



The Role of Citizen Participation in Fostering Political Trust

A Quantitative Study on the Impact of Consultation Meetings and Citizen Initiatives on Political Trust
among Different Educational Groups in the Netherlands

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Abstract

Local governments are increasingly implementing new forms of citizen participation to engage citizens in politics and foster political trust, particularly, among less-educated citizens, who show lower levels of political trust and participation. However, limited knowledge exists regarding the extent to which these participatory activities influence political trust, and moreover, whether their effects vary across educational groups. Drawing on two main perspectives of political trust, this research explores the underlying mechanisms that shape political trust in relation to participation in consultation meetings and citizen initiatives. This study discerns the explanatory power of each perspective. The findings reveal that the willingness to participate in a citizen initiative plays a role in fostering trust in local politics. This is driven by two main factors: firstly, citizens perceive a greater range of opportunities to express their opinions, aligning with the rational perspective; secondly, they perceive that individuals similar to themselves can exert influence, aligning with the social-structure perspective. Furthermore, this study finds that participation in a consultation meeting is more beneficial for less-educated citizens, as their perceived to express an opinion experience an increase after participating. Conversely, attending a consultation meeting has minimal impact on the perceived opportunities to express an opinion among more-educated citizens.

Keywords: citizen participation, education, local government, political trust, the Netherlands

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1 | Introduction

In recent years, increasingly more tasks, such as care for youth and elderly, are transferred from a national level to local governments (Mulder, 2019; Siebers, et al., 2019, p. 548). Though this means there is more at stake for citizens during local elections, voter turnout rates in local elections are incredibly low (NOS, 2022). In an effort to increase citizen engagement, local governments are increasingly developing new opportunities for citizens to participate (Siebers, et al., 2019; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2015). In many municipalities, there is a long list of different participation forms. The municipality of Amsterdam is beginning to experiment with city district panels and Rotterdam is trying to implement new digital participation forms (Bunschoten, 2022; Gemeente Rotterdam, 2023). Smaller municipalities are also expanding options to involve citizens by introducing participatory budgeting, citizen forums and consultation meetings. However, local governments seem to use these participatory activities somewhat as an umbrella concept (van der Lans, 2018). They are all created to enhance participation, but what is the actual purpose of enhancing participation?

Participatory activities serve as a means to enhance legitimacy and foster political trust, aiming to bridge the gap between citizens and government (Berenschot & VNG, 2021; Visser, et al., 2019, p. 8). Less-educated citizens, in particular, are often found to report lower levels of political trust and experience such a gap between them and the government (De Voogd & Cuperus, 2021). This raises the question of whether these new forms are a sufficient way of including these citizens in decision-making. Given that more and less-educated citizens have different perceptions of politics, they both might benefit from various participatory activities differently (Noordzij, et al., 2021). Nonetheless, limited knowledge exists on whether these motives to increase political trust translate into a positive outcome among these different groups. Moreover, it is unclear *whether* citizens from different educational backgrounds experience an increase in political trust from different forms of citizen participation, and *how* this process unfolds. More specifically, there is little attention to how different forms of participation inspire political trust through different mechanisms.

To gain more insight into this matter, this research focuses on two specific forms of citizen participation commonly offered by municipalities: consultation meetings and citizen initiatives. Therefore, the research question guiding this study is: How does participation in consultation meetings and citizen initiatives affect political trust, and does this differ for citizens from different educational backgrounds? Municipalities offer various forms of citizen participation; however, the aforementioned forms are found in most municipalities and have different structures. Consultation meetings typically provide citizens with a platform to express their views on policy intentions, while enabling local governments to offer clarifications of policy intentions (Berenschot & VNG, 2021). Citizen initiatives involve collective citizen engagement with the aim to provide for their community, for example by collectively taking care of the green space in the neighbourhood (Visser, et al., 2021). These two forms of citizen participation are distinct from each other, both in how they are structured and their purposes. Therefore, it is likely that both inspire trust via different mechanisms. These participatory forms are carried out on the local level; therefore, this research will look at trust in local politics. I will look at both trust in the elected Municipal Council and the board of Mayor and Alderman, because these two are concerned with a different part of the policy process, and thus, can inspire different outcomes.

