The Inequality of Participation:
Re-examining the Role of Social Stratification and Post-Communism on Political Participation in Europe*

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Abstract: This article compares the determinants of political participation, from voting and signing petitions to boycotting, across 23 European countries, posing the question whether and to what degree social inequalities in political participation differ between post-communist and Western countries. The data for the analysis is from the second round of the ESS survey, conducted in 2004–2005. The analysis focuses on the role of education, occupation, and gender in shaping the chances of engaging in political action, while also controlling for a range of sociological, political, and demographic variables. Interaction effects between individual variables and a post-communist dummy variable are used to directly compare the statistical significance of the difference in coefficients between post-communist and Western countries. The article finds that the observed effects of the post-communist context are actually accounted for by the indirect effects of a number of individual-level variables. In particular, education, occupation, and gender have stronger effects in post-communist countries than Western countries on many forms of political participation; in other words, the post-communist countries exhibit somewhat larger inequalities in political participation than in the West.

Keywords: political participation, political behaviour, social inequality, social stratification, post-communism

Introduction

In most democracies around the world, citizens have a range of mechanisms, in addition to elections, through which they can voice political discontent or satisfaction, influence political decision-making, or bring about policy change. Civic initiatives, petitions, boycotting, demonstrating, and joining civic and po-

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litical organisations are some of the ways citizens can make their voice heard. Numerous scholars have argued that such forms of non-electoral political participation can have an important influence on a democratic political system: they help ensure the accountability of public officials by providing information about citizens' preferences [Innes and Booher 2004]; they can improve decisions by incorporating citizens' local knowledge and experience [Fischer 2000]; and they can help remedy political injustice in decisions by providing a voice for the less advantaged [Fraser 2003, 2008]. Thus, a number of democratic theorists envision that the proper institutionalisation of different avenues of political participation should *reduce* political inequalities that are known to exist in electoral processes, rather than increase inequalities by providing new ways for the well off to secure advantages.

The degree to which citizens as a whole participate in politics has become a pressing issue in many countries where voter turnout and civic engagement have been undergoing long-term decline. In post-communist countries, debates about political participation are often rooted in Marc Morjé Howard's 'weakness of civil society' hypothesis, according to which citizens in post-communist countries exhibit lower levels of civic and political engagement compared to other democracies due to the persistence of friendship networks in the region, the lack of trust towards others outside of those networks, the legacy of distrust towards communist organisations, and disappointment with post-communist politics [Howard 2002, 2003]. Howard's results also complement a large literature on the problems of democracy building in post-communist countries, particularly the problems of citizen apathy and disillusionment [e.g. Smolar 1996; Greskovits 1998; Ekiert and Kubik 2001; Mihaylova 2004]. While those results are now the common wisdom about post-communist politics, we should question – two decades since 1989 – whether and how the communist legacy continues to exert a strong influence on non-electoral political participation.

Many analyses of non-electoral political participation in Central Europe seem to focus on how much people participate, such as how many civic associations people are members of, growth in the size of civil society, and what political capacities those civic associations have [Frič 2004; Rakušanová 2005, 2008; Vajdová 2005]. While those are important issues, civic participation needs to be clearly differentiated from political participation, and that not all people engage in political action via organised interest groups. Further, the issue of *how much* people participate in civic or political action should not blind us from the equally important issue of *who* participates and what kinds of socio-demographic characteristics those people have. Insofar as systems of social stratification differentiate people's social status into higher and lower, status differences in political participation can also be understood as *inequalities of participation*.

The inequality of political participation should be seen as a fundamental problem of any democratic political system. One of the major tenets of democratic equality among contemporary political theorists is that everyone whose

interests are affected by political decisions should be included in the process of making them [Young 2000; Shapiro 2001; Fraser 2003]. Even in countries that guarantee political equality through complex systems of political and civil rights, the effective ability of all citizens to make use of those rights can vary. If the effective use of opportunities for political participation is socially stratified, and if that stratification is widespread and exhibits patterns of regularity, then we can say that there is inequality in political participation in that situation [Schlozman, Verba and Brady 1995, 1999]. Such inequalities can emerge from differences in the economic resources needed to cover the opportunity costs of participation [Parry, Moyser and Day 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 2003], due to differences in information and knowledge between different groups and due to the broader problems of inequality and exclusion in the society at large.

It might seem intuitive to expect that inequalities in political participation would be lower in post-communist countries compared to Western Europe, due to the breadth of democratic opposition movements the region has witnessed and due to the egalitarian legacy of the past communist regimes. However, this article anticipates that that intuition is wrong. Political participation is also influenced by the openness of the political system, the perceived efficacy of participation and possibilities for political change. The article thus hypothesises that inequalities in political participation are likely to be *higher* in post-communist countries, as respondents of lower status are more likely to see the political system as closed and unresponsive to the concerns of ordinary people.

In a broader light, this article contributes to the emerging literature on the determinants of political participation at the individual level [Mutz 2006; Gallego 2007; Caínzos, Ferrin and Voces 2007]. If social stratification factors like income ad education shape inequalities in voter turnout, do those factors shape, to the same degree, inequalities in other political actions? Are factors like social trust and networks associated with some forms of political participation more than others – and do such associations differ between countries? Above all, what differences are there in the determinants of political participation between Western and post-communist countries, and what do they tell us about political inequality? This article takes a step forward in assessing the role of social stratification, the post-communist context, and other factors on different forms of political participation across 23 West, Central, and East European countries, by making use of the second wave of the European Social Survey (ESS), conducted in 2004–2005.[1]

The article is organised as follows. The following section reviews the international literature on the determinants of political participation. The subsequent

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[1] Only 23 of the 25 ESS countries are included in the analysis below. Since the article focuses on the comparison of political participation between Western European and post-communist countries, Turkey is excluded, as it does not easily fit into that comparative framework. In addition, the French ESS questionnaire excluded a question that is part of a composite measure of social networks, and thus the French data are also excluded.

section then outlines the hypotheses to be tested in the analysis, as well as the data and methods used. The presentation and interpretation of the analysis is then followed by a set of concluding reflections about differences in inequalities of political participation between the two sets of countries examined.

Who participates? A brief overview of the literature

Since the publication of Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action* in 1965, political scientists have tended to view organised civic and political participation as problems of collective action. Citizens can 'free ride' by receiving the benefits of strong civic organisations and political institutions, while not contributing the time and resources needed to realise those benefits. For example, workers may benefit from the services that trade unions can offer (wage bargaining, the defence of workers' interests) but may be not willing to financially support unions, particularly if they think that their contribution will have a negligible impact on what the union does. To solve the free rider problem, Olson observed that unions provide a number of 'non-collective incentives' (membership-based benefits) to entice workers to join; alternatively, they can also force workers to join by having government require that workers become members.

