 1983; Morrell, 2003). As such, political efficacy is considered, along with political interest, as one of the strongest predictors of political participation (Almond and Verba, 1963; Milbrath and Goel, 1977; Barnes et al., 1979; Karp and Banducci, 2008). While there is widespread agreement that resources (Verba et al., 1978; 1995), associational involvement (Putnam, 2000; Brehm and Rahn, 1997), political knowledge (Kenski and Stroud, 2006; Pasek et al., 2008), or political participation itself (Finkel, 1985; Ikeda et al., 2008; Quintelier et al., 2014) are positively correlated with political efficacy, scholarship has in the past been remarkably little concerned with the psychological antecedents of efficacy, often contending to acknowledge that politically efficacious individuals participate more in politics. Lately, however, scholarship has started looking more closely into the psychological structures in which efficacy is developed, notably in the literatures on personality and politics (Mondak, 2010; Gerber et al., 2011), or health and politics (Denny and Doyle, 2007; Ojeda, 2015; Mattila et al., 2013), yet much remains to be understood about the psychological antecedents of efficacy beliefs. These gaps make it all the more essential to better understand how efficacy develops in the individual’s state of mind.

3.1.2.4 Does social support increase political efficacy?

It was mentioned how the socially-rooted psychological antecedents of political efficacy are not well enough understood by current scholarship. The social capital literature partly addresses this gap in our knowledge as it argues how having broad social networks and participating in social groups activities correlate positively with political efficacy on the individual (and group) level (Stolle & Rochon, 1998), since social networks teach skills (Putnam, 1995, 2000; Brady et al., 1995), foster trust (Armingeon, 2007), improve communication and cooperation, and on the individual level favor openness and self-efficacy (Ohmer, 2007), including political efficacy (Vecchione and Caprara, 2009). Meanwhile, social support is also likely foster the development of politically efficacious individuals, regardless if they are embedded into extended social networks ('thin relationships').

Albeit less studied in relation to political efficacy than social networks and associational activity have been, previous research suggests that social support indeed contributes to shaping efficacious individuals. Social support strengthens perceptions and beliefs in political agency, and personal agency more broadly, since it enhances a sense of control (Langford et al., 1997; Thoits, 2011) and capabilities of problem-solving (Sarason et al., 1983; Langford et al., 1997; Whitfield and Wiggins, 2003) as well as increases personal competence (Krause, 2001). In this way, social support increases self-efficacy in politics and a stronger awareness of one's own capabilities as a political actor and increases self-confidence as a political agent. By contrast, a lack of social support has been associated with external locus of control and the difficulty of persisting with a task that does not deliver an immediate and ready solution (Sarason et al., 1983), which is arguably a characteristic of activities aimed at exerting political influence. In addition, social support has also been associated with feelings that should increase self-efficacy

overall, such as a sense of self-worth (Cohen et al., 1985, 2000; Bandura, 2010; Karademas, 2006) and overall psychological wellbeing (Lambert et al., 1989; Sahu and Rath, 2003). Finally, social support reinforces a sense of belonging to a group or a collective (Moscardino et al., 2010; Thoits, 2011), which has been found to be particularly conducive to the development of political efficacy (Anderson, 2010; Talò et al., 2014; McDonnell, 2020). We thereby expect that *social support increases political efficacy on the individual level* (H₁).

3.1.2.5 Does social support increase political efficacy equally for women and men?

Studying gender differences in social interactions and self-perceptions is an important step in understanding the effects of socialization and societal norms on individual attitude-formation. Therefore, one cannot fully understand the relationship between social support and political efficacy without considering the gender differences involved. We have acknowledged earlier how the gender gap in politics has notably been explained by lower levels of political involvement in education and associations, social norms that discourage women's political participation, and resulting lower levels of political interest, knowledge and efficacy among women than men (Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al., 1997, 1978; Dassonneville and McAllister, 2018; Fraile, 2014; Beauregard, 2014; Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010). The important gender differences in the development of political efficacy has its roots in political socialisation in adolescence and early adulthood. Boys and men consistently display higher levels of political efficacy than girls and women (Arens and Waterman, 2017; Cigognani et al., 2012; Paxton et al., 2007; Vecchione and Caprara, 2009; Solhaug, 2006), and furthermore, this tendency is likely to intensify with age (Hill and Lynch, 1983); panel data has moreover shown that gender-specific trajectories of political efficacy development are likely since males show higher mean

levels of efficacy throughout adolescence and adulthood than females (Arens and Waterman, 2017).

Gender differences also extend to patterns of social support, which likely affect its consequences on the development of political efficacy. Gender influences the type of social relationships individuals are embedded in: women are likely to have more close relationships where they give and receive social support than men do, whereas men tend to have larger social networks ('thin' relationships) than women (Fuhrer et al., 1999; Perrewé and Carlson, 2002). Secondly, giving and receiving social support has been found to be more salient for women than men in increasing wellbeing (Gore et al., 1993; Flaherty and Richman, 1989) and self-efficacy beliefs (Vekiri and Chronaki, 2008; Molino et al., 2018). Notably, social support has been found to be particularly important for women's efficacy beliefs *in domains that are traditionally male-dominant* (Vekiri and Chronaki, 2008; Arens and Watermann, 2017; Guan et al., 2017; Molino et al., 2018), which politics arguably is due to the deep-rooted influence of socialization and social norms on gender roles. The gender differences in the relationship linking social support to efficacy are therefore likely to be profound, and we expect that *social support has a greater positive* (H₂). *og p ø u " r*

3.1.2.6 Causality between social support and political efficacy

While past research has often used political efficacy as an independent variable, for instance in explaining its influence on participation outcomes, it is relevant and theoretically interesting to employ political efficacy as a dependent variable for our research as we aim to uncover the socially-oriented psychological origins of political efficacy. There is an on-going debate in the discipline as to whether political participation increases efficacy (Finkel, 1985; Ikeda et al.,

2008; Morrell, 2005), social capital (Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Paxton, 2002; Quintelier et al., 2012) and wellbeing (Bühlmann, 2016; Klar and Kasser, 2009; Pacheco and Lange, 2010), or whether the decision to participate is preceded by efficacy (Clarke and Acock, 1989; Finkel, 1985), wellbeing (Pirralha, 2017; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2011) and social capital (Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Quintelier et al., 2012; Teorell, 2003), yet fewer studies have explicitly addressed the causal mechanism that connects political efficacy with social support or social wellbeing in general. Evidence from earlier research suggest that exploring this relationship is of value; Anderson (2010) found that a sense of community, a measure of the prevalence and quality of social relationships in a given context, fosters political efficacy at both the individual and community-levels. When it comes to (perceived) social support specifically, research predominantly considered it as a source (e.g. Krause, 2001; Langford et al., 1997; Sarason et al., 1983; Vekiri and Chronaki, 2008; Molino et al., 2018) of efficacy.¹⁹ A limitation of existing research is, however, that the majority of existing studies rely on cross-sectional methods, and are thereby in a less favourable position to infer causal relationships. In this regard, our study offers a clear advantage in being able to empirically test causality in the relationship, which *we expect to primarily run from social support to political efficacy* (H₃).

3.1.2.7 *Political efficacy in Switzerland*

The Swiss context is appropriate for studying the effect of social support on political attitude-formation, considering the political and institutional context in which Swiss citizens can exercise their democratic rights. In addition, studying gender differences in political efficacy in Switzerland is particularly salient, given that the gender gap in politics is more persistent in

¹⁹ Exceptions include Schwarzer and Leppin (1991) who argue that individual coping could affect the likelihood of receiving social support, thereby having bearings on the behaviour of others, but not necessarily on the behaviour of the individual itself.

Swiss society than in many other Western democracies (Engeli et al., 2006; Stadelmann-Steffen and Koller, 2014), thereby likely having bearings on Swiss women's political efficacy.

The Swiss political system is unique in its widespread use of direct democracy (e.g. Dorn et al. 2008; Lutz, 2006). From a normative perspective, direct democracy should increase citizen's political competence and system responsiveness to citizen's political demands, both being favourable to the development of political efficacy (Pateman, 1970). On the other hand, direct democracy presupposes a high level of political sophistication from citizens, which may also make especially the uninformed part of the citizenry believe that participation is too hard and thereby have a dampening effect on efficacy beliefs (Dyck and Lascher, 2009). Considering these two mechanisms at play, the question is still open on whether mean levels of political efficacy should be higher in Switzerland than in other democratic systems, which is highlighted by the mixed empirical evidence on the relationship between direct democracy and efficacy in different national contexts (Bernhard and Bühlmann, 2015; Bowler and Donovan, 2002; Schlozman and Yohai, 2008; Kim, 2015) In other words, the particular Swiss context with its widespread use of direct democracy can either spur or dampen mean levels of political efficacy among its citizens. Using Swiss data to test our hypotheses is therefore not likely to compromise, at least by default, the applicability of the conclusions of this research to other national contexts and political systems, yet we encourage future research to test our hypotheses in other national contexts to elucidate how the national context might affect the development of efficacy beliefs.

3.1.3 Data and methods

3.1.3.1 *The sample*

The hypotheses formulated above will be tested in SHP data. Since 1999, the SHP is an annual panel study based on a stratified random sample of private households and individuals living in Switzerland (SHP, 2020). All household members are interviewed mainly by telephone²⁰ (Voorpostel et al., 2018). An advantage of testing the hypotheses in a single country instead of using cross-cultural data is that it helps to avoid common pitfalls related to country-specific political contexts (Hantrais, 1999) that may influence political efficacy beliefs. Moreover, the access to high-quality, longitudinal Swiss data on patterns of social support and political efficacy brings a clear advantage to the present study in examining causal effects compared to previous cross-sectional research efforts in the domain. The population sample was drawn in 1999, and respondents who participated in 1999 and in any of the subsequent waves until 2018 are included in the analysis. The analytical sample thus includes twenty waves (waves 1-20, years 1999-2018) and consists of some 34'480 person-years from 1'724 respondents. A full list of variable codings and question wordings is available in Annex A10.

3.1.3.2 *The key measures*

Political efficacy is our outcome of interest and is measured by a single item-scale (0-10) expressing belief in one's own ability to influence political decision-making, thereby combining elements from the external and internal components of political efficacy ("*How much influence do you think someone like you can have on government policy, if 0 means "no influence at all" and 10 means "a great deal of influence"*"). Respondents in the sample score on average 4.5 on this scale.

²⁰ Since 2010, face-to-face interviews and web-based surveys have been offered as alternatives for respondents who refuse or are reluctant to respond by telephone.

4 out of 10 in political efficacy across time, with intra-individual variation ($\sigma=1.7$) in the panel being slightly, but not substantively, lower than between-individual differences ($\sigma=1.8$), indicating that the sense of political efficacy is not stable but instead undergoes changes over time for individuals in the panel.

Social support is measured by indicators expressing the quantity and quality of available support. The number of close relationships a respondent has with relatives or friends (*“With how many relatives living outside of your household do you have a good and close*

t g n c v k q p u j k r A ö l ö J q y " o c p { " i q q) are combined into a nu g " h t k

additive indicator of ‘strong’ informal ties, whereas the number of close relationships with neighbours or colleagues are combined into an indicator of ‘weak’ informal ties (see e.g.

Granovetter, 1977) (*“With how many of your neighbours are you on good terms and enjoy a*

e n q u g " t g n c v k q p u j k r ö l ö Y k v j " j q y " o c p { " y q t m " e q n n
of leisure, political, religious or other activities. " c t g " { q w " q The extreme values g t o u ö +

of the number of weak and strong ties were truncated at the top due to very low occurrence of these high values (less than 2 % of all observations)²¹. The quality of emotional support given

by relatives, friends, neighbours or colleagues is measured subjectively (*“To what extent can*

your [relatives/friends/neighbours/colleagues] be available in case of need and show

understanding, by talking with you for example, if 0 means "not at all" and 10 "a great

*f g c n*²² For concerns for parsimony, the items measuring support quality are combined into

²¹ The measurement scale of the indicators of strong and weak ties was changed in waves 15 and 18 from being continuous to categorical. For reasons of preserving equivalence of measurement, these variables were excluded from analysis for waves 15 and 18.

²² These questions were not asked whenever respondents reported, at a particular time point, not having any contact with a relative, friend, colleague or neighbour. This occurred at least once for a number of respondents concerning relatives (17%), friends (15%), colleagues (67%) or neighbours (60%). However, only between 20-30 % of those respondents never changed their status in the panel (depending on type of relationship), and persons who never changed their answer in any of those questions were effectively excluded from the analysis. However, since fixed-effects estimation requires that individual change takes place in order to estimate causal effects, the excluded respondents would not in any case contribute to identifying a causal effect, which is a primary objective of this study.

an emotional support-index (0-40, 4 items, $\alpha=0.72$)²³.

3.1.3.3 *The covariates*

In order to contrast the influence of social support with the influence of some of the traditional indicators of social capital, we control for social participation, associational involvement and social trust in our models. Social participation is measured with a dichotomous variable expressing a general engagement in social group activities (“*Do you take part in clubs' or other groups' activities (religious groups included)?*”) as well as with active membership in a range of associations. (“*I will now read out a list of associations and organisations. Could you tell me for each of them whether you are an active member, a passive member or not a member? (union/local or parents/environmental/charity/cultural or education/women/tenants/sports association)*”). Since civic skills are likely better to be learnt through actual participation in the activities of these associations, instead of mere (passive) membership, we isolate the active members in these associations by dichotomizing the variable (1=active member 0=passive member or not a member). We also group active associational membership in any organisation with a political (union/environment/tenant) or social (local or parents/women/charity/culture or education/sports) character into two separate variables. Active political party membership is considered separately due to its presumed strong and independent influence on political efficacy (Finkel, 1985). Social trust (“*Would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people, if 0 means "Can't be too careful" and 10 means "Most people can be trusted"*”) is widely viewed as having bearings both on political efficacy (Kaase, 1999) and on social wellbeing in general (Helliwell and Putnam, 2004), in addition to

²³ The average inter-item correlations between the emotional support items situate between 0.36-0.46 and is thus within the range of appropriate (Clark and Watson, 1995).

being an indicator of social capital on the group-level.

The models additionally control for the influence of sociodemographic confounders and political attitudes. Structural and social aspects of life (such as age, education and income) influence one's social relationships, as "people do not begin or maintain their quest for social well-being with the same assets" (Keyes, 1998: 123), in addition to being correlated with political efficacy (Brady et al., 1995; Finkel, 1985; Verba and Nie, 1972; Vecchione and Caprara, 2009; Marx and Nguyen, 2016). Education is measured by distinguishing between secondary level or less, completed secondary, and tertiary-level or advanced vocational degree education. Income is measured subjectively (i.e. degree of satisfaction with the financial situation of the household, 0-10), as it can be considered a better proxy of the quality of life than objective income measures (Ackerman and Paolucci, 1983), in addition to being less sensitive to item non-response. Finally, we control for political interest as it is considered to be among the strongest predictors of political engagement (Prior, 2010) and thereby also likely correlated with political efficacy (Craig et al., 1990; Finkel, 1985). Political interest is expressed by a 0-10 scale

3.1.3.4 *The method*

Fixed-effects OLS regressions were estimated in the data to encounter for within-individual change in social support and political efficacy, and to identify potential causal effects. The fixed-effects model is essentially a multilevel regression model where observations are nested within individuals, and where the fixed-effects coefficient expresses the variation over time in the individual-specific mean of a construct. An advantage of fixed-effects models is that they control for time-constant heterogeneity between individuals that may be correlated with the

outcome, thereby making self-selection into treatment no longer a problem (Allison, 2009). In this way, fixed-effects estimation provides a significant advantage over other methods in order to estimate the causal effect of a predictor on an outcome. When estimating individual change in statistical models, the individual error terms are likely to correlate across time. Therefore, the standard errors reported in the models clustered by respondents ('panel-robust' standard errors). It is worth noting that, since fixed-effects models only use within-individual variation to estimate effects, the influence of time-constant characteristics (such as gender or social origin) cannot be directly estimated by these models; on the other hand, the models implicitly control for the influence of time-constant traits (Allison, 2009). To test gender differences in the effect of social support on political efficacy (H₂), we estimate the model separately for men and women in a second step of the analysis.

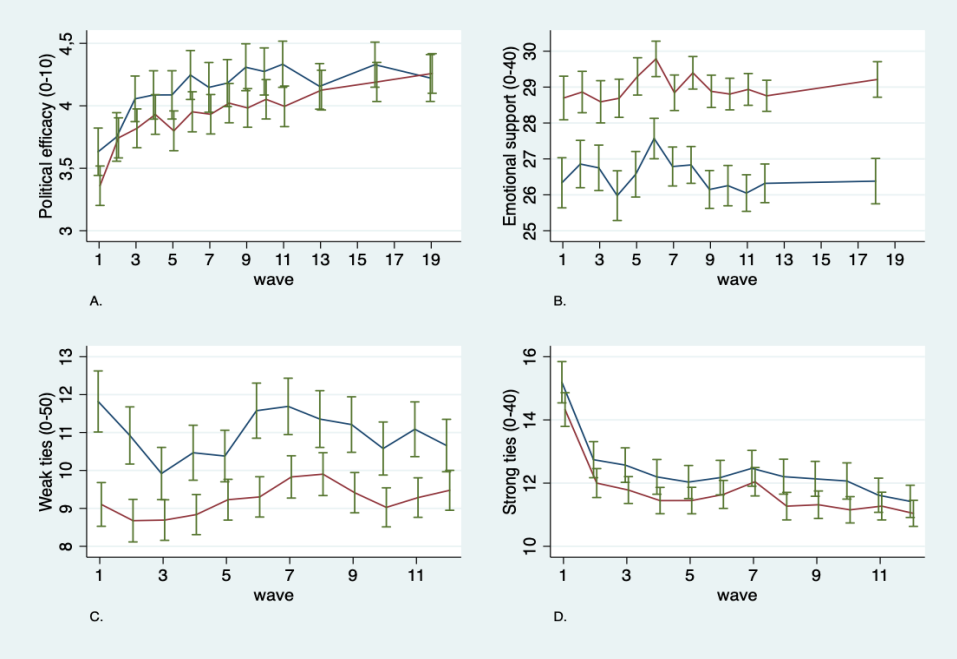
3.1.4 Empirical results and discussion

3.1.4.1 *Descriptive analysis*

Taking a cross-sectional look at the data, we can already observe significant gender-differences in the mean levels of social support across time (Figures 4a-d). Men maintain on average more weak social ties than women (Figure 4c), while women receive more emotional support in their relationships (Figure 4b), both reflecting past research that argue for gendered patterns of social relationships (Fuhrer et al., 1999; Perrewé and Carlson, 2002). By contrast, and perhaps surprisingly, men and women are not significantly different in the panel in terms of average levels of political efficacy or number of strong ties they maintain. It shall nonetheless be kept in mind that the figures express differences *between* individuals in the panel, thus ignoring the

dynamics of individual-level change in political efficacy and social support over time, which will be explored in the multivariate analyses of this study.

Figure 4a-d. Study 1: Mean levels of political efficacy and social support across time, by gender



Note: Red line=women; blue line=men. Spikes show 95% confidence intervals. The gaps in the graphs is due to data unavailability for certain years.

The bivariate cross-sectional relationship between social support and political efficacy also reveals itself to be positive and significant, as expected. The prevalence of weak ties is positively correlated with political efficacy ($\rho = 0.09$), while strong ties displays a slightly weaker association with efficacy ($\rho = 0.04$). Emotional support is furthermore positively correlated with political efficacy across individuals ($\rho = 0.06$). These significant bivariate correlations lay the groundwork for investigating into the multivariate relationship between our constructs of interest in a longitudinal framework, which will be the purpose of the upcoming analyses.

3.1.4.2 Fixed-effects models

Table 3 displays the standardized fixed-effects estimators (FE), their person-clustered standard errors and significance at the 0.05-level, for the entire sample and separately for men and women. By standardising the coefficients, the relative effects of social support on efficacy can be compared across models.

Table 3. Study 1: Fixed-effects estimation of political efficacy, 1999-2018

Predictors of political efficacy	All		Women		Men	
	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE
Social support						
Emotional support	0,0497 ***	0,01389	0,0670 ***	0,01835	0,0267	0,02120
Weak ties	0,0021	0,01223	0,0176	0,01693	-0,0141	0,01761
Strong ties	-0,0003	0,01402	0,0088	0,01860	-0,0094	0,02146
Covariates						
Age in years	0,0452 **	0,01641	0,0371	0,02217	0,0534 *	0,02427
Age-squared	-0,0004 *	0,00016	-0,0002	0,00022	-0,0005	0,00024
Education, completed (ref. secondary level)						
Compulsory school	-0,0602	0,18681	-0,0924	0,28395	0,0178	0,13531
Tertiary level	-0,0813	0,07558	-0,0788	0,10523	-0,0889	0,10609
Satisfaction with income	0,0048	0,01420	-0,0106	0,01828	0,0329	0,02253
Social participation (clubs/groups) (y/n)	-0,0083	0,02911	-0,0110	0,03544	-0,0033	0,05002
Active in political association (y/n)	0,0645	0,03556	0,0692	0,04556	0,0600	0,05348
Active in political party (y/n)	0,2057 **	0,06006	0,1334	0,08784	0,2488 **	0,08028
Active in social association (y/n)	0,0170	0,02520	0,0127	0,03309	0,0272	0,03841
Social trust	0,0171	0,01470	0,0204	0,02038	0,0136	0,02071
Political interest	0,1657 ***	0,02198	0,1754 ***	0,02886	0,1481 ***	0,03325
Constant	1,1495 *	0,48044	0,8566	0,64144	1,4685 *	0,72584
Model diagnostics						
Std. dev of residuals (within-person)	0,82		0,81		0,84	
Std. dev of residuals (between-person)	0,62		0,63		0,62	
Correlation within-person errors/regressors rho	-0,11		-0,13		-0,10	
R2 (within-person)	0,02		0,03		0,02	
n (persons)	1'538		895		643	
N (observations)	7'332		4'192		3'140	

Note: FE= standardized fixed-effects estimators. Standard errors (SE) are panel robust. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

3.1.4.3 Social support increases political efficacy

The results from the fixed-effects models (Table 3) reveal several important trends with regards to the antecedents political efficacy. Firstly, in the full model (Table 3, far left) we can observe that on average, an increase in social support for the individual strengthens their feeling of political efficacy, however, this positive effect *only stems from the emotional support* individuals enjoy in their relationships. This interestingly contrasts with the number of weak and strong ties individuals maintain, which both are revealed to be statistically insignificant (at 0.05-level) in predicting political efficacy.²⁴ The magnitude of the effect of emotional support may be moderate, being responsible on average for a 2 percentage point increase in political efficacy on the individual level ($B=.021$; $\beta=.050$; $p<0.001$), yet *its effect is greater than other conventional predictors of efficacy*, such as aging ($\beta=.045$; $p<0.01$). Strikingly, the positive effect of emotional support remains even when controlling for political party membership or political interest, in spite that the latter especially is viewed by many as one of the most powerful predictor of political efficacy and engagement²⁵ (Craig et al., 1990; Finkel, 1985; Prior, 2010; Verba et al., 1995), thereby underlining the significance of social support in predicting efficacy beliefs.

Secondly, we can observe that an individual increase in emotional support is more important in favouring political efficacy than social participation ($B=-.021$; $\beta=-.008$; ns^{26}) or becoming a member of a social ($B=.043$; $\beta=.050$; ns) or political associations ($B=.161$; $\beta=.065$; ns), with the exception of political party membership ($B=.514$; $\beta=.206$; $p<0.01$). Likewise, social trust ($B=.021$; $\beta=.017$; ns), falls short of statistical significance when we consider the influence of social support in predicting individual trajectories of political efficacy. These results are

²⁴ As a robustness check, the models were subsequently fit without emotional support, which did not alter the significance of the influence of weak and strong ties on political efficacy.

²⁵ The models were also fit without political interest, which did not alter the substantive conclusions of the analyses.

²⁶ Ns = not significant.

remarkable, as they suggest that in a within-individual perspective, *changes in many of the conventional indicators of social capital do not have the same favourable effect on individual political efficacy beliefs as emotional support does*. Yet the weak influence of social capital in our analysis is not necessarily in conflict with the core message of social capital theory (Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Teorell, 2003 and others), but rather complements it by focusing on changes how intimate social relationships foster efficacy-beliefs on the individual level, rather than comparing differences in the size of social networks and efficacy beliefs between individuals. In other words, while individuals who participate actively in associations and other social activities are likely to feel politically more efficacious and engage more politically than their less socially-active peers, in situations where an individual increases their usual level of participation in social activities and networks it does not contribute to a stronger sense of political efficacy to the same extent that emotional support does²⁷.

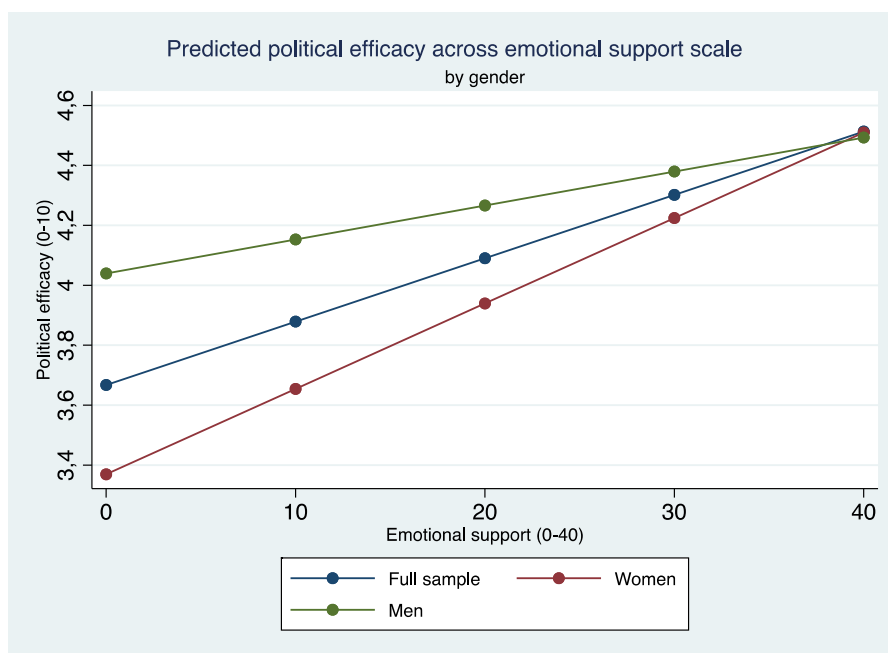
3.1.4.4 Gender differences in social support and political efficacy

Examining gender differences in the model (Table 3, middle and far right) shows, however, more complexity in the relationship between social support and political efficacy. While emotional support remains strongly significant for women's political efficacy in the sample ($B=.029$; $\beta=.067$; $p<0.001$), its effect does not reach statistical significance for men in the data ($B=.011$; $\beta=.027$; ns). These differences suggest that *the positive overall effect in the aggregate model was driven by the positive influence of emotional support for women*, in particular. The powerful influence of emotional support for women strikingly overrides the effect of many other common predictors of efficacy. For women, associational involvement, even becoming a

²⁷ When the models were fit without emotional support, involvement in political associations ($B=.183$; $\beta=.073$; $p<0.01$) and social trust ($B=.052$; $\beta=.043$; $p<0.001$) become significant in predicting political efficacy beliefs, a finding that further underlines how increases in emotional support largely cancels out the influence of social capital indicators in the models.

member of a political party ($B=.334$; $\beta=.133$; ns), does not significantly increase political efficacy in the way emotional support does, while active membership in a political party remains significant for men’s political efficacy ($B=.622$; $\beta=.249$; $p<0.01$). Another interesting finding relates to the influence of the number and density of social networks; while it is generally thought that men have larger social networks than women (Fuhrer et al., 1999), social participation ($B= -.008$; $\beta= -.003$; ns) does not emerge as a statistically significant predictor of men’s political efficacy in the data, and neither does associational involvement beyond political party activity, i.e. involvement in (other) political associations ($B=.150$; $\beta=.060$; ns) and in social associations ($B=.068$; $\beta=.027$; ns).

Figure 5. Study 1: Predicted values of political efficacy across emotional support scale, by gender, 1999-2018



Note: Probabilities retrieved from the fixed-effects models in Table 3. The average marginal effects are reported; other covariates in the model are at their actual values.

Figure 5 above further illustrates the salience of emotional support for women’s political efficacy; it displays the average predicted values of political efficacy with every increase in the emotional support-scale, while controlling for the other covariates in the model. The average

marginal effects are calculated for each observation in the data, for the full sample and separately for men and women, and then averaged to get the predicted values. Figure 5 shows that while there is a considerable gap between men and women at lower levels of emotional support ($\rho=4.0$ for men and $\rho=3.4$ for women when emotional support=0), this gap is progressively narrowed as social support is strengthened, and finally the gender gap closes when women and men reach a ‘maximum’ level of emotional support ($\rho=4.5$ for men and women when emotional support=40). In other words, a lack of emotional support ‘penalizes’ women in their quest of political efficacy compared to men, but *as women receive more emotional support could become a key remedy for women’s initial disadvantaged position in thinking of themselves as political agents.*

The results of the fixed-effects analysis echo previous research on the gender differences in giving and receiving social support (Fuhrer et al., 1999; Perrewé and Carlson, 2002), as well as in feelings of political efficacy (Arens and Waterman, 2017; Cigognani et al., 2012; Paxton et al., 2007; Vecchione and Caprara, 2009; Solhaug, 2006; Verba et al., 1997). Since women feel on average less politically efficacious than men and tend to put more importance on giving and receiving social support than men, emotional support emerges as *an essential resource for sense"of political efficacy*. In this way, paying attention to emotional support is highly beneficial for uncovering the so-far overlooked sources of political efficacy among individuals and, more precisely, for explaining how gender disparities in efficacy can be attenuated.

In order to verify these conclusions for robustness, we also fit a first-difference (FD) model (see Annex A1). The FD-approach is conditioned on the same assumptions as the fixed-effects

model, but instead of estimating change in the individual-specific mean of a construct, the FD regression computes the difference in individual-level political efficacy immediately before and after a change in social support. In this way, only the influence of the first change in social support on political efficacy is retained. The FD models largely corroborate the results of the fixed-effects models. The FD estimator for social support is even slightly larger in magnitude than the fixed-effects estimator for the full sample, and for women and men, thereby highlighting the relatively stronger importance of the (first) increase in social support on the immediate feelings of political efficacy, compared to the effect of the average change (i.e. fixed-effect) in individual social support on political efficacy over time. Taken together, the FE- and FD-approaches provide convincing evidence for H₂ regarding a gendered mechanism that links social support to the development of politically efficacious citizens.

3.1.4.5 Understanding social support, gender and political efficacy

In summary, the results of the analyses provide partial support for H₁, since emotional support, but not weak and strong ties, affects intra-individual change in political efficacy. The results echo research arguing that *it is the quality, not the quantity*, of social support that influences individual perceptions and beliefs (Ishii-Kuntz, 1990; Krause, 2001), and that the size of social networks may rather be vehicular to enjoying more emotional support (Langford et al., 1997) and to increasing wellbeing overall (Gore et al., 1993; Flaherty and Richman, 1989). By contrast, we find strong support for H₂ about the strongly gendered patterns in using emotional support as a resource for strengthening one's political efficacy beliefs, as women clearly benefit more from emotional support than men in this regard, thus echoing previous research on the salience of social support for women's efficacy in traditionally male-dominant fields (Vekiri and Chronaki, 2008; Arens and Watermann, 2017; Guan et al., 2017; Molino et al., 2018).

In all three samples (full sample and split by gender), the surprisingly weak influence of social participation, most forms of associational activity and social trust stand out in the analysis. A possible reason behind this relates to the preponderance of differences between individuals in the panel; the differences in political efficacy between individuals are moderately high, explaining up to 63% of the variance in the full model ($\rho=0.63$), 62% for women and 65% for men. Our results should therefore not be understood as challenging the widespread recognition that persons having large social networks and who participate in social activities feel generally more politically efficacious (Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Putnam, 2000; Stolle and Rochon, 1998), but instead our results shed light on the socially-oriented drivers of the development of political efficacy from the intra-individual perspective: while any further increases from the individual baseline levels of social participation, social trust or associational involvement do not meaningfully increase one's political efficacy beliefs, emotional support remains influential, for women in particular, in reaching previously unattained levels of political efficacy during the life course. Our findings are therefore highly useful in complementing social capital theory on political engagement from a social wellbeing perspective, by emphasizing the salience of emotional support in affecting within-individual trajectories of political efficacy, irrespective of their previous levels of social capital.

