



The Hebrew university of Jerusalem

Social science faculty

The department of political science

Does higher education really affects political participation?

A paper in the MA course "Approaches & Theories in Political Science"

Ayelet Dayan and Shiran Ella

Abstract

The connection between education and political participation is a well-studied one, but there is not much research about what occurs in the process of gaining higher education that leads to higher levels of participation. Our hypothesis was that this connection is mediate through political self-efficacy and political knowledge. We tested this hypothesis using a survey that was conducted at the Hebrew university and compared the answers of freshmen, second year students, and seniors. Surprisingly we did not find a connection between the year in the university and political participation. In addition we found that political self-efficacy and political knowledge has a positive effect on participation. Self-efficacy was found to have a stronger effect and this could have further implication on the ways to enhance political participation.

Introduction

Citizen participation is considered to be a core element of a healthy democracy. Factors that facilitate citizen participation have long been a central interest point for scholars. Many studies have shown that education increases participation. In our study we decided to examine closely how the process of gaining higher education leads to higher levels of participation. A better understanding of this mechanism can tell us if education is actually a cause or only a proxy of political participation.

Our main research question is how higher education influences political participation, and more specifically what are the changes in a person during the years he spends gaining higher education that cause him to participate more? What are the components of this process and which role do they play in it?

We chose to focus on two variables that according to the literature are connected both to education and participation: political self-efficacy and political knowledge. We presume that as education rises so do political self-efficacy and political knowledge, which in turn increase the level of political participation.

First, we will summarize the current studies regarding the connection between our variables. Following that, we will explain the methodology used (a survey that was conducted at the Hebrew university) and why it was chosen. Then we will analyze the obtained data using spearman's correlation and 4 models of OLS regression.

We have found that there is no relationship between year in the university and political participation, and also none between year in the university and political self-efficacy and political knowledge. We did find however, that both political self-efficacy and political knowledge have a positive and significant effect on political participation.

Theoretical background

Political Participation

Political participation is one of the classical topics in political science and there is a great deal of research on this subject. There are many definitions of political participation in the literature today. Verba et al. explains the essence of political participation in democracy as the way citizens can communicate information to government officials about their concerns and preference and put pressure on them to respond.¹ Hence, we can define political participation as the range of activities that citizens can use in order to state their opinions about the political, social, cultural and economic systems.² A more active view defines political participation as actions that are aimed to influence or support government and politics.³ In this study we decided to adopt the following definition for Political Participation: *"Legal acts by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of*

¹ Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman & Henry E. Brady, Voice and equality: civic voluntarism in American politics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 37.

² עפרה שטיין, השתתפות פוליטית של מהגרים יוצאי חבר העמים בישראל (חיפה: אוניברסיטת חיפה, החוג למדע המדינה, 2003), ע' 18.

³ Lester W. Milbrath, "Political Participation", in: Samuel L. Long (ed.), The Handbook of Political Behavior (New York: Plenum Press, 1981), Vol. 4, p.198.

governmental personnel and/or the actions that they take".⁴ We found this definition to be the most appropriate for our study because on the one hand it is the most comprehensive definition regarding the goals of political participation, and on the other hand it excludes non-legal activities allowing us to focus on mainstream political participation.

It is important to indicate that previous studies have shown that political participation does indeed have an impact on getting issues onto the political agenda, and by doing so it is actually influencing policy.⁵

In order to break down political participation into its components we have used Dalton's six modes of participation.⁶ It is important to clarify that this is not a continuous model, meaning that participating in one mode does not influence participation in another and that all the modes have equal rank.

(1) Voting - the most frequent citizen activity in which a citizen affirms his loyalty to the system and makes demands on the political system. A person casting a vote rarely believes that it will make an important difference to the political outcome.⁷ Nevertheless, voting still remains an important aspect of democratic politics because it binds the individual to the political system and legitimizes the rest of the democratic process.⁸ This form of participation is an individual act, and differs from other political acts in that it requires relatively little initiative.⁹

⁴Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie & Jae-On Kim, Participation and Political Equality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.1.

⁵Michael Rush, Politics and Society (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p.123.

⁶ R. J.Dalton, Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Western Democracies (Washington D.C.: Chatham CQ Press, 2008), p.40

⁷Milbrath, op. cit., p.201.

⁸ Dalton, op. cit., p.40..

⁹ Verba, 1978, p.53.

(2) Campaign Activity - is the participation in election campaigns. In this form of participation the citizen can increase his or her influence over the election outcome.¹⁰

Fewer people routinely participate in this activity because it is more demanding than merely casting a vote.¹¹

(3) Direct Contacting – is an activity in which the citizen contacts a government official on a particular issue. This form of participation requires a great deal of initiative.¹²

(4) Communal Activity – is an activity that often involves group efforts to deal with social or community problems. Communal participation occurs largely outside of the regularized, institutional setting of elections.¹³

(5) Protest and Contentious Action – are activities that arise from feelings of frustration and deprivation. This mode of participation is usually concentrated among the socially disadvantaged, and may contain a threat to democracy when people start engaging in violent behavior.¹⁴

(6) Wired Activism – the internet has created a new way for citizens to participate in the political process without leaving their home. Making connections with others, sharing information and experience to influence the political process are just some of the online political activities. In recent years the Internet has become an important tool of political communication and social mobilization especially among the youth.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ibid, Ibid.