This research contributes to the existing literature in several ways; first, while previous studies have shown that citizen engagement can build political trust, consultation meetings and citizen initiatives have yet to be compared by scholars (Holum, 2022; Siebers, et al., 2019). Secondly, the aim of this study is to show how different underlying mechanisms of political trust are shaped by citizen participation and whether this differs among citizens with different educational backgrounds. The existing literature provides various explanations for the factors influencing political trust. Some scholars argue that political

trust is contingent upon citizens' evaluation of politics (Van der Meer, 2010), while others suggest that it relates to individuals' alignment with the dominant political culture (Laurison, 2015; Noordzij, et al., 2021). Additionally, differences in socioeconomic factors, such as the economic climate or individuals' background characteristics, are attributed to shaping political trust (Siebers, et al., 2019). However, the underlying mechanisms that potentially contribute to the formation of political trust have never been adequately measured in relation to participation. This research aims to address this gap by examining the specific mechanisms through which participation could shape political trust. Therefore, this study will primarily focus on investigating the underlying mechanisms that drive the relationship between participation and political trust, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the process and surpassing a narrow focus when solely focusing on citizens' political trust. Therefore, I use two main approaches to political trust: a rational and a social-structure approach. This is a valuable addition to the current literature because it fosters a deeper understanding of how political trust is shaped by these types of participation.

This research uses data from the 'Local Voters Survey 2022' in the Netherlands (N=2846), this data is highly valuable for this study because it contains data on certain political attitudes, shedding light on the underlying mechanisms of political trust. It is important to note that the measurement of citizen initiative in this data is second best because it measures 'willingness to' participate in a citizen initiative. Measuring actual participation would provide the most accurate measurement, however, willingness to participate serves as a valuable indicator that can still provide us with an understanding of citizens' attitudes towards citizen initiatives, and the perspectives on politics of citizens who express openness to citizen initiatives. Therefore, this research can still gain valuable insights into citizens' attitudes and the underlying perspectives that impact political trust.

Moreover, through this data, it can be examined whether citizen participation is a sufficient means to build political trust or whether local governments need to explore other methods to engage certain citizens in policy-making. This will not only help local governments to determine which types of participation they should prioritise and invest in but can also aid the understanding of which forms of participation are more attractive to less-educated citizens – an important element for reducing inequality in participation. Participation plays a crucial role in enhancing democracy and social inclusion. Empowering citizens through (political) participation helps reduce inequality and eliminates the marginalisation of groups (OHCHR, 2018). Thus, this study provides important implications to enhance democratic legitimacy and equality.

2 | Theoretical framework

Political trust has been much studied in recent years, especially the question of why there is a decline in political trust (Catterberg, & Moreno, 2006; Citrin, 1974; Siebers, et al., 2019). Low levels of participation in representative democracies are, argued by some, a danger to the legitimacy of policies and democracy in general (Holum, 2022; van der Meer & Zmerli, 2017). Citizen participation is, therefore, commonly used as an attempt to increase trust in (local) government. To understand *how* citizen participation affects political trust two main approaches to political trust are used in this research: a rational and a social-structure approach. These approaches emphasize different aspects of why citizen participation could successfully influence political trust. From a rational perspective, political trust is shaped by rational evaluations of the political domain, for example on citizens' evaluation of the performance of a political actor, but also on the idea that politicians act upon citizens' interests. This evaluation is shaped by knowledge and understanding of the political domain (Van der Meer, 2010). If citizens feel that their local government is not performing adequately, their trust may be negatively affected (van Elsas, 2015, p. 1160). Citizens' evaluations of politics are positively influenced when they perceive that they can influence decision-making and when they feel that government is responsive and transparent (Ardanaz, et al., 2023, p. 14; Grimmelikhuijsen, 2010; Holum, 2022, p. 2; Siebers, et al., 2019, p. 548). This gives citizens the feeling that there are opportunities to express their opinion, positively impacting political trust.

While the rational perspective focuses on evaluations, the social-structure approach states that political trust among citizens is related to social structures within the political domain. This is related to Bourdieu's idea that people interact with dominant social institutions. In terms of politics, citizens relate themselves to the dominant structure of political institutions. Their position within this social structure affects their perception of politics and their role in it, which in turn affects political trust and participation (Laurison, 2015, p. 926). Possessing and understanding the same cultural practices and preferences as the ones that are dominant in politics is an advantage when participating in politics (Laurison, 2015, p. 926). This is because it increases the feeling of being a legitimate actor in politics, and thus feeling entitled to participate. Moreover, being familiar with the dominant culture in politics makes participating easier because it is often accompanied by mastering the style of language used within the political sphere and making citizens feel that 'people like them' can have an influence (Noordzij, et al., 2021; Visser, et al., 2021, p. 5). In turn, not being familiar with the dominant culture in politics inspires feelings of cultural distance. This results in the feeling that one's own life is far from that of politicians and this is often accompanied by the feeling that politicians are indifferent and insensitive to their experiences, or that they signal superiority (Noordzij, et al., 2021, pp. 571-575). This possibly evolves into distrust. Thus, when someone participates in politics their perception of the dominant culture and how they relate to it affects political trust.