3.1.4.6 Assessing causality

We have shown how between-individual differences in political efficacy are substantial in the data. Yet this variation does not contribute to fulfilling the third objective of our research: to identify causal effects between social support and political efficacy (H_3). We have discussed earlier how social support is likely to precede and affect political efficacy beliefs, rather than

the other way around (e.g. Krause, 2001; Langford et al., 1997; Sarason et al., 1983; Vekiri and Chronaki, 2008; Molino et al., 2018). Examining the reverse relationship in this regard enables us to explore whether our causal assumption is corroborated in the data. The results between our main model (where social support precedes efficacy) and the reversed model (where efficacy precedes social support) can be compared since the dependent and independent variables have been reversed between the models; in other words, by estimating the effect of social support on political efficacy, and comparing the results to the effect of political efficacy on social support. By reporting standardized coefficients, the relative magnitude of the effects of social support and political efficacy can be compared. To maximise comparability, all models include the same control variables; only the outcome and the main independent variable (either social support or political efficacy) are exchanged between the models. An overview of the relevant effects are listed in Table 4, and full results from the reverse fixed-effects models can be found in Annex A2.

A limitation of our approach to explore causality is that it does not account for the stability of the constructs across time. The cross-lagged panel design has become popular for the estimation of autoregressive and reciprocal effects, however, they do not separate between inter- and intra-individual change; while the parameter estimates are affected by changes within individuals, they are not specific to relationships within persons (Selig and Little, 2012). In other words, in cross-lagged models one cannot separate between effects that stem from differences between and within individuals. This would be a major drawback for the aims of this research, given that differences between individuals explain the majority of the variance (63 % for the full sample). Confounding between inter- and intra-person variance in this situation would seriously compromise the ability to identify individual-level causal effects. The cross-lagged modelling approach could be beneficial for research projects comparing the long-term implications of

wellbeing on political efficacy between individuals, but it remains less appropriate for the objectives of the present study, which is to shed light on causal effects.

Table 4. Study 1: Social support and political efficacy: exploring causality

	Predictor at T		Outcome at T	FE (std.)	Std. Err.
Full sample	Emotional support	→	Political efficacy	0,0497 ***	0,01389
	Political efficacy	→	Emotional support	0,0492 ***	0,01390
	Weak ties	→	Political efficacy	0,0021	0,01223
	Political efficacy	→	Weak ties	0,0026	0,01516
	Strong ties	→	Political efficacy	-0,0003	0,01402
	Political efficacy	→	Strong ties	-0,0003	0,01346
Women	Emotional support	→	Political efficacy	0,0670 ***	0,01835
	Political efficacy	→	Emotional support	0,0650 ***	0,01805
	Weak ties	→	Political efficacy	0,0176	0,01693
	Political efficacy	→	Weak ties	0,0191	0,01828
	Strong ties	→	Political efficacy	0,0088	0,01860
	Political efficacy	→	Strong ties	0,0079	0,01650
Men	Emotional support	→	Political efficacy	0,0267	0,02120
	Political efficacy	→	Emotional support	0,0272	0,02173
	Weak ties	→	Political efficacy	-0,0141	0,01761
	Political efficacy	→	Weak ties	-0,0204	0,02556
	Strong ties	→	Political efficacy	-0,0094	0,02146
	Political efficacy	→	Strong ties	-0,0099	0,02277

*Note: T=time(wave). Std. Err. = panel-robust standard error. Significance levels: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.*

Our analytical strategy for exploring the causal relationship between social support and political efficacy shows three important tendencies. Firstly, the data corroborate the earlier findings of the statistically insignificant relationship between support quantity, i.e. weak and strong ties, and intra-individual efficacy beliefs. Secondly, the data suggest that the nature of the relationship between emotional support and political efficacy is most likely reciprocal: considering all individuals in the sample, emotional support enhances political efficacy ($\beta=.050$; $p<0.001$) on the intra-individual level, and when individuals have stronger sentiments of political efficacy they tend to report receiving more emotional support ($\beta=.049$; $p<0.001$). This scenario reflects a feedback mechanism between socially-oriented resources, on the one

hand, and political efficacy and engagement, on the other hand, which some scholars have argued for (e.g. Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Finkel, 1985; Morrell, 2005). Thirdly, the data suggests, although cautiously, that the positive influence of emotional support in *triggering* the development of political efficacy may be greater than the consequences of political efficacy on emotional support, especially for women ($\beta=.067$, $p<0.001$ vs. $\beta=.065$, $p<0.001$).²⁸ Given the modest differences between the effects, however, future in-depth research on causality in the relationship between social support and political efficacy, also across countries and contexts, would be a welcome before confidently confirming the expectations laid out in H₃, and in order to gain a better understanding of how social support is related with the development of the politically efficacious citizen.

3.1.5 Conclusions and research implications

3.1.5.1 *Elucidating gendered trajectories of political efficacy*

This study has discussed the effect of social support on political efficacy by revisiting the mechanism that makes socially well-connected individuals more likely to feel politically efficacious. We have hypothesized that social support predicts political efficacy on the individual level, and we found that this effect manifests itself through emotional support, which is more influential on the development of political efficacy than only the number of weak and strong social ties that an individual entertains. Meanwhile, we concluded that gender differences in this relationship are fundamental, as emotional support fosters women's political

²⁸ The reverse causal relationship was also tested with the first-difference (FD) approach, and the results were robust to the fixed-effects models, and even slightly stronger in supporting the claim that wellbeing precedes efficacy. In precise terms, the FD-estimator of political efficacy in preceding emotional support was $\beta=.057$, $p<0.001$ in the entire sample (vs. $\beta=.060$, $p<0.001$ by FE-estimation); $\beta=.078$, $p<0.001$ for women in the sample (vs. $\beta=.084$, $p<0.001$ by FE-estimation) and $\beta=.033$, ns for men (vs. $\beta=.034$, ns by FE-estimation).

efficacy, but not for men. Remarkably, we found that the influence of emotional support for the individual's development of political efficacy holds even as we take into account many of the common indicators of social capital, thereby challenging some of the conventional wisdoms of the socially-rooted predictors of the political citizen. Finally, we explored causality between social support and political efficacy and concluded that the relationship is likely reciprocal, although the results indicated that emotional support may first and foremost be an antecedent, instead of an outcome, of the development of efficacy in politics.

3.1.5.2 *Research implications*

Our findings have major implications on how scholars should think about the socially-oriented resources that shape the politically engaged citizen. The prominent influence of social support for women highlights the need to look beyond other common, socially-rooted predictors of political engagement, and into *how interactions in close, personal relationships shape how women feel politically* ó thus unveiling just how important social wellbeing and the private sphere are for fostering a politically efficacious female citizenry and for reducing gender disparities in political engagement. We therefore call for more systematic consideration of social support in future research that aims to shed light on the formation of politically efficacious individuals and on the roots of gender inequality in politics.

Could social support become *a remedy for gender disparities in politics*? This study suggests the affirmative: since social support is an antecedent of women's political efficacy, and by extension, their *pre-political engagement*, promoting social support practices in education, and targeting women in particular in these initiatives, by preference already during their formative years (Arens and Watermann, 2017), has the potential to reduce women's disadvantage in

developing their sense of political efficacy over the life course, and eventually alleviate gender inequality in society. The impact of bringing social support into the forefront of political research is thus likely to be profound, not only for the development of the discipline, but also for enhancing political equality in society, thus bringing a new research agenda to political science.

3.2 Study 2: Do life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing affect political participation?²⁹

Chapter summary

This study examines whether life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing predict political participation and its intentions. By estimating fixed effects models in Swiss Household Panel data (9 waves, 2000–2008, n=2790), this study shows that negative emotions increase protest intentions, and that the effect of low emotional wellbeing on protest intentions is greater than the effect of protesting on emotions. Meanwhile, we do not find evidence of a causal link between subjective wellbeing and voting. The results shed light on the psychological underpinnings of diverse forms of political engagement, beyond the findings of earlier, mainly cross-sectional scholarship in the field.

3.2.1 Introduction and aim

3.2.1.1 Introduction to research problem

This study sheds light on the mechanism that connects evaluative wellbeing, i.e. life satisfaction, and emotional wellbeing, i.e. the frequency of positive and negative affective experiences, with political engagement. Previously, research on participation has much focused on the role of personal resources, notably time, money, or civic skills (Barnes et al., 1979; Brady et al., 1995; Stolle and Hooghe, 2011), or on mobilising contextual factors (Verba et al., 1987; Rosenstone et al., 1993; Dalton, 2006), in explaining inter-individual differences in political activity, although scholarship in the psychological antecedents of political participation is growing (Taylor et al., 2000; Hobfoll, 2002; Marcus, 2000; Mondak, 2010; Gerber et al., 2011; Valentino et al., 2011). It is thus increasingly recognised that political engagement does not

²⁹ A slightly modified version of this chapter has been published: Lindholm, A., 2020. Does Subjective Well-Being Affect Political Participation?. *Swiss Journal of Sociology*, 46(3), 467-488.

only stem from the available opportunities or the (objective) resources that individuals have at their disposal, but it is also likely affected by individual psychological factors, which may become additional resources, or obstacles, for participation (Taylor et al. 2000; Hobfoll 2002; Marcus, 2000; Mondak, 2010; Denny and Doyle, 2007; Söderlund and Rapeli, 2015)³⁰. Yet there is a pressing need to further investigate into the psychological explanations to why some people choose to take part in political activities, while others opt out.

Subjective wellbeing is considered a psychological state that influences both public and private life (Veenhoven, 2008), in addition to having intrinsic and instrumental value of its own (Samman, 2007). Subjective wellbeing, and life satisfaction especially, have been positively correlated with political participation in several studies (e.g. Flavin and Keane, 2011; Liberini et al., 2017; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2008, 2011; Ward, 2015), yet much of the existing research use only cross-sectional methods to test a relationship that has often been assumed to run from participation to higher wellbeing (Frey and Stutzer, 2000; Radcliff 2001; Klar and Kasser 2009; Pacheco and Lange 2010; Bühlmann 2016). Only a few studies have systematically tested whether political participation favours the development of subjective wellbeing, or if wellbeing instead nurtures participation (the few exceptions include Weitz-Shapiro and Winters 2008, 2011; Pirralha 2017).

3.2.1.2 The aim

This study contributes to filling the gaps in current scholarship by examining individual trajectories of life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing and political engagement in

³⁰ More recently, scholarship has emerged around personality (Mondak, 2010; Gerber et al. 2011; Jost et al., 2009) and emotions (Marcus, 2000; Valentino et al., 2011; Brader, 2011; Weber, 2013) in explaining political outcomes, however, these alone remain insufficient in unveiling the psychological foundations of political engagement (see discussion in chapter 2.4)

Switzerland, thereby shedding light on the causal mechanism between wellbeing and political participation. The Swiss case is appropriate for testing this relationship, due to direct democracy and the federal structure of the country that encourage active citizen involvement in monitoring political processes (Frey and Stutzer 2000; Dorn et al. 2008; Lutz, 2006). In addition, access to high-quality, longitudinal Swiss data on individual wellbeing and participation patterns brings a clear advantage to the present study in examining causality compared to previous research efforts that use cross-sectional methods to make causal claims.

By using Swiss Household Panel (SHP) data, this study elucidates the relationship between the evaluative and emotional dimensions of subjective wellbeing and political participation, and proposes to answer the following: how do life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing affect individual political engagement? Is their influence stronger than the impact of participation on subjective wellbeing? Firstly, the study argues that from a conceptual point of view, it is likely that wellbeing precedes and affects the decision to participate, instead of only being an outcome of political activity. Secondly, it discusses how the influence of life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing are likely to vary across political activities by having a spurring effect on voting and having a dampening effect on intentions of conflictual participation. Finally, the reciprocal effects between life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing and political engagement are empirically tested.

3.2.2 Linking life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing to political participation

3.2.2.1 *Understanding wellbeing*

Subjective wellbeing is a strong driver of individual attitudes, motivations and preferences (e.g. Diener, 1984, 2012; Veenhoven, 2008; Sahu and Rath, 2003; Ojeda, 2015; Esaiasson et al., 2020), and this recognition has paved the way for subjective wellbeing to become a societal and also a political issue (Carpenter, 2012). In other words, how we feel about ourselves and our lives affects how we behave in the public sphere, explaining why one should expect that subjective wellbeing impacts the willingness to participate in political decision-making processes in society.

While a state of feeling well is intuitively recognised by most of us, different approaches have been applied across disciplines in order to understand and define human wellbeing. Whether seen as utility in explaining human behaviour and preferences (Dolan et al. 2008; Frey and Stutzer 2010), an individual state that explains social behaviour at the collective level (Diener et al., 1993; Veenhoven, 2008), or as an indicator of optimal human functioning and thriving (Diener, 2000, 2012; Oishi et al., 2007), subjective wellbeing has most often been measured through self-reporting in surveys because of the inherently personal nature of the construct. Likert scales of general life satisfaction or happiness are widely used across disciplines to measure subjective wellbeing in national and comparative surveys. While life satisfaction captures a global assessment of the quality of life, as opposed to any domain-specific evaluations, it only expresses the *evaluative dimension* of subjective wellbeing (Diener et al. 1985; Veenhoven, 2008; Jeffrey et al., 2015). A second dimension of wellbeing that we consider in this study is the *emotional dimension*, composed of the positive and negative emotions that persons experience in daily life. Positive emotions constitute of experiences such as joy, energy, happiness and enthusiasm, while negative emotions can entail anger, anxiety, sadness, and related feelings. Emotional wellbeing is influenced by current mood and is therefore likely less stable in time than other wellbeing dimensions (Diener, 2000; Diener et

al., 2003). Yet emotional wellbeing has been described as a measure of the “emotional quality” (Kahneman and Deaton, 2010: 16489) of everyday experiences, and their frequency and intensity, and is one of the key wellbeing dimensions that people consult when assessing if they feel well in life. In other words, the emotions we experience in daily life are strongly indicative of our overall wellbeing.

Previous research has drawn different conclusions on the linkages between subjective wellbeing and political participation, especially when using different dimensions of wellbeing and examining several forms of participation (Oishi et al., 2007; Liberini et al., 2017; Flavin and Keane, 2011; Bühlmann, 2016; Klar and Kasser, 2009). It is therefore appropriate in the framework of this study to differentiate between on the one hand, evaluative measures of wellbeing, and on the other hand, emotional measures of wellbeing when explaining the linkages between wellbeing and political activity. Likewise, it is necessary to consider how life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing relate to different types of political activity and, in the context of this study, also the opportunities in Switzerland to exert political influence.

3.2.2.2 Voting and conflictual political activity

Despite that voting is still a cornerstone of citizen participation in politics in most established democracies, other political activities have been gaining importance in recent decades with increasing postmaterial value-structures in society and the conception of a more active role for the citizenry in politics (Inglehart, 1997; Norris, 1999; Stolle and Hooghe, 2005). We discussed in chapter 2.2 how several typologies of political participation have been proposed over the years (Verba and Nie, 1972; Barnes et al., 1979; Dalton 2006; Van Deth et al., 2007; Marien et al., 2010), distinguishing activities by the mechanism that triggers participation, the nature of

the act, or the goal of the activity. This study will consider participation based on the conflictual or consensual nature of the activity, the former aiming to influence political decision-making from *within* the political system in place, while the latter aims to influence decision-making from *outside* the established political system by using disruptive tactics to exert political influence. (Kaase, 1999; Cornwall, 2004; Erik and Amnå, 2012; Hooghe and Marien, 2013). Among conflictual activities, this study will focus on protest activities, such as strikes, boycotts, or demonstrations, while non-conflictual participation is measured by voting.

3.2.2.3 *Causality between subjective wellbeing and political participation*

Earlier research has showed positive associations between subjective wellbeing and voting in elections (Flavin and Keane, 2011; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2011; Bühlmann, 2016; Liberini et al., 2017), as well as with political activism (Klar and Kasser, 2009; Bühlmann, 2016). Despite the merits of previous efforts to shed light on the linkages and synergies between subjective wellbeing and political participation, research in the domain is still in its infancy. Specifically, past research remains inconclusive on whether political activity enhances wellbeing, whether wellbeing leads to participation, or whether a feedback effect is the most likely³¹. A major limitation in the literature is that most research in the domain relies on cross-sectional analysis to find support for their conceptual assumptions of the relationship. The few studies that explicitly test for causality between subjective wellbeing and participation have found mixed evidence (e.g. Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2008, 2011; Pirralha, 2017). By using Dutch panel data, Pirralha (2017) discovered that life satisfaction and participation were not significantly related, whereas Weitz-Shapiro and Winters (2008, 2011) tested the relationship

³¹ The causality debate regarding wellbeing and participation was discussed in-depth in chapter 2.6.5.

with quasi-experimental methods and sophisticated regression modelling, and concluded that the relationship is likely to go from higher satisfaction to participation.

While cross-sectional studies are in a weaker position to infer causation, many of them argue on a conceptual level that political participation would positively influence subjective wellbeing, mainly through the positive effects that participation should have on the sentiment of individual competence, efficacy, and a sense of belonging and contributing to society (e.g. Klar and Kasser, 2009; Pacheco and Lange, 2010; Bühlmann, 2016), thus reflecting a long-standing tradition in political theory that views the act of participating as valuable in creating procedural utility to the individual citizen and increasing quality of life (Dreze and Sen, 2002; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2008). However, in addition to the scarce longitudinal evidence in support of the argument, it is not conceptually straightforward to assume that causality would inevitably run from political participation to wellbeing, since this would assume that the political act, which is only occasional for most persons, would have such general effects on subjective wellbeing, even in the common situation where the objective of the activity is not fulfilled. In addition, considering the scholarship in health and politics that links poor physical and mental health to less political activity (Denny and Doyle, 2007; Bernardi, 2020; Mattila et al., 2013; Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015; Söderlund and Rapeli, 2015), it hardly seems plausible to argue that abstention from political activity would deteriorate health. Echoing this, it seems equally unlikely that abstention from political activity would automatically decrease wellbeing. Finally, assuming that political participation leads to subjective wellbeing ignores the psychological processes that likely precede the choice to participate in political activities to begin with.

For these reasons, we argue that it is conceptually likely that subjective wellbeing precedes and affects voting and protest intentions. Although the relationship can to some extent be characterised by reciprocal effects, it is likely that subjective wellbeing affects whether or not persons participate in the first place. Therefore, it is expected in this study that *life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing precede and affect political participation or its intentions (H₁)*. In the following, we will outline the expected nature of the influence of subjective wellbeing on political activity.

3.2.2.4 *Subjective wellbeing as a resource for voting*

In the spirit of the CVM and political participation (Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al., 1995, 1987), subjective wellbeing can be considered as an additional, *psychological resource* for the purpose of political participation. Subjective wellbeing positively influences self-efficacy and motivation to invest time and effort into political activities (Sahu and Rath, 2003). Moreover, not feeling well about oneself and life is associated with a dampened overall motivation and a lower sense of efficacy, thereby compromising the ability and willingness to participate in politics (Ojeda, 2015; Denny and Doyle, 2007; Bernardi, 2020; Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015; Söderlund and Rapeli, 2015). This negative influence remains salient even when the health grievances are psychic, instead of being physical (Denny and Doyle, 2007; Mattila et al., 2013; Bernardi, 2020), meaning that *not all health obstacles to participation are physical*. In other words, not feeling well in life is psychologically burdensome and energy-consuming to deal with for the individual, making individuals more inward-looking and withdrawn from society, and consequently affects their ability to invest effort and interest into social activities, including political activities. In another perspective, pursuing higher societal and personal goals ('self-actualization'), e.g. through political activity, tends to only be achieved at moderate to high

levels of well-being (Maslow, 1954; Hagerty, 1999; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Tay and Diener, 2011; Veenhoven, 2008) when more fundamental personal needs are met, which would explain why low wellbeing is associated with the politically passive citizen. Past research has positively linked subjective wellbeing with electoral participation (e.g. Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Flavin and Keane 2011; Liberini et al., 2017; Ward, 2015). Reflecting this, it is expected in this study that *life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing increase the likelihood of voting (H₂)*.

3.2.2.5 *Negative emotions increase political protest intentions*

Meanwhile, subjective wellbeing may not have the same favourable effect on political protest. In fact, it can be argued that high emotional wellbeing dampens political protest, since negative emotions tend to precede and trigger protest activities. Studies have found that negative emotional appraisals³² are more influential on protest intentions than cognitive comparisons that individuals draw against a standard (Van Zomeren et al., 2008; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013), likely making emotional ill-being a better predictor of protesting than life dissatisfaction. In social psychology and in scholarship on emotions and politics, as well as in social movements studies, emotions and appraisals have become increasingly popular explanations for why persons protest (Van Troost et al., 2013; Van Zomeren et al., 2008; Valentino et al., 2011; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013). They have been described as “accelerators” in the process of joining protest movements and as “amplifiers” of motivations to protest (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013: 892), due to their influence on social perceptions and information-processing (Bodenhausen et al., 1994; Clark, 2014). Persons

³² The appraisal theory in psychology argues that emotions are extracted from our evaluations of situations and can cause different reactions between persons (Scherer et al., 2001).

protest to express frustration and injustice that they perceive (Lind and Tyler, 1988; Dalton et al., 2010; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013).³³ It is therefore expected that *high emotional wellbeing decreases protest intentions (H₃)*.

3.2.2.6 Political participation in Switzerland

We will test the influence of life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing on political participation using Swiss data. The Swiss political system is unique in its widespread use of direct democracy and the federal structure of the country that enables Swiss citizens to cast a ballot, in addition to elections, several times per year through popular votes (Lutz, 2006, 2007). The Swiss are called on approximately four times a year to vote and are invited to vote on 15 federal proposals per year on average.³⁴ Another unique feature of electoral participation in Switzerland is the significantly lower voter turnout (Lutz, 2007) than in most other Western democracies, both with regard to elections and popular votes. One possible explanation to the low intensity of voter participation is ‘voter fatigue’, as citizens are called on many times a year to vote on a full range of local, cantonal, and federal issues (Jackman and Miller, 1995; Ladner, 2002). On the other hand, small-scale democracy is thought to favour turnout, due to greater accessibility and understanding of the decision-making processes, stronger identification with the matters at hand, and the greater influence of social control (Dahl and Tufte, 1973; Ladner, 2002).

Protest participation in Switzerland is moderately common at the European level, yet it is, with the exception of boycotting (Yates, 2011), less widespread than in neighbouring France, Italy,

³³ Among negative emotions, anger is thought to have the strongest action potential (Van Stekelenburg et al., 2011; Van Troost et al., 2013). A specific question on anger was introduced to the SHP questionnaire in 2006 (wave 8), which restricts the analysis of the effect of anger on protesting to three waves only (8–10). In this time span, the analysis showed no significant intra-individual effects of anger on voting or protesting.

³⁴ In addition to federal votes, citizens decide on a number of municipal and cantonal issues every year.

or Germany (Quaranta, 2013). Compared to neighbouring countries, the lower overall eagerness to protest in Switzerland could be explained by direct democracy, which give citizens many opportunities to contest political decisions through formal channels of participation (Ackermann, 2017; Fatke and Freitag, 2013). Nevertheless, a moderate resurgence of protest participation has taken place in the Swiss political landscape since the early 2000's (Hutter and Giugni, 2009).

Overall, it is useful to keep in mind the particular context in which Swiss citizens take part in political life when generalizing the results of this study to the context of other advanced democracies. From a normative perspective, one could expect Swiss citizens to be 'better participants' in non-conflictual politics than citizens in other established democracies, considering how direct democracy should have an educative role and thus increase citizen's political competence and external political efficacy beliefs (Pateman, 1970; Donovan, 2019), and lessen the need to contest political issues through political protest. On the other hand, the generally low turnout rates in Swiss elections and popular votes suggests that direct democracy is not a panacea for increasing participation among the population. Given that direct democracy instruments presuppose a high level of sophistication from the citizenry, it may discourage participation of the uninformed and uninterested citizens (Donovan, 2019; Dyck and Lascher, 2009), thereby negatively impacting participation, at least in its non-conflictual forms. From this perspective, the Swiss context of direct democracy should not, at least by default, compromise the generalizability of this research, but instead should encourage future research to test our hypotheses in other national contexts.

3.2.3 Data and methods

3.2.3.1 *The sample*

The three hypotheses stated above will be tested in SHP data. Conducted since 1999, the SHP is an annual panel study based on a stratified random sample of private households and individuals living in Switzerland (SHP, 2020). All household members are interviewed mainly by telephone³⁵ (Voorpostel et al., 2018). Since cross-country, comparative panel data on the different dimensions of subjective wellbeing and habits of political activity is currently not available, we will take a single-country approach to testing the longitudinal relationship between our outcome of interest and the key independent variables. An advantage of testing the hypotheses in a single country instead of using cross-cultural data is that it helps to avoid common pitfalls related to country-specific political contexts (Hantrais, 1999) and cultural differences in evaluating subjective wellbeing (Diener, 2012, 2000; Frey and Stutzer, 2000).

The analytical sample includes nine waves (waves 2 to 10, years 2000–2008) and consists of some 25'100 person-years nested within 2'790 respondents. The population and the timeframe are based on the availability of data on protest intentions.³⁶ The population sample was drawn in 1999 (SHP I), and respondents who participated in 2000, and in any of the subsequent waves until 2008, are included in the analysis. Only adult Swiss citizens were considered for reasons of comparability between voting and protest participation. A full list of variable codings and question wordings is available in Annex A10.

³⁵ Since 2010, face-to-face interviews and web-based surveys have been offered as alternatives for respondents who refuse or are reluctant to respond by telephone.

³⁶ Since data on voting were collected until 2017 (except for years 2010, 2012–2013 and 2015–2016), the analysis was also conducted at a second stage on the entire available time span (2000–2017). The main results were robust (see results in Annex A4).

3.2.3.2 The measures

Subjective wellbeing is measured through two dimensions: life satisfaction (evaluative wellbeing) and the frequency of positive and negative emotions (emotional wellbeing). Life satisfaction (“*In general, how satisfied are you with your life?*”) is a standard measure of subjective wellbeing in surveys and has been found to have high internal consistency and temporal reliability (Diener et al., 1985). There are two emotional wellbeing measures included in the SHP, and both have been adapted from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson et al. 1988): one measuring positive emotions (“*Are you often plenty of strength, energy and optimism?*”) and the other negative emotions (“*Do you often have negative feelings, such as having the blues, being desperate, suffering from anxiety or depression?*”).³⁷ Both items represent distinct aspects of emotional wellbeing, which is underlined by the moderate bivariate correlation ($r = -0.49$ in the data). Moreover, the PANAS scales, which inspired the SHP items, have been shown to be internally consistent and stable at intermediate time spans (Watson et al., 1988).

Non-conflictual and conflictual political engagement are measured by the usual frequency of participation in federal popular votes (“*How many do you usually take part in?*”), and by future intentions of boycotting, striking, and demonstrating (“*How often do you intend to participate in a boycott/strike/demonstration in the future?*”). By examining hypothetical protest behaviour and not actual behaviour, a bias risk cannot be ruled out; on the other hand, protest

³⁷ The PANAS questionnaire identifies over 50 mood terms relevant for either scale (Watson et al., 1988), and the SHP questions explicitly mention only a few of them. However, the SHP question formulation allows respondents to associate additional related emotions to their answers than those that are explicitly asked for.

intentions have been described as powerful predictors of actual participation, and in any case more predictive of activity than only measuring protest attitudes (Anderson and Mendes, 2006).

Both the wellbeing and the political activity measures have slightly to moderately asymmetrical distributions.³⁸ Robustness checks suggest, however, that the data structure is not problematic for the use of OLS techniques in the analytical models.³⁹ The asymmetries are fairly common in survey data: negative emotions may be moderately underreported due to influences of social desirability (Kozma and Stones, 1987; Diener, 1994), and voting is widely considered to be sensitive to over-reporting (e.g. Silver et al., 1986). In the SHP, 74% of persons reported in at least one wave to participate in all popular votes, and less than 10% declared to never vote. These numbers deviate significantly from official turnout statistics, which averaged 44% in the 2000–2008 period (FSO, 2019). Protest intentions are less skewed than voting, yet 57% of persons declared at least once to never consider boycotting, 66% to never consider striking, and 56% to never consider demonstrating. At the other extreme, 39% of respondents reported at least once to certainly considering boycotting, compared to 26% for striking, and 30% for protesting. In this context, it is important to recall that panel attrition may particularly affect the analysis of political participation, since persons who join and stay in the panel tend to also be more politically active ('self-selection') (Voorpostel et al., 2018). The characteristics of the population in the sample shall therefore be kept in mind when interpreting the results of the analysis.

3.2.3.3 *The method*

³⁸ Skewness: life satisfaction: -1.01; negative emotions: 1.24; positive emotions: -0.99; voting: -1.48; boycotting: 0.16; striking: 0.49; demonstrating: 0.27.

³⁹ The models were tested for robustness by applying log transformation on the dependent variables and by z-standardising all linear predictors, which did not change the substantive conclusions of the results.

Fixed-effects OLS regressions are estimated in the data to encounter for within-individual change in subjective wellbeing and political activity, and to shed light on causality in the relationship. The fixed-effects model is essentially a multilevel model where observations are nested within individuals, and where the fixed-effects coefficient expresses the variation over time in the individual-specific mean of a construct. An advantage of fixed-effects models is that they get rid of time-constant heterogeneity between individuals that may be correlated with the outcome, thereby making self-selection into treatment no longer an issue (Allison, 2009). In this way, fixed-effects estimation provides a significant advantage over alternative methods in attempts to estimate causal relationships between variables. When estimating individual change, one shall recall that the error terms are likely to correlate within individuals across time. Therefore, the standard errors reported in the models are panel-robust, i.e. clustered by respondents.

3.2.3.4 The covariates

The models control for the influence of sociodemographic confounders and political attitudes. As discussed in part 2 of this thesis, it is widely acknowledged that objective resources, such as education and income, positively influence political engagement, and may also be related to subjective wellbeing (Verba et al., 1995; Witter et al., 1984; Diener et al., 1993; Brady et al., 1995; Gallego, 2010; Kahneman and Deaton, 2010). Income is measured subjectively (i.e. satisfaction with the financial situation of the household), as it has been considered a better proxy of the quality of life than objective income measures (Ackerman and Paolucci, 1983), in addition to being less sensitive to item non-response. It is worth noting that, since fixed-effects models only use within-individual variation to estimate effects, the influence of time-constant

characteristics, such as gender or social origin⁴⁰, cannot be estimated by these models; on the other hand, the fixed-effects approach implicitly controls for the influence of these time-constant traits (Allison, 2009).

Among political attitudes, the models control for left-right self-identification, political trust, satisfaction with democracy, and self-perceptions of political influence. These attitudes are likely to influence whether individuals participate through formal channels of political activity, through protest acts, or whether they abstain from taking part altogether (Kaase, 1999; Van Deth et al., 2007). For instance, left partisans and persons participate more in protest activities than right-wing partisans, and political efficacy and trust in institutions are likely to be conducive to participation in general. Finally, the models control for wave-effects, in order to account for the influence of the political context on political engagement in specific years. For instance, the overall political climate may encourage protesting in certain years, and also spur or dampen participation in popular votes, depending on the perceived importance of the topics voted on. The main variables of our models, as well as their characteristics, are summarized in Table 5.

⁴⁰ The models were also tested separately for robustness by gender, and by parents' social origin (by dual profession categories: unskilled vs. skilled). These analyses did not alter the substantive conclusions of the results.

Table 5. Study 2: Cross-sectional summary of variables, SHP 2000-2008

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
Voting in federal popular votes	8.03	2.81
Future boycott intentions	4.28	3.66
Future strike intentions	3.50	3.53
Future demonstration intentions	4.00	3.54
Life satisfaction	8.06	1.35
Negative feelings	1.92	1.97
Positive feelings	7.39	1.70
Satisfaction with financial situation	7.36	1.95
Feeling of political influence	3.96	2.52
Left-right self-identification	4.65	2.07
Trust in the Federal Government	5.69	2.03
Satisfaction with democracy	6.13	1.79
Education, 3 levels	%	
low	10	
mid-level	66	
high	24	
n(individuals)	2790	

Note: Statistics for period-indicators (waves) are not shown. All variables are scales (0-10) except for education, which is a categorical indicator.

3.2.4 Empirical results and discussion

3.2.4.1 Bivariate relationship

Cross-sectional analysis of the data gives a first indication of the relationship between subjective wellbeing and political engagement. Voting is positively correlated with life satisfaction ($\rho=0.11$) and positive emotions ($\rho=0.06$), while having a negative relationship with negative emotions ($\rho=-0.09$). Among protest intentions, subjective wellbeing is negatively correlated with boycotting ($\rho=-0.09$ for life satisfaction, $\rho=-0.06$ for positive emotions, and $\rho=0.08$ for negative emotions), striking ($\rho=-0.11$ for life satisfaction, $\rho=-0.07$ for positive emotions, and $\rho=0.11$ for negative emotions), and demonstrating ($\rho=-0.10$ for life satisfaction, $\rho=-0.06$ for positive emotions, and $\rho=0.12$ for negative emotions). While the correlations are moderate in magnitude, all associations are statistically significant at the 0.05-level and have

the expected direction. These results prepare the terrain for moving into analysing the relationship between wellbeing and political outcomes in a longitudinal perspective.