¹¹ Dalton, op. cit., p.40

¹² Dalton, op. cit., p.44.; Verba, 1978, p.54

¹³ Dalton, op. cit., p.45.; Verba, 1978, p.54.

¹⁴ Dalton, op. cit., pp.48-52.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp52-53.

In using these six modes our purpose is to contain the range of different possibilities to participate in politics. We will not examine each mode separately but we will aggregate them into a general participation scale.

Education

Education has long been a powerful factor that affects political participation.¹⁶ The positive relationship between education and political participation is one of the most established empirical correlations in social science. Previous research has shown that the more educated a citizen is, the more likely that he will engage in politics.¹⁷

Why is education the most influential variable on participation? From a rational point of view education reduces the cost of participation, as it provides the intellectual and cognitive skills and the resources that support higher levels of participation. One of the resources that are provided by education is knowledge of the political process and the different ways to influence it.¹⁸

The psychological approach to politics views education as a mechanism that increases the individual's understanding of why politics matter, and the motivation to practice it and hence, is closely tied to political self-efficacy.¹⁹

From a sociological point of view, gaining education helps people acquire valuable personal relationships and social connections that affect their level of political participation.²⁰

¹⁶ Sharon E. Jarvis, Lisa Montoya & Emily Mulroy, "Political participation of college students, working students and working youth", (Texas :The University of Texas, 2005), p.3.

¹⁷ Ronald La Due Lake and Robert Huckfeldt, "Social Capital, Social Networks, and Political Participation", Political Psychology, Vol. 19, No. 3,(1998), p.567.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.568.

¹⁹ Jarvis, , op. cit., p.3.; Douglas Madsen, "Political Self-Efficacy Tested", American Political Science Review, Vol. 81 (2), (Jun., 1987), p. 578.

²⁰ Jarvis, , op. cit., p.3.

Another explanation emphasizes the relationship between education and class. Educated citizens are more likely to belong to higher levels of socioeconomic groups and to possess assets such as money and free time that's allows them to participate in the political world.²¹

To conclude, only by looking at these explanations as complementary to one another we can fully understand the way education effects participation.

Political Self-Efficacy and Political Knowledge

Out of the many factors that education influences that are related to political participation we have decided to focus on two: political knowledge and political self-efficacy. As we have stated earlier we assume that these two elements significantly mediate the relationship between education and political participation. We chose these two elements because unlike income or free time, political knowledge and political self-efficacy change while a person is gaining higher education and not after he finishes university or college, therefore, they can be measured in students and not only in graduates. Contrary to many other studies on this subject our study does not focus on the comparison between educated citizens and uneducated, instead we examine the process through which education influences political participation.

Political self-efficacy, knowledge, and participation are important for a well-functioning democracy. In an optimal democracy citizens have high levels of political knowledge, self-efficacy and participation, and research has shown that self-efficacy, knowledge, and participation are interrelated concepts.²²

²¹ Verba, 1978, p.5; Rod Hague & Martin Harrop, Comparative Government and Politics (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004),p.123.

²² Kate Kenski & Natalie Jomini Stroud, "Connections Between Internet Use and Political Efficacy, Knowledge, and Participation", Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, Vol. 50(2), (2006), pp. 174-175.

Political knowledge is the range of information about politics that a person has stored in his long term memory. It can be acquired through formal education, discussions and the news.²³

Whenever a person gains education, even if it is a general education, it affects his level of political knowledge. The more overall educated a person is, the more he holds political knowledge. Research has shown that college graduates have a higher level of political knowledge than high school graduates.²⁴

Many studies have established that political knowledge is a good predictor of political participation.²⁵ Knowledge provides citizens the ability to make reasoned civic decisions and therefore it gives them the ability to participate more.²⁶ A more informed citizen will participate not only in order to better his own life but in order to make society better.²⁷

Political Self-efficacy was defined in 1954 by Campbell, Gurin, and Miller as "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process."²⁸ More recent theory and research refers to two separate components of Political Self-efficacy: internal efficacy - beliefs about one's own competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics; external efficacy -

²³ Ibid, Ibid.

²⁴ William A. Galston, "Political Knowledge, Political Engagement, and Civic Education" Annual Review of political science, Vol. 4 (2001), p.219, 222.

²⁵ Nakwon Jung, Yonghwan Kim & Homero Gil de Zúñiga, "The Mediating Role of Knowledge and Efficacy in the Effects of Communication on Political Participation", Mas Communication and Society, Vol. 14 (4), (2011), p. 413.; Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, "Measuring Political Knowledge: Putting First Things First", American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 37, (4) (Nov., 1993), p. 1180; Henry Milner, "The Political Knowledge and Political Participation of Young Canadians and Americans", Working Paper No. 56, the American University of Paris, (November 2007), pp.7-8.

²⁶ Galston, op. cit., pp. 218-219

²⁷ Ibid, pp.224-225.