Currently, local governments are implementing many different forms and, seemingly, with little regard for how they affect political trust differently. Using these two different approaches to political trust helps to understand the underlying mechanisms that influence political trust. The next section will show how consultation meetings and citizen initiatives shape political trust differently by looking at how they are organized.

Consultation meeting

Consultation meetings are often organized top-down, meaning civil servants are in charge of the content and structure of the meeting and citizens can 'think along'. This often results in a standard design. Input from citizens is requested when most frameworks of policy are already determined (Berenschot & VNG, 2021, p. 43). Following the rational perspective, it is understandable that participation in a consultation meeting affects political trust positively by focusing on factors that impact citizens' evaluations of politics. Offering various ways to participate, for example, through a consultation meeting, signals to

citizens that the government is open to their input thereby signaling responsiveness (Holum, 2022, p. 2; Siebers, et al., 2019; p. 548). Following Arnsteins' (1969) line of reasoning, a consultation meeting is a participation form "(...) where citizens may indeed hear and be heard" (p. 217). This signals to citizens that local government allows them to express their opinion, and thus that local government is responsive. Inviting citizens for a consultation meeting would therefore increase the perceived opportunities to express an opinion, thereby increasing the perceived influence of citizens. This influences how citizens evaluate local politics positively. Following the rational perspective, participating in a consultation meeting affects political trust positively. Therefore, I hypothesize (H1a) *participation in consultation meetings positively affects trust in local politics because citizens feel that there are enough opportunities to express their opinion.*

The relationship between participating in a consultation meeting and political trust may vary depending on the underlying mechanisms at play. The social-structure perspective emphasizes different underlying mechanisms that possibly shape political trust. As said, consultation meetings are organized by civil servants and have a more standard design (Berenschot & VNG, 2021, p. 43). Whenever participants feel that they do not master the style of language used by civil servants and policy-makers, participants might feel less entitled to say something. Arnstein (1969) points out that within a consultation meeting, citizens might "(...) lack the power to insure their views will be heeded by the powerful" (p. 217). This might be especially the case for citizens who do not master the style of language or don't feel entitled to speak because a consultation meeting inspired cultural distance from politicians. As these consultation meetings are often organized and guided by civil servants, this could draw upon citizens' perceived cultural distance and make them distrust the purpose of these meetings, especially when citizens feel that their view is not genuinely being considered. This might impact their political trust negatively. From both perspectives, we can expect different outcomes. The social-structure would expect that participating in a consultation meeting affects political trust negatively, therefore, I hypothesize: (H1b) *participation in consultation meetings negatively affects trust in local politics because citizens feel that 'people like them' can't have influence.*

Citizen initiative

Citizen initiatives are organized fundamentally differently than consultation meetings. Citizen initiatives have a more bottom-up approach, they are a form of self-organization. Within citizen initiatives, citizens are more in control over structure, input and implementation. Citizen initiatives are organized in line with citizens' interpretations. Implementation of outcomes is also done by citizens' preferences (van de Velde, et al., 2019). And the local government is diminished to a mere facilitator for example through financial support (Visser, et al., 2021, p. 2). Citizen initiatives exist in very diverse forms and sizes; for example, citizens who collectively own solar panels or initiatives in which citizens collectively build and manage a residential care center (NRC, 2020). Following the rational perspective, it could be assumed that participation forms, like citizen initiatives with more perceived influence on decision-making, responsiveness and transparency positively shape evaluations of politics and thus have a positive effect on political trust (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2010, Halvorsen, 2003, p. 536; Holum, 2022, p. 2; Siebers, et al., 2019, p. 548). This can be explained by Arnsteins' (1969) ladder of participation, which describes that citizen participation can be placed differently on the ladder of participation, which is translated to different levels of influence. The higher a participatory activity is on Arnsteins' (1969) ladder, the more perceived influence it holds. Citizen initiatives are high on the ladder of participation because citizens are more in control (Arnstein, 1969). This increases their (perceived) influence on decision-making. Also, openness to participatory forms like citizen initiatives influences the perceived opportunities to express an opinion positively, thereby signalling responsiveness (Holum, 2022). Citizen initiatives can also help citizens to develop skills and knowledge related to policy-making which helps to increase transparency and thus helps citizens to evaluate politics positively. Therefore, from a rational perspective, (H2a)

participation in citizen initiatives positively affects trust in local politics because it makes citizens feel that there are enough opportunities to express their opinion.