3.2.4.2 Fixed-effects models

Table 6 displays the standardised fixed-effects estimators (FE), their standard errors and significance for subjective wellbeing and political activity retrieved from models that estimate, firstly, the influence of wellbeing on political engagement, and secondly, the influence of participation (or its intentions) on wellbeing. The results can be compared since in the modelling strategy, we systematically reverse the dependent and independent variables between the models; in other words, we estimate the effect of life satisfaction and emotions on political activity, and compare the results to the effect of participation on satisfaction and emotional wellbeing. By standardising the coefficients, the relative effects of evaluative and emotional wellbeing and political activity can be compared. To maximise comparability, all models include the same control variables; only the outcome and the main independent variables (either wellbeing or activity/intention) are exchanged between the models. The full results of the models are displayed in Annex A3.

Table 6. Study 2: Causality in subjective wellbeing and political engagement

Predictor at T		Outcome at T	FE (std.)	SE
Life satisfaction	→	Voting	-.0056	.0068
Voting	→	Life satisfaction	-.0056	.0136
Negative emotions	→	Voting	-.0001	.0066
Voting	→	Negative emotions	-.0006	.0134
Positive emotions	→	Voting	.0043	.0054
Voting	→	Positive emotions	.0111	.0138
Life satisfaction	→	Boycott intentions	-.0006	.0075
Boycott intentions	→	Life satisfaction	.0049	.0103
Negative emotions	→	Boycott intentions	.0106	.0077
Boycott intentions	→	Negative emotions	-.0083	.0104
Positive emotions	→	Boycott intentions	.0095	.0067
Boycott intentions	→	Positive emotions	.0199	.0119
Life satisfaction	→	Strike intentions	-.0065	.0073
Strike intentions	→	Life satisfaction	-.0191	.0116
Negative emotions	→	Strike intentions	.0186 *	.0073
Strike intentions	→	Negative emotions	.0219	.0113
Positive emotions	→	Strike intentions	-.0033	.0061
Strike intentions	→	Positive emotions	-.0301 *	.0129
Life satisfaction	→	Demonstration intentions	.0011	.0072
Demonstration intentions	→	Life satisfaction	.0013	.0117
Negative emotions	→	Demonstration intentions	.0234 ***	.0070
Demonstration intentions	→	Negative emotions	.0252 *	.0115
Positive emotions	→	Demonstration intentions	.0069	.0058
Demonstration intentions	→	Positive emotions	.0084	.0124

Note: FE= standardised fixed-effects estimators. Standard errors (SE) are panel robust. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

3.2.4.3 Subjective wellbeing and voting

Contrary to expectations in H₂, the data suggest that life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing do not significantly affect individual voting habits, contrary to a number of previous studies (Flavin and Keane, 2011; Liberini et al., 2017; Ward, 2015; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2011). Meanwhile, the results show no evidence that voting would increase subjective wellbeing, by contrast to what has been assumed in previous work on the link between participation and wellbeing (e.g. Frey and Stutzer, 2000; Dolan et al., 2008; Pacheco and Lange, 2010). This is remarkable, as it *challenges the dominant view in literature that claims that political*

participation would lead to higher wellbeing. The analysis suggests that subjective wellbeing and voting are only weakly related, thereby reflecting the conclusions of previous research (Pirralha, 2017). By consequence, the expectations laid out in H₂ and H₁ cannot be confirmed with regards to voting.

Possible explanations to the weak support for our expectations relates to the limited change in individual voting habits, which is underlined by how SHP measures voting, and the preponderance of differences between individuals in the panel. The differences in voting between individuals in the panel are considerable, explaining up to 79% of the variance in the model ($\rho=0.79$), yet this variation does not contribute to identifying the causal effect of evaluative and emotional wellbeing on voting. Furthermore, sample characteristics indicate that individual voting habits stay rather stable in the panel: among the 74% who ever reported participating in all popular votes (10/10 votes in a year), nearly 70% do not change their response over time. It suggests that persons in the panel who vote regularly will continue to do so, perhaps irrespective of changes in their life satisfaction or emotions, thus reflecting the conclusions of earlier research on the strong habit-forming effect of previous voter participation (Gerber et al., 2003; Cutts et al., 2009). Nevertheless, although no link between wellbeing and voting was found in this study, it does not exclude that such a relationship could exist if one used a more conventional measurement of voting as the dependent variable, notably a binary measure of turnout (yes/no), instead of the frequency of voting, as it is measured in the SHP⁴¹.

3.2.4.4 Subjective wellbeing and protest intentions

⁴¹ The models were also tested on a binary transformation of the dependent variable where voting 1 to 10 times per year (1) was contrasted with never voting (0). This did not substantially change the results of the analysis.

The results align better with the expectations in H₃, showing that *negative emotions significantly increase intentions of conflictual political participation*. These results echo the literature in health and politics that suggests that also mental ill-being, and not only poor physical health, can become a *motivator* for extra-electoral political activity, such as strikes and demonstrations, with *potentially a high policy impact* (Söderlund and Rapeli, 2015). In this rationale, persons with low wellbeing might feel that they have ‘nothing to lose’ by participating, yet ‘everything to gain’, thus pushing them to participate in demanding political activities with a potentially high payoff. Although the magnitude of the effect of emotional wellbeing on protest intentions is moderate, it is nevertheless statistically significant for two of the three protest forms: a unit increase in negative feelings increases strike intentions by 3 percentage points on average ($B=.033$; $\beta=.019$; $p<0.05$), and their readiness to demonstrate by 4 percentage points ($B=.042$; $\beta=.023$; $p<0.001$). By contrast, the effect of subjective wellbeing on boycott intentions does not reach statistical significance, which interestingly contrasts with to the two other protest forms. The difference may be related to the distinct nature of boycotting compared to striking and demonstrating, as boycotting is a form of political consumerism that is more strongly related to lifestyle politics, and perhaps less expressive of contentious action (Stolle et al., 2005, Micheletti and Stolle, 2004).

Meanwhile, the results also indicate that there is a reverse effect: demonstration intentions increase negative emotions by 1.4 percentage points ($B=.014$; $\beta=.025$, $p<0.05$), and strike intentions decrease positive emotions by 1.5 percentage points ($B=-.015$; $\beta=-.030$, $p<0.05$). Although the difference in the magnitude of the effect of demonstration intentions on negative emotions ($\beta=.025$) compared to the reverse effect ($\beta=.023$) is modest, the significance test show *stronger support of emotions first and foremost preceding protest intentions*, than the other way

around. In addition, there is no evidence of striking intentions increasing negative emotions, by contrast to negative emotions significantly predicting striking ($B=.019$; $\beta=.007$, $p<0.05$).

Finally, it is worthy to note the dampening effect of strike intentions on positive emotions, especially since the reverse effect is smaller ($\beta=-.030$ vs. $\beta=-.003$) and falls short of statistical significance. While suggesting that strike intentions indeed could reduce positive emotions, thereby intentions preceding rather than resulting from emotions, these results align with studies arguing that participation in ‘high-risk’ activism, such as strikes or demonstrations, would be negatively correlated with wellbeing (Klar and Kasser, 2009), and echo previous research on the importance of emotions in connection to protesting (Bodenhausen et al., 1994; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013; Van Troost et al. 2013), while also resulting from protest (Jasper, 1998). Low emotional wellbeing thereby becomes an issue intimately linked with citizen’s intentions of contentious political action.

3.2.4.5 Assessing causality

The analysis suggests that the nature of the underlying mechanism between wellbeing and political protest is most likely reciprocal: negative emotions increase protest intentions, and these intentions, to a certain extent, decrease emotional wellbeing. This reflects the existence of a ‘feedback’ mechanism that some scholars have suggested (Oishi et al., 2007; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2011), meaning that the personal emotional state triggers protest intentions, which, in their turn, fuel negative emotions. This is evidenced by the results for demonstration intentions, as these do not only stem from negative emotions, but they also result in fewer positive emotions. Meanwhile, all in all the evidence is stronger for *low emotional*

wellbeing being a driver of protest intentions, especially when we consider the willingness to join strikes, thus showing moderate support for our expectations in H₁.

With regards to voting, the results show no significant effect of wellbeing, contrary to the expectations, and thereby aligning with Pirralha's (2017) conclusions on the relationship. Yet in the absence of any significant reverse effects (i.e. from voting to wellbeing), this study also challenges the conventional wisdom in political theory that consider participation to lead to higher wellbeing (e.g. Frey and Stutzer, 2000; Dorn et al., 2008; Pacheco and Lange, 2010). This is a considerable finding, and indicates that future studies that aim to bring forward scholarship on the psychological underpinnings of political activity should carefully consider, and if possible, empirically test, the assumed causal mechanism connecting citizen wellbeing with political engagement.

A limitation of the chosen analytical approach is that it does not account for the stability of the constructs across time, which limits our possibilities to further explore the interdependencies in the relationship between wellbeing and political participation across the life course. For that purpose, the cross-lagged panel design has become a popular method since it allows for testing autoregressive and reciprocal effects (Selig and Little, 2012), however, cross-lagged panel models do not separate between inter- and intra-individual change; while the parameter estimates are affected by changes within individuals, they are not specific to relationships within persons (Selig and Little, 2012). In other words, in cross-lagged models one cannot separate between effects that stem from differences between and within individuals. This is a major drawback for the aims of this research, given that differences between individuals explain the majority of the variance (between 66% for boycott and 79% for voting), and confounding between inter- and intra-person variance would seriously compromise the ability to identify

causal effects. While the cross-lagged modelling approach could be beneficial for research projects comparing the long-term implications of wellbeing on political participation between individuals, it remains a less appropriate analytical strategy for the aims of the present study in exploring causality in the relationship.

3.2.5 Conclusions and research implications

3.2.5.1 Emotional wellbeing decreases protest intentions

This study contributes to the emerging literature on the psychological drivers of political activity by examining the effect of evaluative and emotional wellbeing on non-conflictual and conflictual political engagement within individuals over time. We show that emotional wellbeing decreases protest intentions, thus adding to scholarship that view negative emotions as drivers of protesting (Bodenhausen et al., 1994; Van Troost et al., 2013; Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013; Marcus, 2000; Van Zomeren et al., 2008), or poor health and general ill-being as determinants of demanding political activities (Söderlund and Rapeli, 2015). Furthermore, we find that, although the relationship is likely reciprocal, *low emotional wellbeing should be considered, first and foremost, as a source of protest intentions*, rather than only resulting from these intentions.

3.2.5.2 A wellbeing cleavage in political participation?

Research in the last decades has been characterized by a growing scholarly attention to subjective wellbeing and its influence on citizen's engagement in politics. The importance of the topic is underlined by the potential political consequences of subjective wellbeing; if

wellbeing is recognised as a predictor of political participation, it could in principle decrease participation among citizens with low wellbeing and potentially engender a wellbeing gap in democratic decision-making (Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015).

The results of this study relativise the risk of a wellbeing gap in voter turnout in Swiss society. Meanwhile, considering that low emotional wellbeing affects individual readiness to engage in contentious political action, one may ask to what extent an increasing *malaise* among the population could result in actual contentious behaviour. *Could low wellbeing be behind the democratic malaise* that scholarship has been increasingly concerned about? If low wellbeing is, indeed, not only a predictor of intentions, but also leads to actual political protest, paying more attention to the wellbeing of the citizenry in political science and by policy-makers could become *key for promoting democratic stability*. In this way, recognizing that low wellbeing fuels political protest has consequences on how policy-makers should perceive the role of subjective wellbeing in society, taking it out from the private sphere and making it also political issue. Despite that wellbeing does not emerge as a fix for low turnout in Switzerland, and possibly elsewhere, more attention should be paid to citizen's subjective wellbeing in anticipating and understanding political protest in a time when the legitimacy of the democratic institutions is increasingly contested across even the most stable democracies.

3.3 Study 3: Do citizens participate more if they feel empowered?

Chapter summary

This study shows that the feeling of empowerment, a key component of eudemonic wellbeing, positively influences high-initiative and high-investment political participation across European countries and cultures (European Social Survey, 2012, 28 countries, N>40'000), although the relationship is to some extent affected by the country's age of democracy. Furthermore, we show that this influence holds despite controlling for objective resources and key political attitudes, which are among the most widely studied individual predictors of political engagement. Recognizing that empowerment is linked to resource-intensive forms of political participation helps us to better understand the psychological drivers of the politically engaged citizen across old and new democracies in Europe as well as to draw a profile of participants in the most demanding forms of political activity.

3.3.1 Introduction and aim

3.3.1.1 Introduction to research problem

Despite that research on political participation has for long focused on the role of personal resources (Barnes et al., 1979; Brady et al., 1995; Stolle and Hooghe, 2011) and mobilizing contextual factors (Dalton, 2006; Rosenstone et al., 1993; Verba et al., 1987) in explaining differences in participation, it is increasingly recognized that citizen participation in political decision-making also stems from individual psychological factors that can serve as resources or motivators for the purpose of political participation (Hobfoll, 2002; Taylor et al., 2000; Valentino et al., 2011; Gerber et al., 2011; Söderlund and Rapeli, 2015). This study will argue that *empowerment*, defined as self-realization, a state of being in control, having an optimistic view of oneself and the ability to affect the future, and having a purpose in life (Zimmerman, 1990; Tengland, 2008), plays a decisive role in explaining differences in political activity across citizens, independently from other psychological drivers or objective resources that the

individual has at their disposal, or the country-context they live in. In other words, if citizens feel empowered, they are also more likely to engage politically.

Empowerment is a key indicator of eudemonic wellbeing, which is a building block of overall subjective wellbeing. The participatory consequences of subjective wellbeing have been subject to recent scholarly interest (Flavin and Keane, 2011; Pirralha, 2017; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2011, Liberini et al., 2017; Ward, 2015), even if wellbeing is traditionally viewed by scholarship as the outcome, rather than a precedent, of political participation (Bühlmann, 2016; Frey and Stutzer, 2010; Klar and Kasser, 2009). Furthermore, most extant research on the participatory consequences of subjective wellbeing operationalize wellbeing exclusively through reported life satisfaction or happiness (i.e. evaluative wellbeing), instead of also considering other, so far overlooked indicators of wellbeing, such as empowerment. This is problematic, since there are strong reasons to believe that the feeling of empowerment is a catalyst of a politically engaged citizenry.

Empowered individuals tend to have a strengthened belief in personal competence, and be more open and cooperative for participation, thereby increasing their willingness to take action in the public domain (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988; Siegall and Gardner, 2000; Seibert et al., 2011; Torres-Harding et al, 2018; Beaumont, 2010). These attributes are highly beneficial for efficient participation in political activities and influencing democratic decision-making in society. Conversely, a lack of empowerment likely lessens personal efficacy and motivation (Denny and Doyle, 2007; Ojeda, 2015), thereby becoming a *psychological obstacle* for the purpose of political participation, regardless if a person has access to objective resources or opportunities provided by the politico-institutional context of the country. Empowerment is a broader constructs than political efficacy, as the latter is a driver of the feeling of empowerment,

while empowerment entails feeling efficacious in various domains in life, as well as experiencing feelings such as having a direction and purpose in life, and feeling autonomous. Empowerment is therefore a broader construct than political efficacy, concerning various aspects of one's life (Edwards et al., 2002), and thus should not be reduced to efficacy only.

If persons who lack empowerment participate less in political decision-making, it could reveal the existence of an 'empowerment bias' in political decision-making in societies, in a similar way that health inequalities cause a health bias (Pacheco and Fletcher, 2015; Mattila et al., 2013) or income inequalities bias policies to the detriment of the poor (Hill and Leighley, 1992). This bias becomes even more meaningful if less empowered persons also systematically hold different policy preferences than the more empowered, participating segments of the population. We thereby call for putting empowerment to the forefront among other key predictors of political engagement, both by political scientists and by policy-makers, for the purposes of combatting political inequality in democratic countries.

3.3.1.2 The aim

This study aims to clarify the following: is empowerment a hidden resource for political participation? and if so, does the relationship change depending on the type of activity under consideration, especially based on the resource-intensity of the activity? How does the influence of empowerment compare to the influence of the established, 'objective' individual resources for participation, such as SES, income and education? And finally, how does the country context, especially the time spent under democratic rule, affect the relationship? In the empirical part, we will answer these research questions with the help of multilevel modelling techniques on cross-sectional survey data from nearly thirty European old and new democracies.

3.3.2 Linking empowerment and political participation

3.3.2.1 Shortcomings of earlier research

As the material standard of living has increased since the second half of the 20th century for the majority of the population in established democracies, subjective wellbeing has started to receive much attention in public debates and scholarly discussion, and there is now increasing momentum to view empowerment, and wellbeing overall, as potential resources for political participation. However, early scholarship in subjective wellbeing and political participation has mostly focused on voting behaviour (e.g. Liberini et al., 2017; Flavin and Keane, 2011; Tella and MacCulloch, 2005; Ward, 2015), although some studies have extended the focus to other participation forms such as campaigning, contacting or protesting (e.g. Bühlmann, 2016; Flavin and Keane, 2011). Equally remarkably, the same scholarship has heavily used life satisfaction or happiness (i.e. evaluative wellbeing) as single indicators of subjective wellbeing. In fact, very few studies have explicitly tested the relationship between empowerment, or other indicators of eudemonic wellbeing, and political participation, with the few exceptions that have considered empowerment rather as the outcome, instead of a precedent, of political participation (Bühlmann, 2016; Klar and Kasser, 2009).

Considering these circumstances, the political consequences of empowerment are to date largely overlooked in the participation literature. The scarce scholarly interest in the political outcomes of empowerment is rather surprising, considering the great attention that has been paid to political efficacy and participation (see e.g. Clarke and Acock, 1989; Craig et al., 1990; Finkel, 1985; Morrell, 2005; Karp and Banducci, 2008), and since a sense of efficacy over the

various domains in life, including in politics, can be considered *a central building block* of the individual's overall sense of empowerment. Meanwhile, political efficacy is not alone responsible for the positive influence of empowerment on participation; the contributions of optimism about the future, having a purpose in life, feeling accomplishment of one's actions and feeling that one's actions are valuable and worth the time given to them are equally important in predicting whether or not a person will invest in political activity. Studying empowerment – and not only political efficacy - in relation to political participation, is therefore a promising, yet so far underexplored research objective.

3.3.2.2 *Empowerment and eudemonic wellbeing*

We have defined earlier (chapter 2.5.2) how eudemonic wellbeing has been described as the underlying psychological needs, feelings and perceptions (Kapteyn et al., 2014) that contribute to the optimal functioning of a human being, such as autonomy, personal mastery or control, self-realization, functioning, as well as having a purpose in life (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryff and Keyes, 1995; Peterson, 2000). Others have described eudemonic wellbeing as the outcome when a person functions optimally in relation to others and as a member of society (Gable and Haidt, 2005; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Empowerment is an intrinsic component of eudemonic wellbeing and, as we will argue, particularly relevant to political participation. Empowerment is a psychological state that stems from many diffuse feelings and perceptions, such as a state of being in control of one's life, having an optimistic view of oneself and one's life, and the ability to affect the future (Zimmerman, 1990; Tengland, 2008; Beaumont, 2010). Empowerment is also the feeling of living a life that is worthwhile and valuable (i.e., having a purpose in life) and feeling

accomplishment of one's actions (i.e. self-realization) (Tengland, 2008). Conversely, a state of low empowerment has been described as a feeling of alienation, helplessness or powerlessness in life (Zimmerman, 1990).

While empowerment is closely related to the concept of efficacy, these two are separate constructs. Efficacy is domain-specific, and can concern aspects such as views of oneself and the societal institutions in the process of political decision-making (*political efficacy*) (Clarke and Acock, 1989; Finkel, 1985; Morrell, 2003, 2005), cohesion in society and the willingness to take action for the common good (*collective efficacy*) (Sampson et al., 1997), or a teacher's ability to convey information and motivate pupils to learn (*teacher efficacy*) (Gibson and Dembo, 1984). Instead of being synonymous to empowerment, efficacy is a driver of the feeling of empowerment, and the latter concerns holistically the various aspects of one's life (Edwards et al., 2002). Therefore, in addition to considering how efficacy in the political domain is conducive to participation, it becomes salient to consider how the broader feeling of empowerment favours individual political activity.

3.3.2.3 Empowerment is a resource for political participation

There are strong reasons to believe that empowerment is positively related to participation in political activities. Firstly, empowered individuals are likely to have higher levels of efficacy and motivation that they can invest into political activities. Inspired by the Maslowean motivational theory (Maslow, 1987, 1954, 1943), scholars argue that self-realization, one of the indicators of empowerment, allows individuals to pursue higher goals of individual and societal wellbeing (Hagerty, 1999; Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Tay and Diener, 2011). Empowerment is thereby conducive to developing a willingness to take action in the public, including the

political, domain (Leighley, 1995; Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988; Siegall and Gardner, 2000; Seibert et al., 2011; Torres-Harding et al, 2018; Beaumont, 2010). Secondly, empowerment makes persons function optimally in relation to others and as a member of society (Gable and Haidt, 2005; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Empowered individuals tend to be more open and cooperative for social and civic participation (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988; Torres-Harding et al, 2018; Beaumont, 2010), including in politics. By contrast, low empowerment negatively impacts one's psychological disposition to participate politically since it weakens the ability to invest effort and interest into political activities, similarly to how poor health dampens participation (cf. Denny and Doyle, 2007; Ojeda, 2015; Mattila et al. 2013, Bernardi, 2020), and increases feelings of hopelessness, alienation and powerlessness (Zimmerman, 1990), which risk becoming psychological obstacles for political engagement.

For these reasons, empowerment is a psychological state that is immensely beneficial for the purpose of political activity. Without feeling empowered, challenges in daily life can become so burdensome and energy-consuming to deal with for the individual that these challenges can effectively become hurdles and distractions for the individual in order to dedicate their time and efforts into political activities. We therefore expect that *empowerment is positively associated with political participation* (H₁).

3.3.2.4 *Empowerment and resource-intensive political activity*

While voting in elections still remains the most widespread form of political activity in most established democracies, we have discussed how extra-electoral forms of political participation have been on the rise in recent decades with the development of a critical and engaged citizenry

(Inglehart, 1997; Norris, 1999; Stolle and Hooghe, 2005; see also the discussion in ch.2.1). We have also distinguished non-electoral political activities based not only on the nature of the activity, or the relationship of the activity with the political system, but also the extent to which these activities are intensive in their use of resources (chapter 2.2).

Socially-oriented activities can be distinguished based on the level of effort they require (Mannell, 1993; Serrat et al., 2015), and it is plausible that *empowerment is strongly influential for participation in resource-intensive political activities*. While studies show that individuals with high life satisfaction vote more (Flavin and Keane, 2011; Liberini et al., 2017; Ward, 2015; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2008), empowerment is likely to be especially important for participation in political activities that require a high level of initiative and investment from the individual. Efficacy, autonomy, a feeling of direction in life and optimism about oneself are all drivers of empowerment, as well as being qualities that are important for initiative-taking and resource-intensive political activities (Pollock, 1983). High-initiative and high-investment political activities include both institutionalized (e.g. campaigning, contacting) and non-institutionalized (e.g. protest) participation⁴². Conversely, empowerment may be less influential on electoral participation, petition signing and consumer product boycotts, which can arguably be carried out with relatively little investment and initiative in terms of time and effort than the more resource-intensive activities, such as working in political campaigns, reaching out to politicians or mobilization into political protest (Marien et al., 2010; Parry et al., 1992). This can also be recognized intuitively: protesting and campaign activity especially require a significant amount of time and an intensive and repeated use of one's knowledge, capacities in communication, persuasion and deliberation, and the mobilization of one's networks, whereas

⁴² It has, however, been pointed out that participation in non-institutionalized, resource-intensive political activities is especially likely if individuals have a strong sense of empowerment all the while having a low trust in political incumbents (Pollock, 1983).

signing a petition or casting a vote at national elections are single acts that arguably require less from one's networks or communication skills, and are carried out periodically and on demand. Therefore, our second expectation is that *empowerment is more strongly positively associated with high-initiative and high-investment participation forms (campaigning, contacting and protesting) than with less-resource intensive participation forms (H₂).*

3.3.2.5 *Empowerment, participation and the country context*

The nature and the extent of citizen participation in political decision-making processes is affected by the historical, cultural and politico-institutional context of a country. It is widely recognized that political participation patterns are influenced by the political opportunity structure in country, the institutional context in place, as well as country-specific traditions of political engagement (Dalton, 2006; Rosenstone et al., 1993; Verba et al., 1987; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004; Tarrow, 1996; Vráblíková, 2014). The cross-European differences in participation can be substantial: while voting in elections remains the most common form of citizen political participation in all European democracies, there is still substantial variation in turnout across Europe and in the past few decades, the average turnout rates have fallen to below 50 % in many Eastern European countries and in Switzerland, while attaining over 80 % in the Nordic countries and Malta (Siaroff and Merer, 2002). The variation is even greater for extra-electoral participation: public protest and strikes are much more common in Southern European countries than in Northern Europe (Quaranta, 2013), and political consumerism is more practiced by Nordic and Central European citizens than Southern Europeans (Ferrer-Fons and Fraile, 2013).

Despite that political activity is subject to country-specific circumstances, certain patterns of participation emerge on the European, country-aggregate level when we consider the *age of democracy*; that is, how long a country has been under democratic, as opposed to authoritarian, rule. Countries, where democracy was established only starting from the 1970's (Samuel Huntington's (1993) famous 'third wave' of democratization, or 'new democracies'), share certain characteristics that affect citizen willingness to participate in political life, and distinguish them from earlier established democracies ('old democracies'). It is thought that as a democracy matures, citizens are better able to "navigate the political system" and "internalize motivations to participate", thereby increasing participation (Teorell et al., 2007a: 409). As a result, in general, citizens in new democracies have lower aggregate levels of political trust and satisfaction (Catterberg and Moreno, 2006), lower internal and external political efficacy (Torcal, 2006), weaker party attachments and lower turnout rates (Karp and Banducci, 2007) and tend to participate less in all forms of political activities (Torcal, 2006), compared to older democracies. The lower political implication of citizens in new democracies has also been explained by the lack of political opportunities in these democracies ('political opportunity structures', see e.g. Meyer and Minkoff, 2004; Tarrow, 1996). The politico-institutional context is thought to be especially influential non-electoral participation in a country (Dalton et al., 2010; Torcal, 2006), possibly because non-electoral activities depend more on the opportunities in place (Vráblíková, 2014) and are more demanding in terms of the politico-psychological resources, and trust and efficacy in particular (Torcal, 2006; Pollock, 1983) that are unevenly developed between citizens in old and new democracies.

These circumstances entail that the average citizen in a new democracy has, all else equal, a more distant relationship with political decision-making processes than the citizen living in an old democracy, which may affect how empowerment influences participation across

democracies. The age of democracy could thus influence the mechanism between wellbeing and participation in two opposite, yet equally possible, ways: a first one suggests that the participation gap across old and new democracies is so profound that it cannot be meaningfully attenuated by wellbeing increases among citizens in new democracies. Put differently, it entails that wellbeing has a weaker influence on citizens' participation in new democracies, due to the pervasiveness of the influence of the politico-institutional legacy in these countries (*'the path of grief'*). On the other hand, the opposite is also imaginable, meaning that the positive influence of wellbeing on participation is stronger in new than old democracies; since citizens in new democracies already encounter many hurdles for the purpose of participation, such as lower efficacy, lower trust, weaker party attachments, and so forth, wellbeing could matter quite much for their participation and thus compensate for their lack of other resources (*'the compensation effect'*), while wellbeing differences among citizens in old democracies are considerably smaller and thus wellbeing would not become a cleavage for the purpose of political participation in old democracies. These two competing moderation hypotheses (H_{3A} and H_{3B}) regarding the relationship between empowerment and participation across old and new democracies will thus be tested in this study.

3.3.3 Data and methods

3.3.3.1 The sample

We will test our hypotheses on data collected in round 6 of the European Social Survey (ESS) (European Social Survey, 2012). The ESS is a cross-national survey on the attitudes, values and behaviour of the European population. The participants to the survey are drawn through a cross-sectional sample from the resident population by using random probability sampling (European

Social Survey, 2018b). The surveys are carried out by face-to-face interviewing. The sixth round of ESS included a thematic module on wellbeing, and is the only ESS round so far that includes items on empowerment, or the eudemonic dimension of wellbeing in general. The full sample consists of more than 40'000 respondents interviewed in 28 countries. For reasons of comparability across electoral and extra-electoral participation, we narrowed down our sample to only include persons with the right to vote in their country of residency, thus excluding minors and foreigners from the analysis of all participation outcomes (about 7 % of the full sample). A full list of variable codings and question wordings is available in Annex A10.

3.3.3.2 The dependent variables

Political participation is measured by a battery of dichotomous variables that indicate whether or not the respondent: (1) voted in the last national election, or during the last year carried out the following political activities; (2) contacted a politician or government official; (3) worked in a political party or action group; (4) displayed a campaign badge or sticker; (5) signed a petition; (6) boycotted a consumer product; (7) participated in a lawful public demonstration. Inspired by the extended participation typology developed by Jan Teorell and colleagues (2007), we consider six participation outcomes among our dependent variables: voting, contacting, campaigning (coded 1 if the respondent worked in a party or action group, or wore a campaign badge (or both)), signing a petition, product boycotting, and protesting. Among the extra-electoral participation forms, contacting and campaigning represent institutionalized participation, while product boycotting and protesting represent non-institutionalized participation. Petition signing can be either, depending on the country context, and will therefore be modelled as a separate participation form⁴³. We also recognize that political

⁴³ Cf. Teorell et. al. (2007b).

activities differ with respect to the level of initiative and investment they require, and among our participation outcomes, we consider contacting, campaigning and protesting to be more demanding in terms of initiative and personal investment (resource-intensive political activities, H₂) than voting, signing a petition, or boycotting a product.

3.3.3.3 Empowerment-index

We measure empowerment, our key independent variable, through a battery of 5 items expressing the extent to which the respondent agrees or disagrees with the following statements: “K ø o " c n y c { u " q r v k o” (optimism), “I generally feel positive about myself” (positivity), “I feel accomplishment of what I do in life” (self-realization), “What I do in life is valuable and worthwhile” (purpose in life), “I am free to decide how to live my life” (autonomy). Optimism about the future and positivity about oneself reflect the state of hopefulness, while self-realization, purpose in life and autonomy relate to sentiments of mastery, efficacy and control – and, as discussed earlier, these feelings contribute to a sense of overall empowerment. The items are each measured by 5-point scales, from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing with the relevant statement. For reasons of comparability, the scales of some of the items needed to be reversed in order to ensure that a higher value of the variable represents a higher level of empowerment. For purposes of parsimony, the five empowerment items were combined into a summative index (value range 5-25) with high reliability ($\alpha=0.75$) and satisfying intra-item correlation (0.30-0.40) (Clark and Watson, 1995)^{44,45}. The overall mean empowerment score is

⁴⁴ The index was tested for reliability in each country; in all cases except one (Switzerland, $\alpha=0.46$), the reliability was acceptable ($\alpha \geq 0.65$). Due to being a major outlier, the Swiss data were dropped from the sample in all subsequent analysis.

⁴⁵ Two alternative scaling methods were used to verify the index for validity. In exploratory factor analysis (EFA) a single factor was retained and all loadings were sufficient ($\beta > .5$) or satisfying ($\beta > .6$) (Optimism: $\beta = .69$, Positivity: $\beta = .69$; Purpose in life: $\beta = .63$; Self-realization: $\beta = .64$; Autonomy: $\beta = .54$). In confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) all five items load highly ($\beta > .75$) and significantly ($p < 0.001$) on the latent empowerment construct.

rather high in the aggregate sample ($\bar{x}=19$; Std. Dev=3), and the distribution of the index is not significantly different from a normal distribution (skewness= -.0.7, kurtosis=4). The characteristics of the empowerment index are therefore appropriate for the purpose of the upcoming analyses.