²⁸ Campbell, Angus, Gerald Gurin, and Warren E. Miller, The Voter Decides (Oxford: Row, Peterson, and Co., 1954), p.187

beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands.²⁹

Out of the many socioeconomic variables that are connected to self-efficacy, education has the most influence. As the level of education rises the individual has a stronger sense of both kinds of political efficacy. Education creates stronger cognitive and psychological involvement in politics that increases the sense of political self-efficacy.³⁰

Political self-efficacy is one of the determinants of political behavior, including political participation. If a person does not believe he can make a difference, he has little incentive to participate in politics.³¹ Studies have shown that political efficacy is related to different forms of political participation.³² For example people with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to vote than people with a low sense of self-efficacy.³³

Hypotheses and model

As previously noted, our aim is to try to explain what happens when a person gains education that leads to higher levels of political participation. We focused on two mediators between education and participation – political self-efficacy and political knowledge. We assume that education increases political self-efficacy and political

²⁹ Stephen C. Craig, Richard G. Niemi, and Glenn E. Silver, "Political Efficacy and Trust: A Report on the NES Pilot Study Items", Political Behavior, Vol. 12, (3), (1990), p.290.

³⁰ Madsen, op. cit., p. 578; Gian Vittorio Caprara, Michele Vecchione, Cristina Capanna and Minou Mebane, "Perceived political self-efficacy: Theory, assessment, and applications", European Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 39 (2009), p. 1017; Jeffrey A. Karp and Susan A. Banducci, "Political Efficacy and Participation in Twenty-Seven Democracies: How Electoral Systems Shape Political Behaviour", British Journal of Political Science. Vol. 38 (2), (2008), p.326.

³¹ Kenski, op. cit., p. 174

³² Nakwon, op. cit., p. 413

³³ Joseph Kahne and Joel Westheimer, "The Limits of Political Efficacy: Educating Citizens for a Democratic Society", Political Science and Politics, Vol. 39 (2), (Apr., 2006), pp. 289-290.

knowledge which in turn increases political participation. Thus, this study poses the following hypotheses:

H1: Education will be positively associated with political participation

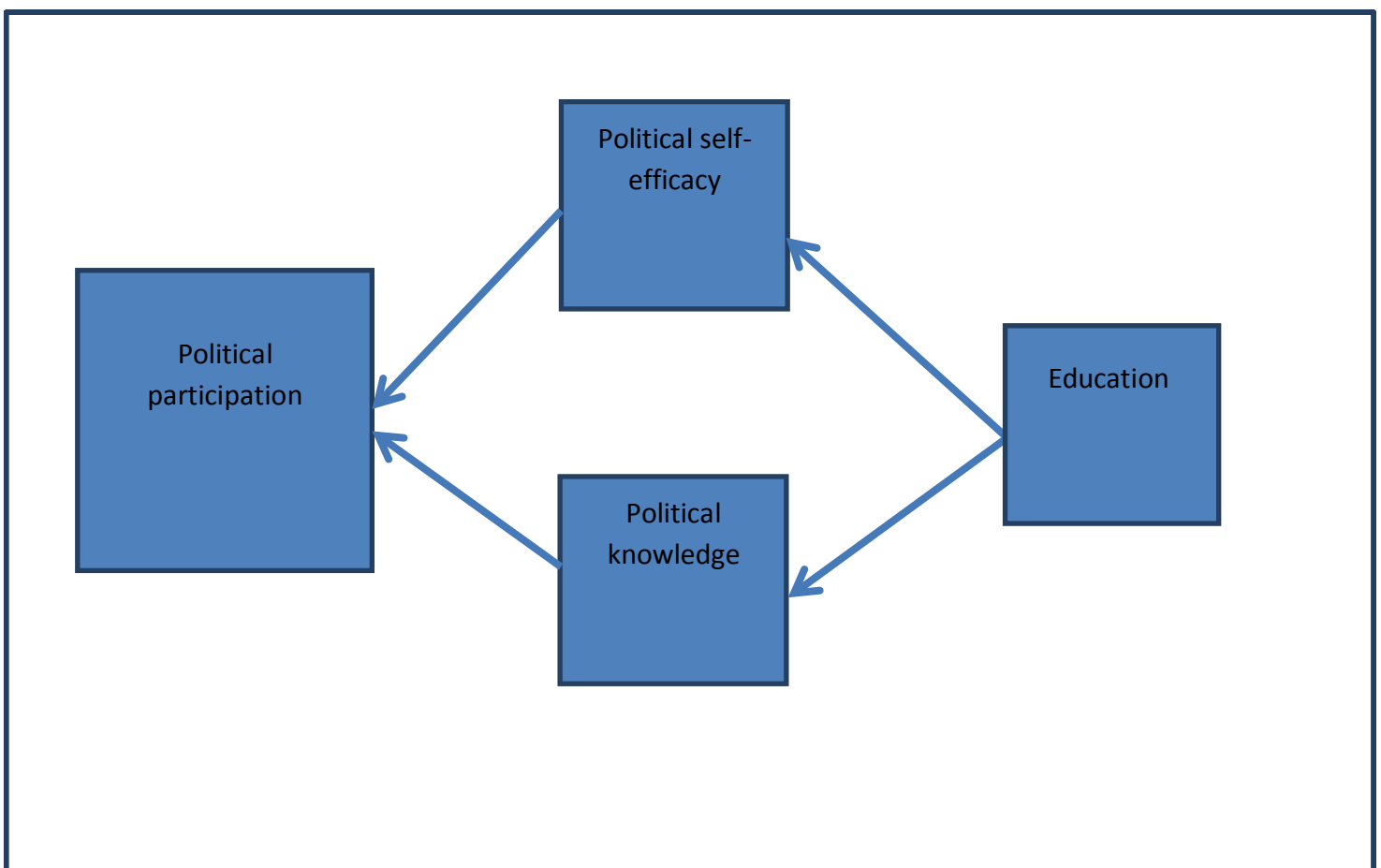
H2: Education will be positively associated with political knowledge and political self-efficacy.