The social-structure perspective emphasises different aspects of how participating in a citizen initiative builds political trust. As citizen initiatives have a more open structure, this gives people a better opportunity to use it as they like. Thereby, citizens can use the style of language they find easy and find a way to implement decisions which ‘suit’ them. Citizens collaborating is central to citizen initiatives and the role of civil servants is less dominant. Within citizen initiatives, citizens are less likely to experience cultural distance from politicians because they are in charge of the participatory process. Even when feeling culturally distanced from local government, trust can be built through interactions with other citizens. Therefore, citizen initiatives draw upon citizens’ feelings of entitlement and through participation citizens feel that ‘people like them’ can have an influence which impacts political trust positively. From both the rational and social-structure perspective it is expected that participating in a citizen initiative has a positive effect on political trust. From the social-structure perspective I expect that: (H2b) *participation in citizen initiatives positively affects trust in local politics because it makes citizens feel that 'people like them' can have influence.*

Educational attainment

However, people from different educational levels might evaluate and relate to politics differently. And therefore, there might be a difference between more and less-educated citizens in the sense that citizen participation builds political trust. Again, this research aims to understand the underlying mechanisms that might differ among different educational groups; this is also known as a conditional indirect effect (Preacher, et al., 2007). To assess the role of education in the relationship between participation and the underlying mechanisms that shape political trust, this research will mainly be focusing on the differential effects of educational background on the mechanisms. Rather than focusing on political trust itself, because this will narrow our understanding. Focusing on the theoretical mechanisms sheds light on how perspectives of political trust differ among more and less-educated citizens.

More-educated citizens might benefit from a more top-down structure of consultation meetings. Following the rational approach, this is explained by how they evaluate participating in a consultation meeting and their political knowledge. More-educated citizens often have more political knowledge than less-educated and this increases the perceived influence on the decision-making of more-educated citizens (Galston, 2001). Within a consultation meeting, civil servants determine what is talked about and in which form. It is helpful to have more political knowledge because it helps to evaluate the political process and expectations over input. Moreover, citizens with more political knowledge might find it easier to understand the information provided, thereby enhancing transparency. And this knowledge benefits their (perceived) influence on decision-making, and thus, the feeling that there are enough ways to express their opinion. This enhances the evaluation of the participatory process positively, especially among more-educated citizens as they have more political knowledge. In contrast, less-educated citizens often have less political knowledge and therefore might perceive to have less influence. Also, they lack the knowledge to evaluate whether the government is responsive to their input, affecting how they evaluate the participatory process. A consultation meeting, therefore, might shape the political evaluations of more and less-educated citizens differently. From a rational perspective, I expect that (H3a) *education positively shapes the relationship between participating in a consultation meeting and the perceived opportunities to express an opinion.*

Through the social-structure approach, it can be understood why the impact of consultation meetings on political trust is more pronounced among more-educated citizens and less so for less-educated citizens. As the more-educated citizens are overrepresented in the political domain, the dominant culture in politics highly corresponds with those of the more-educated. This is known as the ‘diploma democracy’ and makes that less-educated citizens “consider politicians to be insensitive to the lived experiences of the “common” people” (Bovens & Wille, 2017; Noordzij, et al., 2021, p. 571).

Therefore, less-educated citizens on average feel more cultural distance from politicians and civil servants. Even more so, among less-educated citizens this is exacerbated by feelings of stigmatisation or superiority signalled by civil servants, thereby causing them to perceive themselves as less legitimate actors within the context of a consultation meeting (Noordzij, et al., 2021; Visser, et al., 2021, p. 5). Not mastering the language style might make less-educated feel excluded in a consultation meeting. Or they might feel misunderstood by the civil servants organising it due to their perceived cultural distance. This effect might even be stronger when citizens feel that the meeting is not designed for people like them; less-educated citizens could therefore feel the meeting holds no influence for 'people like them'. While on the other hand, more-educated citizens might feel extra entitled in a consultation meeting because they are familiar and confident with the style of language and feel culturally close to the civil servants. The social-structure perspective explains that: (H3b) *education positively shapes the relationship between participating in a consultation meeting and the perceived influence of 'people like them'.*

Following the underlying mechanisms from both perspectives it can be expected that: (H3c) *education positively shapes the relationship between participating in a consultation meeting and political trust.*