3.3.3.4 *The individual and contextual covariates*

Among the purely sociodemographic predictors of participation, we control for age, its squared term, and gender in the models. Overall, political participation increases with age, although its effect wears off at older age (Nie et al., 1974; Hooghe and Quintelier, 2012), and younger adults engage more in newer, non-electoral forms of participation, such as signing petitions and protesting (Quintelier, 2007). Gender is included to account for male-female differences in participation, as a gender gap still persists for many political activities and in several European countries (Gallego, 2007; Norris, 2013; Paxton et al., 2007). We also control for three traditional resources as proposed by the CVM: time, money and civic skills. The respondent's occupational status is a proxy for time availability: we draw a contrast between working part-time (between 5 and 34 hours per week), or not working at all (0-5 hours per week), against working full-time (35 hours or more in a week). Civic skills are indirectly measured through the level of education, since the highly educated participate more in political activities (e.g. Verba and Nie, 1978; Verba et al., 1995; Gallego, 2010; Stolle and Hooghe, 2011) than less educated citizens. Education is measured through a simplified version of the ISCED⁴⁶ 2011 standard on the highest completed level of education, which we combined into three categories: less than secondary education (low), attainment of secondary education (middle), and completion of post-secondary or tertiary education (high). Monetary resources are measured

⁴⁶ International Standard Classification of Education.

through household net income, which is regrouped into low (1st-3rd decile), middle (4th-6th decile), and high (7th -10th decile) income groups, in addition to keeping undisclosed income level in a separate category (about 12 % of cases).

Furthermore, we control for the effects of three core political attitudes in predicting participation: political trust, political interest, and left-right identification. Political trust is not only widely considered to be conducive to political activity, but also affects the type of activity one opts for: while persons who trust political institutions might participate more through voting and institutionalized forms of non-electoral activities, political distrust has been found to be conducive to non-institutionalized participation, or to a withdrawal from politics altogether (Kaase, 1999; Pollock, 1983; Hooghe and Marien, 2013). We create a composite index of political trust (0-50), which is built from 5 items expressing the level of trust in the national parliament, in the legal system, the police, trust in politicians, and trust in political parties ($\alpha=0.90$ in the aggregate data). Political interest is considered among the strongest predictors of political activity (Prior, 2010) and is measured with a four-level Likert scale ('not interested at all' to 'very interested').

Persons who identify themselves on either side (left *or* right) of the left-right self-placement scale are also more likely to participate in political acts than persons who do not identify strongly with either ideology (i.e. those who place themselves in the middle of the scale). Moreover, left or right self-identification likely influences the kind of activities people engage in. Non-institutionalized forms of political activities may be more popular among persons with left self-identification, since left ideology is associated with universalism, tolerance and independent thought and action (Pioro et al., 2011). Citizens who place themselves on the left of the scale are therefore more likely to be engaging in activities that challenge the established

political institutions, rather than citizens with right orientation, which is associated with conformity, including restraint from actions that could violate social norms, as well as with tradition, stability and security (Pioro et al., 2011). These values are linked to control and an opposition to change, and therefore could be less conducive to non-institutionalized participation, and more conducive to voting and other institutionalized participation forms. We use left-right self-placement (0-10) to measure left-right identification and isolate left-wing (0-4) and right-wing (6-10) partisans from persons with no particular partisan preference (5).

Finally, to test differences in empowerment and participation between old and new democracies (H_{3AB}), we insert a dummy for citizens living in a new democracy (1) versus an old democracy (0). Countries were identified as new democracies if they underwent a democratization process under the third wave according to Samuel Huntington's classification, meaning from mid-1970's onwards (Huntington, 1993). New democracies in our sample thus include Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine and Kosovo. Old democracies in the data are Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

3.3.3.5 The method

We take into account the hierarchical, cross-national structure of the data by clustering the standard errors by country and allowing for variation in the empowerment regression slopes in the model ('random coefficient model'). The random coefficient model allows for variation in the effect of the covariates on the country-level (level 2), including for the empowerment-index (hence the different slopes for this key variable), while the effects of the other individual-level

(level 1) regressors on the dependent variable are presumed to be invariant across countries. In other words, we allow empowerment to influence individual participation differently depending on the country context, in addition to expecting variation across countries in the likelihood of citizens carrying out different types of political activities. This is necessary since there are country-specific structural, political and institutional factors that influence participation patterns (Dalton, 2006; Rosenstone et al., 1993; Verba et al., 1987) and since the personal evaluation of wellbeing is subject to country-level variation (Diener and Suh, 2003) and hence the notion of empowerment can be understood and expressed differently across countries⁴⁷.

The logit coefficients in the model are calculated as a linear combination of the predictor variables, taking into account both random and fixed effects, and a nested data structure. Meanwhile, we do not expect that the *mechanism* that connects empowerment to participation would substantially differ between countries, but instead the association will stay positive despite some country-level variation in the strength of this relationship. It will therefore suffice to apply multilevel modelling techniques for the purposes of this study, while looking more closely into country-specific patterns of political participation (case studies) falls outside the scope of this study.

3.3.4 Empirical results and discussion

3.3.4.1 *Distribution of political activities*

⁴⁷ The theoretical grounds for using a random coefficient model over a random intercept model (i.e. where empowerment has fixed instead of random effects across countries) were also supported empirically by the Hausman test.

Table 7. Study 3: Participation rates by activity, all countries

Activity	Participation %, all	% in old democracies	% in new democracies
Voting	76	82	71
Campaigning	9	13	6
Contacting	12	16	9
Signing a petition	19	28	11
Product boycott	15	24	7
Protesting	7	8	6

Note: Unweighted ESS 6 data.

The average participation rates in the sample, also separately by the age of democracy, are listed in Table 7, while the participation rates by country are listed in Annex A5. In the aggregate data, voting is by far the most common activity ($\bar{x}=76\%$), followed by petition signing ($\bar{x}=19\%$), product boycott ($\bar{x}=15\%$), contacting ($\bar{x}=12\%$), and campaigning ($\bar{x}=9\%$). Protesting is the rarest activity form across all countries ($\bar{x}=7\%$). As expected, the participation rates are overall lower in new democracies, with the difference being especially important for extra-electoral activities. This is consistent with earlier research findings (e.g. Bernhagen and Marsh, 2007; Torcal, 2006; Karp and Banducci, 2007; Micheletti and Stolle, 2004), and is especially striking in the data for product boycott, which is more than three times more widespread in old than new democracies. Reflecting this, the country-level variation in participation is substantive for all extra-electoral activities⁴⁸ These group-level differences clearly indicate the need to account for country-level clustering and variation in further analysis.

3.3.4.2 Country-level clustering

⁴⁸ Country-level participation rates, from lowest to highest: Campaigning 2 % in Portugal and Hungary – 47 % in Iceland; party activity 5 % in Hungary and Bulgaria – 26 % in Iceland; petition signing 3 % in Hungary and Ukraine – 56 % in Iceland; product boycotting 1 % in Ukraine – 43 % in Sweden; protest 2 % in Ukraine and Poland – 26 % in Spain.

The country-level patterns of participation indicate the extent to which political participation is influenced by the country context, and by consequence, whether we can generalize our findings across individuals in different countries. The multilevel logit models in Annex A6 suggest that the data are, to a certain degree, nested by countries. Firstly, we observe only a weak variation among the country-specific empowerment regression slopes (between $\sigma=0.001$ and $\sigma=0.0009$, depending on the activity)⁴⁹. While accounting for different regression slopes is theoretically justified (see discussion in chapter 2.5.5 on culture and wellbeing), empirically we find negligible differences in the data regarding a country-specific influence of empowerment for political participation, suggesting that the mechanism that links empowerment to participation is, in fact, very similar across European countries. By contrast, the specific country-level context partly explains the residual variance in participation, ranging from a low 14% for contacting and 17 % for voting, to a moderate level of 44 % for campaigning and 45 % for signing a petition. The variation is quite high for the two conflictual and non-institutionalized forms of participation: protesting (62%) and product boycotting (66%), showing that countries differ the most when it comes to these two participation forms. The intra-class correlation (ICC), i.e. the average correlation between individuals in a given country, is another indicator of country-level differences in political activity. ICC is relatively low for voting (ICC=0.05) and contacting (ICC=0.04), while being moderate for campaigning and petition signing (both at ICC=0.12). The highest cluster-level correlation can be found for boycotting (ICC=0.17) and protesting (ICC=0.16), yet the correlation is not excessively high. The widely-theorized contextual drivers of political activity are, however, empirically reflected in the data.

While the cluster-level correlation is not negligible and becomes another indicator of the need to consider the country context when explaining patterns of participation, we consider that, once

⁴⁹ Null variation ($\sigma=0$) would indicate that all regression slopes are parallel.

this variation is accounted for through a multilevel modelling strategy, the contextual influence is within a reasonable range for the purpose of generalizing across countries about the relationship between empowerment and political participation⁵⁰. However, some caution should still be applied when interpreting the relationship between empowerment and non-institutionalized participation, since the country-specific patterns for boycotting and protesting are more substantial than for the other participation forms.

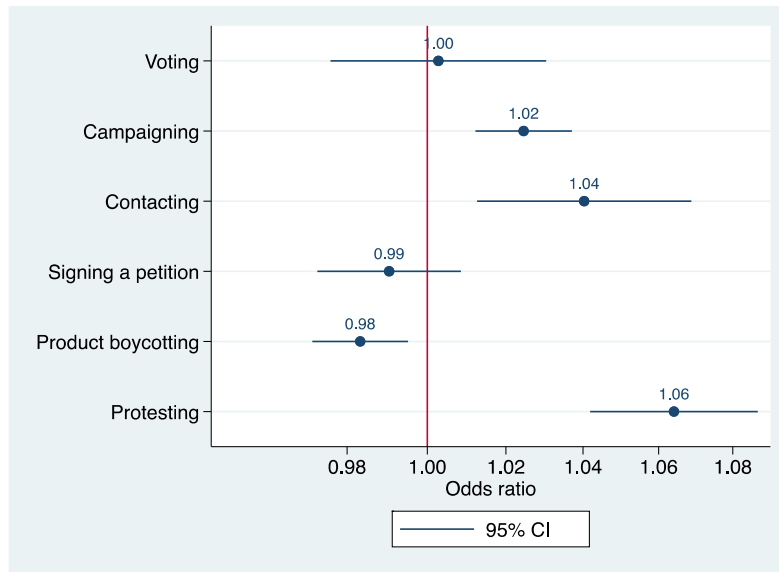
3.3.4.3 Model fit

We test our hypotheses by estimating random coefficient logistic regressions separately on six forms of political participation: voting, campaigning, contacting, signing a petition, boycotting a product, and protesting. We apply survey weights throughout our analysis to correct for bias relating to design, sample selection and population size in cross-national surveys. The overall model fit is similar across models, indicating that the independent variables of the models explain fairly well the variation in the activity forms. Model fit is the best for protesting (AIC=20'706), campaigning (AIC=23'815) and contacting (AIC=27'877), while the predictors explain slightly less of the variation in product boycotting (AIC=31'788), petition signing (AIC=37'098), and voting (AIC=39'017). Full results of the regression models can be found in Annex A6.

3.3.4.4 Empowerment and the odds of political participation

⁵⁰ We consider ICC to be small if it is lower than 0.05, moderate if it is >0.10, high if it is >0.15, and very high if it is >0.20 (LeBreton and Senter, 2008).

Figure 6. Study 3: Factor change in odds of participation, from empowerment



Note: N=see Annex A6. Survey-weights (design, poststratification and population-size) are applied. The spikes indicate 95 % confidence intervals. Other covariates in the model: gender, education, age, income, time availability, political trust, strength of partisanship, political interest and age of democracy.

As depicted in Figure 6, we observe a *positive and significant association between empowerment and political participation* across three forms of participation: contacting, campaigning and protesting. Under strict control conditions, a stronger feeling of empowerment, i.e. an increase of 1 unit in the score, positively influences the odds of contacting (OR=1.04, β =.040, SE=.014, $p<0.01$), campaigning (OR=1.02, β =.024, SE=.006, $p<0.001$) and protesting (OR=1.06, β =.062, SE=.011, $p<0.001$), while the association between empowerment and voting, on the one hand, and empowerment and signing a petition, on the other hand, fall short of statistical significance. These results align with the expectations in H₁ and reflect the conclusions of earlier research regarding a favourable influence of a sense of empowerment on political and social engagement (Hagerty, 1999; Leighley, 1995; Pollock, 1983; Tay and Diener, 2011; Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988; Beaumont, 2010; Torres-Harding et al., 2018), however, the null influence regarding the other participation forms do not align with the expectations in H₁.

Strikingly, the three participation forms that are positively related to empowerment, i.e. campaigning, contacting and protesting, can all be considered as political activities that require high initiative and investment, thus corresponding to expectations laid out in H₂ and echoing the conclusions of earlier research (Pollock, 1983; Mannell, 1993; Serrat et al., 2015). In other words, *empowerment seems to be a driver of resource-intensive participation*. Furthermore, it is notable that empowerment remains significantly and positively correlated with campaigning, contacting and protesting regardless of the influence of traditional objective resources for participation, notably time availability, income, and education, or the influence of key political attitudes such as political trust or interest. This further underlines the pressing need for future scholarship to consider the feeling of empowerment as a *key psychological driver* of the political citizen, next to other established, objective and subjective, predictors of political participation.

Meanwhile, for political consumerism, the results are somewhat puzzling: at a first glance, the data indicate that in the entire sample, a significant negative relationship exists between empowerment and product boycott (OR= 0.98, β = -.017, SE=.006, $p < 0.01$), thus contradicting expectations in H₁. On that note, it is possible that the somewhat unexpected results are at least partly influenced by measurement issues: the ESS interrogates whether a respondent has boycotted certain products in the past year, but this question does not encompass the motivations behind the act, including whether the reasons for boycotting have, in fact, been political, or led by other motivations (Van Deth, 2001).

However, irrespective of measurement issues, looking beyond the aggregate sample trends and instead scrutinizing the country-group patterns based on the age of democracy could shed further light on these results. We know that political consumerism is more widespread in old

democracies than new democracies (Bernhagen and Marsh, 2007; Micheletti and Stolle, 2004; Stolle et al., 2005; Boström et al., 2019), a tendency that is also observable in the ESS sample (see Table 7). A robustness check by analyzing split samples, separately for new and old democracies, shows that empowerment loses its significance for product boycotting in old democracies, while it, by contrast, appears as positively significant ($\beta = .028$, $SE = .010$, $p < 0.01$) in new democracies.⁵¹ The insignificant relationship in old democracies likely reflects the stage these countries have reached in their democratic and political development. In addition to citizens being overall more politically involved in old democracies (Teorell et al., 2007a), research has shown that political consumerism is disproportionately practiced by specific subgroups of the population, notably the economically more well-off (Stolle et al., 2005) and the postmaterialist, critical citizenry (Norris, 1999; Boström et al., 2019) with a strong feeling of internal political efficacy (Stolle et al., 2005; Copeland and Boulianne, 2020). Due to the longer trajectory of economic, social and democratic development in old democracies, citizens in old democracies have overall a higher material standard of living, adhere more to postmaterial values (Catterberg and Moreno, 2006), and have greater political efficacy beliefs (Torcal, 2006) than citizens in new democracies, which could explain why political consumerism is more widespread in old than new democracies. As a result, any further increases in empowerment among citizens in old democracies may very well not translate into higher likelihood of practicing political consumption, since citizens in old democracies already engage in product boycotts to a much higher rate. By contrast, empowerment remains meaningful for the purpose of engaging in political consumerism in new democracies, where citizens do by default engage significantly less in political consumption acts compared to the level of engagement in old democracies. A split sample approach therefore provides support for the compensation hypothesis (H_{3B}) rather than the path dependency hypothesis (H_{3A}), at least when it comes to

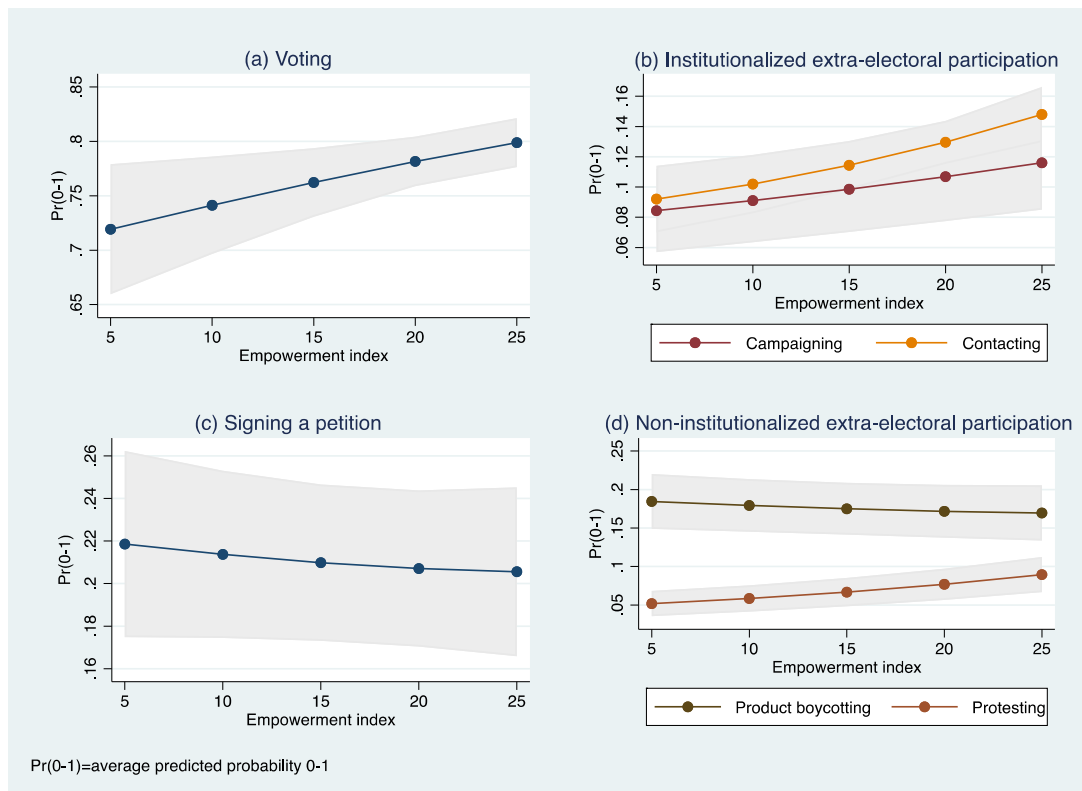
⁵¹ The results by separate samples are available in Annex A7ab.

product boycotts. These results also suggest that the initial, sample-aggregate negative relationship may merely be an artefact, since the actual meaningful relationship between empowerment and political consumerism is driven by the positive relationship that is present in new democracies. Keeping the potential measurement issues in mind and acknowledging the variation in the relationship between old and new democracies, the association between empowerment and political consumerism would without a doubt benefit from further investigation in future studies.

3.3.4.5 Probability of participation across the empowerment scale

Since the odds ratios in Figure 6 express an overall tendency of the relationship between empowerment and political activity, but they do not reflect the differences in the baseline probability of political activity between individuals, we will also depict the average probabilities (0-1) of political activity for individuals across the empowerment scale. Figures 7a-d thereby show a complementary way of thinking about the relationship between empowerment and political activity, and further underlines the salience of empowerment for resource-intensive participation.

Figure 7a-d. Study 3: Predicted probability of voting and extra-electoral activity, across empowerment scores



Notes: N =see Annex A6. Survey-weights (design, poststratification and population-size) are applied. The shaded areas indicate 95 % confidence intervals. Other covariates in the model: gender, education, age, income, time availability, political trust, strength of partisanship, political interest and age of democracy. Other variables in the models are fixed to their actual values.

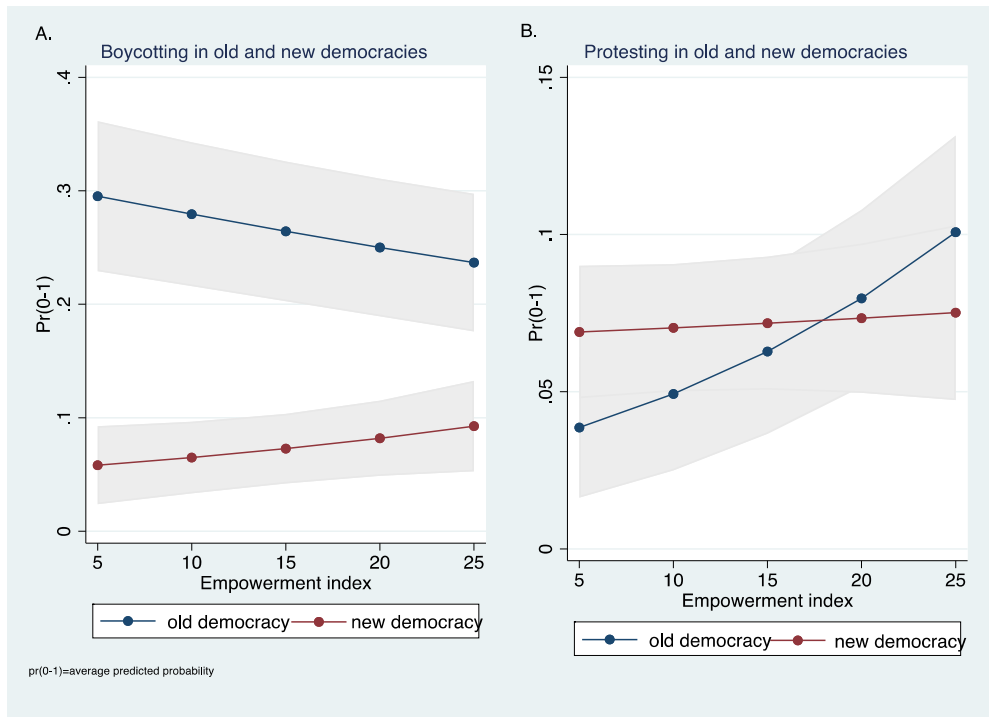
For voting, we can observe an increase in probability from $\rho=0.72$ to $\rho=0.80$ (+11 %) when moving along the empowerment scale. Despite that the probability of voting is, to no great surprise, substantially higher for the average individual than non-electoral participation, the relative increase in probability across the empowerment scale remains modest. By contrast, the probability increases are, relatively speaking, higher for the three forms of high-initiative, high-investment activities i.e. campaigning ($\rho=0.08$ to $\rho=0.11$, +38 %) and contacting ($\rho=0.09$ to $\rho=0.15$, +67 %), and for protesting ($\rho=0.05$ to $\rho=0.09$, +80%), than for the remaining participation forms. Though the probability of taking part in these activities remain clearly lower on average than for most other participation forms, the discrete change (%) in the probability is meaningful, again echoing how empowerment is important in driving

participation in resource-intensive participation (H₂). Product boycotting ($\rho=0.17$ to $\rho=0.18$, +6 %), and petition signing ($\rho=0.22$ to $\rho=0.21$, -5 %), remain remarkably stable across the empowerment scale, and the latter even showing a slight negative tendency towards higher empowerment scores, although it is worth noting that the confidence intervals of petition signing are particularly large and thus affect the reliability of these estimates. Most importantly, we find that the increase in probability of resource-intensive political activities (campaigning, contacting and protesting) across the empowerment scale is greater in magnitude than for voting and any less demanding participation forms (i.e. petition signing and product boycott), thereby further emphasizing how empowerment relates to resource-intensive participation (H₂).

3.3.4.6 Empowerment, participation and the age of democracy

We formulated two competing hypotheses on how the age of democracy moderates the influence of empowerment on participation: the ‘path dependency hypothesis’ (H_{3A}) and ‘the compensation hypothesis’ (H_{3B}). The results in our random coefficient model (Figure 6 and Annex A6) show some evidence of a moderation, but only with regards to the two activities: protesting ($\beta= -.051$, $SE=.014$, $p<0.001$) and product boycotting ($\beta=.047$, $SE=.021$, $p<0.05$). Interestingly, these participation forms are not equal in terms of resource-intensity, since we considered political protest to be more demanding in initiative and investment than consumer product boycott, however both have in common their non-institutionalized character. This suggests that, while the main influence of empowerment only extends to high-initiative, high-investment participation, the influence of the age of democracy *does not* discriminate between participation forms based on their resource-intensity.

Figure 8a-b. Study 3: Empowerment and participation in old and new democracies



Notes: N =see Annex A7ab. Survey-weights (design, poststratification and population-size) are applied. The shaded areas indicate 95 % confidence intervals. Other covariates in the model: gender, education, age, income, time availability, political trust, strength of partisanship, political interest and age of democracy. Other variables in the models are fixed to their actual values.

Reflecting the earlier results for product boycotting in a split-sample approach (Annex A7ab), Figure 8a shows that, while the probability of engaging in product boycotts for the average individual is, to no great surprise, consistently higher in old than new democracies (Bernhagen and Marsh, 2007; Micheletti and Stolle, 2004), the probability of boycotting substantially increases with higher levels of empowerment for the average person living in a new democracy ($\rho=0.06$ to $\rho=0.09$, + 33%), while it stays almost stable and even slightly decreases for individuals living in old democracies ($\rho=0.29$ to $\rho=0.24$, -7%). Put differently, although citizens in new democracies engage less in product boycotts, empowerment matters more in new democracies for political consumerism purposes than it does in old democracies. For product boycotts, the results thereby align clearly better with idea that *citizens in new democracies can*

w u g " g o r q y g t o g to the 'participation levels in old democracies and thereby use empowerment to *partly compensate for their disadvantaged position* compared to old democracies ('the compensation hypothesis', H_{3B}).

By contrast, the results for protesting align better with the 'path dependency' hypothesis (H_{3A}). While the main effect of empowerment in the aggregate sample (Annex A6) is positive ($\beta=.062$, $SE=.011$, $p<0.001$), the interaction effect is negative ($\beta= -.051$, $SE=.014$, $p<0.001$), meaning that the influence of empowerment on protesting is significantly weaker in new than old democracies; a tendency that is further illustrated in Figure 8b, where the probability of protesting stays relatively stable across empowerment scores in new democracies, while we witness a more than two-fold surge across the empowerment scale in the probability of protesting in old democracies ($\rho=0.04$ to $\rho=0.10$, +150 %). This indicates that the influence of empowerment on protesting *only reinforces the existing inequalities* in participation between citizens in old and new democracies (e.g. Torcal, 2006), although it is worth noting that the difference between old and new democracies with regards to protesting is less pronounced due to the partly overlapping confidence intervals of the estimates.

Considering the country's history of democracy is thereby revelatory of how the contextual environment interferes in how individual psychological resources, such as empowerment, can be used for the purpose of political activity. It suggests that two opposite mechanism are at play, since the country context helps empowered citizens to 'catch up' to old democracies with regard to political consumerism, but not with regard to protesting. These findings prepares the field for future in-depth research on how a country's political heritage influences their citizens abilities to turn their potential politico-psychological resources, such as empowerment, into

actual political engagement and thus alleviate political inequality between citizens in old and new democracies.

3.3.5 Conclusions and research implications

3.3.5.1 *Empowerment is an asset for resource-intensive political participation*

This study has elucidated the relationship between empowerment and political participation and showed that empowerment is a *powerful psychological driver of resource-intensive political activity*. Remarkably, empowerment continues to matter for resource-intensive participation even when we control for the influence of the established objective resources, as well as key political attitudes, in explaining participation. Furthermore, we found that the age of democracy moderates the link between empowerment, on the one hand, and product boycotting and protesting, on the other hand, but in clearly different ways; while it reinforces existing differences in protest participation, i.e. by favouring protest participation in old democracies, it allows citizens in new democracies to reduce their disadvantage with regards to political consumerism. Although not all expectations were confirmed in the data, the results nonetheless underline the great relevance of empowerment for the discipline in order to extend on our knowledge of the psychological drivers of the most demanding forms of political activity, and how these can depend on the country context citizens are embedded in.

3.3.5.2 *An empowerment gap in politics?*

We have witnessed in the last few decades a growing awareness of the importance of subjective wellbeing and mental health for individuals to become well-functioning members of society,

including for the purposes of citizen's political engagement. Yet the growing momentum for wellbeing research is not the only reason why political science should be concerned with empowerment in relation to political activity. We have discussed how an 'empowerment gap' in political influence risks deepening inequalities among citizens and possibly make the political preferences of the less-empowered individuals overlooked in policy-making. Given the high visibility and potentially strong policy-impact of resource-intensive participation in society, and campaigning and public protesting especially, resource-intensive activities arguably have *a high potential of influencing public opinion and induce debate in society* beyond the networks and circles of individuals who actually take part in these activities. By consequence, the political demands and concerns of the empowered, participating citizens may very well be more heard in policy processes than the preferences and demands of less-empowered citizens, who take less part in these resource-intensive activities. Considering this, an empowerment gap could very well be at stake in contemporary European democracies. Hence, acknowledging that empowerment is a driver of participation could shed further light on the persistence of political and social inequality in European democracies, which alone justifies the need to pay more attention to empowerment, in addition to the other, more established psychological resources of political engagement.

3.3.5.3 *Limitations*

A few methodological limitations of this study should be noted. Firstly, and echoing our previous discussions, our cross-sectional dataset allows us to have an impressive sample size clustered in 28 countries, but it does not allow us to directly test for causality between empowerment and political participation. We have discussed (ch. 2.6.5) how causality is debated in the relationship between wellbeing and political engagement. When it comes to

empowerment specifically, to date (and to the author's awareness) no existing studies explicitly test the causal relationship between the sense of empowerment and political participation⁵², yet scholarship has predominantly supposed that participation enhances wellbeing in the broader sense (e.g. Bühlmann, 2016; Dreze and Sen, 2002; Klar and Kasser, 2009). Yet, we argue that it is not straightforward to assume that the occasional political act would have such general effects on the sense of empowerment in the various aspect of life, especially in the common situation where the objective of the political activity is not fulfilled (e.g. voting or campaigning for a candidate that is not elected, or protesting on the streets against a law that is finally enacted). Arguing that political participation precedes the feeling of empowerment, instead of being first and foremost a result from it, has some conceptual weaknesses and ignores the psychological processes that precede the individual's choice to engage in, or abstain from, politics. We therefore subscribe to the view that empowerment is an essential antecedent of political participation, and that any recursive effects, though they may exist and should be empirically tested for whenever possible, still come second in importance to the influence of empowerment in fostering participation in the first place.

Secondly, we have assumed that the level of empowerment stays relatively constant within individuals across a short or medium-term span of time and represent well enough the true level of empowerment of an individual at the time of the field work and when deciding to participate or abstain from political activity. While we cannot empirically test this assumption with the available data, we argue that a stable level of empowerment over a short to medium time span is likely, since changes in the feeling of empowerment are likely to be gradual and not too strongly influenced by short-term events, by contrast to positive and negative emotions that

⁵² Political efficacy is the closest construct to empowerment whose causal relationship with participation has received ample attention in the literature. Political efficacy has been conceived generally as the predictor, but also as the outcome, of political activity (Finkel, 1985; Pollock, 1983). Yet it is important to recall that political efficacy is a narrower concept than empowerment, and thus it cannot be considered as equivalent to it.

tend to be more volatile (see e.g. Diener, 2000). Finally, it is possible that our sample overestimates the occurrence of empowerment among the population, as respondents could be likely to report higher wellbeing during face-to-face interviews (the survey mode of the ESS) than what they actually experience in daily life, due to concerns for social desirability (Richman et al., 1999). It is, likewise, possible that some forms of political activity are over-reported by respondents, such as voting, while other can be underreported, such as protesting (Brady et al., 1995; Karp and Brockington, 2005), also due to the influence of social desirability in surveys. Nevertheless, these potential biases can be attenuated by question wording that aims to normalize non-participation with regards to voting, and normalize participation with regards to protesting (Persson and Solevid, 2014), which is also reflected in the design of the ESS questionnaire. Yet finding new ways of addressing these methodological challenges and, when possible, developing new measures and tools for data production and analysis would be welcome in order to expand the possibilities of empirically testing the relationship between empowerment and political participation.

3.3.5.4 Research implications

The implications of this study are several and important for the discipline and the society at large. Firstly, this study extends on scholarship on the psychological explanations for political participation and shows that the feeling of empowerment is a *key driver* of resource-intensive activities which are, as we suggest, some of the most visible and influential forms of political activity in society. Since empowerment could thereby become a significant political cleavage in society, policy-makers should have an interest in taking concrete measures for the development of an empowered citizenry, e.g. through education that target pupil's personal growth, mastery, autonomy and self-efficacy beliefs already in the formative years, as it could

contribute to reducing political passiveness and increase participation in the most demanding forms of political activities in society. Despite that, as such, empowerment does not emerge as a remedy for the trend of decreasing turnout in many European societies and beyond, politicians who are concerned about the weakening legitimacy of representational democracy and citizen disengagement in politics in general should pay more attention to citizen's feeling of empowerment in order to increase all-round political participation and defend the legitimacy of the political system in the eyes of its citizens.

3.4 Study 4: Life dissatisfaction, attitude-formation and the right-wing populist vote

Chapter summary

While research on populism has traditionally focused on economic conditions and value-change as the main explanation to right-wing populism, we build on this scholarship and link it to subjective wellbeing by showing that economic insecurity fuels a global dissatisfaction with life among the electorate, which in turn favours right-wing populist voting through its influence on political attitudes. Using comparative survey data from 11 countries (N=33'500), collected between 2012-2016, our analysis shows that, regardless of the influence of economic insecurity and value-change, dissatisfaction with life cultivates a right-wing populist vote choice through negative views on immigration, and to some extent, on political distrust and democratic dissatisfaction. By shedding light on how life dissatisfaction affects political preferences, our research extends on scholarship on the psychological drivers of right-wing populism, and underlines that subjective wellbeing is not only a private issue, but also has consequences on political representation, and may even pose a threat to liberal democracy.