H3: Political self-efficacy will be positively associated with political participation.

H4: Political knowledge will be positively associated with political participation.

H5: Political self-efficacy and political knowledge will significantly mediate the relationship between education and political participation.

Figure 1 - Proposed hypothetical model



Method

This study was conducted at the Hebrew University (Mount Scopus campus), between April 23rd and May 1st. A two page questionnaire (appendix A) was distributed to 295 (272 were found valid) B.A. students that we approached in libraries and sitting places all around the campus. Although this unsystematic method of sampling undoubtedly did not provide an entirely representative sample of the B.A. student's population, the demographic data that was obtained in the survey points out that the sample was not atypical. For example 50.7% of the sample were men and 49.3% were women. In addition 5.9% defined themselves as Arabs.

We used a cross sectional design by comparing students from three groups: freshmen, second year students and seniors. In addition we also categorized them by the faculty in which they study. The first part of the survey obtained questions about political knowledge, the second part tested the level of political self-efficacy, the third part measured political participation and the final part contained socio-demographical variables.

The variable of political knowledge was created by adding the scores of four open-ended questions and two multiple choice questions regarding political facts. Those questions were: "Which position does Avigdor Liberman hold?" (Minister of foreign affairs); "Which party gained the largest numbers of seats in the last elections?"(Kadima); "Name two of the current ministers in the government?" (For example- Ehud Barak and Gideon Sa'ar); "Who is the Speaker of the Knesset?"(Reuven Rivlin); "Who is entitled to vote in general elections – citizens, permanent residents, or temporary residents?" (Citizens); "Does the government spend more on education, security or welfare?" (Security).

In order to examine political knowledge we choose questions that cover a wide range of subjects that span the complexity of the political world. That explains our relative low reliability of the political knowledge index (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.524). . For each correct answer, respondents received 1 point, with the number of correct answers summed up to construct the variable of political knowledge.

It is important to emphasize that the questions we choose to use were drawn from studies conducted all over the world with adaption to the Israeli case.³⁴ Taking into account that the specific group that we studied is more educated than the general population, we chose the more complex questions. For example we did not use a question from The 2011 Israeli Democracy Index about the number of Knesset members.³⁵

In order to measure political self-efficacy we choose one question. "I think people like me can influence government". There is still disagreement among scholars on the valid measure of political efficacy, for this reason, we used a single relatively valid item that relates to Campbell's definition and is frequently used in published studies.³⁶

The political participation index was assembled using six multiple choice questions that correspondent with Dalton's six modes of participation. "Did you vote in the last two general elections?"; "During the last year did you contact any government officials or Member of Knesset?"; "During the last year did you participate in protest actions/ demonstrations/marches regarding a political or social subject?"; "Are you an adherent or an active member of a political party?"; "During the last year did you

³⁴ Delli Carpini *op. cit.*; Milner, *op. cit.*; Nakwon, *op. cit.*.

³⁵ תמר הרמן ואחרים, מדד הדמוקרטיה הישראלית 2011, [http://www.idi.org.il/events1/Events The President%27s Conference/2011/Documents/democracy%20ivrit.pdf](http://www.idi.org.il/events1/Events%20The%20President%27s%20Conference/2011/Documents/democracy%20ivrit.pdf)

³⁶ Nakwon, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

participate in any on-line political activity?"; "During the last year did you participate in communal activity, without the expectance of a reward?".

For each question respondents received a mark between 0 and 1. 1 stands for the highest level of participation while 0 stand for no participation an all. In order to create the index we summed up the answers so that every respondent received a grade between 0 and 6 on our political participation scale. The different activities that we included in our index are very divergent and not dependent upon each other. We assume that this is the reason that the index's reliability was not very high (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.53).

All of the questions regarding political participation refer to the last year except two. The question about voting refers to the last two general elections, because elections are a unique mode of participation that is occurring only once in a few years and even if someone wants to vote more frequently he cannot.

The other question that does not examine the activity in the last year is the question about adherence or membership of a political party. This question was used instead of a question about campaign activity which is not common in Israel.

In our research we are focused only on active participation. Passive participation lacks a key component – the effort to influence government and policy, and it is usually measured through examining the level of exposure to politics (political media exposure and political discussions).³⁷

The final part of our questionnaire recorded many socio-demographical variables. Age and sex was measured by open-ended questions. Regarding nationality, the respondents had to choose between Jewish or Arab nationality. Two questions used self-definition parameters. The first one related to a personal level of religiosity. The

³⁷ שטיין, שם, ע' 19

second examined socio-economic status which is most commonly measured by an objective question of family income level. The reason we didn't use this method is the temporary socio-economic status of students, most of which are single and do not hold a steady job. The last socio-demographical variable is the place of birth, if a respondent was born in Israel we asked for the father's place of birth.