The free rider problem can also be applied to forms of political participation like voter turnout. If citizens believe that voting is costly (e.g. in terms of time and energy) and that their decision to vote would have a negligible impact on the electoral outcome, we would expect that voter turnout would be much lower than it actually is. Aldrich [1993] thus posed the question of whether rational choice theories can explain who and why people vote in the numbers that they do. A core premise of such theories is that the expected utility of voting for individual voters must be higher than the aggregate costs of turnout. Different voters in different contexts or life situations will have different expected utilities, and thus different turnout rates. While not rejecting the rational choice approach, Aldrich argued that turnout can be high because the benefits and costs of voting for many citizens are very small. In terms of stratification, poorer and lower-status voters might have higher opportunity costs of voting than voters with higher income and status. In sum, the decision to participate in an election can be due to very small variations in benefits and costs, such as the time and costs of travelling to the poll, or whether or not there is bad weather on Election Day. Those arguments have spurred a large literature on the role of institutional and legal conditions that can significantly impact the calculus of voting.

Opposed to the rational choice approach, social status-based explanations of participation focus on the role of stratification variables like income and occupation in shaping people's decision to vote. In *Who Votes?* [1980], Wolfinger and Rosenstone found that, within their model, receiving a high school diploma leads to a roughly 22% increase in the probability of voting across income groups,

whereas going to college also increases turnout, but more so for people of lower income. In terms of the effect of age, they challenged the view that age has a strong non-linear effect on voting (i.e. increasing with age, but then declining as voters become very old), observing instead that the lower turnout rates among the very old are not due to age per se, but due to differences in education, marital status, and sex. Earlier studies by Glenn and Grimes [1968] and Verba and Nie [1972] also identified interaction effects between age and other demographic variables. While these studies are relatively old, they set the groundwork for the kinds of social and demographic variables to be tested in explanations of turnout.

While sociological studies often focus on the statistical significance of individual demographic factors, Matsusaka and Palda [1999] contended that the focus of the analysis should rather be placed on the overall explanatory power of such models. Using survey and aggregate data for four Canadian national elections from 1979 to 1988, they found that a long list of demographic variables (age, income, education, gender, community size, occupational status, etc.) can explain no more than 15% of the variation in turnout. In other words, 'although individuals with certain demographic characteristics have higher propensities to vote (more educated and older people, for example), and contextual factors such as campaign expenditures have significant positive effects on an individual's likelihood of voting, the overall ability of these variables to organize the data is weak' [ibid: 432]. Since most of the variation in turnout cannot be explained, i.e. turnout is more or less random in nature, they conclude that the inability to explain turnout supports rational choice theory. According to Aldrich, voting behaviour hinges on relatively small factors like traffic conditions on Election Day; since such factors are basically immeasurable, turnout at the individual level should appear unpredictable and variable, which is precisely what Matsusaka and Palda observed.

Research on non-electoral political participation often differentiates such behaviour into two types: conventional political action and protest activity. Conventional action involves attending meetings, working for political organisations, joining political parties, contacting officials, etc. Besides demographic characteristics, scholars have (not surprisingly) found that citizens' interest in politics is a key determinant of whether or not they would be willing to participate in political action. Schlozman, Verba, and Brady's critique of rational choice theories of participation was based on the claim that activists do not participate out of material benefits, but because of the feeling of civic duty, 'civic motivations and a desire to influence policy' [Schlozman, Verba and Brady 1995: 32]. Similarly, citizens who believe that government is responsive to citizens' needs are thought to be more willing to participate compared to others [Teixeira 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 2003].

Scholars have also claimed that social characteristics influence probabilities of participation as well. Schlozman, Verba, and Brady [1995] contended that explanations of political participation need to go beyond analysis of social status to

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examine the role of civic capacities and skills, such that citizens who are better at organising or speaking would be more likely to participate in certain forms of political action. Research on social capital has found that social connections, such as the size of friendship networks, would lead to more participation in political life [Almond and Verba 1963]. Similarly, Bădescu, Sum, and Uslaner [2004] found that social trust contributes to the chances that citizens – in the case of Romania and Moldova – would become politically active in their communities.

By contrast, some scholars claim that citizens who participate in protest activities are thought to have different stratification and attitudinal characteristics than those who participate in conventional actions. Most of the research on protest activities has come from the social movement literature. For example, it can be contended that people who protest are those who have become dissatisfied with political and economic conditions or the way government has handled specific issues [McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996]. Protesters also differ in their value systems and are more likely to hold post-materialist values, such as demonstrating in order to protect encroachments on the freedom of the press [Inglehart 1990; Bean 1991]. Generational factors may also play a role, as young people may be more likely to protest than older citizens [Bean 1991; Dalton 2002].

Against the stratification approach, Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst [2005] argue that protesting is simply one form of participation among others, i.e. that the form of participation citizens choose is based on strategic decisions of efficacy and not based on the 'type' of person the protester is. As a result, those scholars predict that there should be a great deal of similarity between people who engage in conventional and protest activity, such as in their political interests, attitudes, and political orientations.

From the literature above, it is clear that an analysis of inequalities in political participation cannot simply focus on conditions like education and income in shaping participation. Rather, such factors need to be supplemented with control variables on social trust, social networks, satisfaction with politics, and so on. While the inclusion of such control variables will likely weaken the effects of the stratification variables, they at the same time provide a clearer picture of the kinds of conditions that determine the chances of engaging in different forms of political action.

Data, hypotheses, and methods

The data for our analysis of the determinants of political participation come from the second round of the ESS, conducted in 2004 and 2005. Compared to other social surveys, the ESS is relatively theory-driven and is designed to create data that can explain the interaction between institutions, beliefs, and behaviour across the European continent. The third round of the survey was conducted in 2006–2007, but the final international data file was not yet completed in time for this analysis.

ESS is an ideal survey to use because it contains a core module focused on social variables like media use, social trust, political interest, political participation, political orientations, social values, and demographic and stratification background variables.[2] The variables for political participation are all binary YES/NO questions, and thus binary logistic regression was used as the main method of analysis. The dependent variables include:

- VOTE: Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]? ('national' refers to the primary legislative body; in the Czech case this is the June 2002 elections to the House of Deputies). Response: Yes = 1, No = 0.

The non-electoral forms of participation are measured by asking 'During the last 12 months, have you…'

- CONTACT: '…contacted a politician, government or local government official?'
- WRKPP: '…worked in a political party or action group?'
- WRKORG: '…worked in another organisation or association?'
- BADGE: '…worn or displayed a campaign badge/sticker?'
- PETITION: '…signed a petition?'
- PROTEST: '…taken part in a lawful public demonstration?'
- BOYCOTT: '…boycotted certain products?'

All of the variables have be recoded so that a Yes response = 1, and a No response = 0.

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for these variables in terms of the valid percent of respondents in each country who indicated that they participated in the given form of political action. Participation rates are clearly lower in post-communist countries compared to Western Europe, but there are large differences in the forms of participation. In total, 17% of Czech respondents claimed to have contacted a politician or government official in the last year, which is comparable to the level in many Western countries. Petition use in Slovakia is also quite high and comparable to advanced democracies. While Ukrainians participate relatively little, their reported engagement in public demonstrations is among the highest in Europe (arguably due to the political situation of the country at that time). This suggests the importance of not making blanket statements about the incidence of political participation in post-communist countries; rather, we should observe and understand how and why different types of participation become actively used.

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[2] The survey data, documentation, and questionnaires are all freely available on the ESS website at www.europeansocialsurvey.org.