3.4.1 Introduction and aim

This final empirical study sheds light on the consequences of low wellbeing, in the form of life dissatisfaction, on the electoral preferences of voters. The literature on right-wing populist voting has so far strongly focused on the economic context (Arzheimer, 2009; Betz, 1993; Kriesi et al., 2006; Oesch, 2008; Rydgren and Ruth, 2013) and changes in societal value-structures (Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990; Kitschelt, 1995; Norris and Inglehart, 2019) as the main explanations for voting for the populist right. Nevertheless, these dominant theories insufficiently address the role of the *individual psychological processes* that shape attitudes and preferences for the populist right. In this study, we contribute to the growing literature on the psychological antecedents of populism (e.g. Mondak and Halperin, 2008; Bakker et al., 2016; Dunn, 2015; Demertzis, 2006; Flecker et al., 2007; Rico et al., 2017) by linking the economic conditions and cultural change in contemporary European democracies to lower life satisfaction, and ultimately, to higher likelihood of voting for the populist right.

We argue that a general and diffuse dissatisfaction with life, which is brought about by economic insecurity and the tensions caused by changing societal value structures, relates to voting for right-wing populist parties (RPP:s) directly and indirectly through political attitude-formation: political distrust, dissatisfaction with democracy, as well as negative views on immigration. Previous research has separately linked subjective economic insecurity (Clark and Oswald, 1996; Easterlin, 1995; Rohde et al., 2016) and inconsistency between personal values and dominant societal values (Li and Bond, 2010; Neto, 1995; Ojeda et al., 2014) with life dissatisfaction and lower wellbeing in general. Likewise, a dissatisfaction with life has been linked to higher political distrust, a dissatisfaction with democracy, and negative views on immigration (Esaiasson et al., 2020; Esses et al., 2001; Hooghe, 2012; McLaren, 2003; Zmerli et al., 2007), three clusters of political attitudes that are widely considered to positively correlate with support for RPP:s (Lucassen and Lubbers, 2012; Mileti and Plomb, 2016; Staerklé and Green, 2018; Green et al., 2016; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2007). Yet, little systematic efforts have been made to consider dissatisfaction with life and the resulting attitudes together *as pathways to RPP support*. This is a clear gap in the existing scholarship on the psychological drivers of right-wing populism, which has heavily focused on personality factors⁵³ (e.g. Mondak and Halperin, 2008; Bakker et al., 2016), emotional reactions (Rico et al., 2017; Salmela and von Scheve, 2017, 2018; Capelos and Katsanidou, 2018) and misinformation (van Kessel et al., 2021; Schultz et al., 2020) in predicting attitudes that are conducive to RPP support, while paying less attention to *how the overall wellbeing of the electorate* relates to these attitudes and to an RPP vote choice.

⁵³ The mechanism that links personality to populist support has been contested by some (e.g. Capelos and Katsanidou, 2018), since personality traits, values and attitudes are not easily distinguishable. This is illustrated in how authoritarianism shares some of the populist core values and attitudes, but without necessarily expressing a desire to break the status quo (Jost et al., 2004). In addition, if low agreeableness would increase populist voting it would mean that countries where populist parties thrive should be composed of less agreeable citizens, which is unlikely and incompatible with the fact that populist parties have been successful across countries and political contexts. (Capelos and Katsanidou, 2018).

This study proposes a holistic framework to explaining right-wing populism by exploring how economic insecurity and having traditional values in the postmodern society provide a fertile ground for a part of the electorate to feel dissatisfied of their lives. By consequence, and as the main objective of this study, we show that a *diffuse and generalized dissatisfaction with life is key* to understanding why a part of the electorate turns to RPP:s in liberal democracies that are affected by the societal changes former scholarship has identified as providing the structural conditions for RPP success. To conclude we discuss the major implications these findings have to understanding contemporary threats to liberal democracies. The empirical evidence for our research is supported by European Social Survey (ESS) data from eleven countries and three rounds between 2012 and 2016.

3.4.2 Right-wing populist voting in the traditional perspective

3.4.2.1 *Defining right-wing populism*

The rise and success of RPP:s in the last few decades continues to intrigue scholars, especially since these parties have become stable parts of the political landscape in many liberal democracies. Populism has been defined by Cas Mudde (2007: 23) as a “thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus the ‘corrupt elite’ ”, further arguing that politics should be about popular sovereignty, i.e. expressing the general will of “the pure people” (Mudde, 2004: 543, 562). Being thin-centred, populism attaches itself to other ideologies that range across the ideological spectrum from left socialism to neoliberalism and right-wing nationalism, making it particularly context-dependent (Akkerman et al., 2014). Meanwhile, the antagonism between

the People and the Others constitutes a sort of *t c k u q p* for populism, irrespective of its other ideological attachments. This antagonism is expressed by the anti-establishment and anti-elite aspects of the populist discourse (Akkermann et al. 2014; Mudde 2004, 2007), and scepticism over the globalization movement (Kriesi et al. 2006; Oesch 2008) or, in the European context, opposition to European integration. Distinct from other populist parties, RPP:s combine populism with *authoritarianism* and *nativism*. Authoritarianism prioritizes security and order in society at the cost of individual freedoms, and advocates conformity and obedience (Altemeyer & Altemeyer, 1996; Feldman, 2003), while nativism defines the in-group in society in terms of a culturally, ethnically and religiously homogeneous people and nation, and considers that states should only be inhabited by the native group and that non-native elements, brought in by immigration and multiculturalism, threaten the nation-state (Higham, 2002).

3.4.2.2 *Weaknesses in the structural theories of RPP voting*

Increasing economic insecurity and the drawbacks of globalization (Betz, 1993; Kriesi et al., 2006; Oesch, 2008; Oesch and Rennwald, 2010), and value-change in society (Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990; Bornschieer and Kriesi, 2012; Kitschelt, 1995; Norris and Inglehart, 2019) are widely recalled explanations to RPP success. The former argues that low-skilled workers vote proportionally more than high-skilled for RPP:s since the structural changes brought about by globalization have made these workers particularly vulnerable in the labour market and have increased their feelings of insecurity and anxiety (Gidron and Hall, 2019). In defending national preference, RPP:s offer a solution to the grievances of low-skilled workers in reducing competition and preserving jobs (Kriesi et al., 2006; Mughan et al., 2003). The second theory focuses on cultural change, i.e. the changing societal value structures that create tensions

between groups of individuals holding traditional values and rejecting this change, and the groups endorsing the transition to postmodern values in society ('cultural backlash') (Norris and Inglehart, 2019; see also discussion in chapter 2.1). Since RPP:s put the defence of national identity and value-conservatism at the forefront of their agenda, these parties appeal to voters who believe that society should be guided by traditional values instead of pluralism, multiculturalism and other postmodern values (Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990; Bornschieer, 2010; Norris and Inglehart, 2019).

Meanwhile, focusing on the economic and cultural factors alone in explaining RPP voting has certain limitations that justify the need to look into additional sources of RPP success. Echoing the earlier discussion on how subjective wellbeing is distinct from objective wellbeing (ch. 2.4.10), socio-economic vulnerability does not necessarily predict perceptions and attitudes (Flecker et al., 2007). By consequence, not all economically vulnerable persons vote for the populist right; what matters more are the individual subjective experiences of the structural conditions they are immersed in (Flecker et al., 2007; Gidron and Hall, 2017; Salmela and von Scheve, 2017). Individuals who translate their experiences of economic insecurity into fear, anxiety, powerlessness and loss of recognition may become particularly receptive to the RPP discourse, meaning that objective socio-economic conditions cannot alone explain RPP support.

Furthermore, the cultural change theory has some limitations in how the mechanism from values to populist support is construed. If we acknowledge that age and generation predict value structures and adherence to traditional values (Inglehart, 1997), we should find more RPP voters among older voters, however the empirical evidence on this is mixed at best (Arzheimer, 2009; Bakker et al., 2016; Rooduijn, 2018). In addition, while RPP voters are generally lower

educated than the voters of other parties, the relationship between education and values is not clear-cut. Education is positively correlated with some aspects of post-modern values, such as inclusivity and tolerance, but the influence of a country's broad cultural and religious heritage on value structures is thought to persist despite increasing education levels (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). It thereby becomes less than straight-forward to claim that support for RPP:s should be stronger in countries where the population structure is aging, and the aggregate level of education is lower. This is further underlined by the fact that RPP:s have been successful in many different countries with varying levels of economic and social development (see e.g. Bohman and Hjerm, 2016; Oesch, 2008), including in welfare states, such as the Nordic countries, which should be more 'resistant' to waves of populism notably due to high levels of social equality. As useful as economic inequality and value-change in society are for explaining the structural conditions in which RPP voting thrives, they do not alone explain well *what is the mechanism* that makes voters turn to RPP:s under these conditions. It is here that life dissatisfaction takes centre stage.

3.4.2.3 *Economic and cultural change foster life dissatisfaction*

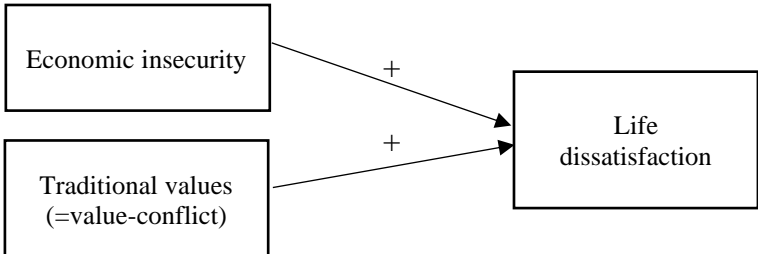
Instead of linking economic and cultural change directly with RPP voting, we argue that the focus should be on *how economic and cultural change create the conditions that influence the voter's wellbeing*, and through that, their political attitudes and party choice. Previous research in the field has associated societal conditions with status anxiety and social marginalization that concerns a part of the electorate, viewing right-wing populism as essentially a problem of the social integration of these groups (Gidron and Hall, 2017, 2019). By arguing that a general dissatisfaction with life is *the key link* that connects societal changes with right-wing populist

success, our study looks beyond concerns for social status and identify right-wing populism as a symptom of the broader cognitive appraisals individuals make about their lives.

When encountered with changes in one’s social environment that an individual perceives as negative, these changes may produce feelings of anxiety and grievances and thus adversely affect subjective wellbeing. Economic insecurity erodes individual life satisfaction (De Cuyper and De Witte, 2007; Grün et al., 2010; Lucas et al., 2004; Oesch and Lipps, 2012) and this influence is thought to be pervasive especially if the experienced insecurity breaches with one’s expectations (De Cuyper and De Witte, 2007). This is arguably the case with workers whose jobs have become more insecure under free trade and economic globalization. It is therefore expected that *economic insecurity is positively associated with life dissatisfaction* (H_{1A}).

Value-shift in society also has bearings on individual life satisfaction. As public discourse in liberal democracies is increasingly under pressure to embrace more postmodern issues and values, such as striving for multiculturalism, the protection of LGBT rights or combatting climate change, persons who adhere to traditional values instead may feel that their opinions and views are becoming increasingly marginalized in public opinion and discourse (e.g. Gidron and Hall, 2019). Research has argued that alienation from dominant societal values and culture is a symptom of social marginalization, fuels dissatisfaction with life and erodes subjective wellbeing (Neto, 1995; Ojeda et al., 2014). We therefore expect that *having traditional values in European democracies is positively associated with life dissatisfaction* (H_{1B}).

Figure 9. Study 4: Sources of life dissatisfaction (H1AB)



3.4.3 Life dissatisfaction and RPP voting

3.4.3.1 *Life dissatisfaction thrives from economic insecurity and value conflict*

We have discussed how economic and cultural change in society provide breeding ground for life dissatisfaction among the economically insecure and culturally and morally conservative electorate (H_{1A} & H_{1B}). Along the reasoning of Gidron and Hall (2017, 2019), we argue that economic and cultural change should not be viewed as competing explanations to populism but as constituting *a joint framework* that influences subjective wellbeing and, through that, the choice to support right-wing populists. With this approach we go beyond explanations of economic and cultural change and *make life dissatisfaction the crucial link* between changes in society and the success of the RPP phenomenon.

As mentioned earlier, the works of Gidron and Hall (2017, 2019) identified status anxiety and social marginalization as the link between structural explanations to RPP success and individual voting behaviour. While anxiety over one's social status is likely correlated with life dissatisfaction, it is conceptually a narrower construct since it essentially stems from the level of respect or esteem people believe they are accorded within the social order (Gidron and Hall, 2017). Life dissatisfaction, on the other hand, encompasses a diffuse and generalized discontent over various aspects of life, also beyond the social respect or esteem people believe they should enjoy in society. In other words, it is possible for people to feel dissatisfied in life even if they feel respected in society or feel anxious about their place in society even if life goes well for them overall. This study thereby takes an even more holistic approach to explaining right-wing populism, as it broadens the definition of the life aspects that are influenced by economic and

cultural change and proposes an encompassing psychological framework that links structural conditions with RPP success.

3.4.3.2 Linking life satisfaction and voting behaviour

We have discussed how subjective wellbeing influences many domains of public life, and explains social behaviour and preferences (Diener et al., 1993; Veenhoven, 2008). Life satisfaction, i.e. a retrospective assessment that persons make by balancing the positive and the negative evaluations about their lives, is a standard indicator of subjective wellbeing in survey research and expresses the evaluative dimension of wellbeing (see ch.2.5.2). It captures a global assessment of one's quality of life, instead of domain-specific aspects of life, and allows individuals to evaluate their satisfaction against a subjective standard, instead of a standard that has been externally imposed (Diener et al., 1985, 2012).

We have also discussed how research has positively associated life satisfaction with electoral turnout (Flavin and Keane, 2011; Liberini et al., 2017; Owen et al., 2008; Radcliff, 2001; Tella and MacCulloch, 2005), and with the functioning of political institutions (Frey and Stutzer, 2010, 2000; Owen et al., 2008; Radcliff, 2001) and with citizen's satisfaction with the output of institutions (Tella and MacCulloch, 2005; Esaiasson et al., 2020), yet less attention has been paid to explaining the influence of subjective wellbeing on the partisan choices of the individual. Despite some evidence of life satisfaction influencing party preferences (Flavin and Keane, 2011; Napier and Jost, 2008) and support for the status quo (Schlenker et al., 2012), to date, no systematic attention has been paid to how life satisfaction influences populist voting. Studies explaining populist support have mostly treated life satisfaction as a factor to control for (e.g. Groshek and Koc-Michalska, 2017; Rooduijn and Burgoon, 2017), while its

independent influence on populist voting has not received the attention it deserves. This is a major gap in current populism scholarship, since it has been demonstrated that poor mental health is related to a lower likelihood of voting for centre-right ('mainstream') parties (Bernardi, 2020) and a higher likelihood to voting against the status quo (Bernardi and Johns, 2020). Considering this, how we feel about our lives likely influences whether or not we choose to support RPP:s at the ballot box.

3.4.3.3 Life satisfaction is a perception of the Self and the Others

Since life satisfaction is a construct based on a self-made standard, it is intrinsically linked to our perceptions, beliefs and attitudes about ourselves and others in society. The notion of self-concept in psychology represents not only our understanding of the current actual self but also representations about the past self and expectations about the future possible selves (Cross and Markus, 1991; Sani, 2008; Strahan and Wilson, 2006). The future selves include both projections of aspirational states as well as representations about what we are afraid of becoming. In this way, how we understand ourselves (the past, the current and the future selves) affects the evaluations we make about the quality of our lives, i.e. our life satisfaction.

3.4.3.4 Dissatisfaction with life triggers negative emotions

Negative emotions, such as anxiety, fear, insecurity and self-disvalue, accompany low life satisfaction and low wellbeing in general (Diener, 1994). Research has underlined the important role of emotions in affecting attitude-formation (e.g. Edwards, 1990; Marcus, 2000; Van Kleef et al., 2015), and negative feelings are thought to make persons more open to changing their predispositions and (political) opinions (Valentino et al., 2008; Brader, 2011; Weber, 2013), as

well as to have less optimistic views about others in society (Schwarz, 2011). By consequence, negative emotions are increasingly recognized as predictors of populist support (Demertzis, 2006; Flecker et al., 2007; Magni, 2017; Rico et al., 2017; Salmela and von Scheve, 2018, 2017), and on the supply side, RPP:s aim to fuel negative emotions among the electorate in an attempt to increase their support (Belanger and Aarts, 2006; Rooduijn et al., 2016; Van der Brug, 2003).

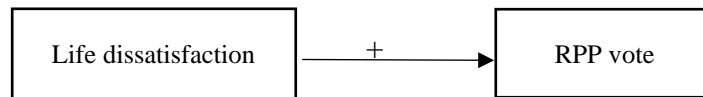
3.4.3.5 Dissatisfaction with life feeds a sentiment of injustice

Following the well-known saying that ‘happiness is relative’, life satisfaction is indeed influenced by how we evaluate our lives compared to others (Veenhoven, 1991a, 2008). In addition to triggering negative emotional responses, life dissatisfaction affects our perceptions about the surrounding society: it influences how we process information and interpretate it. As a result, a feeling of (individual) *relative deprivation*, i.e. the feeling that one is disadvantaged compared to a relevant referent (Smith et al., 2012), and life dissatisfaction are closely related sentiments.⁵⁴ The sense of injustice that relates to life dissatisfaction may motivate individuals to blame elites and outgroups in society for the injustice they perceive, especially if the outgroups and elites are seen as being spared from the risks and insecurities of an increasingly harsh and merciless society, while reaping its benefits and resources (Flecker et al., 2007). Life dissatisfaction and feelings of injustice are also likely to make the idea of popular sovereignty particularly attractive, as populist parties present themselves as a force against established politics and vindicate the return of popular sovereignty. For these reasons, we argue that

⁵⁴ Smith et al. (2012) note four preconditions for relative deprivation: individuals make cognitive comparisons (1), followed by cognitive appraisals that they or their ingroup are disadvantaged (2). Moreover, they perceive these disadvantages as unfair (3) and resent these disadvantages (4).

dissatisfied persons are more likely to support RPP:s because of the negative emotions and perceptions of injustice that accompany low life satisfaction (H₂).

Figure 10. Study 4: Life dissatisfaction to RPP voting; Direct effect (H₂)



3.4.4 The mediating role of political attitudes

We have argued how life dissatisfaction is directly associated with a tendency to vote for RPP:s because of the feelings of injustice and the other negative emotions that accompany dissatisfaction (H₂). Meanwhile, life dissatisfaction also influences political attitudes that are widely considered to be predictive of RPP voting, namely political distrust, dissatisfaction with democracy and negative views on immigration⁵⁵. The mediating role of political attitudes in explaining populist voting has been demonstrated by several studies (Ackermann et al., 2018; Guiso et al., 2017; Kitschelt, 1995; Lucassen and Lubbers, 2012; Van der Brug et al., 2000; Werts et al., 2013) and will be further discussed in the following section.

3.4.4.1 *Political distrust and dissatisfaction with democracy*

While being related attitudes, political distrust and dissatisfaction with democracy express distinct dimensions of the citizen's level of disapproval of the political system. Political trust is an evaluation of whether the political system and its institutions are performing in line or against the citizen's normative expectations (Hetherington, 1998; Miller, 1974), and low levels of

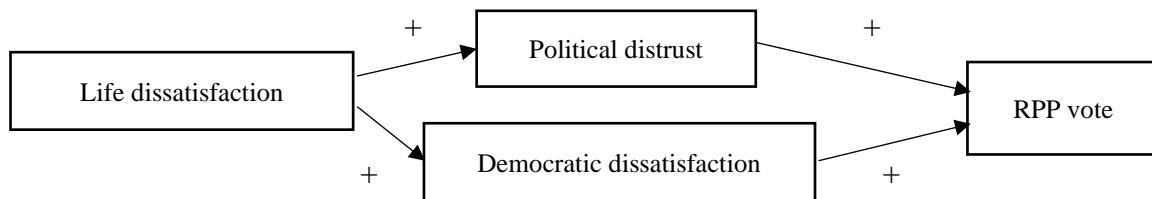
⁵⁵ It is worth noting that in a strict sense, these attitudes do not directly measure populist attitudes as theorized by Akkermann et. al. (2014), but since they are theoretically close to populist attitudes they provide good insight into the mechanism that connects life dissatisfaction to RPP voting.

political trust thus express a disconnect between democratic ideals and perceptions of the actual performance of the political system. On the other hand, satisfaction with democracy (also called 'democratic satisfaction') is an indicator of political support, and it is considered as an evaluation of how democracy works in practice (Linde and Ekman, 2003; Lühiste, 2014), instead of support for democracy as an ideal. Essentially, democratic satisfaction is an evaluation of the efficiency of democratic institutions and the output the political system provides (Thomassen, 2003).

Generally speaking, satisfied citizens tend to be more trusting of others and the democratic institutions (Esaiasson et al., 2020; Zmerli et al., 2007), suggesting that life dissatisfaction erodes political trust. A state of wellbeing, both when measured objectively e.g. through economic prosperity (Inglehart, 2018), or subjectively through life satisfaction (Habibov and Afandi, 2015; Leung et al., 2013; Zmerli et al., 2007), has been positively associated with political trust. Esaiasson et al. (2020) argue that "citizens use their [subjective wellbeing] as an evaluative criterion" (2020: 2) when making a judgement on how the political incumbents and the political system is performing. In the same vein, several studies show that the quality of democracy in a country and democratic satisfaction on the individual-level are associated with wellbeing (Frey and Stutzer, 2000; Hooghe, 2012; Owen et al., 2008; Zmerli et al., 2007). In fact, the penalizing influence of low life satisfaction is considered to have more bearings on political trust and democratic satisfaction than positive changes have (Esaiasson et al., 2020), making life dissatisfaction particularly influential on political attitude-formation. Since RPP voting is, in many ways, a means to express disapproval of the current political establishment ('protest voting' see e.g. Mileti and Plomb, 2016; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2007), the mechanism that links life dissatisfaction with RPP voting through political distrust and dissatisfaction with democracy becomes highly relevant for better understanding the wellbeing

(or rather, ill-being) bases of RPP support. Thus, in addition to a direct relationship (H₂), we argue that there is an *indirect mechanism that links life dissatisfaction with RPP voting through political distrust (H_{3a}) and democratic dissatisfaction (H_{3b})*.

Figure 11. Study 4: Linking life dissatisfaction, political distrust, democratic dissatisfaction and RPP voting (H3AB)

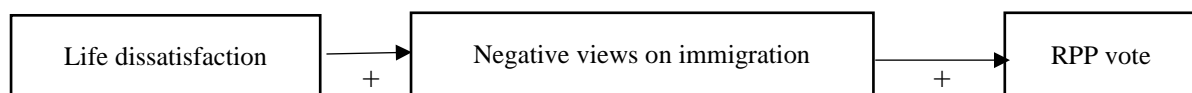


3.4.4.2 Attitudes towards immigration

Views on immigration are among the most widely studied attitudes in relation to RPP voting (Betz, 1994; Rydgren, 2008; Lucassen and Lubbers, 2012; Ivarsflaten, 2008 and many others), and being dissatisfied with life makes a fertile ground for individuals to develop anti-immigrant attitudes and perceive immigration as a threat to wellbeing and a positive social identity. In social identity theory, classifying persons in the out-group reinforces the positive distinctiveness of the in-group (Esses et al., 2001; Tajfel et al., 1979), and the act of limiting opportunities for the out-group in society is one way to reinforce and protect the in-group boundaries (Esses et al., 2001), thus relieving status anxiety (Küpper et al., 2010; Tajfel et al., 1979). Furthermore, dissatisfaction increases a tendency to attribute blame to the out-group for one’s misfortunes (McLaren, 2003). On the supply side, RPP:s promote a representation of the in-group, based on attributes such as nationality, religion or ethnicity, as a “morally superior group” of like-minded citizens, rejecting difference and valuing similarity across citizens (Staerklé and Green, 2018: 431). In this way, the RPP narrative is likely to echo particularly well with dissatisfied persons who, in their fear of “falling” even lower on the “social ladder”,

draw sharp boundaries between themselves and the out-group (Gidron & Hall, 2019: 1034). Therefore, in addition to triggering distrusting attitudes towards politicians and the political establishment, feeling dissatisfied with life is likely to fuel anti-immigrant sentiments among the electorate, as it becomes a way of protecting one's status and social identity, while blaming the outgroup for one's grievances. We therefore argue that there is an *indirect mechanism that links life dissatisfaction with RPP voting through negative views on immigration* (H3c).

Figure 12. Study 4: Linking life dissatisfaction, immigration attitudes and RPP voting (H3C)



3.4.5 Data and methods

3.4.5.1 The sample

Testing our hypotheses on European Social Survey (ESS) data (European Social Survey, 2018c) allows us to use comparative data from various countries collected at three time points. The ESS is a cross-national survey on the attitudes, values and behaviour of the European population. The participants are drawn through a cross-sectional sample from the resident population by using random probability sampling (European Social Survey, 2018a). The survey is conducted using a standardized questionnaire and through face-to-face interviewing. The sample consists of data collected in 11 countries during three consecutive waves of the ESS: round 6 (2012; ESS6), round 7 (2014; ESS7) and round 8 (2016; ESS8), amounting to about 33'500 observations in total⁵⁶. Using a repeated design allows us to increase sample size and

⁵⁶ Sample size by round: ESS6=11'664; ESS7=10'820; ESS8=11'047.

broaden the number of country contexts we analyse, and thus increase the generalizability of the results. Year 2012 (ESS6) was chosen as the starting point for analyses since the country-specific data in earlier rounds often lack sufficient effect sizes of RPP voters to enable multivariate analysis. Only the respondents who report having voted in the last national election in their country are included in the analysis, which excludes persons without the right to vote and absentees from the polling station. A full list of variable codings and question wordings is available in Annex A10.

We selected 11 countries for further analysis: Austria (ESS 7 & 8 only), Switzerland, Denmark (ESS 6 & 7 only), Finland, France, Hungary, Italy (ESS 7 and 8 only) the Netherlands (ESS 7 & 8 only), Norway, the United Kingdom (ESS 7 & 8 only) and Poland. The countries were chosen on both a theoretical and empirical basis: firstly, an RPP party has established itself in the party spectrum of these countries and stood for national elections over the recent years, and secondly, the number of RPP voters is sufficiently high ($N > 100$) in the data in order to increase reliability in multivariate analysis. In addition to estimating the association between life dissatisfaction and RPP voting on the entire sample, we checked the results for robustness by applying the models separately for each country (see Annex A9). This was considered as particularly important in order to avoid pitfalls since significant variation in the party spectra can be expected across political contexts (Hantrais, 1999), but also in the way life satisfaction is evaluated by respondents across cultures (Diener, 2000; Frey & Stutzer, 2010).

3.4.5.2 The key measures

The main dependent variable in our analysis is dichotomized by isolating RPP vote choice in the last national election from voting for any other party. Table 8 lists the parties we identify as

RPP:s for our analysis. The parties have been cross-checked against a party classification developed by a consortium of populism scholars ('The PopuList Project', see Rooduijn et al., 2019).

Table 8. Study 4: RPP:s, by country and year

Country	RPP	RPP vote share in data, %		
		ESS 6	ESS 7	ESS 8
Austria	FPÖ, BZÖ	-	15	19
Denmark	Danish People's Party	9	12	-
Finland	True Finns	13	14	14
France	FN	10	12	12
Hungary	Fidesz, Jobbik, MIEP	71	67	78
Italy	LN, Brothers of Italy	-	-	12
Norway	Progress Party	11	13	10
Poland	Law and Justice, Kukiz '15	32	34	54
Switzerland	SVP	18	20	19
The Netherlands	Party for Freedom	-	8	9
United Kingdom	UKIP	-	7	8
RPP vote share in data, total % per wave		22	18	22

Note: Percentages are unweighted. FPÖ=The Freedom Party of Austria; BZÖ=Alliance for the Future of Austria; FN=Front National; MIEP=Hungarian League; UKIP=UK Independence Party.

While the vote shares for RPP:s (Table 8) vary between 10 and 20 % in most countries in the data and across waves, Poland (32–54%) and Hungary (67–78%) stand out as countries where voters reported significantly higher voting for RPP:s than in other countries in the data. They are also the only post-Communist countries in the sample, and it has been suggested that this shared legacy partly explains the exceptional success of RPP:s in the two countries, due to, *inter alia*, the rapid introduction of market-level mechanisms in the aftermath of socialism, the traditional gender order that is under pressure since the admission of many of these countries in the European Union, a particularly weak civil society and a longing for a strong authoritarian leader and state (Van der Brug and Fennema, 2007; Weyland, 1999; Enyedi, 2020; Szelewa, 2020). In the total sample, the variation is limited with between 18 and 22 % of respondents in each wave reported having cast an RPP vote.

Life dissatisfaction, the key independent variable, is a single-item indicator of subjective wellbeing and is measured by a Likert scale (0-10), which we reverse so that higher scores indicate stronger dissatisfaction. Life satisfaction is a widely-used measure of the evaluative dimension of subjective wellbeing, and it has been found to have high internal consistency and temporal reliability (Diener et al., 1985)⁵⁷. Mean life satisfaction is relatively high in all countries, the overall score being 7.5, while the cross-country variation ranges between 5.7 (Hungary 2012) and 8.6 (Denmark 2012). High mean life satisfaction is not uncommon to self-reported wellbeing in survey data (Diener, 1994; Kozma & Stones, 1987; Cummins, 2003), since survey data is thought to be to some extent influenced by social desirability and self-selection effects. However, the country variation in life satisfaction reflects the existing and sometimes considerable cultural differences in evaluating and understanding subjective wellbeing (Diener, 2000, 2012), and further justifies the need to examine the influence of life satisfaction on party choice on the country-level.

Economic insecurity (objective and subjective) and personal value structures express the economic and cultural conditions that are expected to fuel life dissatisfaction. Economic vulnerability is measured by income levels, which are grouped into low (1-3rd decile), mid-level (4-6th decile), and high income (7th decile and above), while keeping undisclosed income in a separate category, and through subjective economic security, which is measured by how respondents feel about their economic situation (very difficult/difficult/coping/living comfortably). The personal distance from postmodern value structures is measured by a proxy indicator that captures the importance respondents give to selected value statements (*to live in safe and secure surroundings/follow traditions and customs/do what is told and follow*

⁵⁷ Research suggests that the level of life satisfaction stays relatively constant within individuals across a short and medium-term span of time (Diener, 2000). It is therefore reasonable to assume that the level of life satisfaction does not radically change between the moment of casting a ballot and the time of field work.

rules/that government is strong and ensures safety/to behave properly/that people are treated equally and have equal opportunities/to understand different people/to make own decisions and be free/to care for nature and environment). The direction of these opinions was harmonised so that higher scores indicate stronger adherence to traditional values, and lower scores express adherence to postmodern values. The internal consistency of the created index (9 items) is acceptable (Cronbach's α by country: 0.60–0.89; by round $\alpha=0.70$ (ESS6); $\alpha=0.68$ (ESS7); $\alpha=0.69$ (ESS8))⁵⁸.

Three clusters of political attitudes are used to associate life dissatisfaction indirectly with RPP support. Political trust is a composite indicator based on the level of trust respondents report having for the main national political institutions (*ō í q ø score of 0-10 how much you r g t u q p c n n { " v t w u v 0 0 0 0] e q w p v t { _) u "*). The internal consistency of the index (3 items) is very satisfactory (Cronbach's α by country: 0.84–0.92; $\alpha=0.91$ for each round). Satisfaction with democracy is measured by a single item scaling from 0 to 10 (*"on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?"*). The scales of political trust and democratic satisfaction were reversed so that higher scores indicate lower trust or satisfaction. Opposition to immigration is measured through perceptions about the influence of immigration on the economy (*"K v " k u " i g p g t c n n { " d c f " q t " economy that people come to live here from other countries"*), on cultural life (** ð E q w p v t { ø u _ cultural life is in general undermined or enriched by immigrants"*), on the society (*"Immigrants make [country] a worse or better place to live"*). Again, the scaling of the index was reversed so that higher scores indicate stronger opposition to immigration. The internal consistency of the index (3 items) is satisfactory in all countries and rounds (Cronbach's α by country: 0.77–0.89; by round $\alpha=0.85$ (ESS6&8) and $\alpha=0.87$ (ESS7)). In order to minimize the loss of cases,

⁵⁸ The average inter-item correlation situates between 0.18-0.22 for every item, and is thus within the range of acceptable (Clark and Watson, 1995).

the “don’t know” –responses were attributed to the middle value of the life dissatisfaction and the political attitude scales.