In the analysis of the data we used OLS multivariate regression, in an effort not violate the regression assumptions some of our variables – year in the university, faculty, sex, nationality and place of birth – were recoded into dummy valuables. Our reference point is a Jewish male freshman student of social sciences that was born in Israel.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Our research population was roughly divided equally between the years in the university: 98 freshmen, 93 second year students and 81 seniors. Most of the students (38.6%) study only social sciences, 25.7% study social sciences and humanities, and 18.8% study only humanities. 9.6% study social sciences and law, 6.2% study law, and only 1.1 study law and the humanities. When we examine the demographic distribution of our sample we can see that the average age was 24.6. Almost all of the students describe themselves as middle class and above (97.8%), and most of the students defined themselves as secular (61.8). For full data on the demographics distributions see appendix B.

Voting is the most common mode of participation. 90.8% of the students voted at least once in the last two elections. 66.5% of the students participated in the last year in on-line political activity. 66.2% participated in communal activity, 49.6% took part

in a demonstration. 48.5% are adherent or an active member of a political party and 29.2% contacted a politician or a government official in the last year.

Table 1 – participation level

Grade in participation index	Percentage
0-2	44.2%
2-4	46.6%
4-6	9.2

As you can see in table 1, most of the students participate in politics at different levels. The table does not show that only 1.5% were graded 0 – not participating at all.

When divided into freshmen, second year and seniors (Table 2) the levels of participation are not very different between the groups. Similarly, we didn't find many differences between the groups regarding political self-efficacy and political knowledge. A steady pattern is detected only in participation, which increases over the years.

Table 2 – A cross comparison between years

	Freshmen	Second year	Seniors
Average participation	2.2	2.46	2.49
Average self-efficacy	0.58	0.59	0.55
Average knowledge	5.37	5.27	5.45

Although we can see (table 3) that law students participate the most, and social science students participate the least, the difference between the groups is not significant. Regarding political self-efficacy the data shows that the level is roughly the same in all the groups. The political knowledge of students of Social science and law is the highest, and that of students of humanities is the lowest, but again, the difference is not significant.

Table 3 – A cross comparison between faculties

	Social science	Humanities	Law	Social science and humanities	Social science and law
Average participation	2.16	2.35	2.7	2.59	2.46
Average self-efficacy	0.57	0.57	0.58	0.59	0.53
Average knowledge	5.32	5.1	5.47	5.51	5.53

From a cross comparison between the demographic variables (see appendix C) it is evident that men participate and have more political knowledge than women. Students with Arab nationality received the lowest scores in participation, self-efficacy and knowledge. Participation and self-efficacy rises along with socio-economic status.

Inferential statistics

Table 4 – Correlations between the variables in our model

	Year	knowledge	Self-efficacy
participation	0.099	0.187**	0.292**
Self-efficacy	-0.063	-0.089	
knowledge	0.027		

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N= 272

The correlation between the year in the university and political participation, self-efficacy and knowledge is very weak and not significant. While participation and knowledge increase, self-efficacy decreases. The two significant correlations are between self-efficacy and participation and between knowledge and participation, where both correlations are positive. It is important to note that the relation between self-efficacy and participation is stronger.

These inconclusive results led us to investigate the data further, using four models of OLS multivariate regression. In all the models that we used, the socio-demographic variables were held constant (nationality, age, sex, level of religiously, place of birth and socio-economic status). We also held the faculty constant. In the first model we tested the effect of the year in the university upon political participation. In the second model we tested the effect of year in the university regarding self-efficacy. The third model tested the effect of year in the university on political knowledge. The last model is a multivariate regression, which tested the effect of all the independent variables (year in the university, efficacy and knowledge) on participation.

Looking at table 5 it is evident that the relationship between year in the university and political participation is not significant and so we cannot refute the null

hypnotize and accept H1. In other words we did not find any connection between the two variables and so there is no reason for further investigation of this relationship. Hence we cannot examine the mediation part of our model (H5).

Table 5 – the effect of year in the university upon political participation

	B	Se	Beta
Constant	.256	.798	-----
Second year	.156	.166	.064
Seniors	.120	.182	.048
Faculty(Humanities)	.102	.190	.035
Faculty(Law)	.602*	.288	.127
Faculty(Social Sciences & Humanities)	.421*	.179	.161
Faculty(Social Sciences & Law)	.027	.244	.007
Faculty(Law & Humanities)	.503	.641	.046
Nationality (Arab)	-.545	.299	-.112
Age	.071**	.029	.170
Sex (Female)	-.213	.138	-.093
Religiously	-.070	.081	-.050
Place of birth (Outside Israel)	-.561**	.203	-.162
Socio-economic	.179	.108	.096
R²	0.15		

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

N= 272

The next step we took was to investigate the relationships between year in the university and self-efficacy and between year in the university and political

knowledge. As can be seen from tables 6 and 7 the effect of year in the university on efficacy and knowledge is not significant, therefore we could not accept H2. An interesting result from the regressions analysis is that when all the other variables are hold constant, the levels of self-efficacy and political knowledge for a student with Arab nationality is predicted to be lower than those of a student with Jewish nationality by 0.397 and 4.68 respectively. Also when all the other variables are hold constant, the levels of political knowledge for a female student is predicted to be lower than of a male student by 5.347.