Table 1. Percentage of respondents in each country engaging in different forms of political participation over the last 12 months

	VOTE	CONTACT	WRKPP	WRKORG	BADGE	PETITION	PROTEST	BOYCOTT
				Western Europe				
Austria	81%	19%	11%	24%	9%	25%	7%	20%
Belgium	92%	14%	4%	15%	5%	22%	6%	10%
Denmark	92%	19%	5%	24%	8%	29%	5%	28%
Finland	79%	22%	4%	31%	14%	26%	2%	29%
Greece	90%	14%	6%	5%	3%	3%	5%	5%
Iceland	92%	30%	14%	49%	34%	49%	15%	28%
Ireland	81%	23%	5%	13%	8%	23%	6%	11%
Luxembourg	72%	21%	5%	24%	6%	21%	15%	14%
Netherlands	82%	14%	4%	17%	5%	24%	4%	8%
Norway	86%	23%	8%	25%	23%	39%	11%	24%
Portugal	72%	6%	2%	3%	3%	5%	4%	2%
Spain	82%	13%	7%	18%	12%	25%	34%	14%
Sweden	89%	14%	3%	24%	13%	49%	8%	35%
Switzerland	67%	14%	7%	13%	9%	38%	9%	25%
UK	68%	15%	2%	8%	7%	36%	4%	21%
W. Germany	82%	10%	3%	21%	5%	32%	7%	23%
AVE WEST	**82%**	**17%**	**6%**	**20%**	**10%**	**28%**	**9%**	**19%**

|	VOTE	CONTACT	WRKPP	WRKORG	BADGE	PETITION	PROTEST	BOYCOTT
				Central and Eastern Europe				
Czech Rep.	56%	17%	3%	8%	5%	14%	4%	7%
E. Germany	77%	13%	4%	20%	3%	33%	13%	16%
Estonia	59%	9%	2%	3%	3%	4%	2%	4%
Hungary	78%	10%	1%	2%	2%	6%	2%	5%
Poland	65%	7%	3%	6%	4%	9%	2%	5%
Slovakia	74%	8%	3%	8%	5%	25%	4%	12%
Slovenia	69%	11%	3%	2%	2%	6%	2%	2%
Ukraine	85%	9%	4%	2%	13%	9%	22%	2%
AVE EAST	**70%**	**11%**	**3%**	**6%**	**5%**	**13%**	**6%**	**7%**

Source: ESS Round 2, 2004–2005.

One limitation in the data in Table 1 could be that self-reported turnout rates for the country samples can differ from the official turnout rates in the respective national elections. That would occur if the sample were not representative of the voting population at large, or if respondents did not accurately report or remember their voting behaviour. In 2002, turnout to the Czech parliamentary elections was 58%, quite close to the 56% self-reported in the survey. For Hungary, turnout in the first round of the parliamentary elections was 74%, again close to the self-reported rate of 78%. For Slovakia, the actual turnout in the 2002 elections was 70%, compared to the self-reported rate of 74%. By contrast, Poland's 2001 Sejm elections had a turnout rate of 46%, which is quite far from the self-reported rate of 65%.

Differences between countries in the representativeness of self-reported voting to official turnout statistics could cause problems in the possibility of biased regression coefficients. The vote validation study by Bernstein and his associates [Bernstein, Chadha and Montjoy 2001: 24] found that 'people who are under the most pressure to vote are the ones most likely to misrepresent their behaviour when they fail to do so'. This means, according to one of the most recent vote validation studies in the United States, that 'education is the most consistent predictor of over-reporting… over-reporters also tend to be more partisan, older, more likely to claim that they were contacted by a political party, more likely to be regular church attendees, and… people who feel that it is a civic duty to vote' [Ansolabehere and Hersh 2008: 11]. Fortunately, there is also evidence from vote validation studies that false responses to self-reported voting are not likely to have a material impact on survey research using such data [Sigelman 1982; Anderson and Silver 1986]. Since there is no way to validate whether respondents correctly report their participation in other forms of political action, such survey data have to be taken at face value.

To describe the overall degree of non-electoral participation in different countries, the seven variables above were summarised for each respondent, i.e. adding the number of types of participation each respondent has done in the previous year. It was then possible to measure the average participation rates by country, which are depicted in Figure 1. It should be emphasised that the graph does not depict the total number of participatory acts respondents have done, only the average number of *types* of participatory action. As would be expected, respondents in post-communist countries participate in the fewest forms of political participation, with the average Hungarian or the average Pole engaging in only .24 and .36 forms of participation, respectively. By contrast, Scandinavians employ the largest set of political actions, with the average Icelander claiming to have done over two different forms of participation in the previous year.

As discussed in the previous section, analyses of political participation often categorise such actions into conventional and protest forms [e.g. Badescu, Sum and Uslaner 2004]. The problem, however, is that different kinds of actions count as conventional or protest in different countries and contexts [Smith 2009]. In addi-

Figure 1. Mean participation rates by country, excluding voter turnout
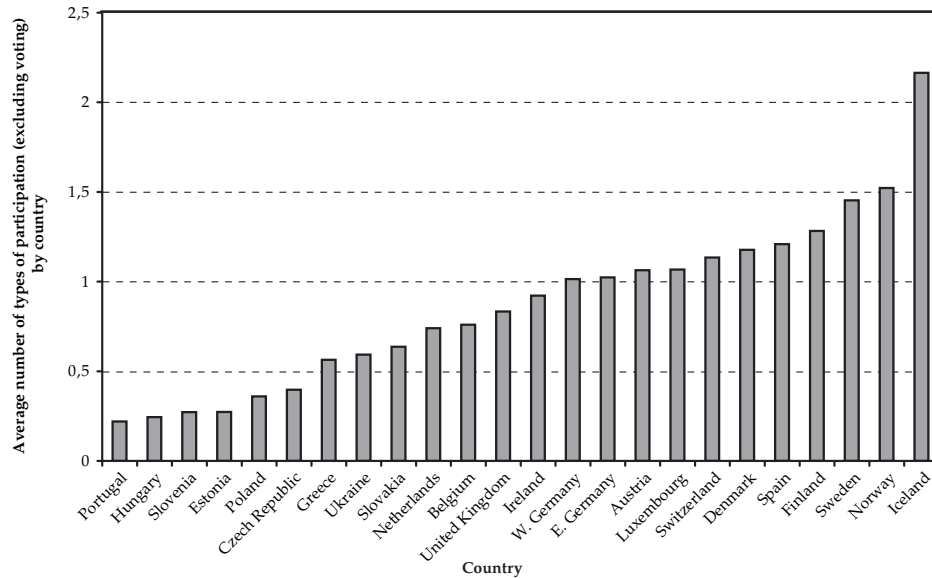
Source: ESS Round 2, 2004–2005.

tion, the determinants of different forms of participation can vary greatly, as Urban and Zvěřinová [2009] observed in the case of environmental political behaviour. For such reasons, we will analyse each form of political participation separately, i.e. without regard to whether it is seen as a conventional or protest activity.