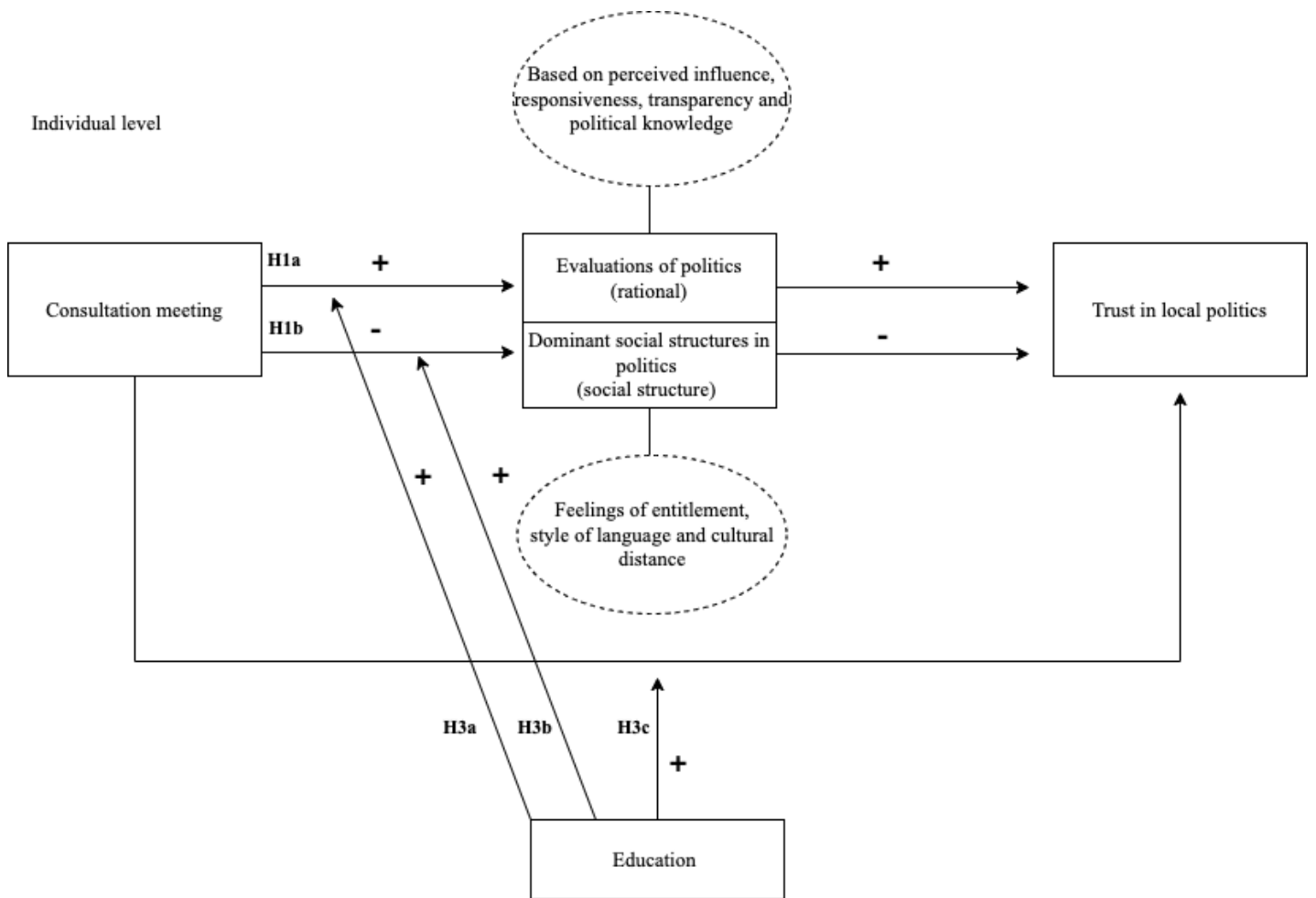
The previous section argued that a consultation meeting builds more upon the political trust of more-educated citizens. The other way around, in the context of a citizen initiative, the impact of participating on political trust might be more pronounced among less-educated citizens. The rational and social-structural perspectives explain this differently. As stated previously, a citizen initiative has a more bottom-up approach where citizens are more in charge of the initiatives' structure. From a rational perspective, less-educated citizens might evaluate their influence on decision-making negatively, because they have less political knowledge. Specific political knowledge, for example about political processes, is less influential when participating in a citizen initiative. Even more so, citizen initiatives have a more practical character, which is valued among less-educated citizens and make them evaluate the participatory process as open to their knowledge (Visser, et al., 2021, p. 7; p. 10). Participating in a citizen initiative could build trust among less-educated citizens as it allows them to have an influence on decision-making for a 'change'; it may signify a long-awaited chance to voice their ideas. This influences their perceived government responsiveness positively, and thus, impacts how they evaluate politics positively. While for more-educated citizens, this effect is less pronounced as they already tend to make more use of participatory opportunities like a citizen initiative. From the rational perspective, it is expected that: (H4a) *education negatively shapes the relationship between participating in citizen initiatives and the perceived opportunities to express an opinion.*