Although we did not find that year in the university has any effect on participation, self-efficacy and knowledge, we decided to try and shed some light on the effect that political self-efficacy and political knowledge have on political participation.

We ran a multivariate regression with participation as the dependent variable and all the other variables in our model as independent variables.

Table 6 – the effect of year in the university upon political self-efficacy

	B	Se	Beta
Constant	.535	.151	-----
Second year	.019	.031	.045
Seniors	-.030	.035	-.067
Faculty(Humanities)	-.003	.036	-.005
Faculty(Law)	.028	.055	.033
Faculty(Social Sciences & Humanities)	.008	.032	.018
Faculty(Social Sciences & Law)	-.052	.046	-.074
Faculty(Law & Humanities)	-.009	.121	-.005
Nationality (Arab)	-.138*	.057	-.159
Age	.000	.005	.003
Sex (Female)	.035	.026	.087
Religiously	-.010	.015	-.042
Place of birth (Outside Israel)	.003	.038	.004
Socio-economic	.021	.020	.062
R²		.052	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

N= 272

Table 7 – the effect of year in the university upon political knowledge

	B	Se	Beta
Constant	5.66	.667	-----
Second year	-.130	.139	-.065
Seniors	.108	.152	.052
Faculty(Humanities)	-.284	.159	-.117
Faculty(Law)	.213	.241	.054
Faculty(Social Sciences & Humanities)	.120	.142	.055
Faculty(Social Sciences & Law)	.060	.204	.019
Faculty(Law & Humanities)	.079	.535	.009
Nationality (Arab)	-.980***	.250	-.243
Age	.013	.024	.038
Sex (Female)	-.313**	.115	-.165
Religiously	-.098	.068	-.085
Place of birth (Outside Israel)	.004	.170	.002
Socio-economic	-.097	.091	-.062
R²		.135	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

N= 272

Table 8 – the effect of political self-efficacy and political knowledge upon political participation

	B	Se	Beta
Constant	-2.046	.863	----
Second year	.158	.156	.066
Seniors	.140	.171	.056
Self-efficacy	1.6***	.308	.287
Knowledge	.255***	.070	.212
Faculty(Humanities)	.179	.179	.061
Faculty(Law)	.503	.270	.106
Faculty(Social Sciences & Humanities)	.377*	.179	.144
Faculty(Social Sciences & Law)	.094	.229	.024
Faculty(Law & Humanities)	.498	.599	.045
Nationality (Arab)	-.074	.291	-.015
Age	.067*	.027	.161
Sex (Female)	-.189	.131	-.082
Religiously	-.028	.076	-.020
Place of birth (Outside Israel)	-.567**	.190	-.164
Socio-economic	.170	.102	.091
R²	0.262		

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

N= 272

We can see from table 8 that political self-efficacy and political knowledge can explain part of the variance of political participation. In the first model we used, that

did not include those variables, the percentage of explained variance was 13.5% and in the current model it increases up to 26.2%.

Political self-efficacy has a positive and significant effect on political participation. With all other factors being equal, a rise of 1 unit in political self-efficacy means a rise in 1.6 in political participation. Political knowledge also has a positive and significant effect on political participation. With all other factors being equal, a rise in 1 unit in political knowledge means a rise in 0.255 in political participation. These results confirm our H3 and H4 hypotheses.

In addition, three more variables were found to have a significant effect on political participation. With all other factors being equal, a rise in 1 year in age means a rise in 0.067 in political participation. Regarding the faculties, when all the other variables are hold constant the level of political participation for a social sciences and humanities student is predicted to be higher than that of a social sciences student by 1.669. Also, the level of political participation for an immigrant is predicted to be lower than that of a student that was born in Israel by 2.613.

Discussion

As we predicted, almost all of the students are participating in politics. Only 1.5% of them do not participate at all. Surprisingly we found that the level of participation does not increase or decrease over the years. Many studies have shown that education affects participation, but our study roughly demonstrates the same level of participation across the years. This result leads us to the assumption that it is not the processes of gaining education that increases participation, but perhaps that the personal, socio-demographic and socialization factors that cause a person to participate in politics also affect his choice to gain higher education. We believe that

this assumption should be further investigated in a research that compares students, enrollments and people that have no higher education and no intent to gain one.

Another explanation could be that political socialization occurs in earlier stages of life and hence high-school education is more important for participation than higher education.

Further researches that can bring better understanding of the process of gaining higher-education and political participation could include comparison between students of other fields of higher education than those that were included in our research and maybe even higher resolution of specific majors.

An important finding in our analysis that concurs with other studies about education and political knowledge is the high level of political knowledge that students have regardless of the faculty in which they study.

In addition we found that the level of knowledge decreases from freshmen to second year, and since a person cannot lose knowledge, this may indicate that there is a methodological problem with our research design, and that perhaps a longitude research will be more appropriate than a cross-sectional one. Alternatively, this may be result of the fact that our sample is not representative.

We also found differences in the average level of political self-efficacy between students of social science and humanities and students of social sciences and law. It will be interesting to conduct a cross faculty research that will reveal if there is a connection between a student major and his self-efficacy level.