3.4.5.3 The covariates

In the analysis we control for the influence of sociodemographic factors (gender, age, education) as well as contextual factors (country fixed-effects and survey year). Gender is included to account for male-female differences in RPP voting (Box-Steffensmeier et al., 2004; Shmotkin, 1990; Spierings and Zaslove, 2017), and age and its squared term to account for life course effects on party choice (Shmotkin, 1990; Tilley, 2002). Education is introduced as a proxy of SES and its influence on partisan identification (Verba et al., 1995; Gallego, 2010), and is measured by a simplified version of the ISCED 2011 standard, regrouped into lower secondary education or less (low), upper secondary education or advanced sub-degree (mid-level) and tertiary education (high)⁵⁹.

3.4.5.4 The method

As a preliminary step to the main analysis, we explore if economic insecurity and value-change fuel life dissatisfaction (H_{1AB}) by means of survey-bias corrected OLS regression. In doing that, we control for sociodemographic factors (gender, age and education) as well as country and survey year fixed-effects. In order to accomplish the main purpose of our study – to test the influence of life dissatisfaction on RPP voting – we estimate the direct link (H_2) by applying survey-bias corrected logit regressions for the aggregate sample as well as separately by

⁵⁹ Less than 0.5 % of respondents declare having an “other” level of education. Due to the low effect size these cases are regrouped into the middle education category.

country. The models estimating a direct effect control for sociodemographic factors (gender, age and education), survey year, the influence of economic insecurity (objective and subjective) and the respondent's distance from postmodern values (i.e. having traditional values). Doing so helps us identify the independent influence of dissatisfaction on RPP voting without the risk of confounding it with the influence of economic insecurity and values on RPP support.

For testing the indirect effect (H_{3ABC}), we conduct a mediation analysis using the PROCESS-macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (2017). In its simplest form, mediation occurs when the influence of an independent variable (X) affects a dependent variable (Y) through a mediator variable (M). PROCESS allows for estimating mediation effects through several mediators simultaneously (model 4 in PROCESS v.3.4), allowing us to compare the relative strength of the different mediators (Hayes, 2012)⁶⁰. PROCESS also enables estimating indirect effects in binary dependent variables while controlling for the influence of covariates in the model, thus increasing robustness of the results compared to alternative modelling strategies.

3.4.6 Empirical results and discussion

3.4.6.1 Bivariate relationships

Preliminary analysis of the data shows, as we expected, that the economic context matters for life satisfaction; with higher income levels ($\rho = -.12$) and economic security ($\rho = -.41$), persons are significantly less dissatisfied with their lives. We also find a significant positive correlation between adherence to traditional values and dissatisfaction, although the correlation is much weaker in magnitude ($\rho = .04$). When it comes to linking life dissatisfaction with RPP support,

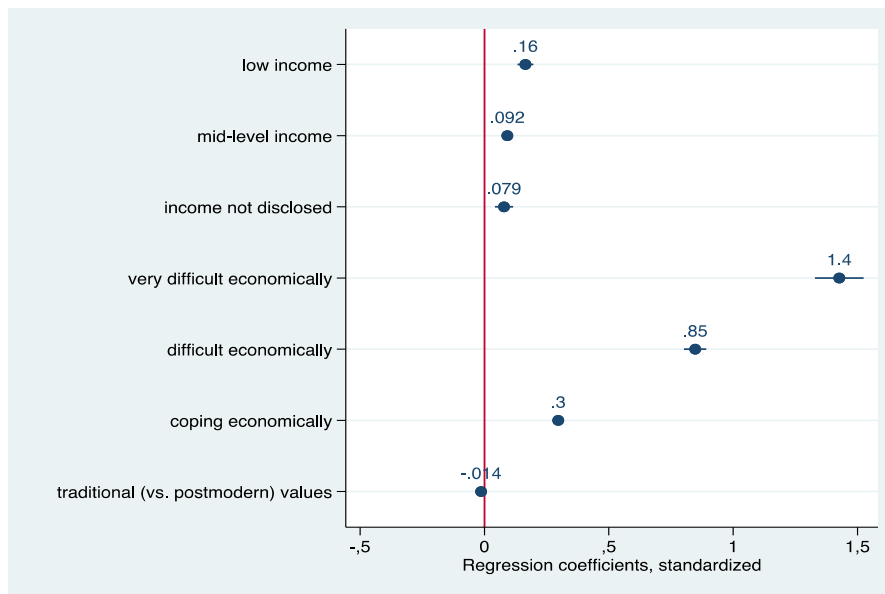
⁶⁰ The model was also tested separately for each attitude (mediator), which did not substantially alter the results.

the data show a significant association ($X^2= 663.3$, $p<0.001$). We can also observe that, while RPP parties receive less support compared to support for any other party across the dissatisfaction scale, dissatisfied persons vote more for RPP:s within the most dissatisfied decile of voters (31 %), while these voters make up only 19 % of the most satisfied decile of voters. These results prepare the terrain for examining the multivariate relationship between dissatisfaction and RPP support in the upcoming analyses.

3.4.6.2 Economic insecurity, value structures and life dissatisfaction

Before assessing the influence of dissatisfaction on vote choice, we explore whether our expectations concerning economic insecurity and value conflict as antecedents of life dissatisfaction are supported in the data. Figure 13 below illustrates the influence of these predictors on dissatisfaction. The coefficients are retrieved from the OLS regression models and full estimates of these models are available in Annex A8.

Figure 13. Study 4: The influence of economic insecurity and traditional values on life dissatisfaction, all countries



Note: Coefficients are standardized. Reference categories: high income (objective economic insecurity), living comfortably (subjective economic insecurity). Survey weights are applied to the models. Control variables are omitted; full results are listed in Annex A80 " P ? 5 4 2 0 25. ; 0 " T

The results in Figure 13 not only show how strongly economic insecurity and values influence life dissatisfaction, but notably highlight that economic vulnerability takes precedence in magnitude over traditional values in relation to life dissatisfaction. It is also worth noting that in associating economic conditions with life dissatisfaction, the relationship is more strongly driven by subjective economic insecurity than by actual earnings (objective economic insecurity), indicating, in accordance with earlier research, that perceptions of one's economic situation matter more for subjective wellbeing than having more money (Diener et al., 1993; Easterlin, 1995). What is striking in the analysis is that traditional values are, overall, negatively associated with life dissatisfaction ($\beta = -.014$, $SE = .005$, $p < 0.01$), as opposed to our expectations (H_{1B}). Meanwhile, these results reflect a line of research that associates conservatism with higher reported life satisfaction and happiness, due to the transcendent moral principles and rationalization of injustice and inequalities that accompany conservative views (Napier and Jost, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2012). By consequence, based on the ESS data we cannot conclude

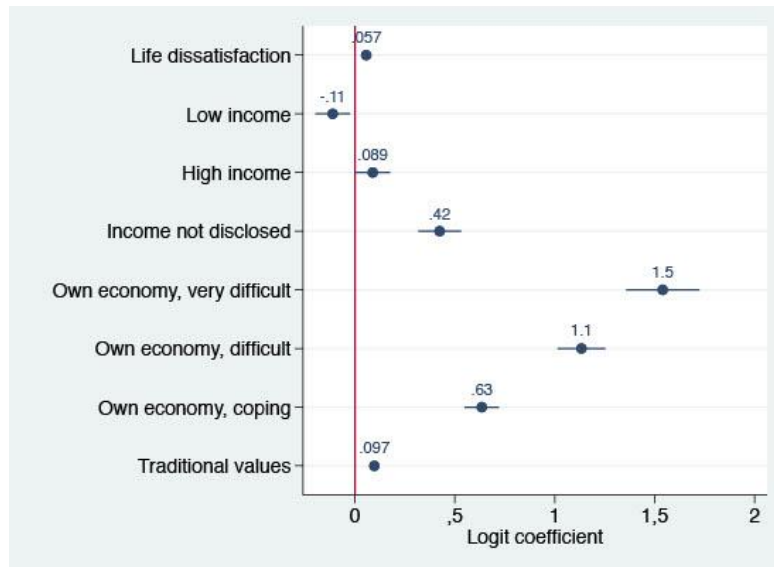
that subscribing to traditional values in today's societies would be associated with lower life satisfaction, irrespective of the country context⁶¹. Meanwhile, since our measure of the respondent's distance from postmodern values is only a proxy of one's position vis-à-vis dominant societal value structures, it may have some drawbacks in expressing value conflict, especially considering that societies may, even on the European level, differ in terms of how dominant postmodern value structures have so far become compared to traditional values. Comparative investigation, outside the focus of this study, on the relationship between values and dissatisfaction with life would therefore be welcomed to better understand in which contexts do societal value-structures become breeding ground for low life satisfaction among the morally and culturally conservative citizens.

3.4.6.3 Direct effects

After showing that economic insecurity is correlated with life dissatisfaction (H_{1A}), we move on to the main aim of this study, which is to clarify the link between life dissatisfaction and an RPP vote. Figure 14 below shows the change in log odds of voting for right-wing populists as a result of life dissatisfaction, compared to the influences of economic insecurity and values. The odds coefficients are retrieved from a logit regression model that is fully available in Annex A9.

⁶¹ The model controls for country fixed-effects.

Figure 14. Study 4: Direct effect on RPP voting, all countries



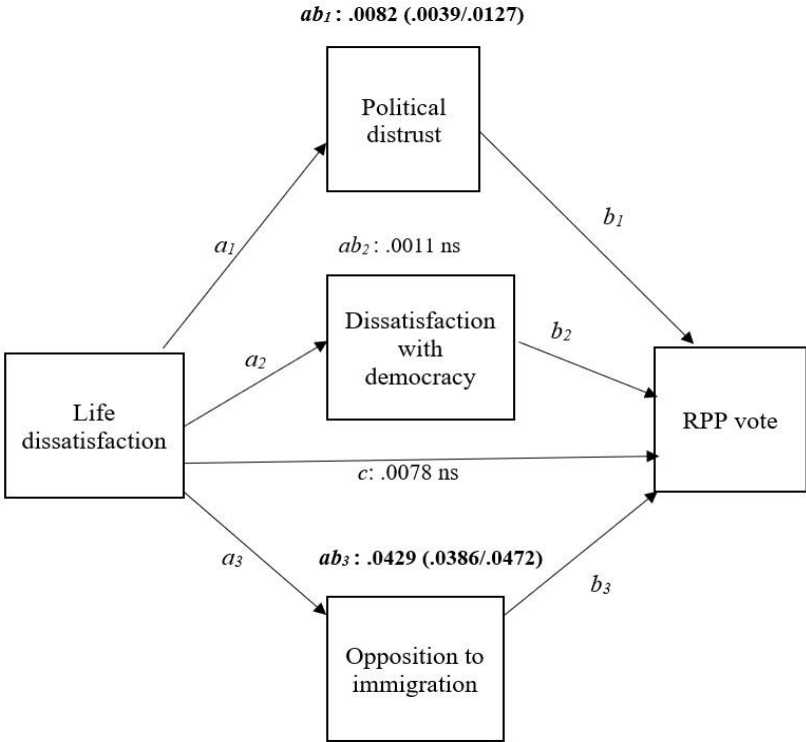
Note: Only life dissatisfaction, economic variables and values are displayed. Results are weighted. Full results are available in Annex A90 " P 384. ;R²>0.10.

Aligning with the expectations in H₂, the change in log odds of casting a vote for an RPP, attributable to a decrease in life satisfaction, is positive and significant (B=.057, SE=.008, p<0.001), even when controlling, notably, for the influence of the personal economic situation and adherence to traditional values. Despite suggesting that life dissatisfaction is meaningfully linked with RPP voting, given that we do not account here for the influence of the three plausible mediators of the relationship. i.e. political distrust, dissatisfaction with democracy, and negative attitudes on immigration, it is worth looking beyond the direct relationship and into an indirect mechanism that could stand behind the positive association between life dissatisfaction and RPP voting. In other words, the influence of life dissatisfaction on an RPP vote choice could be, partially or fully, mediated through political attitude-formation.

3.4.6.4 Indirect effects

Figure 15 illustrates the hypothesized path connecting life dissatisfaction with political attitudes and eventually with RPP voting (H_{3a} to H_{3c}) and reports the results of the mediation analysis on the country-aggregate sample⁶². The indirect effects are calculated as a product of the effect of life dissatisfaction (X) on each of the three political attitudes (M1-M3), and the effects of these attitudes (M1-M3) on RPP voting (Y), while controlling for life dissatisfaction (X)⁶³. Whenever the confidence interval for the indirect effect is statistically different from zero, we conclude that an indirect effect exists and that life dissatisfaction (X) influences vote choice (Y) through one of the political attitudes.

Figure 15. Study 4: Direct and indirect effect of life dissatisfaction on RPP voting, entire sample



P q v g < " P ? 4 ; ø 5 4 9 0 " c d ? k p f k t g e v " g h h g -eds métrik. ns= kot siggnificánt.g h h g e v 0 ' Monte Carlo confidence intervals (95%) are shown in brackets.

⁶² Results of the mediation analysis are unweighted since survey weights are not available for PROCESS. As a robustness check, we ran the logit regression model (Annex A9) with and without weighting. This operation did not alter the substantive conclusions of the models.

⁶³ The significance of the indirect effects are estimated using Monte Carlo confidence intervals (95%), which have been found to be a viable alternative to the computationally-intensive bootstrap method and performing better than the common Delta-method for confidence interval construction (Preacher and Selig, 2012).

Figure 15 illustrates the more refined mechanism that connects life dissatisfaction to RPP support than what could be found by examining the direct relationship. Indicating support for H_{3a} and H_{3c} , Figure 15 indicates that *life dissatisfaction influences an RPP vote choice indirectly through political attitude-formation*, namely through political distrust ($ab_1 = .0082$) and negative views on immigration ($ab_3 = .0429$). The pairwise difference ($ab_1 - ab_3 = -.0346$) between the specific indirect effects reveal that, when taken in isolation, immigration attitudes are more important in mediating the relationship than political distrust. In other words, *the influence of dissatisfaction stems primarily through immigration attitudes*, reflecting the salience of these attitudes for RPP vote choice (e.g. Betz, 1994; Van der Brug et al., 2000; Lucassen and Lubbers, 2012; Rydgren, 2008; Green et al., 2016), but also how life dissatisfaction fuels the development of these attitudes (McLaren, 2003; Mutz, 2007).

We find no significant effect of life dissatisfaction stemming through democratic dissatisfaction in the aggregate data. In other words, life dissatisfaction seems to fuel right-wing populist support fully through distrust towards the political elite and resentment towards outgroups in society, and when we control for these attitudes, *democratic dissatisfaction has little bearings on this relationship*. Most importantly, when taking into account political attitude-formation, the significance of the hypothesized direct effect (H_2) of life dissatisfaction on RPP voting, illustrated in Figure 14, disappears. These results strongly indicate that the relationship between life dissatisfaction and RPP voting is *fully mediated through political distrust and negative views on immigration*. The results on the country-level (Table 9 below) broadly reflect the tendencies found in the aggregate sample.

Table 9. Study 4: Direct and indirect effects of life dissatisfaction on RPP voting, by country

Country	N	R2 (MacFadden)	Direct effect of life dissatisfaction	Indirect effect of life dissatisfaction		
				Political distrust	Dissatisfaction with democracy	Opposition to immigration
Austria	2'387	.24	ns	ns	.0267 (.0143/.0407)	ns
Denmark	2'415	.22	ns	.0134 (.0029/.0264)	ns	.0392 (.0129/.0664)
Finland	4'099	.18	ns	.0473 (.0316/.0644)	.0288 (.0109/.0467)	.0440 (.0307/.0589)
France	3'287	.23	ns	ns	ns	.0626 (.0456/.0811)
Hungary	2'494	.19	ns	ns	-.1386 (-.1676/-.1122)	.0201 (.0110/.0303)
Italy	1'366	.12	ns	ns	ns	.0385 (.0181/.0634)
Netherlands	2'411	.26	ns	.0489 (.0258/.0746)	.0259 (.0038/.0494)	.0362 (.0187/.0571)
Norway	3'369	.19	ns	.0166 (.0058/.0286)	ns	.0428 (.0256/.0615)
Poland	2'744	.11	ns	-.0102 (-.0182/-.0031)	ns	.0170 (.0098/.0250)
Switzerland	2'111	.18	ns	ns	.0192 (.0016/.0374)	.0401 (.0164/.0649)
United Kingdom	2'644	.14	ns	.0219 (.0070/.0384)	.0198 (.0011/.0388)	.0357 (.0212/.0525)

Note: Coefficients are in a log-odds metric. ns= not significant. Monte Carlo confidence intervals (95%) are shown in brackets.

The strong evidence about the salience of immigration attitudes across countries and cultural, institutional and political contexts suggests that it is a *key mechanism* through which life dissatisfaction fuels support for RPP:s, even when controlling for socio-demographics, political attitudes, economic insecurity and personal values. The evidence of mediation on the country level is less pronounced for political distrust (H_{3a}) or dissatisfaction with democracy (H_{3b}); both significantly mediate the effect of life dissatisfaction in only about half of the countries tested. While many explanations to this variation are possible, one reason could go back to the differences in strength of RPP:s on the country-level. Since RPP:s have accessed parliament and even the government in a number of the countries under analysis, could supporting RPP:s have become an expression of incumbent approval and belief in the legitimacy of the political institutions, or even ‘mainstream’ voting, in some contexts? This could be especially the case in Poland and Hungary, where the mediation is negative, suggesting that in these two countries, RPP voters are more satisfied about democracy and trusting in politicians and the institutions than other voters. These curious results could be related not only to the shared post-Communist

legacy that has often been evoked to explain why RPP:s are so successful in these countries (e.g. Enyedi, 2020; Szelewa, 2020), but also to the position that RPP:s have held as government incumbents in these countries in recent years. It raises the question whether Polish and Hungarian RPP voters could be more satisfied and trusting because their preferred parties are in power since a while back? Although the data does not allow us to test the stability of life dissatisfaction in its relationship to RPP support, it is certainly a possibility. However, keeping in mind that also the direct association between life dissatisfaction and RPP voting in these countries is negative, meaning that more satisfied persons vote more for RPP:s (although the relationship is not statistically significant in Poland), it raises the possibility of the mediation being inconsistent (MacKinnon et al., 2007) and thereby should not be interpreted as such.

3.4.6.5 Dissatisfaction fuels RPP support through attitude-formation

Summarizing our analysis, we find that life dissatisfaction is *a missing link* between economic insecurity, attitude-formation, notably about immigration, and support for right-wing populism across many contemporary European democracies. Our conclusions reflect the findings of several earlier studies that underline the persistent role of anti-immigrant attitudes in predicting RPP support (e.g. Betz, 1994; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Lucassen and Lubbers, 2012; Rydgren, 2008), but also the relevance of political distrust and democratic dissatisfaction (Guiso et al., 2017; Mileti and Plomb, 2016; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2007) in this relationship, depending on the country context and possibly whether or not RPP:s are in power, which could explain why distrust in elites and the establishment, and democratic dissatisfaction, have in some contexts little bearings in the relationship. Notably, the results show *how life dissatisfaction is a source for the development of key political attitudes* (McLaren, 2003; Mutz, 2007; Zmerli et al., 2007; Hooghe, 2012; Esaiasson et al., 2020) that are conducive to RPP support, thereby underlining

its salience for better understanding the psychological drivers of RPP voting beyond the findings of earlier scholarship in the field.

Overall, our study suggests that RPP support has its foundations in a deep and generalized dissatisfaction with life that has likely been building up for a while among a part of the electorate in the context of the deep-rooted economic and societal changes, and that this discontent is mirrored in people's perceptions and attitudes about themselves and others in society. When people are not feeling well about their lives, these grievances are likely to shape their political attitudes, and ultimately be transmitted to their partisan preferences. Discontent has been identified as a driver of populist voting by many scholars (Elchardus and Spruyt, 2016; Gidron and Hall, 2019; Oesch, 2008; Rooduijn et al., 2016 and others) however our study makes a unique contribution to the literature by identifying this discontent to stem from a general dissatisfaction with life and a lower overall wellbeing of voters. We therefore call for more systematic consideration of voter wellbeing in future research aiming to unveil the psychological underpinnings of RPP success.

3.4.6.6 Causality issues

We have argued that life dissatisfaction and attitudes influence RPP vote choice, yet other studies have claimed that populist voters are equally likely to adopt the attitudes that their parties represent (Harteveld et al., 2017; Rooduijn et al., 2016; Van der Brug, 2003). While reciprocal effects may very well exist between attitudes and party support, considering the long-standing theories of issue positions influencing vote choice (Carmines and Stimson, 1980; Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989; Mauerer et al., 2015; Lachat, 2014), we argue that prior attitudes and preferences remain key to understanding vote choice in general and RPP support

in particular (e.g. Belanger and Aarts, 2006; Lucassen and Lubbers, 2012; Norris and Inglehart, 2019). Future studies should, however, explore the potential circular effects between life dissatisfaction, attitudes and populist voting whenever the research design allows for it.

3.4.6.7 Limitations

Our empirical analysis has a few limitations that deserve to be addressed. Firstly, the cross-sectional design of our study enables us to compare across political contexts, yet the usual limitations in drawing causal conclusions remain. These limitations extend to mediation analysis, and the results of this study shall not be understood as a proof of a causal chain where life dissatisfaction precedes RPP voting through attitudes, but instead should be considered as an empirical indication of a decomposed effect between direct and indirect effects in the correlation between these variables (Fiedler et al., 2011). On this note, endeavours to collect comparative panel data or design experimental studies on wellbeing, attitudes and vote choice would constitute a desirable future direction for research in the field.

Secondly, it is important to recall the potential influence of self-selection in the sample. Persons with lower life satisfaction may be less willing to participate in social surveys, and in addition, populist and radical party voters are often underrepresented in surveys (Hooghe and Reeskens, 2007), affecting the characteristics of the sample. Likewise, the residual influence of social desirability cannot be ignored when using survey data on wellbeing and political opinions, although research has suggested that any overreporting of life satisfaction could be less severe in face-to-face interviews (Dolan and Kavetsos, 2016). While the influences of social desirability and self-selection should be kept in mind, self-reporting is still arguably among the best methods available to understand on a large scale how voters' wellbeing affects their attitudes and political preferences.

3.4.7 Conclusions and research implications

The proposed subjective wellbeing–perspective to explaining RPP voting finds its origins in the traditional explanations to right-wing populism that stem from the economic and cultural changes in established democracies, while also proposing an integrative psychological framework to understanding what makes the right-wing populist message so appealing to some voters. Explaining right-wing populism from a life dissatisfaction perspective has implications both on a theoretical level and from a policy perspective. For scholarship, our research shows that subjective wellbeing and the resulting political attitudes are essential for understanding the success of RPP:s beyond the psychological explanations to RPP voting provided by previous research in the field (e.g. Elchardus and Spruyt, 2016; Gidron and Hall, 2019, 2017; Rooduijn et al., 2016; Mondak and Halperin, 2008; Bakker et al., 2016). Moreover, by linking the traditional structural predictors of RPP voting with lower life satisfaction, and highlighting the essential role played by life dissatisfaction in influencing information-processing and attitude-formation, and ultimately explaining preferences for the populist right, this research calls for more attention to life dissatisfaction and the voter’s wellbeing overall in future research endeavours that aim to unveil how the structural and psychological explanations to RPP success come together under one, integrative framework.

On the policy level, the recognition that life dissatisfaction influences vote choice has implications on how policymakers should think about subjective wellbeing, making it a matter with consequences for political representation and policy-making in society, and *perhaps for the future of liberal democracy as a whole*. Thus, politicians who are concerned about the surge of right-wing populism in many liberal democracies, as well as a growing distrust and

disenchantment over political institutions and the establishment, and harshening attitudes towards outgroups in society, should pay more attention to targeting citizen's life satisfaction in their policies in order to increase the legitimacy of established party systems and preserve liberal democracy as the foundation of modern European societies. The importance of the linkages between wellbeing, attitudes and RPP vote choice large thus becomes paramount for the society at large.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Subjective wellbeing and its linkages to political outcomes: a summary

Through the four empirical studies of this thesis, we have shed light on the multiple avenues through which subjective wellbeing influences political attitudes and behaviour. Our research shows that *the subjective dimension of wellbeing matters*, not only for the decision to actually participate in politics, but also for the development of political efficacy, an essential politico-psychological orientation that precedes the choice to participate, as well as for the political choices the participating citizen makes at the ballot box.

Firstly, we have shown how *social support, pertaining to the social dimension of wellbeing, increases a sense of political efficacy among Swiss female citizens* (Study 1). The evidence was drawn from investigating intra-individual trajectories in social support and efficacy beliefs using Swiss panel data, and the results indicate that the emotional type of social support is more influential for the development of political efficacy among women than several socially-oriented core predictors of political engagement, including social participation, active associational involvement, or social trust. These results not only shed further light on where political efficacy comes from, which is a subject that has not received enough attention in scholarship, but also reflect how social support functions differently for women and men in terms of creating politically efficacious citizens. The results also imply that social support could be extremely useful as a resource of targeted public policies and education initiatives aiming at encouraging women's political involvement and alleviating gender inequalities in political engagement.

Secondly, we have shown that subjective wellbeing positively influences resource-intensive political activity (Study 3) and increases intentions of protest participation (Study 2). By examining individual change in wellbeing and political participation among the Swiss citizenry, we show that, while life satisfaction is not significantly related to participation, low emotional wellbeing increases intentions of protest participation. In other words, *low emotional wellbeing seems to become a catalyst for protest intentions*, and conversely, that feeling well emotionally decreases the willingness to engage in contentious political action. In this way, our findings converge with grievances theories of contentious political action, while emphasizing the salience of considering protest participation as a result of a low emotional wellbeing overall instead of a reaction to specific negative emotions.

Moreover, taking a cross-European perspective across old and new democracies, we find that a sense of empowerment, which pertains to the eudemonic dimension of wellbeing, is positively linked to resource-intensive political activities in the form of contacting, campaign activity and political protest. In other words, *feeling empowered relates positively to participation in the most demanding forms of political activity*. In addition, we find that the relationship between empowerment and political activity depends to a certain extent on the country's history of democracy; whereas empowerment seems *to reinforce the traditional inequalities between old and new democracies regarding citizens' participation in political protest, it may serve to alleviate them for the purpose of political consumerism*. The emotional and eudemonic dimensions of subjective wellbeing thereby reveal to be crucial for the purposes of political engagement beyond electoral participation, and much more so than life satisfaction that research has conventionally associated with political participation.

Thirdly, we have shed light on the relevance of subjective wellbeing on the choices the politically-active citizen makes at the ballot box (Study 4). By examining the influence of low life satisfaction on an RPP vote choice across several European democracies, we showed that *life dissatisfaction, which thrives from economic insecurity, fuels a right-wing populist vote indirectly through political attitude-formation*. These attitudes include notably a hostility to immigration, but also, to a certain degree, a political distrust and democratic dissatisfaction. By considering RPP success from a wellbeing perspective, this research has suggested that widespread life dissatisfaction among the electorate could have deep implications on political representation and policy-making in Europe and constitute a threat for the future of liberal democracies.

4.2 Different dimensions of wellbeing have distinct political outcomes

Throughout this thesis, we have shown how the influence of subjective wellbeing *extends to all stages of the formation of the political citizen*: it shapes political attitudes and orientations, influences participation in manifest political activities and guides the political choices of the citizen at the ballot box. However, there is variation in the influence and the preponderance of each wellbeing dimension in relation to these political outcomes. Social wellbeing emerges, in the form of social support, as a powerful predictor of women's political efficacy beliefs and is thereby revealed as being highly relevant for women's pre-political engagement, which could potentially turn into manifest participation. By contrast, emotional and eudemonic wellbeing emerge as powerful determinants of protest intentions and resource-intensive activities respectively. Strikingly, evaluative wellbeing, i.e. life satisfaction, does not appear to be a predictor of participation in political activities, thereby challenging previous participation research that has been particularly attached to using life satisfaction or overall happiness as the

only indicators of subjective wellbeing. Life satisfaction may not be helpful for unveiling what makes people participate to begin with, yet its merits lie in informing us about the wellbeing-bases of the (right-wing populist) vote choice. The lesson to learn is that the *multidimensionality of subjective wellbeing truly matters*, not only from a conceptual perspective but also because the different dimensions of wellbeing interfere at different stages of the development of the political citizen and have distinct consequences on individual political attitudes and behaviour. This thesis therefore calls for future research that is interested in the political consequences of wellbeing to focus more systematically and holistically, not only on life satisfaction, but equally much on the socially-oriented indicators of wellbeing, on a person's everyday emotional experiences, as well as on the underlying psychological needs that make individuals live a full life, in order to better understand the psychological drivers of the political citizen.

4.3 Political engagement is a consequence of wellbeing

Recalling the debate about the causes and consequences of political engagement, this research has brought a significant contribution to the understanding of causality in the relationship. Using panel data in studies 1 and 2, we explored the causal relationship between subjective wellbeing, political efficacy and political engagement in Switzerland. After critically discussing the conventional wisdom that political participation should enhance wellbeing, we empirically explored causality in the data and concluded that the relationship is likely to be recursive, meaning that negative emotions fuel protest intentions, and these intentions trigger negative emotions in their turn. Nonetheless, that data indicated, albeit cautiously, that *low emotional wellbeing first and foremost precedes and increases protest intentions*. We found similar results for social support, which emerged *primarily as the cause* of women's political efficacy beliefs. Taking into account both the evidence in the data, as well as the conceptually solid reasons to

view subjective wellbeing as an instigator of political attitudes and behaviour, this research calls for future scholarship to revisit the conventional assumptions regarding the relationship between wellbeing and political engagement, and more systematically consider subjective wellbeing as a *building block* of the politically-engaged citizen, thus further underlining the relevance of wellbeing for political science.

4.4 Social support is key to closing the gender gap in politics

The consequences of subjective wellbeing for the development of women's political efficacy beliefs is primary avenue through which wellbeing shapes politically engaged citizens. Moreover, considering that political efficacy is a key predictor of actual political participation, it emphasizes the role of social support as a *resource for y q o g p r e p o l i t i c a l e n g a g e m e n t*, and plausibly also for later manifest political activity. The gendered impact of the social dimension of wellbeing on the development of the politically efficacious citizen is a major finding of this research with potential profound consequences for alleviating gender inequality in politics. Through its effect on women's pre-political engagement, social support can become the solution for further integrating and mobilizing women into participation in democratic decision-making processes, and thereby contributing to *narrowing down the gender gap* that persists to this day in many established democracies. Concretely this could be done by targeted action, such as promoting social support practices in education, by preference already during formative years, as well as through strengthening existing structures in society that combat social isolation among female populations. Actions such as these could alleviate gender inequalities and combat stereotypes about women's political involvement, and ultimately have the potential to reduce women's disadvantage in developing their sense of political efficacy

over the life course and encourage their participation in political life. In this way, social support could indeed hold the key to the development of a more politically-engaged female citizenry.

4.5 A wellbeing gap in political science

Throughout this research, we have interrogated whether a wellbeing gap exists in political science and whether this gap could extend to participation patterns in society, giving rise to a wellbeing bias in European democracies. The outcomes of this research indicate the affirmative; it is, indeed, salient to speak about a wellbeing gap in the discipline, and that this gap can effectively bring about issues that challenge the democratic functioning of societies and moreover, explain threats to liberal democracy.

For political science, subjective wellbeing serves as an important extension to traditional models of political engagement, and the CVM with its focus on objective resources in particular. While the CVM explains unequal participation and variation in political attitudes and party preferences through the lens of individual objective characteristics and resources, bringing in subjective wellbeing adds another layer into this model and shows that *subjective resources equally matter*, independently from objective resources, for the development of the political citizen and the partisan preferences they hold, and that these subjective resources cannot be explained through objective resources alone. In addition, explaining political activity and attitudes from a subjective wellbeing framework successfully builds on the emerging scholarship around the psychological drivers of political behaviour and attitudes, as well as the literature in health and politics, by proposing to explain wellbeing as state of mind that does not only stem from an absence of ill-being, from stable personality factors, or volatile emotional reactions, but instead holistically explains who we are, what we do, and how we think about

politics. In this way, this research brings an important contribution to the discipline, notably from the point of view of strengthening the role that is given in political science to the psychological drivers of political attitudes and behaviour.