Independent variables used to test the inequality of political participation were selected directly from the theoretical and empirical literature in the previous section. The selection of variables also draws directly from the author's recent research on educational and social stratification [Matějů et al. 2007; Matějů and Smith 2008; Veselý and Smith 2008]. First, to test the hypothesis that respondents of higher social status are more likely to participate in many forms of political action, I used two variables, EDUYRS, a measure of years of education, and the International Socio-economic Index (ISEI), which is a standard measure of the occupational status of respondents. These variables provide a simpler and clearer picture of the effects of education and occupation than variables based on educational and class categories; further, the variable on educational categories also was not used due to a larger degree of non-response and deviation in the coding of data. A variable on family income also was not used due to the large degree of non-response. Lastly, to test for the degree of gender inequality, the dummy variable FEMALE (female = 1, male = 0) was used in the analysis.

Second, to control and measure the effects of other socio-demographic conditions, the following variables were used:

- AGE and AGE2: age of the respondent, and to capture non-linear effects, age squared divided by 100.
- RELIG is a variable indicating the respondents' self-reported degree of religiosity, as religion is often regarded as a strong predictor of political activity. Religiosity is measured through responses to the question: 'Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?' with responses ranging on a 12-point scale from 0 = not at all religious, to 11 = very religious.
- CITY and VILLAGE are dummy variables relating to whether the respondent reports that he or she lives in a large city (1 = yes, 0 = no) or in a village or farm (1 = yes, 0 = no). The reference category for these variables is the category of respondents living in towns and suburban areas.
- UNION is a dummy variable for whether the respondent is currently a member of a trade union = 1, if not = 0.
- STUDENT is a dummy variable for whether the respondent's main activity for the week prior to the interview was studying = 1, if not = 0.

Third, to test the hypothesis that citizens in post-communist countries are less likely to participate in non-electoral forms of action than citizens without a communist past, a dummy variable POSTCOM was created indicating a post-communist country = 1, if not 0. The German data were split so that respondents in the former GDR were coded as post-communist. To account for national level effects, dummy variables were created for each country.

Fourth, to test the hypothesis that social trust is a strong determinant of political participation, I used principle components analysis (PCA) to construct a latent variable TRUST based on three standard questions:

- 'Would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?' (Scale of 0 through 10; 0 = you can't be too careful, 10 = most people can be trusted).
- 'Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?' (Scale of 0 through 10; 0 = most people would try to take advantage of me, 10 = most people would try to be fair).
- 'Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?' (Scale of 0 through 10; 0 = people mostly look out for themselves, 10 = people mostly try to be helpful).

These questions work well across countries, and have factor weights of .84, .84,

and .80 respectively for the latent variable TRUST, which in turn explains 68% of the variance in the underlying three variables.

Fifth, to test the hypothesis that people who are more interested in politics are more likely to participate, I also used PCA to create a latent variable INTPOL comprised of three standard questions on political interest:

- 'How interested would you say you are in politics?' with responses ranging from 1 = not at all interested, to 4 = very interested.
- 'How often does politics seem so complicated that you can't really understand what is going on?' with responses ranging from frequently (1), regularly, occasionally, seldom and never (5).
- 'How difficult or easy do you find it to make your mind up about political issues?' with responses ranging from very difficult (1), difficult, neither easy nor difficult, easy, and very easy (5).

The first two questions were recoded so that higher values indicate higher levels of interest and understanding. It should also be mentioned that these questions and the social trust questions were asked prior to the political participation questions in the survey, which avoids the bias that respondents' political activities would impact how they report their political interests, which some studies have found can lead to biased responses [Bishop, Oldendick and Tuchfarber 1984; Abramson, Silver and Anderson 1987]. The questions work well across countries and have factor weights of .74, .80, and .80 respectively, creating a latent variable INTPOL that explains 61% of the variance of the underlying three variables.

Sixth, to test the hypothesis that respondents with larger social networks are more likely to participate, I created a relatively unique composite variable SOCNET that incorporates questions on socialising with a question on personal Internet use, since the latter is an important way many people maintain their friendship networks:

- 'How often do you meet socially with friends, relatives or work colleagues?' with responses ranging from never (=1), less than a month, once a month, several times a month, once a week, several times a week, and every day (=7).
- 'Compared to other people of your age, how often would you say you take part in social activities?' with responses ranging from much less than most (=1), less than most, about the same, more than most, and much more than most (=5).
- 'How often do you use the internet, the World Wide Web or e-mail – whether at home or at work – for your personal use?' with responses ranging from 1 to 7 on a similar scale as the first question.

The Internet question worked with the other questions better than any other vari-able I was able to identify. Overall, the three questions have factor weights of .77, .74, and .62, respectively, creating a latent variable SOCNET that explains 51% of the variance in the underlying three variables. The French survey omit-ted the question on Internet use, and thus the entire French dataset was omitted from the final analysis. This, however, does not have a material impact on the re-sults.

Lastly, it was important to test whether satisfaction or dissatisfaction with politics has different effects across forms of participation. Since political partici-pation could spring from one's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the govern-ment, the economic situation, or problems with the quality of democratic de-cision-making, a composite variable SATPOL was constructed based on three similar questions:

- 'On the whole how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in [country]?' with responses based on an 11-point scale from extremely dissatisfied =0, to extremely satisfied = 10.
- 'Now thinking about the [country] government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?' with responses based on the same 11-point scale.
- 'And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?' with responses based on the same 11-point scale.

These questions work very well together with factor scores of .85, .88, and .84, respectively, creating a latent variable SATIS that explains a large 73% of the vari-ance in the underlying three variables.

Results of the analysis

One of the primary goals of the analysis is to compare differences in the determi-nants of political participation between Western and post-communist countries in the ESS file. This was achieved through four separate logistic regression analy-ses. The first regression incorporated the data for all countries and included the POSTCOM variable to measure the direct effect of post-communism. In the sec-ond and third regressions, the ESS file was split so that two separate regressions could be run on Western and post-communist countries, respectively. Lastly, the fourth regression tested for the statistical significance of the differences in coef-ficients between the two sets of countries, as reported in the second and third regressions. As a whole, the four sets of regressions for each of the forms of politi-cal participation provide a comprehensive picture and direct comparison of the determinants of participation across Europe.

Since the significance test is the most important aspect of the analysis, the reasoning behind the approach should be briefly outlined.[3] As an example, let's say we want to compare the regression coefficients of years of education (EDUYRS) between Western and post-communist countries by testing the null hypothesis that $EDUYRS_{POSTCOM} = EDUYRS_{WEST}$. To do this, we create a dummy variable (POSTCOM) that is coded 1 for a post-communist country and 0 for a Western one, and an interaction effect EDUYRS*POSTCOM to be included in the regression equation. Our model includes a constant A. Also, let's say we want to compare the effects of 11 years of schooling between the two sets of countries. In this example, the predicted value for the Western countries would be: f(West) = f(A + 0*POSTCOM + 11*EDUYRS + 11*0*EDUYRS*POSTCOM). Since the value of POSTCOM is 0 for Western countries, the value of the interaction effect also is 0. As a result, f(West) = f(A + 11*EDUYRS), or in other words, the coefficient for EDUYRS in the regression model with interaction effects is the slope of education for Western countries only (i.e. it is the same as the coefficient for Western countries in the second regression).

Similarly, the predicted value of f(East) at 11 years of schooling = f(A + 1*POST-COM + 11*EDUYRS + 11*1*EDUYRS*POSTCOM). In this case, the slope for education in post-communist countries is f(11*EDUYRS + 11*1*EDUYRS*POSTCOM). This is why, if we look at Tables 2a–h, the coefficients in the regressions with interaction effects ($B_E - B_W$) are equivalent to the coefficients for EAST minus the coefficients for WEST. In a similar vein, *the p-value of the interaction effect indicates the statistical significance to which the coefficient of education differs between the two sets of countries*.