As hypothesized, our study found that both self-efficacy and knowledge do correlate positively and significantly with political participation. Self-efficacy has stronger

effect than political knowledge. This result can indicate that in order to raise participation level, a democratic state should focus its efforts on trying to raise the political self-efficacy of its citizens. We believe that the way to achieve this goal is through deliberative democracy.

Almost all our socio-demographic variables were found to be not connected to participation, except age, place of birth and one of the faculties. Because we know that other research has found strong and significant connections between socio-demographic variables and political participation we can assume that these variables may be less important in the student population than the general population. Further research should examine these differences.

There is a limitation that this study could not overcome. Our analyses are based on cross-sectional data. We assume that longitude data will provide a better understanding of how education influences participation and which role political self-efficacy and knowledge play in this process.

Although this study does not indicate one unequivocal conclusion about the relationships between education and political participation, we can still see that the independent variables of our last model (year in the university, political self-efficacy, political knowledge, faculty and all of our socio-demographic variables) explain a quarter of the variance of political participation.

References

- Campbell, Angus, Gurin, Gerald, & Miller Warren E. The Voter Decides. Oxford: Row, Peterson, and Co., 1954.
- Caprara, Gian Vittorio, Vecchione ,Michele, Capanna ,Cristina & Mebane, Minou. "Perceived political self-efficacy: Theory, assessment, and applications", European Journal of Social Psychology. Vol. 39, 2009, pp. 1002-1020.
- Craig Stephen C., Niemi ,Richard G. & Silver, Glenn E. "Political Efficacy and Trust: A Report on the NES Pilot Study Items", Political Behavior. Vol. 12,(3), 1990, pp.289-314.
- Dalton, Russell. J. Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Western Democracies. Washington D.C.: Chatham CQ Press, 2008.
- Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Keeter, Scott. "Measuring Political Knowledge: Putting First Things First", American Journal of Political Science. Vol. 37, (4) November 1993,pp. 1179-1206.
- Galston, William A. "Political Knowledge, Political Engagement, and Civic Education" Annual Review of political science. Vol. 4 2001, pp.217-234.
- Hague, Rod and Harrop, Martin. Comparative Government and Politics. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Jarvis ,Sharon E., Montoya, Lisa & Mulroy, Emily. Political participation of college students, working students and working youth. Texas :The University of Texas, 2005.
- Kahne, Joseph and Westheimer, Joel. "The Limits of Political Efficacy: Educating Citizens for a Democratic Society", Political Science and Politics. Vol. 39(2), April 2006, pp. 289-296.

- Karp, Jeffrey A. and Banducci, Susan A. "Political Efficacy and Participation in Twenty-Seven Democracies: How Electoral Systems Shape Political Behaviour", British Journal of Political Science. Vol. 38 (2), 2008, pp.311-334.
- Kenski, Kate and Stroud Natalie Jomini, "Connections between Internet Use and Political Efficacy, Knowledge, and Participation", Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media. Vol. 50(2), 2006, pp. 173-193.
- La Due Lake, Ronald and Huckfeld, Robert. "Social Capital, Social Networks, and Political Participation", Political Psychology Vol. 19 (3), 1998, pp.567-584.
- Madsen, Douglas. "Political Self-Efficacy Tested", American Political Science Review. Vol. 81 (2), June 1987, pp. 571-581.
- Milbrath, Lester W. "Political Participation", in: Samuel L. Long (ed.), The Handbook of Political Behavior , Vol. 4. New York: Plenum Press, 1981, pp.197-239.
- Milner, Henry, "The Political Knowledge and Political Participation of Young Canadians and Americans", Working Paper No. 56, the American University of Paris, November 2007.
- Nakwon, Jung, Yonghwan Kim & Homero Gil de Zúñiga, "The Mediating Role of Knowledge and Efficacy in the Effects of Communication on Political Participation", Mass Communication and Society. Vol. 14 (4), 2011, pp. 407-430.
- Rush ,Michael. Politics and Society. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.
- Verba, Sidney, Nie, Norman H. & Kim ,Jae-On. Participation and Political Equality. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Verba, Sidney, Schlozman, Kay Lehman & Brady, Henry E. Voice and equality: civic voluntarism in American politics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

הרמן, תמר ואחרים. מדד הדמוקרטיה הישראלית 2011,

http://www.idi.org.il/events1/Events_The_President%27s_Conference/2011/Documents/democracy%20ivrit.pdf

שטין, עפרה. השתתפות פוליטית של מהגרים יוצאי חבר העמים בישראל. חיפה: אוניברסיטת חיפה, החוג למדע המדינה, 2003.

Appendix A – The questioner

הבדלים בין סטודנטים ברמת ההשתתפות הפוליטית

שם החוקרות האחראיות איילת דיין ושירן אלה

הנך מתבקש להשיב על שאלון בנושא ההשתתפות הפוליטית של סטודנטים. זמן המענה לא אמור לעלות על 10 דקות. השאלונים הינם אנונימיים והמידע לא יועבר לגורמים מחוץ לאוניברסיטה ולא ישמש למטרות שאינן מחקריות. במידה וקיימת שאלה אשר מעוררת בך אי נוחות אינך מחויב להשיב עליה. כמו כן בכל עת תוכל להפסיק את השתתפותך בסקר. באם תחוש נפגע משאלות הסקר נשמח אם תיצור עמנו קשר במייל: shiranella@gmail.com כמו כן אתה מוזמן לפנות למייל שלעיל בכל שאלה נוספת שיש לך בקשר למחקר.