From the societal perspective, this research suggests that a wellbeing bias in democratic decision-making may very well be at stake. Considering that political participation entails much more than merely voting at elections, subjective wellbeing becomes a *cleavage* that divides the population with regards to campaigning, contacting and protesting, which we identified as high-initiative, high-investment types of political activity. Sceptics could claim that these activities only attract a minor part of the citizenry in most societies, making a wellbeing gap in terms of these activities less problematic for the functioning of democracy than the number of absentees from the polling station. However, given the high visibility of resource-intensive political activities, especially political campaigning and protesting in public, there are strong grounds to refute such claims. To the contrary, resource-intensive participation are among the most visible forms of political activity, thereby having a high potential of influencing public opinion and inducing debate in society greatly beyond the circles and networks of persons who actually take part in the activities. In other words, the political demands and concerns of empowered citizens, who also take more part in the most demanding and visible forms of political activities, are arguably more likely to be heard and gain political momentum in democratic societies than the preferences of less-empowered, less-active citizens. From this perspective, empowerment differences and the unequal participation they bring about in society become problematic from the point of view of democratic inclusion in society, and even potentially gives rise to a wellbeing bias in the policies that are adopted in democratic societies.

But what does this 'empowerment gap' concretely mean for the functioning of democracies?

Firstly, it *encompasses* the political inequalities that are created by unequal access to the objective resources for participation. In practical terms, this entails that the less empowered part of the population is less likely to campaign for their political causes, reach out to politicians or government incumbents with their demands, or voice their concerns through political protest. Secondly, as a consequence, unequal participation between empowered and less empowered citizens contributes to deepening the existing cleavages among groups in society with regards to their integration into political decision-making, and risk making the preferences of less empowered individuals overlooked in political decision-making. An unequal political influence between empowered and less empowered citizens becomes even more problematic if the less empowered citizens systematically hold different political preferences than their more empowered peers, possibly engendering a bias in political decision-making, similarly to how physical health inequalities risk engendering a health bias in politics. In other words, a wellbeing gap in political participation could *potentially bias policies* to the benefit of the empowered part of the population, and risk further contributing to the political and social inequality in societies. Policy-makers should therefore have an interest in taking concrete measures for the development of an empowered citizenry, e.g. through education that target and promote students' personal growth, mastery, autonomy and self-efficacy beliefs already in the formative years, as it could contribute to reducing political passiveness and disengagement, cultivate a politically engaged citizenry and thus by extension strengthen the legitimacy of representational democracy in the eyes of the citizens. Political scientists as well as policy-makers should therefore be highly concerned with the potentially profound consequences of a wellbeing gap in political decision-making in democratic societies.

4.6 Is emotional wellbeing the key to democratic stability?

In addition to shedding light on how empowerment differences may induce political inequality, our research reveals the profound consequences that ill-being may have on the stability of democracies. Since negative emotions predict citizen's willingness to take on contentious political action, low emotional wellbeing could indeed become a *significant driver* of political protest, given that the intentions turn into actual behaviour. It therefore raises the question as to whether the current waves of political protest that are sweeping over many established democracies in Europe and beyond, such as the Yellow Vests movement in France, the Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the USA and Europe, or the many national protest movements that contest current political incumbents in various nations, be *traced back to an generalized malaise* among the population? This is significant, considering that the overall higher levels of prosperity of established democracies have not diminished the occurrence of political protest, but rather to the contrary, protest movements are flourishing. It furthermore makes us speculate whether the waves of political protest that we are currently witnessing are symptomatic of widespread grievances and low emotional wellbeing among the population in Europe. *Could low emotional wellbeing become a threat to democratic stability?* And conversely, could a high level of emotional wellbeing among the population be key to preserving stable democracies? Thinking of low emotional wellbeing as a catalyst for political protests raises these essential questions that concern the support and functioning of democracy, and emphasizes the relevance of wellbeing for the discipline as well as for the future of democracy in general.

4.7 Is life dissatisfaction a threat to liberal democracy?

Finally, in addition to affecting pre-political attitudes and actual political participation, subjective wellbeing influences the voter's electoral choices, thereby extending its influence to political representation and policy-making in electoral democracies. Since we concluded that life dissatisfaction is associated with voting for the populist right through political attitude-formation, *a dissatisfied electorate could be a de-stabilizing factor for policy-making in liberal democracies*. Concretely, in a scenario where a growing part of the population becomes increasingly dissatisfied with their lives, this development could potentially have profound consequences on the political party spectrum of a country by tipping the scale in favour of RPP:s at elections, and eventually increasing their representation in the national legislative and executive branches of power. By consequence, if RPP:s become ruling parties in government, it would more often than not result in adopting illiberal policies that make authoritarian and nativist aspects more prominent in society, often at the cost of inclusiveness, diversity, and the protection of the rights of minorities. Therefore, politicians and the electorate who are concerned about the surge of right-wing populism, a growing distrust of political institutions and the political establishment and increasing xenophobia in societal debate, should pay attention to fostering a satisfied and happy electorate in public policies, in order to increase the perceived legitimacy of the established party system and preserve the values of liberal democracy. In this way, the policy impact of widespread life dissatisfaction among the electorate has the potential of being profound for the future of liberal democracy.

4.8 Subjective wellbeing is a political affair

The recognition that subjective wellbeing influences political outcomes has deep implications both on a theoretical level and from a policy point of view. For scholarship, it underlines the urgency of widening our notion of human wellbeing beyond what is measurable with its

objective indicators, and to put subjective wellbeing at equal footing with the objective indicators of wellbeing, notably income, education, SES or access to social capital, in explaining political attitudes and behaviour. Moreover, considering subjective wellbeing as driver, comparable to the other more widely-studied predictors, of political orientations, participation and vote choice, contributes to strengthening the emerging psychologically-oriented and health-related scholarships around political attitudes and behaviour, by *placing human wellbeing to the forefront* of these explanations and thus bringing the scholarship to a new level.

On the policy level, linking subjective wellbeing to political outcomes affects how policy-makers should perceive the role of wellbeing in society. Echoing how physical health is considered in scholarship as a matter with a political dimension, a similar stance can be taken with regards to subjective wellbeing: it should no longer be considered as merely belonging into the private sphere of citizens, but also as a *political matter with consequences for democratic inclusiveness, gender equality, democratic stability and support for core democratic values in liberal democracies*. This means that policy makers should be concerned with citizen wellbeing for multiple reasons: firstly, because of the risk of political inequality that stems from disparities in empowerment between citizens; secondly, because low social support may perpetuate gender inequalities in politics; thirdly, because low emotional wellbeing may threaten democratic stability; and finally, because a dissatisfied citizenry may erode support for liberal democracy. Fostering and promoting the wellbeing of the population should therefore be a primary target of political incumbents, by, *inter alia*, targeting citizen empowerment through education initiatives and reinforcing women's social support structures in schools and community activities. Finally, given that voters' subjective wellbeing is an important *barometer* of the electoral choices of citizens and their protest intentions in a time

when liberal democracy is in crisis, political incumbents who are concerned about democratic instability, the surge of right-wing populism, a growing distrust and disenchantment over political institutions and the establishment, and harshening attitudes towards outgroups in society, should make the act of cultivating happy and satisfied citizens a primary objective in their policies in order to foster democratic stability, increase the legitimacy of established party systems and preserve liberal democracy as the foundation of contemporary European societies. Understanding subjective wellbeing as a political affair in society thereby becomes paramount.

4.9 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This thesis has elucidated the multiple avenues through which subjective wellbeing is linked to political participation, orientations and preferences. Yet some limitations to this research need to be acknowledged. In addition, the conclusions of this research have paved the way for several possibilities and directions for future research in the field, among which a few particularly promising ones are discussed below.

A first desirable, future research objective is first and foremost methodological, since it concerns the causality and endogeneity issues we discussed in the relationship between subjective wellbeing and political outcomes. We have proposed ways to explore causality in studies 1 and 2 in this thesis by using Swiss panel data. Despite the many merits of panel data and the clear advantages it holds compared to cross-sectional data collection endeavours, a drawback with panel data is its sensitivity to self-selection. We have discussed (ch. 2.5.4) how it is likely that persons participating in panels have on average higher wellbeing and are also more politically active due to stronger patterns of pro-social behaviour, higher levels of trust in institutions, and simply a stronger motivation to participate in surveys. Likewise, not feeling

well in life tends to make persons more inward-looking, to reduce available energy and motivation to invest into tasks such as surveys, and fuel distrust in institutions and authorities. Finally, we also discussed how wellbeing may become a positive discriminant in keeping respondents in panels, since attrition proportionally affects more persons with lower wellbeing. Although these influences are not strong enough to overrule the many strengths of panel data research, the profile of panel participants should nonetheless be kept in mind whenever making inferences from panel data, including in the framework of this research.

Secondly, panel data availability has constrained us to explore individual trajectories of wellbeing and participation in a single country, i.e. Switzerland, which is moreover characterized by an overall high standard of living and political institutions that give citizens a uniquely active role in the political decision-making process through instruments of direct democracy. Yet currently, and to the author's awareness, no comprehensive, comparative panel data have been collected that would both include multidimensional indicators of subjective wellbeing and data on political attitudes, preferences and participation habits, including beyond voting in elections. Future data collection endeavours with a comparative and longitudinal perspective would be extremely welcome in order to be able to better generalize across cultural, economic and institutional settings about the causes and consequences of subjective wellbeing, political attitudes and behaviour. Besides panel data, the use of experimental methods for exploring causality between wellbeing, political attitudes and behaviour is another promising methodological approach that future research may consider taking.

Thirdly, beyond the specific challenges related to panel data, finding new, innovative ways of addressing the other methodological challenges involved in wellbeing and political research would be a highly desirable future research objective. We have discussed how survey data in

general is vulnerable to certain biases that affect reported wellbeing and political participation, attitudes and opinions. These include overreporting due to concerns of social desirability, and it cannot be ruled out that the data we used for our analyses slightly overestimates the level of actual wellbeing of the sample population. Political participation is also affected by social desirability since some forms of political activity, notoriously voting, are frequently over-reported in surveys, while protest participation, or its intentions, could be underreported by respondents. Social desirability may also interfere in the measurement of political attitudes and opinions in survey data, and as previously noted, RPP sympathizers may be underrepresented in surveys since the attitudes that they hold, notably relating to distrust of politics and of the establishment, makes it more challenging to reach these populations and convince them to participate in surveys. Since survey data production on wellbeing and the political opinions and activities of respondents are influenced by normative and desirability concerns as well as self-selection, efforts to develop new measures and tools for data production and analysis, without forgetting the potential of exploring experimental methods of research, would be welcome in order to produce even more reliable data and expand on the current possibilities of investigating into the intriguing relationship between subjective wellbeing and the political citizen.

Fourthly, besides methodological advances, a number of research proposals emerge from the findings of this thesis. A first one would investigate into the *transition* from pre-political engagement to manifest political participation. In other words, under which conditions do the political orientations and intentions that we consider in our research – namely, a sense of political efficacy and intentions of political protest – turn into actual political participation? Since we now know that low emotional wellbeing increases protest intentions, what will trigger these intentions to turn into actual participation in political protest? Linking subjective wellbeing with pre-political intentions and orientations and ultimately actual participation

within one overarching, theoretical and, whenever possible, empirical framework would be a highly promising research objective and could further elucidate the broader political consequences of citizen wellbeing.

Fifthly, future research projects would also benefit from further, in-depth investigation into the attitudinal consequences of subjective wellbeing. Considering how this research revealed that wellbeing not only influences political efficacy and participation patterns, but also that a lack thereof is associated with protest intentions, political ‘anti’ attitudes and RPP support, could subjective wellbeing ultimately be a predictor of democratic support? It is certainly a possibility, since we alluded that subjective wellbeing fosters support for keeping the status quo, thereby relating to scholarships on protest voting (Mileti and Plomb, 2016; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2007) and grievance models of political protest (Armingeon, 2007; Barnes et al., 1979; Klandermans, 1984; Lind and Tyler, 1988; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013), as well as literature on antidemocratic attitudes in general (Howe, 2017; Dunwoody and Plaine, 2019; Cornelis and Van Hiel, 2015). Moreover, how does subjective wellbeing relate to political attitudes and values more broadly? Does low wellbeing erode support for core democratic values? There is great potential in future research to further explore the possible linkages between wellbeing and the citizen’s support for liberal democracy, which is widely considered to be under threat in advanced democracies.

Finally, the findings of this research regarding the sources of women’s political efficacy indicates the relevance for future research to consider additional political orientations that could be instrumental in closing the gender gap in politics, such as political interest or knowledge. Does social support increase women’s interest and knowledge about politics, and perhaps ultimately increase their participation? Since political interest is widely thought to be acquired

in formative years and to stay relatively stable after that (Prior, 2010; Shani, 2009), it would be particularly relevant to examine the influence of girls' wellbeing on their political orientations under formative years, in adolescence and early adulthood. Yet scholars have suggested that certain major life events, such as changes in health and wellbeing, can have consequences on even the most stable political attitudes (Mattila et al., 2020), making future research efforts that examine how wellbeing influences the various key predictors of the politically active citizen, both under formative years and throughout the life course, extremely welcome for the purpose of building further on scholarship on the political implications of wellbeing.

4.10 A wellbeing agenda for political science

This thesis has shed light on the intriguing relationship between subjective wellbeing and political behaviour and attitudes in contemporary European democracies. In a context where many unanswered questions remain about the psychological underpinnings of *why and how* citizens engage politically, *which are the sources* of their political orientations and convictions, as well as *what drives* their party choices at the ballot box, have paved the way for considering citizen's subjective wellbeing as a powerful predictor of individual political attitudes and behaviour. Through four empirical studies, this research has shown that wellbeing positively relates to the most demanding forms of political activity and fosters women's political efficacy beliefs. Conversely, this study has shown that low wellbeing triggers intentions for political protest and fuels right-wing populist support through the formation of political attitudes that are critical of the political establishment and hostile to immigration. In this way, this research has shown that subjective wellbeing affects all stages of the development of the political citizen and how they think and act politically. The implications of the relationship between wellbeing and political outcomes thereby become profound, both for better understanding persisting

political inequality in contemporary democracies and for the purposes of alleviating it, as well as for identifying the origins of democratic instability, illiberal political ideas, antidemocratic attitudes and threats to liberal democracy. In this way, subjective wellbeing has proved itself to be a crucial research agenda for the future of political science.

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Annexes

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A1 Study 1: First-difference estimation of social support and political efficacy

Predictors of political efficacy	All		Women		Men	
	FD	SE	FD	SE	FD	SE
Social support						
Emotional support	0,0604 ***	0,01522	0,0836 ***	0,02041	0,0343	0,02295
Weak ties	-0,0062	0,01305	0,0108	0,01828	-0,0235	0,01878
Strong ties	0,0056	0,01530	0,0100	0,02073	0,0010	0,02282
Covariates						
Age in years	0,0591	0,05263	0,0784	0,07044	0,0329	0,07963
Age-squared	-0,0005	0,00052	-0,0007	0,00070	-0,0002	0,00078
Education, completed (ref. secondary level)						
Compulsory school	-0,0991	0,25677	-0,0619	0,37568	-0,1196	0,35455
Tertiary level	-0,3167 *	0,14041	-0,3758 *	0,17998	-0,2256	0,22462
Satisfaction with income	0,0223	0,01559	0,0151	0,01922	0,0371	0,02658
Social participation (clubs/groups) (y/n)	0,0089	0,03312	-0,0084	0,04164	0,0324	0,05466
Active in political association (y/n)	0,0554	0,03801	0,0792	0,05497	0,0355	0,05315
Active in political party (y/n)	0,0718	0,06851	0,1428	0,11374	0,0387	0,08690
Active in social association (y/n)	0,0154	0,02994	0,0300	0,03891	-0,0035	0,04702
Social trust	0,0258	0,01541	0,0275	0,01998	0,0274	0,02433
Political interest	0,1407 ***	0,02241	0,1529 ***	0,02837	0,1191 **	0,03655
Constant						
Model diagnostics						
R2 (within-person)	0,02		0,02		0,01	
n (persons)	1'538		895		643	
N (observations)	4'583		2'579		2'004	

Note: FD=standardized first-difference estimators. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

A2. Study 1: Fixed-effects estimation of political efficacy and social support

Predictors	DV: emotional support						DV: weak ties						DV: strong ties					
	All		Women		Men		All		Women		Men		All		Women		Men	
	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE
Political efficacy	0,0492 ***	0,0139	0,0650 ***	0,0180	0,0272	0,0217	0,0026	0,0152	0,0191	0,0183	-0,0204	0,0256	-0,0003	0,0135	0,0079	0,0165	-0,0099	0,0228
Emotional support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0,0060	0,0153	-0,0109	0,0206	-0,0014	0,0227	-0,0038	0,0149	-0,0135	0,0199	0,0089	0,0225
Weak ties	-0,0048	0,0122	-0,0097	0,0184	-0,0010	0,0159	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,1498 ***	0,0147	0,1636 ***	0,0194	0,1347 ***	0,0220
Strong ties	-0,0039	0,0154	-0,0148	0,0218	0,0086	0,0217	0,1934 ***	0,0188	0,1996 ***	0,0233	0,1845 ***	0,0301	-	-	-	-	-	-
Covariates																		
Age in years	-0,0270	0,0179	-0,0178	0,0246	-0,0372	0,0262	0,0044	0,0178	0,0135	0,0204	-0,0025	0,0313	-0,0041	0,0184	0,0137	0,0225	-0,0276	0,0308
Age-squared	0,0001	0,0002	0,0001	0,0002	0,0002	0,0003	-0,0001	0,0002	-0,0002	0,0002	0,0000	0,0003	-0,0001	0,0002	-0,0003	0,0002	0,0002	0,0003
Education, completed (ref. secondary level)																		
Compulsory school	-0,0788	0,1469	-0,0882	0,1805	-0,0594	0,2492	0,1544	0,1940	-0,0743	0,1289	0,5482	0,4007	0,0189	0,1711	-0,0279	0,1944	0,1007	0,3008
Tertiary level	0,0657	0,0640	0,0549	0,0805	0,0915	0,1076	0,0287	0,0932	0,1135	0,0889	-0,0833	0,1888	-0,0437	0,0874	-0,1025	0,0967	0,0582	0,1655
Satisfaction with income	0,0406 **	0,0153	0,0342	0,0192	0,0521 *	0,0253	-0,0258	0,0152	-0,0283	0,0191	-0,0190	0,0251	-0,0224	0,0148	-0,0201	0,0188	-0,0249	0,0239
Social participation (clubs/groups) (y/n)	-0,0542	0,0295	-0,0480	0,0389	-0,0603	0,0455	0,0972 **	0,0317	0,1147 **	0,0385	0,0854	0,0549	-0,0078	0,0301	-0,0041	0,0381	-0,0191	0,0493
Active in political association (y/n)	0,0187	0,0331	0,0280	0,0461	0,0106	0,0474	-0,0576	0,0437	0,0034	0,0592	-0,1042	0,0637	0,0335	0,0356	-0,0110	0,0499	0,0715	0,0511
Active in political party (y/n)	0,0190	0,0613	-0,0382	0,1087	0,0606	0,0726	0,0488	0,0598	0,1158	0,0985	0,0189	0,0755	-0,0791	0,0642	0,0276	0,0943	-0,1473	0,0847
Active in social association (y/n)	0,0274	0,0274	0,0301	0,0345	0,0244	0,0446	0,0536	0,0281	0,0075	0,0343	0,1191 *	0,0475	0,0548	0,0280	0,0626	0,0364	0,0432	0,0440
Social trust	0,0882 ***	0,0148	0,0726 ***	0,0204	0,1087 ***	0,0214	0,0359 *	0,0155	0,0184	0,0180	0,0601 *	0,0275	0,0278 *	0,0140	0,0135	0,0170	0,0478 *	0,0240
Political interest	0,0773 ***	0,0201	0,0818 **	0,0263	0,0681 *	0,0316	0,0492 *	0,0235	0,0667 *	0,0294	0,0176	0,0386	0,0185	0,0197	0,0027	0,0246	0,0390	0,0324
Constant	-0,3771	0,5223	0,0184	0,7124	-0,8507	0,7737	0,4444	0,5205	0,6725	0,5893	0,3447	0,9297	0,1855	0,5536	0,7209	0,6828	-0,5416	0,9233
Model diagnostics																		
Std. dev of residuals (within-person)	0,87		0,81		0,87		0,70		0,68		0,74		0,80		0,79		0,83	
Std. dev of residuals (between-person)	0,62		0,62		0,62		0,69		0,66		0,74		0,61		0,59		0,63	
Correlation within-person errors/regressors	-0,11		-0,08		-0,11		0,26		0,17		0,18		0,13		0,03		0,17	
rho	0,66		0,63		0,66		0,50		0,52		0,50		0,63		0,64		0,63	
R2 (within-person)	0,02		0,02		0,02		0,04		0,04		0,36		0,03		0,04		0,03	
n (persons)	1'538		895		643		1'538		895		643		1'538		895		643	
N (observations)	7'332		4'192		3'140		7'332		4'192		3'140		7'332		4'192		3'140	

Note: FE=standardized fixed-effects estimators. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

A3. Study 2: Full results of fixed-effects models in Table 6

Fixed effects OLS regression models, 2000-2008	DV: Voting		DV: Boycott intentions		DV: Strike intentions		DV: Demonstration intentions		DV: Life satisfaction		DV: Negative emotions		DV: Positive emotions		
	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	
Political participation															
Voting in federal popular votes, per year (0 – 10 times)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.0056	.0136	-.0006	.0134	.0111	.0138
Boycott intentions (0 never – 10 certainly)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.0049	.0103	-.0083	.0104	.0199	.0119
Striking intentions (0 never – 10 certainly)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.0191	.0116	.0219	.0113	-.0301 *	.0129
Demonstration intentions (0 never – 10 certainly)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.0013	.0117	.0252 *	.0115	.0084	.0124
Subjective well-being															
Life satisfaction (0 low – 10 high)	-.0056	.0068	-.0006	.0075	-.0065	.0073	.0011	.0072	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Negative emotions (0 never – 10 always)	-.0001	.0066	.0106	.0077	.0186 *	.0073	.0234 ***	.0070	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Positive emotions (0 never – 10 always)	.0043	.0054	.0095	.0067	-.0033	.0061	.0069	.0058	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Covariates															
Education, highest level attained (Swiss classification) (ref: post-obligatory degree)															
Low (compulsory education only)	.1137	.0689	.0416	.0586	.1853 ***	.0508	.1330 **	.0481	-.0491	.0676	.1739 *	.0783	-.1310 *	.0634	
High (tertiary level)	-.0308	.0396	-.0678	.0427	-.0533	.0382	-.0416	.0443	.0671	.0484	-.0740	.0435	.0898 *	.0455	
Satisfaction with financial situation (0 low – 10 high)	-.0008	.0066	-.0089	.0078	-.0159 *	.0075	-.0034	.0072	.2091 ***	.0112	-.0760 ***	.0095	.0929 ***	.0097	
Left-right self-positioning (0 left – 10 right)	.0055	.0084	-.0303 ***	.0090	-.0442 ***	.0087	-.0305 ***	.0083	.0057	.0110	.0150	.0105	-.0216	.0128	
Feeling of personal political influence (0 low – 10 high)	.0339 ***	.0059	.0268 ***	.0075	.0400 ***	.0071	.0319 ***	.0068	-.0009	.0086	-.0015	.0086	.0066	.0097	
Trust in Federal Government (0 low-10 high)	.0206 **	.0078	-.0103	.0087	-.0158	.0085	-.0106	.0080	.0094	.0103	.0093	.0101	.0225	.0115	
Satisfaction with democracy overall (0 low – 10 high)	.0174 **	.0065	.0018	.0082	-.0078	.0075	.0044	.0073	.0329 ***	.0095	-.0120	.0092	.0228 *	.0099	
Period-effects (ref. 2000 (w2))															
2001 (w3)	-.0325 *	.0139	-.0407 *	.0202	-.0657 ***	.0192	-.0196	.0178	-.0499 *	.0204	.0264	.0203	.0183	.0244	
2002 (w4)	.0281	.0149	.0050	.0205	-.0037	.0194	.0221	.0175	-.1074 ***	.0218	.0402	.0210	-.0033	.0240	
2003 (w5)	.0001	.0159	.0555 **	.0201	.0255	.0188	.0458 *	.0184	-.0887 ***	.0208	.0335	.0204	.0102	.0240	
2004 (w6)	.0797 ***	.0156	.0121	.0206	-.0071	.0197	.0385 *	.0190	-.1520 ***	.0219	.0995 ***	.0219	.0030	.0251	
2005 (w7)	.1124 ***	.0162	-.0468 *	.0204	-.0381 *	.0192	.0087	.0183	-.1619 ***	.0225	.0848 ***	.0212	-.0172	.0257	
2006 (w8)	.0407 *	.0167	-.0963 ***	.0202	-.0987 ***	.0190	-.0447 *	.0179	-.2041 ***	.0229	.1590 ***	.0225	-.1461 ***	.0258	
2007 (w9)	.0323	.0170	-.1464 ***	.0198	-.1291 ***	.0195	-.0762 ***	.0180	-.1700 ***	.0228	.1525 ***	.0226	-.1433 ***	.0253	
2008 (w10)	.0463 **	.0172	-.1333 ***	.0204	-.0988 ***	.0193	-.0700 ***	.0177	-.2012 ***	.0226	.1349 ***	.0223	-.1614 ***	.0260	
Constant	.0356 *	.0153	.0999 ***	.0184	.0838 ***	.0168	.0570 ***	.0171	.1300 ***	.0206	-.0962 ***	.0188	.0338 ***	.0212	
Model diagnostics															
Rho (fraction of individual-specific error to total)	.79		.66		.69		.72		.52		.56		.48		
N (person-years)	19'189		19'799		19'795		19'908		18'911		18'905		18'894		
n (individuals)	2'577		2'726		2'728		2'728		2'573		2'573		2'573		
R2 - within	0.014		0.016		0.015		0.011		0.056		0.015		0.020		

Note: FE= fixed-effects estimator (standardised). Standard errors (SE) are panel robust. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

A4. Study 2: Fixed-effects models for subjective wellbeing and voting, 2000-2017

Fixed effects OLS regression models, 2000-2017	DV: Voting		DV: Life satisfaction		DV: Negative emotions		DV: Positive emotions		
	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	FE	SE	
Political participation									
Voting in federal popular votes, per year (0-10 times)	-	-	-	-0.0006	.0128	-.0143	.0128	.0013	.0133
Subjective well-being									
Life satisfaction (0 low – 10 high)	-.0018	.0066	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negative emotions (0 never – 10 always)	-.0085	.0068	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Positive emotions (0 never – 10 always)	-.0012	.0055	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Covariates									
Education, highest level attained (Swiss classification) (ref: post-obligatory degree)									
Low (compulsory education only)	.0938	.0876	-.1232	.0818	.2487 **	.0952	-.2107 ***	.0702	
High (tertiary level)	-.0176	.0377	-.0483	.0417	-.0264	.0454	.0236	.0413	
Satisfaction with financial situation (0 low – 10 high)	-.0046	.0064	.2189 ***	.0106	-.0787 ***	.0088	.0855 ***	.0092	
Left-right self-positioning (0 left – 10 right)	.0099	.0090	.0142	.0110	.0085	.0107	-.0192	.0122	
Feeling of personal political influence (0 low – 10 high)	.0423 ***	.0064	.0101	.0083	.0104	.0080	.0053	.0096	
Trust in Federal Government (0 low – 10 high)	.0239 ***	.0075	.0043	.0105	-.0033	.0095	.0246 *	.0111	
Satisfaction with democracy overall (0 low – 10 high)	.0211 **	.0067	.0205 *	.0092	-.0072	.0090	.0350 ***	.0096	
Period-effects (ref. 2000 (w2))									
2001 (w3)	-.0624 ***	.0169	-.0411	.0242	-.0166	.0231	.0449	.0282	
2002 (w4)	.0111	.0177	-.0934 ***	.0253	.0230	.0236	.0188	.0280	
2003 (w5)	-.0330	.0179	-.0828 ***	.0244	.0163	.0229	.0356	.0280	
2004 (w6)	.0687 ***	.0177	-.1404 ***	.0256	.0822 ***	.0248	.0160	.0289	
2005 (w7)	.1007 ***	.0191	-.1488 ***	.0255	.0697 **	.0241	.0072	.0297	
2006 (w8)	.0246	.0198	-.1765 ***	.0266	.1242 ***	.0250	-.1257 ***	.0288	
2007 (w9)	.0168	.0195	-.1433 ***	.0262	.1300 ***	.0248	-.1177 ***	.0287	
2008 (w10)	.0312	.0198	-.1782 ***	.0254	.1125 ***	.0246	-.1257 ***	.0293	
2009 (w11)	.0331	.0209	-.1970 ***	.0260	.1808 ***	.0249	-.1491 ***	.0290	
2011 (w13)	-.0046	.0207	-.2085 ***	.0263	.1452 ***	.0250	-.2375 ***	.0306	
2014 (w16)	.0969 ***	.0212	-.1911 ***	.0275	.2081 ***	.0276	-.2400 ***	.0312	
2017 (w19)	.1247 ***	.0213	-.2034 ***	.0278	.1998 ***	.0272	-.2502 ***	.0306	
Constant	.0377 *	.0176	.1755 ***	.0234	-.1268 ***	.0221	.0936 ***	.0242	
Model diagnostics									
Rho (fraction of individual-specific error to total)	.77		.48		.55		.45		
N (person-years)	20'187		20'207		20'200		20'189		
n (individuals)	1'843		1'843		1'843		1'843		
R2 - within	0.021		0.057		0.019		0.028		

Note: FE= fixed-effects estimator (standardised). Standard errors (SE) are panel robust. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

A5. Study 3: Political participation rates, by country and activity

Country	N	Voting	Campaigning	Contacting	Signing a petition	Product boycott	Protest
Aggregate sample	53'180	76	9	12	19	15	7
Albania	1'201	85	16	16	6	10	8
Belgium	1'869	89	9	16	21	11	5
Bulgaria	2'260	74	4	5	7	4	6
Cyprus	1'116	80	7	15	11	9	5
Czech Republic	2'009	65	8	12	19	14	7
Denmark	1'650	94	9	17	25	26	4
Estonia	2'380	68	5	12	10	7	4
Finland	2'197	85	18	18	24	35	2
France	1'968	79	9	12	29	33	11
Germany	2'958	82	9	15	35	34	9
Hungary	2'014	73	2	5	3	4	4
Iceland	752	87	47	26	56	33	18
Ireland	2'628	74	8	18	23	11	11
Israel	2'508	78	5	10	13	22	11
Italy	960	81	13	15	23	12	17
Kosovo	1'295	65	6	9	10	15	8
Lithuania	2'109	56	5	8	6	2	2
Netherlands	1'845	84	6	13	22	14	3
Norway	1'624	87	33	22	35	24	10
Poland	1'898	69	6	7	11	6	2
Portugal	2'151	69	2	6	7	3	7
Russia	2'484	68	7	8	6	3	4
Slovakia	1'847	76	4	10	21	11	3
Slovenia	1'257	73	4	7	8	4	3
Spain	1'889	76	15	13	33	17	26
Sweden	1'847	91	22	16	44	43	7
UK	2'286	72	8	15	32	19	4
Ukraine	2'178	77	6	8	3	1	2

Note: Unweighted data. Numbers indicate the percentage (%) of respondents having responded yes (=1). Data source: ESS 6.