Following this reasoning, interaction effects between POSTCOM and all of the individual-level variables were used as a way to directly compare the determinants of political participation between the two sets of countries. This creates a very large regression table, since the regression includes both the two-way interactions and their main effects. But since the coefficients for the main effects are equivalent to the coefficients in the WEST regression, they are not included in Tables 2a–h. The country dummy variables are also not reported due to space constraints and the limited information of interest that they provide.[4]

Many of the coefficients go in the direction that one would expect from the empirical literature [Caínzos, Ferrin and Voces 2007], yet there are also some surprising results. Looking at the regressions for all countries (the ALL columns), the coefficients for POSTCOM are not particularly strong, and are even insig-

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[3] Readers interested in how to perform tests of significance in SPSS regressions can consult the very useful website of the UCLA Academic Technology Services (http://www.ats. ucla.edu/stat/spss/default.htm). Jaccard [2001] also provides a theoretical analysis of the issues involved in interpreting interaction effects in logistic regressions.

[4] The full results of the analysis (including, e.g., the country dummy coefficients, standardised coefficients, etc.) are available upon request by contacting the author.

Table 2a. Determinants of VOTE across Europe. Unstandardised coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels are reported. Country dummies and the fixed effects for $B_E - B_W$ are not shown.

	VOTE			
	ALL	West	East	$B_E - B_W$
ISEI	.010*** (.001)	.008*** (.001)	.013*** (.002)	.005* (.003)
EDU	.032*** (.006)	.027*** (.007)	.050*** (.012)	.023 (.014)
FEMALE	.172*** (.033)	.197*** (.042)	.124* (.054)	−.073 (.068)
AGE	.089*** (.006)	.097*** (.007)	.074*** (.010)	−.023 (.012)
AGE2	−.059*** (.006)	−.064*** (.007)	−.048*** (.010)	.016 (.012)
INTPOL	.460*** (.019)	.513*** (.024)	.365*** (.031)	−.148*** (.039)
TRUST	.130*** (.019)	.130*** (.025)	.125*** (.030)	−.005 (.039)
SOCNET	.187*** (.019)	.215*** (.025)	.145*** (.031)	−.070 (.040)
SATISPOL	.209*** (.020)	.198*** (.025)	.219*** (.032)	.021 (.040)
CITY	−.198** (.044)	−.178** (.057)	−.234** (.070)	−.056 (.090)
VILLAGE	.217*** (.036)	.208*** (.046)	.237*** (.060)	.029 (.076)
RELIG	.042*** (.006)	.052*** (.008)	.024* (.010)	−.028* (.012)
UNION	.384*** (.044)	.424*** (.051)	.279** (.087)	−.145 (.101)
STUDENT	−.225** (.084)	−.173 (.097)	−.333 (.170)	−.160 (.196)
POSTCOM	−.439*** (.114)			−.100 (.346)
Country dummies	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown
Constant	−2.079*** (.170)	−2.232*** (.205)	−2.331*** (.279)	−2.232*** (.205)
Nagelkerke R–square	**.227**	**.223**	**.192**	**.229**
Hosmer and Lemeshow test (Sig.)	.015	.018	.355	.001
N. cases	30693	21817	8876	30693

*** indicates $p < 0.001$, ** indicates $p < 0.01$, and * indicates $p < 0.05$.

Table 2b. Determinants of CONTACT across Europe. Unstandardised coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels are reported. Country dummies and the fixed effects for $B_E - B_W$ are not shown.

	CONTACT			
	All	West	East	$B_E - B_W$
ISEI	.005*** (.001)	.003* (.001)	.009*** (.003)	.006* (.003)
EDU	.035*** (.005)	.028*** (.006)	.077*** (.014)	.049** (.015)
FEMALE	−.140*** (.033)	−.142*** (.038)	−.157* (.069)	−.016 (.079)
AGE	.081*** (.007)	.092*** (.008)	.045** (.013)	−.047** (.015)
AGE2	−.074*** (.006)	−.085*** (.007)	−.038** (.013)	.048** (.015)
INTPOL	.432*** (.019)	.480*** (.022)	.269*** (.040)	−.211*** (.046)
TRUST	−.068** (.020)	−.083*** (.023)	−.028 (.039)	.055 (.045)
SOCNET	.356*** (.020)	.367*** (.023)	.324*** (.039)	−.043 (.046)
SATISPOL	−.054** (.020)	−.076** (.023)	−.004 (.039)	.072 (.045)
CITY	−.254*** (.047)	−.238*** (.055)	−.318** (.092)	−.081 (.107)
VILLAGE	.302*** (.036)	.298*** (.041)	.327*** (.075)	.029 (.086)
RELIG	.042*** (.006)	.047*** (.007)	.031*** (.012)	−.016 (.014)
UNION	.182*** (.038)	.207*** (.042)	.035 (.097)	−.172 (.106)
STUDENT	−.041 (.094)	−.010 (.103)	−.157 (.230)	−.147 (.252)
POSTCOM	.109 (.117)			.440 (.423)
Country dummies	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown
Constant	−4.937*** (.181)	−5.047*** (.205)	−4.608*** (.370)	−5.047*** (.205)
Nagelkerke R–square	**.136**	**.143**	**.100**	**.139**
Hosmer and Lemeshow test (Sig.)	.003	.009	.929	.191
N. cases	32278	23112	9156	32278

*** indicates p < 0.001, ** indicates p <0.01, and * indicates p <0.05.

Table 2c. Determinants of WRKPP. Unstandardised coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels are reported. Country dummies and the fixed effects for $B_E - B_W$ are not shown.

	WRKPP			
	ALL	West	East	$B_E - B_W$
ISEI	.003 (.002)	.002 (.002)	.006 (.004)	.004 (.005)
EDU	.000 (.009)	−.008 (.009)	.060* (.024)	(.068)** (.025)
FEMALE	−.189** (.057)	−.150* (.063)	−.357** (.129)	−.208 (.144)
AGE	.066*** (.011)	.069*** (.012)	.048 (.025)	−.022 (.028)
AGE2	−.051*** (.011)	−.054*** (.012)	−.036 (.024)	.019 (.027)
INTPOL	.821*** (.034)	.835*** (.038)	.757*** (.077)	−.078 (.086)
TRUST	.016 (.033)	−.013 (.038)	.024 (.071)	.010 (.080)
SOCNET	.489*** (.035)	.503*** (.040)	.448*** (.072)	−.056 (.083)
SATISPOL	−.050 (.033)	−.060 (.037)	−.016 (.069)	.045 (.078)
CITY	−.098 (.076)	.006 (.086)	−.489** (.168)	−.495** (.188)
VILLAGE	.255*** (.062)	.303*** (.069)	.081 (.139)	−.223 (.155)
RELIG	.034** (.010)	.037** (.011)	.023 (.022)	−.014 (.025)
UNION	.377*** (.063)	.413*** (.068)	.211 (.165)	−.202 (.178)
STUDENT	.546*** (.142)	.572*** (.155)	.441 (.349)	−.131 (.382)
POSTCOM	.600** (.192)			.424 (.755)
Country dummies	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown
Constant	−6.348*** (.310)	−6.376*** (.344)	−5.952*** (.672)	−6.376*** (.344)
Nagelkerke R–square	**.169**	**.173**	**.137**	**.171**
Hosmer and Lemeshow test (Sig.)	.456	.115	.851	.496
N. cases	32275	23118	9157	32275

*** indicates p<0.001, ** indicates p<0.01, and * indicates p<0.05.

Table 2d. Determinants of WRKORG across Europe. Unstandardised coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels are reported. Country dummies and the fixed effects for $B_E - B_W$ are not shown.