In the social-structural line of reasoning, the more practical character of citizen initiatives might draw upon the feelings of entitlement of less-educated citizens. Visser, de Koster and van der Waal (2021) see that even some non-participants perceive citizen initiatives to provide 'opportunities for people on the ground' (p. 10). Less-educated citizens might feel there is finally a participation form that is more 'suited' which enables them to feel more entitled to participate. Not suppressed by not mastering the style of language or cultural distance, a citizen initiative, unlike other participatory activities, provides the opportunity for less-educated citizens to feel like 'people like them' are legitimate actors in politics. Therefore, less-educated citizens benefit more strongly from this participation form. The social structure-perspective explains that (H4b) *education negatively shapes the relationship between participating in citizen initiatives and the perceived influence of 'people like them'.*

Following the underlying mechanisms from both perspectives it can be expected that: (H4c) *education negatively shapes the relationship between participating in a citizen initiative and political trust.*

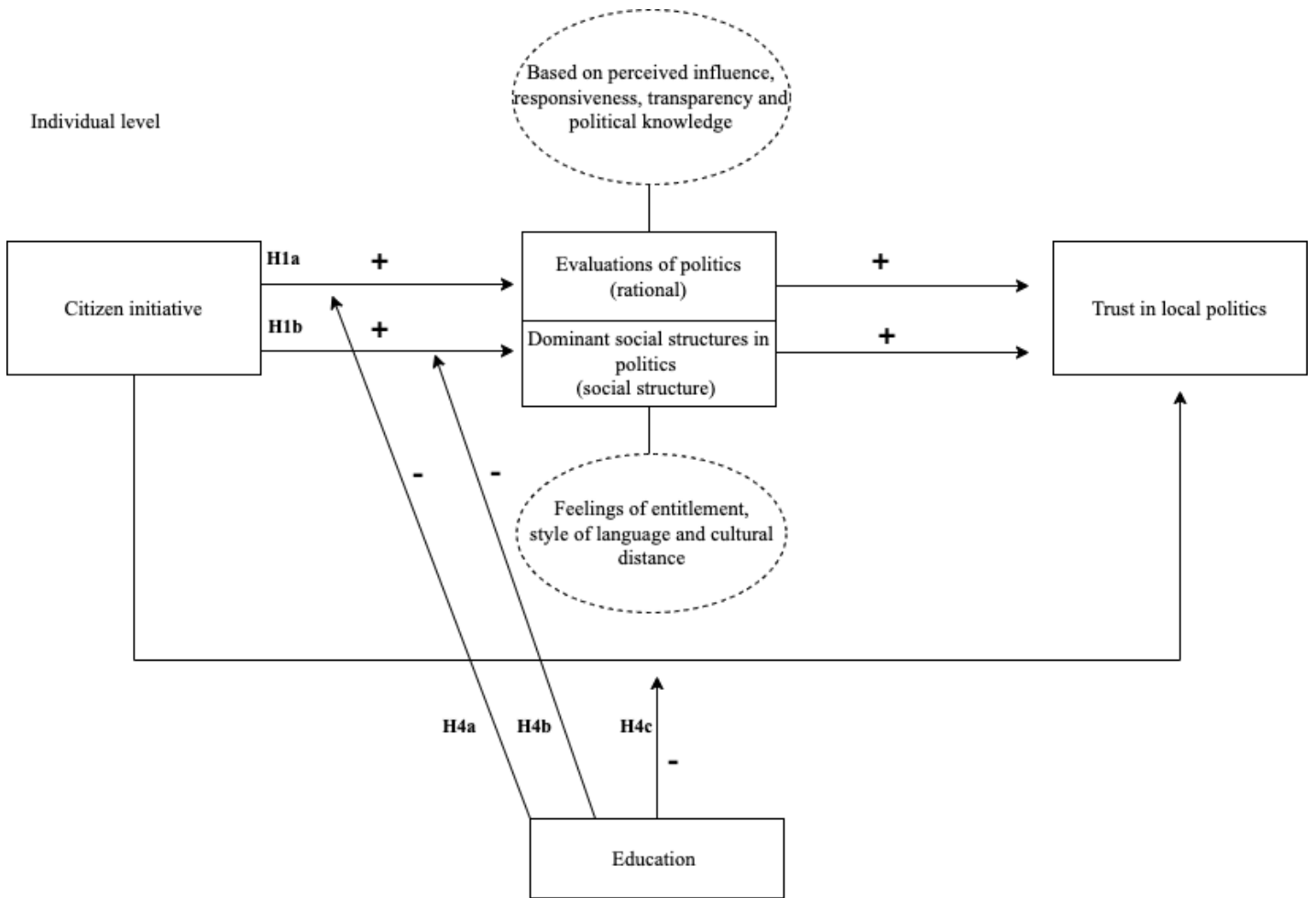
2.1 | Conceptual Models

Consultation meeting



Citizen initiative

Individual level



3 | Methods and data

To analyse the relationship between the different forms of local citizen participation and political trust, I use data collected from the ‘Local Voters Survey 2022’ in the Netherlands. The ‘Local Voters Survey’ is a survey that is conducted right after the local elections, and concerns local voter behaviour and opinions about local politics. This makes it able to test the relationship between citizen participation and political trust on the local level. Moreover, specific questions about perceived opportunities and feelings of influence make it able to test the two different perspectives on political trust. The data is collected by the LISS institute, which is a high-quality centre for data collection and is often used in social science. In this case, data is collected from the 17th of March until the 29th of March 2022. The survey was repeated in April 2022 for panellists who had not participated yet. The panel data is drawn from the population register of the Netherlands using a probability sample. The LISS institute goes to great lengths to ensure that the sample is a good representation of the population and that some groups are not over- or underrepresented, such as using stratification in their sampling. The survey was submitted to 3552 panellists and 2846 respondents completed the survey in full, which is a response rate of 80.1% (Oudejans, 2023). This research will be using a quantitative method in STATA, by analysing the relationship between citizen participation and political trust using multi-level linear regression, a KHB regression to establish the mediation effects of the rational and social-structure perspective and moderation to analyse the difference between more and less-educated citizens. KHB is a method that is recognized as a suitable approach for ordinal dependent variables and helps determine which perspective explains the effects more comprehensively (Smith, et al., 2019). Answers options like ‘I don’t know’, ‘I prefer not to say’ and ‘don’t remember’ were coded as missing.

3.1 | Operationalisation

Dependent variables