A6. Study 3: Full random coefficient logit regression results

Political activity	VOTING		CAMPAIGNING		CONTACTING		PETITION SIGNING		PRODUCT BOYCOTT		PROTESTING	
<i>Level 1 fixed effects</i>	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE
Empowerment-score (5-25)	0,0028	0,01386	0,0243 ***	0,00620	0,0395 **	0,01377	-0,0096	0,00923	-0,0169 **	0,00615	0,0621 ***	0,01078
Interactions												
Empowerment*Age of democracy	0,0347	0,01996	-0,0078	0,02164	-0,0184	0,01883	0,0250	0,02283	0,0470 *	0,02071	-0,0514 ***	0,01359
Sociodemographic predictors												
Gender (1=Female)	0,1693 *	0,07710	0,0561	0,09186	-0,1160	0,06037	0,2186 **	0,07122	0,2192 ***	0,04846	-0,0594	0,09345
Age in years	1,1707 ***	0,24955	-0,4441 **	0,16135	1,3939 ***	0,13376	0,5034 **	0,15432	0,7366 ***	0,18955	-0,6616 *	0,32818
Age squared	-0,0004 *	0,00014	0,0001	0,00008	-0,0007 ***	0,00006	-0,0004 ***	0,00007	-0,0004 **	0,00013	0,0002	0,00015
Objective resources												
Education, completed ¹												
- less than secondary	-0,3828 ***	0,06039	-0,1931 **	0,07123	-0,4425 ***	0,04682	-0,4783 ***	0,06315	-0,3214 ***	0,07330	-0,1148	0,17561
- tertiary or post-secondary	0,1590 *	0,07362	0,2043 ***	0,05672	0,2214 ***	0,05725	0,3208 ***	0,06229	0,2811 ***	0,05667	0,3335 **	0,09613
Household net income, monthly ²												
- mid-income (4th-6th decile)	0,2300 **	0,07990	-0,0555	0,05146	-0,1274	0,08649	0,0836	0,07801	0,1909	0,12283	0,0017	0,07970
- high income (7th-10th decile)	0,3844 *	0,18346	0,0683	0,08227	-0,0159	0,12618	0,2059 *	0,08267	0,3084 *	0,15268	0,0732	0,10343
- income not disclosed	0,0382	0,19924	-0,2146 *	0,09745	-0,3858	0,24158	-0,0629	0,10876	0,0565	0,14245	-0,2559	0,16329
Time in activity ³												
- part-time	-0,0463	0,08861	0,2113 **	0,06268	0,1288	0,06760	0,1347 *	0,06335	0,1188	0,06684	0,0863	0,09768
- not applicable/no activity	-0,2063 **	0,07805	0,0417	0,23263	-0,2261	0,13966	-0,0628	0,11894	-0,0900	0,13708	0,0182	0,20705
Political attitudes												
Political trust score (0-50)	0,0145 ***	0,00407	0,0061	0,00494	-0,0043	0,00646	-0,0024	0,00422	-0,0198 ***	0,00343	-0,0046	0,00682
Left-right self-placement ⁴												
- left	0,3995 ***	0,04594	0,4526 ***	0,08182	0,1122	0,06197	0,4334 ***	0,04572	0,4573 ***	0,10392	0,7162 ***	0,14346
- right	0,5205 ***	0,05080	0,0080	0,10818	0,1518	0,09765	0,0426	0,07904	0,0966	0,10815	-0,1738	0,12942
Political interest ⁵												
- hardly interested	0,6334 ***	0,10101	0,4621 **	0,15124	0,3376 *	0,14048	0,4545 ***	0,09829	0,3488 **	0,11572	0,3169 **	0,11174
- quite interested	1,2505 ***	0,10523	1,3086 ***	0,10176	0,8783 ***	0,16091	1,0421 ***	0,10581	1,0448 ***	0,14114	1,0779 ***	0,07307
- very interested	1,5149 ***	0,15021	2,0951 ***	0,15444	1,5908 ***	0,14813	1,3569 ***	0,14737	1,3368 ***	0,11956	1,5405 ***	0,14044
Contextual predictors												
Age of democracy, dichotomous (1=new)	-0,2237	0,17721	-0,4105	0,28648	-0,4620 **	0,16829	-1,1819 ***	0,24864	-1,5436 ***	0,32942	-0,0617	0,26943
Level 2 random effects (28 countries)												
Country variance	0,1716	0,05477	0,4438	0,12521	0,1371	0,04051	0,4538	0,14509	0,6572	0,21349	0,6206	0,00000
Empowerment effect (slope) variance	0,0009	0,00034	0,0002	0,00024	0,0008	0,00034	0,0008	0,00059	0,0004	0,00041	0,0001	0,00000
Empowerment, correlation between countries	-0,0089 *	0,00429	-0,0013	0,00551	-0,0011	0,00297	-0,0045	0,00772	-0,0020	0,00750	-0,0080 ***	0,00000
Model statistics												
Intraclass correlation (ICC)	0,05		0,12		0,04		0,12		0,17		0,16	
AIC	39017		23815		27877		37098		31788		20706	
N	41'404		44'065		44'016		43'951		43'848		44'013	

Note: Models are adjusted for design, post-stratification and population size (survey weights). Standard errors are robust. Significance levels: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$ for a two-tailed test. Reference categories: 1= secondary education; 2=low income (1st-3rd decile); 3=full-time; 4=neither left nor right; 5=not at all interested.

A7ab. Study 3: Logit regression results by split samples (age of democracy)

A.

Political activity in old democracies	VOTING		CAMPAIGNING		CONTACTING		PETITION SIGNING		PRODUCT BOYCOTT		PROTESTING	
	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE
<i>Predictors</i>												
Empowerment-score (5-25)	0,0215 **	0,00754	0,0352 ***	0,00876	0,0199 *	0,00835	0,0072	0,00627	-0,0075	0,00666	0,0295 **	0,01014
Sociodemographic predictors												
Gender (1=Female)	0,0815	0,04905	0,2642 ***	0,04844	-0,1353 **	0,04266	0,3064 ***	0,03771	0,2981 ***	0,04122	-0,0397	0,05690
Age in years	1,3902 ***	0,15127	-0,4083 **	0,14259	1,1019 ***	0,13011	0,3180 **	0,10457	0,8179 ***	0,11846	-0,2022	0,16870
Age squared	-0,0004 ***	0,00008	0,0001	0,00008	-0,0006 ***	0,00007	-0,0003 ***	0,00006	-0,0005 ***	0,00006	-0,0001	0,00009
Objective resources												
Education, completed ¹												
- less than secondary	-0,3465 ***	0,05886	-0,2189 **	0,06800	-0,2684 ***	0,05740	-0,3648 ***	0,04698	-0,4143 ***	0,05692	-0,1003	0,07612
- tertiary or post-secondary	0,3049 ***	0,06460	0,1065	0,05556	0,1858 ***	0,04704	0,2719 ***	0,04436	0,3116 ***	0,04414	0,1984 **	0,06701
Household net income, monthly ²												
- mid-income (4th-6th decile)	0,2703 ***	0,05653	-0,0632	0,06148	0,0131	0,05188	0,0656	0,04515	0,1185 **	0,04537	-0,0776	0,07131
- high income (7th-10th decile)	0,6187 ***	0,06271	0,0216	0,06278	0,2040 ***	0,05373	0,1967 ***	0,04635	0,2128 ***	0,04942	-0,1301	0,07543
- income not disclosed	0,2612 **	0,08682	-0,1226	0,11347	-0,1169	0,08912	-0,0686	0,07657	-0,0245	0,07622	-0,3296 **	0,11481
Time in activity ³												
- part-time	0,0208	0,05158	0,0770	0,05541	-0,0611	0,05044	0,1471 ***	0,04038	0,0665	0,04205	0,0853	0,06721
- not applicable/no activity	-0,3028 **	0,09179	-0,0976	0,10970	0,0421	0,10134	0,0460	0,07969	-0,0109	0,09060	0,0598	0,12802
Political attitudes												
Political trust score (0-50)	0,0201 ***	0,00261	0,0028	0,00286	-0,0014	0,00254	-0,0099 ***	0,00203	-0,0201 ***	0,00211	-0,0134 ***	0,00332
Left-right self-placement ⁴												
- left	0,4189 ***	0,05615	0,4335 ***	0,05606	0,0295	0,04964	0,4252 ***	0,03973	0,4445 ***	0,04383	0,8055 ***	0,06724
- right	0,5151 ***	0,05273	-0,0240	0,05792	0,0311	0,04797	-0,0692	0,04255	-0,0482	0,04225	-0,1578 *	0,08000
Political interest ⁵												
- hardly interested	0,5439 ***	0,05847	0,5949 ***	0,10323	0,2389 **	0,07810	0,6961 ***	0,06550	0,5352 ***	0,07100	0,6610 ***	0,12616
- quite interested	1,2382 ***	0,06824	1,1396 ***	0,10190	0,8377 ***	0,07821	1,1333 ***	0,06730	1,1558 ***	0,07006	1,2825 ***	0,12674
- very interested	1,3461 ***	0,09280	1,9751 ***	0,10930	1,5731 ***	0,08404	1,4810 ***	0,07471	1,4936 ***	0,07927	1,8570 ***	0,13479
Country indicators⁶												
Belgium	0,6560 ***	0,16486	-1,5095 ***	0,11381	-0,2522 *	0,09925	-0,7303 ***	0,09446	-0,9075 ***	0,15929	-0,6066 ***	0,15188
Germany	-0,4669 ***	0,11445	-1,8534 ***	0,09473	-0,6403 ***	0,08819	-0,1783 *	0,07141	0,2402 **	0,07827	-0,3264 **	0,11302
Denmark	0,8023 ***	0,16077	-2,0050 ***	0,10580	-0,5845 ***	0,10129	-0,6848 ***	0,08833	-0,0119	0,08841	-1,1757 ***	0,16256
Finland	-0,2258	0,11711	-0,7552 ***	0,08698	-0,1978 *	0,08945	-0,5083 ***	0,08111	0,6381 ***	0,07835	-1,9103 ***	0,19124
France	-0,3834 **	0,11526	-1,5967 ***	0,10692	-0,6763 ***	0,10054	-0,2378 **	0,07680	0,4445 ***	0,07953	0,1174	0,12072
United Kingdom	-0,6558 ***	0,11265	-1,6653 ***	0,11259	-0,2997 **	0,09295	0,0750	0,07605	-0,2461 **	0,08538	-0,9742 ***	0,14773
Ireland	-0,1622	0,11818	-1,6391 ***	0,11138	0,0130	0,09856	-0,5410 ***	0,08694	-0,8965 ***	0,10822	0,1217	0,12538
Israel	-0,2349	0,12172	-2,3959 ***	0,13049	-0,8933 ***	0,11391	-1,3820 ***	0,10612	-0,1745	0,09605	0,1539	0,11929
Iceland	0,6778 **	0,19670	0,5705 ***	0,11546	0,2820 **	0,10251	0,9298 ***	0,10905	0,4527 ***	0,09638	0,6286 ***	0,13355
Italy	0,3165	0,20349	-1,0267 ***	0,15144	-0,2827	0,15759	-0,4943 ***	0,11650	-0,8445 ***	0,15261	0,7259 ***	0,16456
Netherlands	-0,2734 *	0,11989	-2,1822 ***	0,12512	-0,6256 ***	0,10358	-0,7401 ***	0,08332	-0,8156 ***	0,10208	-1,4253 ***	0,17404
Sweden	0,4720 ***	0,13445	-0,6165 ***	0,10408	-0,4417 ***	0,09964	0,3996 ***	0,08160	0,9131 ***	0,08192	-0,3414 **	0,12491
Model statistics												
AIC	15097		14626		18103		23426		21762		10519	
N	20'180		21'610		21'597		21'550		21'569		21'602	

Note: Models are adjusted for design, post-stratification and population size (survey weights). Standard errors are robust. Significance levels: *= $p<0.05$, **= $p<0.01$, ***= $p<0.001$ for a two-tailed test. Reference categories: 1= secondary education; 2=low income (1st-3rd decile); 3=full-time; 4=neither left nor right; 5=not at all interested; 6= Norway.

B.

Political activity in new democracies	VOTING		CAMPAIGNING		CONTACTING		PETITION SIGNING		PRODUCT BOYCOTT		PROTESTING	
	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE	Log odds	SE
<i>Predictors</i>												
Empowerment-score (5-25)	0,0413 ***	0,00563	0,0198	0,01052	0,0025	0,00844	0,0113	0,00814	0,0275 **	0,00999	-0,0044	0,01041
Sociodemographic predictors												
Gender (1=Female)	0,1704 ***	0,04001	-0,0659	0,05921	-0,2431 ***	0,05440	0,1027 *	0,04963	0,0242	0,06048	-0,2446 ***	0,06368
Age in years	1,5014 ***	0,12104	0,1097	0,19568	1,4146 ***	0,19125	0,5240 **	0,16579	0,9025 ***	0,19478	-0,1419	0,20941
Age squared	-0,0006 ***	0,00006	-0,0002 *	0,00011	-0,0008 ***	0,00010	-0,0004 ***	0,00009	-0,0006 ***	0,00011	-0,0001	0,00012
Objective resources												
Education, completed ¹												
- less than secondary	-0,1895 ***	0,04954	-0,3519 ***	0,08439	-0,2758 ***	0,07820	-0,4760 ***	0,07006	-0,3409 ***	0,07969	-0,4445 ***	0,08617
- tertiary or post-secondary	0,2180 ***	0,05304	0,2763 ***	0,07226	0,4199 ***	0,06114	0,4625 ***	0,05838	0,5228 ***	0,07316	0,3982 ***	0,07972
Household net income, monthly ²												
- mid-income (4th-6th decile)	0,0951 *	0,04652	0,0510	0,07860	0,0160	0,06597	0,0364	0,06700	0,0929	0,07697	0,0821	0,08299
- high income (7th-10th decile)	0,2224 ***	0,05122	0,1509	0,08477	0,0275	0,07210	0,2248 **	0,06933	0,1141	0,08391	0,2064 *	0,08967
- income not disclosed	0,1596 **	0,05615	-0,1577	0,11160	-0,0511	0,08574	-0,0213	0,08092	0,0246	0,09857	0,0308	0,10798
Time in activity ³												
- part-time	0,0366	0,06399	0,3782 ***	0,08916	0,2649 **	0,07763	0,1257	0,07937	0,3174 ***	0,08995	0,2093 *	0,09821
- not applicable/no activity	-0,0879	0,06176	0,0657	0,10849	-0,3312 **	0,10704	-0,2059 *	0,09155	0,0661	0,10206	-0,0099	0,10650
Political attitudes												
Political trust score (0-50)	0,0190 ***	0,00186	0,0131 ***	0,00289	0,0066 *	0,00267	-0,0006	0,00245	-0,0142 ***	0,00288	-0,0135 ***	0,00336
Left-right self-placement ⁴												
- left	0,6404 ***	0,04937	0,6220 ***	0,07550	0,3363 ***	0,06484	0,4952 ***	0,06004	0,2880 ***	0,06932	0,7689 ***	0,07294
- right	0,6386 ***	0,04412	0,5282 ***	0,07191	0,3139 ***	0,05888	0,2937 ***	0,05906	0,3654 ***	0,06817	0,3016 ***	0,07904
Political interest ⁵												
- hardly interested	0,6884 ***	0,04134	0,4402 ***	0,10408	0,2867 ***	0,07778	0,3230 ***	0,07071	0,4090 ***	0,08478	0,4731 ***	0,09654
- quite interested	1,1335 ***	0,05030	1,2310 ***	0,10375	0,8018 ***	0,07981	0,9698 ***	0,07389	0,8991 ***	0,08741	1,1253 ***	0,09728
- very interested	1,3424 ***	0,09339	2,1103 ***	0,11758	1,5533 ***	0,09738	1,4153 ***	0,10185	1,4372 ***	0,11163	1,5847 ***	0,11835
Country indicators⁶												
Albania	0,8177 ***	0,12363	1,4368 ***	0,17420	0,6580 ***	0,14239	-1,3413 ***	0,15473	-0,0834	0,14949	0,8946 ***	0,19552
Bulgaria	-0,1593	0,09071	0,0943	0,18148	-0,9706 ***	0,15160	-1,2360 ***	0,11470	-1,2022 ***	0,14878	0,4823 **	0,18172
Cyprus	0,5408 ***	0,12668	0,5437 **	0,18933	0,4856 **	0,14613	-0,7175 ***	0,15436	-0,0555	0,16134	0,4652 **	0,21483
Czech Republic	-0,6379 ***	0,08885	1,0093 ***	0,16696	0,3673 **	0,13190	0,1268	0,09539	0,5060 ***	0,12062	0,9172 ***	0,17620
Estonia	-0,5045 ***	0,13040	0,1222	0,19092	0,2523	0,15306	-0,9300 ***	0,11037	-0,4007 *	0,15815	0,2158	0,22195
Spain	0,2524 *	0,10007	1,4879 ***	0,16407	0,3638 **	0,13492	0,9864 ***	0,09741	0,6700 ***	0,12012	2,4924 ***	0,16367
Hungary	0,0794	0,09777	-0,7601 **	0,23618	-0,7238 ***	0,16037	-1,9743 ***	0,16940	-0,8790 ***	0,16047	0,3721	0,22256
Lithuania	-0,8391 ***	0,08660	0,4566 *	0,18169	-0,2332	0,15160	-1,4390 ***	0,13883	-1,5487 ***	0,19665	-0,4442 *	0,22396
Poland	-0,2970 **	0,09494	0,4452 *	0,17597	-0,3579 *	0,14835	-0,7228 ***	0,10979	-0,6125 ***	0,14170	-0,2979	0,21455
Portugal	-0,0891	0,10212	-0,0482	0,23678	-0,4493 *	0,17704	-0,8134 ***	0,13774	-0,7344 ***	0,18688	1,2617 ***	0,19009
Russia	-0,3038 **	0,09164	0,3420	0,17759	-0,5573 ***	0,14731	-1,5976 ***	0,12541	-1,4718 ***	0,17989	-0,1203	0,20403
Slovenia	0,0217	0,11373	0,0129	0,20444	-0,3034	0,15775	-1,0514 ***	0,13982	-0,9885 ***	0,21336	0,1076	0,20098
Ukraine	0,4007 ***	0,09599	0,8185 ***	0,17766	-0,1401	0,14207	-1,9393 ***	0,15658	-2,7201 ***	0,28144	-0,2284	0,21313
Kosovo	-0,1582	0,11144	0,4291 *	0,20361	0,0885	0,16109	-0,6205 ***	0,13385	0,5509 ***	0,13718	1,2041 ***	0,19839
Model statistics												
AIC	22049		9480		12586		13267		10089		8770	
N	21'224		22'455		22'419		22'401		22'279		22'411	

Note: Models are adjusted for design, post-stratification and population size (survey weights). Standard errors are robust. Significance levels: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$ for a two-tailed test. Reference categories: 1= secondary education; 2=low income (1st-3rd decile); 3=full-time; 4=neither left nor right; 5=not at all interested; 6=Slovakia.

A8. Study 4: Full results; regressing life dissatisfaction on economic and cultural change

Predictors	β	SE
Economic		
Low income (ref. mid-level)	0,0729 ***	0,01569
High income (ref. mid-level)	-0,0919 ***	0,01176
Income not disclosed (ref. mid-level)	-0,0133	0,01900
Economically very difficult (ref. living comfortably)	1,4267 ***	0,05004
Economically difficult (ref. living comfortably)	0,8473 ***	0,02286
Economically coping (ref. living comfortably)	0,2966 ***	0,01121
Cultural		
Traditional vs. Liberal values (0-54)	-0,0135 **	0,00519
Covariates		
Gender (female=1)	-0,0491 ***	0,01032
Age in years	0,0189 ***	0,00179
Age squared	-0,0002 ***	0,00002
Low education (ref. mid-level)	0,0392 *	0,01524
High education (ref. mid-level)	-0,0182	0,01160
ESS 7	0,0656 ***	0,01277
ESS 8	0,0108	0,01307
Country fixed-effects		
Austria	0,0470	0,02512
Switzerland	-0,1624 ***	0,02475
Denmark	-0,2173 ***	0,02103
Finland	-0,1584 ***	0,01973
United Kingdom	0,2217 ***	0,02107
Hungary	0,6459 ***	0,03068
Italy	0,2997 ***	0,03355
Netherlands	0,0783 ***	0,01880
France	0,6249 ***	0,02394
Poland	0,2022 ***	0,02548
Constant	0,1707 **	0,05682
Pseudo R2 (unweighted, MacFadden)	0.25	
N	32'399	

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*reference category for the country dummies. Significance levels: *=p<0.05 **=p<0.01 ***=p<0.001.*

A9. Study 4: Full results; regressing vote choice on life dissatisfaction

Independent variables	Austria		Denmark		Finland		France		Hungary		Italy	
Life dissatisfaction	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
	0,0136	0,03115	0,0345	0,04619	0,0772 *	0,03232	0,0690 *	0,02723	-0,1513 ***	0,02701	0,11017 *	0,05168
Covariates												
Gender (female=1)	-0,3443 **	0,11370	-0,1386	0,13405	-0,8039 ***	0,09889	-0,5601 ***	0,11867	-0,1153	0,12010	-0,17133	0,23137
Age in years	0,0353	0,02092	-0,0347	0,02122	0,0548 **	0,01968	0,0354	0,02426	-0,0386 *	0,01875	0,07436 *	0,03535
Age squared	-0,0005 *	0,00021	0,0004 *	0,00021	-0,0007 **	0,00020	-0,0006 *	0,00023	0,0001	0,00017	-0,00061	0,00033
Low education (ref. mid-level)	0,3450 *	0,16420	0,0192	0,14591	0,1132	0,12974	0,3207 *	0,15555	0,3917 *	0,17065	-0,16845	0,27191
High education (ref. mid-level)	-1,1086 ***	0,23375	-1,2460	0,22150	-1,1056 ***	0,13297	-1,4464 ***	0,24371	-0,3984 **	0,14424	-0,18575	0,34951
Low income (ref. mid-level)	0,2362	0,15103	-0,1005	0,15704	0,1973	0,13890	-0,1501	0,15125	0,0143	0,15219	-0,53302	0,32794
High income (ref. mid-level)	0,2105	0,15965	-0,2900 ***	0,15928	-0,1987	0,11248	-0,1573	0,15320	-0,2382	0,13430	0,40514	0,33256
Income not disclosed (ref. mid-level)	-0,1697	0,17045	-0,4127	0,28863	-0,0247	0,35764	0,2921	0,27388	0,0391	0,14530	-0,00879	0,29007
Economically very difficult (ref. living comfortably)	1,4525 ***	0,34489	0,3677	0,59629	0,5218	0,28846	0,2591	0,46574	0,5993 *	0,29922	0,36403	0,45532
Economically difficult (ref. living comfortably)	0,4845 *	0,20988	0,3241	0,31485	0,5754 **	0,18623	0,8069 ***	0,20783	0,1946	0,23999	-0,10123	0,37880
Economically coping (ref. living comfortably)	0,2822 *	0,13056	0,3205 *	0,15892	0,3538 *	0,14619	0,3326 *	0,15470	-0,0285	0,21650	0,15444	0,26034
Traditional vs. Postmodern values (0-54)	0,0516 ***	0,01386	0,0623 ***	0,01433	0,0423 ***	0,01151	0,0865 ***	0,01386	0,0893 ***	0,01473	0,15809 ***	0,04091
ESS 6	n/a		ref.		ref.		ref.		ref.		n/a	
ESS 7	ref.		0,2787 *	0,13070	0,0909	0,10361	0,3011 *	0,14118	-0,0558	0,15692	ref.	
ESS 8	0,2426 *	0,11531	n/a		0,1396	0,11060	0,2883 *	0,14316	0,4455 ***	0,12345	1,67316 ***	0,33235
Constant	-1,9325 *	0,81584	-5,1982 ***	0,84132	-0,9116	0,73073	-3,2378	0,81060	-1,4104 *	0,70360	-7,40928 ***	1,68905
Pseudo R2 (unweighted, MacFadden)	0,06		0,08		0,09		0,10		0,08		0,12	
N	2'404		2'418		4'098		3'290		2'488		1'354	

Note: B=Log odds. SE= standard error. Weighted results displayed. Significance levels: *=p<0.05 **=p<0.01 ***=p<0.001.

(A9 continued)

Independent variables	The Netherlands		Norway		Poland		Switzerland		United Kingdom		All countries	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Life dissatisfaction	0,1517 *	0,06141	0,0383	0,03656	-0,0108	0,02031	-0,0196	0,04202	0,0696	0,03897	0,0568 ***	0,00839
Covariates												
Gender (female=1)	-0,1917	0,15691	-0,7602 ***	0,12881	-0,0123	0,09145	-0,2642	0,13543	-0,2843	0,16763	-0,2240 ***	0,04549
Age in years	-0,0496	0,02669	0,0042	0,01845	-0,0249	0,01529	0,0218	0,01832	0,0728 *	0,03182	0,0009	0,00633
Age squared	0,0002	0,00025	-0,0001	0,00018	0,0002	0,00015	-0,0003	0,00018	-0,0007 *	0,00028	-0,0001	0,00006
Low education (ref. mid-level)	0,9181 ***	0,18991	0,3724 *	0,16369	0,5181 ***	0,10023	0,3951 *	0,15153	0,2034	0,17242	0,0556	0,04891
High education (ref. mid-level)	-1,3384 ***	0,29228	-1,1980 ***	0,16906	-0,2450 *	0,11426	-1,2282 ***	0,21895	-0,9876 ***	0,27256	-0,7815 ***	0,06184
Low income (ref. mid-level)	0,2953	0,21134	0,3476 *	0,14206	0,1397	0,12193	-0,0293	0,15947	0,2194	0,22606	-0,1109 *	0,04435
High income (ref. mid-level)	-0,1740	0,20561	-0,0158	0,14092	-0,0796	0,11744	-0,1268	0,14626	0,0728	0,21536	0,0900 *	0,04412
Income not disclosed (ref. mid-level)	0,2448	0,32534	-0,0449	0,46653	-0,0437	0,12618	0,4482 *	0,17932	0,2452	0,28336	0,4295 ***	0,05469
Economically very difficult (ref. living comfortably)	0,5637	0,44024	1,3441 **	0,40681	1,3929 ***	0,38604	0,4009	0,43147	0,5858	0,41357	1,5417 ***	0,09342
Economically difficult (ref. living comfortably)	-0,0226	0,31878	0,2637	0,26167	0,7277 ***	0,19330	0,1187	0,28182	-0,2006	0,31882	1,1337 ***	0,06111
Economically coping (ref. living comfortably)	-0,0498	0,18168	-0,0185	0,12513	0,4436 **	0,16644	-0,0246	0,13664	0,0383	0,16163	0,6348 ***	0,04404
Traditional vs. Liberal values (0-54)	0,1249 ***	0,02070	0,0417 **	0,01330	0,1102 ***	0,01455	0,1207 ***	0,01558	0,0681 ***	0,01776	0,0973 ***	0,00408
ESS 6	n/a		ref.		ref.		ref.		n/a		ref.	
ESS 7	ref.		0,1251	0,16084	0,1380	0,11730	0,1251	0,16084	ref.		-0,1037	0,05936
ESS 8	0,2621	0,15318	-0,0195	0,15784	1,0593 ***	0,10480	-0,0195	0,15784	0,2119	0,16688	0,1010	0,05503
Constant	-7,4397 ***	1,08427	-2,7963 ***	0,74837	-5,5427 ***	0,73776	-4,0434 ***	0,67442	-2,5606 *	1,06586	-4,5926 *	0,23584
Pseudo R2 (unweighted, MacFadden)	0,15		0,09		0,09		0,09		0,06		0,10	
N	2'401		3'368		2'789		2'114		2'638		29'381	

Note: B=Log odds. SE= standard error. Weighted results displayed. Significance levels: *= $p<0.05$ **= $p<0.01$ ***= $p<0.001$.

A10. List of variable codings and question wordings used in empirical studies

Note: Indicators for country, panel wave and ESS round fixed effects are not displayed.

	Item	Measurement	Wording
Study 1	Political efficacy	0-10	"How much influence do you think someone like you can have on government policy, if 0 means "no influence", and 10 "a very strong of influence?"
	Emotional support	0-40	"To what extent can your [relatives/friends/neighbours/colleagues] be available in case of need and show understanding, by talking with you for example, if 0 means "not at all" and 10 "a great deal"?"
	Strong ties	0-40	"With how many relatives living outside of your household do you have a good and close relationship?" "How many good and close friends do you have?"
	Weak ties	0-50	"With how many of your neighbours are you on good terms and enjoy a close relationship?" "With how many work colleagues or acquaintances met during the course of leisure, political, religious or other activities, are you on good terms?"
	Social participation	yes=1, no=0	"Do you take part in clubs' or other groups' activities (religious groups included)?"
	Active in a political party	active member=1, passive member or not a member=0	"I will now read out a list of associations and organisations. Could you tell me for each of them whether you are an active member, a passive member or not a member? [political party]"
	Active in political organization	active member=1, passive member or not a member=0	"I will now read out a list of associations and organisations. Could you tell me for each of them whether you are an active member, a passive member or not a member? [union/environmental/tenants]"
	Active in social organization	active member=1, passive member or not a member=0	"I will now read out a list of associations and organisations. Could you tell me for each of them whether you are an active member, a passive member or not a member? [local or parents/charity/cultural or education/women/sports association]"
	Social trust	0-10	"Would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people, if 0 means "Can't be too careful" and 10 means "Most people can be trusted"?"
	Education, highest attained	secondary level or less=1 completed secondary=2 tertiary-level or advanced vocational degree=3	
	Satisfaction with financial situation	0-10	"Overall how satisfied are you with your financial situation, if 0 means "not at all satisfied" and 10 "completely satisfied"?"
	Political interest	0-10	"Generally, how interested are you in politics?"
	Age	in years, numeric	
Gender	female=1, male=0		

(A10 continued)

	Item	Measurement	Wording	
Study 2	Life satisfaction	0-10	"In general, how satisfied are you with your life?"	
	Positive emotions	0-10	"Are you often plenty of strength, energy and optimism, if 0 means "never" and 10 "always"?"	
	Negative emotions	0-10	"Do you often have negative feelings, such as having the blues, being desperate, suffering from anxiety or depression, if 0 means "never" and 10 "always"?"	
	Voting in popular votes	0-10	"Let's suppose that there are 10 federal polls in a year. How many do you usually take part in?"	
	Boycott intentions	0-10	"If 0 means 'never', and 10 'certainly', to what extent, in the future, you are prepared to take part in a boycott?"	
	Strike intentions	0-10	"If 0 means 'never', and 10 'certainly', to what extent, in the future, you are prepared to take part in a strike?"	
	Demonstration intentions	0-10	"If 0 means 'never', and 10 'certainly', to what extent, in the future, you are prepared to take part in a demonstration?"	
	Satisfaction with financial situation	0-10	"Overall how satisfied are you with your financial situation, if 0 means "not at all satisfied" and 10 "completely satisfied"?"	
	Education, highest attained	secondary level or less=1 completed secondary=2 tertiary-level or advanced vocational degree=3		
	Trust in the Federal Government	0-10	"How much confidence do you have in the Federal Government, if 0 means "no confidence" and 10 means "full confidence"?"	
	Political efficacy	0-10	"How much influence do you think someone like you can have on government policy, if 0 means "no influence", and 10 "a very strong of influence?"	
	Left-right self-identification	0-10	"When they talk about politics, people mention left and right. Personally, where do you position yourself, if 0 means "left" and 10 "right"?"	
Satisfaction with democracy	0-10	"Overall, how satisfied are you with the way in which democracy works in our country, if 0 means "not at all satisfied" and 10 "completely satisfied" ?"		

(A10 continued)

	Item	Measurement	Wording
Study 3	Voting in last national election	yes=1, no=0	"Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]?"
	Contacting a politician or government	yes=1, no=0	"During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you... ..contacted a politician, government or local government official?"
	Campaigning	yes=1, no=0	"During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you... ..worked in a political party or action group? ...worn or displayed a campaign badge/sticker?"
	Boycotting a product	yes=1, no=0	"During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you... ..boycotted certain products?"
	Signing a petition	yes=1, no=0	"During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you... ..signed a petition?"
	Joining a public demonstration	yes=1, no=0	"During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you... ..taken part in a lawful public demonstration?"
	Empowerment	5-25 (index). Single items: 1=strongly disagree - 5=strongly agree"	"I'm always optimistic about my future", "I generally feel positive about myself", "I feel accomplishment of what I do in life", "What I do in life is valuable and worthwhile", "I am free to decide how to live my life"
	Age	in years	
	Gender	female=1, male=0	
	Time availability	not working (0-5 h/week)=1; working part- time (5-34h/week)=2; working full-time (+35 h/week=3	
	Education, highest attained	low=1, mid-level=2, high=3	
	Income, household	low=1, mid-level=2, high=3, undisclosed=4	
	Political trust	0-50 (index)	"...on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust...[country]'s parliament/the legal system/the police/politicians/political parties?"
	Political interest	1=not at all interested - 4=very interested	"How interested would you say you are in politics?"
Left-right self-identification	0-4=left; 6-10=right; 5=no partisan preference	"In politics people sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right'. Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?"	
Age of democracy	new=1, old=0		

(A10 continued)

	Item	Measurement	Wording
Study 4	RPP vote	yes=1, other party=0	
	Life dissatisfaction	0-10 (reversed)	"All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? If 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied"
	Income, household	low=1, mid-level=2, high=3, undisclosed=4	
	Subjective economic insecurity	very difficult=4, difficult=3, coping=2, living comfortably=1	"Which of the descriptions comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?"
	Traditional vs. Postmodern values	9-48	"I will briefly describe some people. Tell me how much each person is or is not like you. It is important to her/him... [to live in safe and secure surroundings/follow traditions and customs/do what is told and follow rules/that government is strong and ensures safety/to behave properly/that people are treated equally and have equal opportunities/to understand different people/to make own decisions and be free/to care for nature and environment]."
	Political distrust	0-30 (index) (reversed)	"on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust...[country]'s [parliament/politicians/political parties]?"
	Dissatisfaction with democracy	0-10 (reversed)	"on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?"
	Negative views on immigration	1-31 (reversed)	"It is generally bad or good for [country's] economy that people come to live here from other countries" "[Country's] cultural life is in general undermined or enriched by immigrants" "Immigrants make [country] a worse or better place to live"
	Gender	female=1, male=0	
	Age	in years, numeric	
Education, highest attained	low=1, mid-level=2, high=3		