	WRKORG			
	All	West	East	$B_E - B_W$
ISEI	.009***	.007***	.018***	.010**
	(.001)	(.001)	(.003)	(.004)
EDU	.031***	.027***	.069***	.042*
	(.006)	(.006)	(.018)	(.019)
FEMALE	−.268***	−.241***	−.481***	−.240*
	(.035)	(.038)	(.095)	(.103)
AGE	.040***	.042***	.027	−.015
	(.007)	(.007)	(.018)	(.019)
AGE2	−.026***	−.029**	−.013	.015
	(.006)	(.007)	(.017)	(.018)
INTPOL	.339***	.360***	.218***	−.142*
	(.021)	(.022)	(.056)	(.060)
TRUST	.058**	.083***	−.079	−.161**
	(.022)	(.024)	(.054)	(.059)
SOCNET	.593***	.611***	.503***	−.108
	(.022)	(.025)	(.055)	(.060)
SATISPOL	−.066**	−.072**	−.021	.051
	(.021)	(.023)	(.053)	(.058)
CITY	−.207***	−.265***	.014	.278*
	(.050)	(.055)	(.116)	(.128)
VILLAGE	.289***	.314***	.121	−.193
	(.038)	(.041)	(.107)	(.115)
RELIG	.055***	.060***	.031	−.029
	(.006)	(.007)	(.016)	(.018)
UNION	.363***	.317***	.732***	.414**
	(.039)	(.041)	(.119)	(.126)
STUDENT	.356***	.306**	.696**	.390
	(.085)	(.090)	(.243)	(.259)
POSTCOM	.324**			.390
	(.104)			(.516)
Country dummies	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown
Constant	−4.051***	−3.990***	−4.179***	−3.990***
	(.180)	(.193)	(.479)	(.193)
Nagelkerke R–square	**.245**	**.218**	**.205**	**.249**
Hosmer and Lemeshow test (Sig.)	.215	.162	.803	.053
N. cases	32242	23099	9143	32242

*** indicates p<0.001, ** indicates p<0.01, and * indicates p<0.05.

Table 2e. Determinants of BADGE across Europe. Unstandardised coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels are reported. Country dummies and the fixed effects for $B_E - B_W$ are not shown.

	BADGE			
	ALL	West	East	$B_E - B_W$
ISEI	.001 (.002)	.000 (.002)	.009* (.004)	.009* (.004)
EDU	−.002 (.007)	−.006 (.008)	.033 (.022)	.038 (.023)
FEMALE	.233*** (.045)	.298*** (.050)	−.117 (.108)	−.416*** (.119)
AGE	−.001 (.008)	.000 (.009)	.009 (.021)	.009 (.023)
AGE2	−.005 (.008)	−.003 (.009)	−.023 (.021)	−.021 (.023)
INTPOL	.445*** (.026)	.458*** (.029)	.369*** (.065)	−.089 (.071)
TRUST	.042 (.027)	.042 (.031)	.040 (.059)	−.002 (.067)
SOCNET	.363*** (.028)	.399*** (.032)	.236*** (.062)	−.164* (.069)
SATISPOL	−.067* (.027)	−.123*** (.030)	.156** (.058)	.279*** (.066)
CITY	.088 (.059)	.113 (.066)	−.049 (.132)	−.161 (.148)
VILLAGE	.025 (.050)	.015 (.055)	.062 (.123)	.046 (.134)
RELIG	.030*** (.008)	.031*** (.009)	.024 (.020)	−.008 (.021)
UNION	.372*** (.050)	.385*** (.054)	.302* (.136)	−.082 (.147)
STUDENT	.558*** (.093)	.525*** (.101)	.892*** (.234)	.367 (.255)
POSTCOM	−.361 (.215)			−.838 (.605)
Country dummies	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown
Constant	−3.503*** (.223)	−3.485*** (.242)	−4.322*** (.555)	−3.485 (.242)
Nagelkerke R–square	**.155**	**.149**	**.140**	**.159**
Hosmer and Lemeshow test (Sig.)	.721	.189	.721	.867
N. cases	32233	23092	9141	32233

*** indicates p<0.001, ** indicates p<0.01, and * indicates p<0.05.

Table 2f. Determinants of PETITION across Europe. Unstandardised coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels are reported. Country dummies and the fixed effects for $B_E - B_W$ are not shown.

	PETITION			
	All	West	East	$B_E - B_W$
ISEI	.004*** (.001)	.004** (.001)	.004 (.003)	.000 (.003)
EDU	.048*** (.005)	.046*** (.005)	.062*** (.014)	.017 (.015)
FEMALE	.254*** (.030)	.276*** (.033)	.134 (.069)	−.142 (.077)
AGE	.030*** (.006)	.031*** (.006)	.021 (.013)	−.010 (.015)
AGE2	−.039*** (.006)	−.039*** (.006)	−.031* (.013)	.008 (.015)
INTPOL	.267*** (.017)	.244*** (.019)	.383*** (.041)	.139** (.046)
TRUST	.033 (.018)	.027 (.020)	.050 (.039)	.023 (.044)
SOCNET	.269*** (.018)	.288*** (.020)	.197*** (.039)	−.091* (.044)
SATISPOL	−.201*** (.018)	−.214*** (.020)	−.137** (.039)	.078 (.044)
CITY	−.010 (.041)	.018 (.046)	−.144 (.086)	−.162 (.098)
VILLAGE	−.054 (.033)	.004 (.036)	−.328*** (.079)	−.332*** (.087)
RELIG	.024*** (.005)	.022*** (.006)	.033** (.012)	.011 (.014)
UNION	.260*** (.034)	.231*** (.037)	.497*** (.092)	.265** (.099)
STUDENT	.344*** (.070)	.351*** (.076)	.289 (.184)	−.062 (.199)
POSTCOM	.227* (.089)			.345 (.385)
Country dummies	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown
Constant	−2.491*** (.149)	−2.499*** (.163)	−2.153*** (.184)	−2.499*** (.163)
Nagelkerke R–square	**.228**	**.201**	**.194**	**.231**
Hosmer and Lemeshow test (Sig.)	.003	.010	.087	.006
N. cases	32164	23044	9120	32164

*** indicates p<0.001, ** indicates p<0.01, and * indicates p<0.05.

Table 2g. Determinants of PROTEST across Europe. Unstandardised coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels are reported. Country dummies and the fixed effects for $B_E - B_W$ are not shown.