Political trust will be measured by using the question: ‘For each of the following persons/institutions, please indicate to what extent you trust them’, answers are coded from not at all (1) to a lot (5). Because this research is concerned with citizen participation on the local level, political trust will be operationalized by looking at local political institutes. All municipalities in the Netherlands are represented in the data. In this case, I will look at both trust in the elected Municipal Council and the board of Mayor and Alderman. Both are concerned with a different part of the policy process. Therefore, it is interesting to see whether this results in differences in political trust. The elected Municipal Council is responsible for legislation and control of the executive power. The board of Mayor and Alderman is responsible for executing policies.

To test the two perspectives – rational and social-structure perspective – related to political trust, and thus to measure the mediation effect, two distinct questions that link to these perspectives are used. For the rational perspective, the following question will be used: ‘*There are currently enough ways for citizens to make clear what their views are on the state of affairs here in the municipality*’. This gives an idea of whether citizens evaluate the local government as being open to their input, which is related to both perceived influence and responsiveness (Seyd, 2015). The social-structure perspective will be measured by using the question: ‘*People like me have no influence at all on local politics*’. The latter question shows how the respondents perceive themselves within the social-structure of politics. Someone who feels that ‘people like them’ have no influence, might feel that their social group is more distant from politics (Noordzij, et al., 2021). The variable that measures the social-structure approach was recoded so that it can be interpreted the same way as the rational approach; the higher the score the more people feel like people like them have influence (social-structure perspective) or that there are enough ways to express their opinion (rational perspective), the range extends from 1 to 5. It is important to note

that the measurement of the two perspectives is not entirely exhausting, but provides a solid foundation for investigating the mechanisms at play.

Independent variables

For citizen participation, two different forms of participation are chosen: consultation meetings and citizen initiatives. Participating in a consultation meeting is measured by the question: ‘Which of the following ways have you used in the past 5 years? This can be digital or physical, looking at the answer ‘attended a consultation meeting(s) of your municipality’. Participating in a citizen initiative is measured slightly differently, by the question: ‘If you were asked, to what extent would you be willing to... work with other citizens to solve problems in your neighbourhood, with or without the help from the municipality (this is called a citizens' initiative)’. The data doesn’t allow for measuring actual participation in citizen initiatives. Citizen initiatives have been on the rise in the past years, but are not very common yet, by using this question more people can be included in the data, which leads to a higher N, and thus a more reliable measurement. This means the findings for both citizen participation cannot be compared. However, the aim of this study is not to show which type of citizen participation sparks political trust more, but rather to demonstrate what the underlying mechanisms are that shape political trust and whether this is different for more and less-educated citizens.

