

# Does Education Cause Participation in Politics?

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Persson, Mikael. (Forthcoming). "Review Article: Education and Political Participation." Accepted for publication in *British Journal of Political Science*.

Persson, Mikael. (2011). "An Empirical Test of the Relative Education Model in Sweden." *Political Behavior*. 33: 455–478.  
DOI: 10.1007/s11109-010-9138-5

Persson, Mikael. (Forthcoming). "Social Network Position Mediates the Effect of Education on Active Political Party Membership." Accepted for publication in *Party Politics*.  
DOI: 10.1177/1354068812453368

Persson, Mikael. (2013). "Is the Effect of Education on Voter Turnout Absolute or Relative? A Multi-level Analysis of 37 countries." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. 23: 111–133.  
DOI: 10.1080/17457289.2012.747530

Persson, Mikael. (Forthcoming). "Testing the Relationship Between Education and Political Participation using the 1970 British Cohort Study." Accepted for publication in *Political Behavior*.  
DOI: 10.1007/s11109-013-9254-0

Persson, Mikael. (2012). "Does Type of Education Affect Political Participation? Results From a Panel Survey of Swedish Adolescents." *Scandinavian Political Studies*. 35: 198–221.  
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**Abstract:** In most studies of political behavior in Western countries, it is found that individuals with higher education participate to a greater extent in political activities than individuals with lower levels of education. According to the conventional view, education increases skills and knowledge but also affects political interest and political efficacy; factors that all in turn trigger political participation. This dissertation tests two alternative explanations to the conventional view. The first alternative – the relative education model – claims that the social status gained by education drives participation and not the educational experience. According to the second alternative explanation – the pre-adult socialization model – the relationship is largely due to self-selection effects. It suggests that pre-adult factors heavily affect both educational choice as well as political participation in adulthood. The first three papers evaluate the relative education model while the last two papers deal with the pre-adult socialization model. The first paper deals with the research question: Is the relative education model supported in the Swedish context? The second paper deals directly with the causal mechanism: Does social network position mediate the effect of education on political participation? The third article brings the discussion on the relative education model further by providing the first country comparative test of the relative education model, using data from 37 countries. Hence, it deals with the research question: Is the effect of education on political participation absolute or relative in a comparative perspective? The three first articles present evidence in favor of the relative education model. The fourth paper employs matching techniques on data from the UK to mimic an experimental test of the causal effect of higher education. It deals with the question: Is college education a cause or a proxy for political participation? This paper contributes to the discussion by using a more extensive set of pre-adult covariates than previous studies, including important information on childhood cognitive ability. The fifth paper moves from length of education to testing the impact of type of education. It presents a panel study that follows Swedish adolescents over time during the first year in the gymnasium (upper secondary level) in order to answer the question: Does type of education affect political participation? The findings of both paper four and five point in favor of the pre-adult socialization model; education seems to be a proxy rather than a cause for political participation. Taken together, the five papers provide weak evidence that the educational experience directly causes participation. Thus, the dissertation challenges the conventional view on how education is related to participation.

**Key words:** Political participation, political behavior, education, voting, political parties.