	PROTEST			
	ALL	West	East	$B_E - B_W$
ISEI	−.003 (.002)	−.004* (.002)	.003 (.004)	.007 (.004)
EDU	.038*** (.008)	.036*** (.008)	.034 (.021)	−.001 (.022)
FEMALE	.141** (.048)	.239*** (.055)	−.231* (.102)	−.469*** (.116)
AGE	.000 (.009)	.000 (.010)	.009 (.019)	.009 (.022)
AGE2	−.013 (.009)	−.011 (.011)	−.022 (.020)	−.011 (.022)
INTPOL	.404*** (.028)	.401*** (.031)	.405*** (.061)	.004 (.069)
TRUST	.038 (.028)	.072* (.033)	−.043 (.055)	−.115 (.065)
SOCNET	.304*** (.030)	.389*** (.035)	.088 (.057)	−.301*** (.067)
SATISPOL	−.195*** (.028)	−.262*** (.033)	−.013 (.054)	.249*** (.064)
CITY	.334*** (.059)	.330*** (.068)	.349** (.118)	.018 (.137)
VILLAGE	−.194*** (.056)	−.209** (.063)	−.187 (.122)	.021 (.137)
RELIG	−.018* (.009)	−.032** (.010)	.039 (.018)	.071** (.021)
UNION	.528*** (.054)	.519*** (.061)	.563*** (.120)	−.044 (.135)
STUDENT	.590*** (.136)	.535*** (.109)	.857*** (.244)	.322 (.267)
POSTCOM	.993*** (.136)			.652 (.564)
Country dummies	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown
Constant	−3.399*** (.239)	−3.321*** (.267)	−2.669*** (.496)	−3.321*** (.267)
Nagelkerke R–square	**.209**	**.202**	**.239**	**.213**
Hosmer and Lemeshow test (Sig.)	.516	.134	.616	.220
N. cases	32252	23114	9138	32252

*** indicates p<0.001, ** indicates p<0.01, and * indicates p<0.05.

Table 2h. Determinants of BOYCOTT across Europe. Unstandardised coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels are reported. Country dummies and the fixed effects for $B_E - B_W$ are not shown.

	BOYCOTT			
	All	West	East	$B_E - B_W$
ISEI	.004*** (.001)	.004*** (.001)	.005 (.003)	.001 (.003)
EDU	.068*** (.006)	.069*** (.006)	.060** (.018)	−.009 (.019)
FEMALE	.289*** (.034)	.334*** (.037)	.001 (.008)	−.333** (.096)
AGE	.044*** (.006)	.047*** (.007)	.031 (.017)	−.016 (.018)
AGE2	−.046*** (.006)	−.048*** (.007)	−.033 (.017)	.015 (.018)
INTPOL	.398*** (.020)	.391*** (.022)	.450*** (.053)	.059 (.057)
TRUST	.019 (.021)	.014 (.023)	.026 (.051)	.012 (.056)
SOCNET	.184*** (.021)	.179*** (.023)	.200*** (.050)	.021 (.055)
SATISPOL	−.218*** (.020)	−.232*** (.022)	−.122* (.050)	.110* (.055)
CITY	.154** (.045)	.117* (.050)	.264** (.101)	.147 (.113)
VILLAGE	−.140*** (.038)	−.096* (.041)	−.485*** (.111)	−.388** (.118)
RELIG	−.005 (.006)	−.011 (.007)	.028 (.015)	.039* (.017)
UNION	.114** (.039)	.109** (.041)	.171 (.126)	.062 (.132)
STUDENT	.365*** (.079)	.336*** (.084)	.656** (.219)	.320 (.235)
POSTCOM	−.686*** (.106)			−.131 (.490)
Country dummies	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown	Not shown
Constant	−3.425*** (.173)	−3.482*** (.186)	−3.613*** (.453)	−3.482*** (.186)
Nagelkerke R–square	.212	.189	.137	.214
Hosmer and Lemeshow test (Sig.)	.108	.412	.542	.367
N. cases	32159	23052	9107	32159

*** indicates p<0.001, ** indicates p<0.01, and * indicates p<0.05.
Source (Tables 2a–2h): ESS Round 2, 2004–2005.

nificant for contacting politicians and wearing badges. After controlling for the country-level dummy variables, the post-communist context decreases the chances of voting and boycotting, but surprisingly increases the chances of signing petitions, demonstrating, and to a lesser degree working in political parties and organisations. It should be noted that, once we allow for two-way interactions, all of the observed direct effects of post-communism are actually *indirectly mediated* by individual-level variables. As can be seen in the regression with interaction effects ($B_E - B_W$), POSTCOM is insignificant for all forms of political participation.

Focusing on the role of social stratification, the effect of occupational status (ISEI) is the strongest on voting and working in organisations. The effects of occupational status are statistically stronger in post-communist countries in terms of voting, contacting politicians, wearing badges, and working in organisations. In no case are class inequalities in participation larger in the West than in the East. Even in the cases where the differences between the sets of countries are statistically insignificant, the coefficients are usually larger in the post-communist set, though this could be entirely due to sampling error.

Similarly, the coefficients for the role of education closely match that of occupational status, and generally show that more education increases the odds that respondents engage in more political participation. However, education clearly has stronger effects in the post-communist countries in terms of the conventional political actions of contacting politicians and working in political parties and other organisations. While *each year of education* achieved by respondents in post-communist countries increases their odds of contacting politicians by a factor of 1.08, this is only 1.03 for respondents in Western Europe. Overall, we can say that while it is well known that political participation is socially stratified, we have additionally found that *conventional political actions are even more stratified by occupation and education in post-communist countries compared to the West*. By contrast, there are relatively few differences in the effects of social stratification on voting and protest actions (i.e. petitions, demonstrations, and boycotting) between the two sets of countries.

One of the most interesting findings of the analysis concerns the role of gender (FEMALE). Across all countries, women are more likely than men to vote, wear political badges, demonstrate, sign petitions, and boycott products. By contrast, women are less likely than men to engage in the conventional actions of contacting politicians and working in political parties and organisations. This suggests a strong gendered dimension of political action, with men more likely to engage in the 'official' or conventional forms of participation, whereas women have greater odds of engaging in grassroots actions that are generally located outside political institutions. Comparing gender inequality between East and West, women in post-communist countries are statistically less likely to work in organisations, demonstrate, boycott, and wear badges. In other words, in all of the regressions performed with statistically significant gender differences, the coefficients express that gender inequalities are larger in the East. For example,

the odds of participating in demonstrations in the West increases by a factor of 1.27 by being female instead of male, but decreases by a factor of .79 for women in the East. Overall, it seems to be the case that women in both sets of countries face inequalities in participating in conventional political actions. While this is compensated somewhat in the West by women's greater propensity for protest, this is not the case at all in the East, where women are no more likely than men to engage in any of the protest actions.

These findings generally reflect qualitative research conducted on gender politics in post-communist countries. In the Czech case, Havelková [1997, 1999] found that women are much less likely to get involved in politics at the national level (compared to the local level) due to deeply rooted gender stereotypes. Differences in gendered political behaviour are not rooted in gender or sexual identity per se, but the way political environments are socially interpreted in terms of the 'proper' roles of men and women in those environments. Besides women's greater propensity to vote, the data confirm arguments that the political sphere in post-communist countries is strongly gendered. The problem is that the more women or sexual minorities are actively engaged in politics, the more information they have about issues that concern them; by contrast, those who are politically disengaged tend to accept stereotypes about gender roles as matters of fact [Sokolová 2006, 2009].