אני מסכים ומקבל את התנאים לעיל

תאריך

חתימה

-
1. באיזה תפקיד מכהן כעת אביגדור ליברמן? _____
 2. איזו מפלגה קיבלה את מספר הקולות הגדול ביותר בבחירות האחרונות? _____
 3. מי רשאי להצביע בבחירות לכנסת? (אנא הקף בעיגול את התשובה הנכונה, עשויה להיות יותר מאחת):
א. תושב קבע ב. אזרח ג. תושב ארעי
 4. על איזה מן הנושאים הבאים ההוצאה הממשלתית גבוהה יותר? (אנא הקף בעיגול את התשובה הנכונה)
א. חינוך ב. ביטחון ג. רווחה
 5. ציין שמות של שני שרים בממשלה: _____
 6. מי יושב ראש הכנסת כיום? _____
 7. באיזו מידה אתה והחברים שלך יכולים להשפיע על מדיניות הממשלה? (אנא הקף בעיגול את התשובה הנכונה)
א. במידה רבה ב. במידה מסוימת ג. במידה מועטה ד. בכלל לא ה. לא יודע

8. האם הצבעת בשתי מערכות הבחירות האחרונות?
- א. הצבעתי בשתי מערכות הבחירות האחרונות ב. הצבעתי רק באחת משתי מערכות הבחירות האחרונות ג. לא הצבעתי באף אחת משתי מערכות הבחירות האחרונות
9. האם במהלך השנה האחרונה יצרת קשר עם גורמים רשמיים בממשלה (שרים ופקידים) או עם חברי כנסת?
- א. פעם אחת ב. בין פעם אחת לשלוש פעמים ג. יותר משלוש פעמים ד. לא
10. האם במהלך השנה האחרונה השתתפת במחאה/הפגנה/צעדה בקשר לנושא פוליטי או חברתי (למעט המחאות החברתיות בקיץ האחרון)?
- א. פעם אחת ב. בין פעם אחת לשלוש פעמים ג. יותר משלוש פעמים ד. לא
11. האם אתה אוהד או פעיל של מפלגה כלשהי?
- א. לא, אני לא אוהד ולא פעיל בשום מפלגה ב. אני אוהד של מפלגה אך לא חבר בה ג. אני חבר במפלגה ד. אני חבר פעיל במפלגה
12. האם במהלך השנה האחרונה השתתפת בפעילות פוליטית מקוונת? (לדוגמא: חתימה על עצומה, השתתפות בדיון, כניסה לאתרים רשמיים של מפלגות ופוליטיקאים)
- א. פעם אחת ב. בין פעם אחת לשלוש פעמים ג. יותר משלוש פעמים ד. לא
13. האם במהלך השנה האחרונה לקחת חלק בפעילות קהילתית ללא קבלת תמורה? (לדוגמא: התנדבות קבועה או חד פעמית, תרומת מזון/כסף לנזקקים, פעילות עם אוכלוסיות מוחלשות)
- א. פעם אחת ב. בין פעם אחת לשלוש פעמים ג. יותר משלוש פעמים ד. לא
14. שנת הלימוד בתואר _____
15. חוגי הלימוד (אנא רשום את כל החוגים בהם אתה לומד) _____
16. פקולטה (אנא רשום את שם הפקולטה/פקולטות) _____
17. לאום:
- א. יהודי ב. ערבי
18. גיל _____
19. מין: _____

20. כיצד אתה מגדיר את עצמך?

א. חילוני ב. מסורתי ג. דתי ד. חרדי

21. היכן נולדת (אנא רשום שם הארץ) _____ אם נולדת בארץ, באיזו ארץ נולד

האב _____

22. לאיזה מעמד חברתי אתה משייך את עצמך?

א. גבוה ב. בינוני-גבוה ג. בינוני ד. נמוך

Appendix B

Socio-Demographics distribution

	percentage	Frequency
Low class	2.2	6
Middle class	58.8	160
Middle-high class	34.6	94
High class	4.4	12
Secular	61.8	168
Traditional	17.6	48
Religious	20.2	55
Orthodoxy	0.4	1
Male	50.7	138
Female	49.3	134
Jewish Nationality	94.1	256
Arab Nationality	5.9	16
Social sciences	38.6	105
Humanities	18.8	51
Law	6.2	17
Social sciences & Humanities	25.7	70
Social sciences & Law	9.6	26
Humanities & Law	1.1	3
Born in Israel	87.5	238
Immigrant	12.5	34

Appendix C

A cross comparison of average levels of political participation, self-efficacy and knowledge between socio-demographics variables

	Political participation	Political self-efficacy	Political knowledge
Low class	1.9	0.54	5.91
Middle class	2.3	0.57	5.38
Middle-high class	2.4	0.57	5.27
High class	2.8	0.66	5.58
Secular	2.4	0.58	5.44
Traditional	2.2	0.55	5.36
Religious	2.3	0.58	5.23
Male	2.5	0.56	5.53
Female	2.2	0.59	5.19
Jewish Nationality	2.4	0.58	5.42
Arab Nationality	1.6	0.45	4.43
Born in Israel	2.46	0.57	5.36
Immigrant	1.835	0.58	5.35