First of all, we should keep in mind that the observed effects of the social stratification variables are reduced by the large set of control variables in the analysis. Turning to those variables, the effect of age goes in the direction expected, though the strength of the coefficients are substantially stronger for voting than for other forms of participation. There are also virtually no material differences in the effects of age between East and West. Second, respondents residing in villages are more likely to vote and engage in the more conventional political actions, whereas respondents in cities are more likely to protest (participate in demonstrations and to boycott). In the post-communist countries, urban residents are significantly less likely to work in political parties than urban residents in Western Europe. Post-communist villagers are also less likely to sign petitions compared to other residents and with villagers in Western countries.

Third, trade union members are not only more likely to engage in demonstrations, but in all other forms of participation as well. Union members in post-communist countries are more likely to work in political organisations and sign petitions; but besides that, there seems to be no other cross-regional differences in union behaviour. Fourth, participation also increases with religiosity in both East and West, but substantially more so with the so-called 'conventional' forms of action than 'protest' ones. Lastly, students have nearly the opposite behavioural pattern of participation compared to religious respondents. There are also no observed differences in the political behaviour of students between East and West, and relatively small differences in the case of the role of religiosity.

In terms of the explanatory power of the models in Table 2, the role of political interests, political satisfaction, and social networks are important. As expected, political interests are very strong predictors of all forms of political participation, though the coefficients for voting, contacting politicians, and working in organisations are significantly weaker in the post-communist countries. Social networks – i.e. how often respondents socialise and meet with friends – are also very strong predictors of all forms of political participation, above all for working in organisations and political parties. The effect is weaker for protest actions in post-communist countries (especially for demonstrations), though even in those countries social networks generally play an important role in generating participation. In contrast to political interests and social networks, the effects of political satisfaction vary according to the type of participation: more satisfaction leads to greater chances of voting, but is negatively associated with engaging in most other forms of action, either conventional or protest. This finding contradicts the hypothesis that people engaging in so-called conventional forms of action would be more satisfied with political life than people who engage in protest activity. The only differences between East and West is that wearing badges is a sign of political satisfaction in the East (i.e. political satisfaction increases the odds of wearing badges, whereas in the West the odds decline), and that political satisfaction decreases the odds of participating in demonstrations in the West, whereas there is no such effect in the East.

One of the surprising findings in the table concerns the role of social trust. Trust turned out to be a particularly weak predictor of many forms of participation other than voting, contacting politicians and working in organisations. While there is significant empirical evidence that social trust impacts civic participation, clearly it is not a prerequisite for political participation in the East or West. The finding thus raises the important question of how civic and political participation are linked, and why social trust impacts one but not the other. Given the relatively large literature on social trust, it is surprising that relatively little is known about its lack of association to many forms of political participation across a wide set of countries.

Lastly, compared to other studies of the determinants of political participation, the explanatory power of the models is rather good. Many of the models have pseudo R-square values around .20 or more, which is considerably higher than the strength of association between predicted and actual values reported in other analyses of the same ESS political participation data [Caínzos, Ferrin and Voces 2007; Gallego 2007]. Further, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test of model fit indicates that most of the models exhibit very good fit with the data. As a reminder, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test computes chi-squares by dividing respondents into deciles based on predicted probabilities. If the statistic is .05 or less (which we do not want), we reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the observed and predicted values of the dependent variables, but if it is over .05 (which we do want), we fail to reject the null hypothesis, i.e. we can say that the model fits that data in a satisfactory manner.

Measures of fit are useful for countering arguments that models of political behaviour cannot coherently explain political participation [Matsusaka and Palda 1999]. If all of the variables discussed above account for only a minority of the variation in the dependent variable, it suggests either that other important variables have been omitted from the analysis, or that a large degree of political behaviour is random and thus unexplainable. While the latter view is consistent with the rational choice claim that relatively small, immeasurable increases in cost, such as bad weather, can have large effects on political behaviour, the data do not necessarily lead us to conclude that that view is correct.

Conclusion

The analyses above enable us to conclude that, 15 years after the collapse of communism (i.e. at the time of the ESS survey), the post-communist context continues to have a number of important *indirect*, but not *direct*, effects on political participation. Our main hypothesis was confirmed that the social stratification variables – occupational status, education, and gender – play a heightened role in predicting participation in the East, indicating that there is more inequality in participation in that region. In fact, East-West differences seem to be stronger in the stratification variables than in any of the other sociological variables we have examined. The differences are particularly strong with gender inequality, as women in post-communist societies are much less likely to engage in protest behaviour compared to Western women, while they are just as likely to be excluded from the more conventional forms of behaviour. The combination of these variables indicate that political participation in post-communist countries is more stratified than in the West, despite relatively similar laws and rights to participation in most of the countries examined.

Does non-electoral political participation increase or decrease social inequalities in electoral behaviour? While we did not test for the significance of the differences in coefficients between voting and other forms of participation, we can generally say that the coefficients for occupational status are lower for most forms of non-electoral participation in both the East and the West compared to the situation with voting. Education seems to play a substantially larger role in boycotting products and signing petitions compared to voting, and a slightly larger role in the conventional political actions. While we cannot directly answer the above question, it seems to be the case that inequalities in non-electoral political participation generally reflect political life as a whole, rather than being mechanisms that would drastically improve the ability of citizens of lower social status in having a larger say in political decision-making.

Some may criticise the approach taken in this article in that post-communist and Western democracies are too diverse to compare directly. To that I would counter that diversity does not prevent analytical comparison. Indeed, this research has provided support to those critics by demonstrating the weak direct

effects of differences between East and West. We have found that country-specific conditions (which explain 4–5% of the variance in the dependent variables) and individual-level variables explain what others might observe as the direct influence of post-communist conditions. That is, when we observe that political participation is lower in Hungary than it is in France, this may be due to factors other than the communist heritage per se, such as country-level conditions we did not measure (e.g. GDP per capita, the size of the civil society). By the same token, similarities in participation rates in Poland and the Czech Republic may be due to similarities in economic and political conditions other than the direct effect of their common communist heritage. What we observe as a 'communist legacy' may actually be the effect of different, though related, political and economic variables.

Nonetheless, it is possible to identify statistically significant differences between East and West – which could be attributed to the conditions of the post-communist context – via interaction effects with individual-level variables. Following that approach, we have found some important differences in the degree of inequality in political participation between the two sets of countries. Overall, however, the differences between the two sets of countries are not particularly strong, especially in comparison to the larger literature about the 'weakness of civil society', political apathy, and other negative conditions of post-communist politics.

After 1989, one of the first objectives of the newly established democratic governments of Central and Eastern Europe was to pass electoral laws and constitutionally enshrine rights to political participation. Two decades later, many of those countries are far along the path of democratic consolidation. Nonetheless, this article suggests that an important task for future democratic leaders is to improve upon the actions of the first post-communist generation by not only institutionalising more forms of political participation, but by improving the quality and opportunities of political participation so that the political arena is open, inclusive, and accessible to all citizens regardless of their social backgrounds.

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