This research looks at whether the relationship between citizen participation and political trust is different for citizens from different educational backgrounds. Education will be divided into two groups; more and less-educated citizens. It is most interesting to compare these two groups for several reasons. The division of education into two groups – more and less-educated citizens – holds significant interest for several reasons. Firstly, there exists an empirical divide that separates highly-educated individuals from less-educated individuals. This divide manifests in varying degrees of representation, political trust, and political participation, with the latter group feeling less represented, possessing lower political trust, and engaging in politics to a lesser extent (De Voogd & Cuperus, 2021). Also, the study of Noordzij, De Koster, and Van der Waal (2021) shows that generally speaking the widest gap in political attitudes lies between low and highly-educated citizens. Therefore, the difference between these two groups is most interesting to investigate. The two groups are coded as follows, citizens educated in primary school, preparatory secondary vocational education (vmbo), senior general secondary education/pre-university education (havo/vwo) and secondary vocational education (mbo) are coded as less-educated citizens, and citizens educated in higher professional education (hbo) and university (wo) are coded as more-educated citizens. More-educated citizen participates more often, therefore the distribution of less and more-educated citizens in participatory activities can be scattered.

Control variables

To make sure the effect of citizen participation on political trust is not affected by other variables that also (highly) correlate with either citizen participation or political trust, several control variables will be used. Previous research shows that men and women are drawn to different forms of political participation (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010). Therefore, I will be controlling for gender, female (1) and male (0), and other. ‘Other’ was recoded as missing because there were only 2 observations for ‘other’. 47,1% of the respondents are male and 52,9% are female. Older people report different levels of political trust than younger people, and they are distinct in the way they participate (Quintelier, 2007; Schmeets, 2017). Age will be measured by looking at the age of the household member. The age range is from 18 years until 98 years. Political interest is a well-known factor that influences participation and is higher among the more-educated (Catterberg & Moreno, 2006; Schmeets, 2017). Political interest is controlled by asking to which extent someone is interested in local politics: not interested (1), fairly interested (2) or very interested (3). Income impacts political participation, partially by influencing whether people feel entitled to ‘state an opinion’ (Laurison, 2015). Income is often related to education, thus to account for the educational difference, income is an important control variable. Also, citizens with lower incomes

could blame politicians for their economic situation and thus have less political trust (Catterberg & Moreno, 2006; Noordzij, et al., 2021). Income is measured by looking at personal net monthly income in Euros. The data shows outliers for the variable income. This is tested by visual examination of a box plot. Income is measured by monthly personal net income; some values are over €100.000. This amount is unlikely and rare, possibly respondents filled out their yearly income. Therefore, these values are deleted. Local connectedness could influence whether people participate, how close they feel to local politics and thus whether participation builds trust. Local connectedness is oftentimes higher in rural areas (Alexander, 2013, p. 831). This will be controlled by asking about the urban character of the place of residence: extremely urban (1) to not urban (5).

4 | Results

Statistical assumptions

Before performing linear regression, several assumptions were tested. Firstly, linearity is tested by visual examination of scatterplots. This shows that dependent and independent variables are linearly associated. Thereby, the assumption of linearity is not violated. Next, the data is checked for multicollinearities. Testing for VIF shows that for all variables VIF is close to 1 (mean VIF: 1.16)¹. This means that there the assumption of multicollinearity is not violated. To test for homoscedasticity, the Breusch-Pagan test and White's test are performed. The Chi-square value is $p < .001$, this implies the presence of heteroscedasticity in the residuals. Visual inspection of the histogram shows that the assumption of normality is violated. Violation of normality and homoscedasticity can affect standard errors and significance tests. In order to prevent this, a bootstrap during linear regression is used². By bootstrapping the data, smaller samples from the data are taken and the parameters are recalculated in each bootstrap sample. This process is repeated several times to estimate the parameters and standard errors in a robust way (Field, 2013, p. 736). The Pearson's R correlations are all in the expected direction and are shown in the appendix.³

Model explanation

I conducted a linear regression analysis to assess the direct effects of participating in a consultation meeting or expressing willingness to participate in a citizen initiative on political trust. The results are presented in Table 4 of the appendix, where Model 1 includes only the main effects, Model 2 includes the control variables, and Model 3 incorporates the mediator variables. Furthermore, to test hypotheses 1 and 2, I employed a KHB regression. Table 5 in the appendix displays the outcomes of the KHB regression, all Models include the control variables.

To test hypotheses 3 and 4, a linear regression with interaction terms is performed. The results of hypotheses 3a and 4a, to test whether there is a difference in the effect of citizen participation on political trust is shown in Table 6 (trust in Municipal Council) and 7 of the appendix (Trust in Alderman and Mayor). Table 8 (the rational perspective) and Table 9 of the appendix (social-structure perspective) displays the results of whether citizen participation affects the perceived opportunities or feeling of influence of more and less-educated citizens differently. The models are structured consistently; Model 1 showcases the main effects, Model 2 includes the control variables, Model 3 presents the interaction effects of education and participation in a consultation meeting, and finally, Model 4 shows the interaction effects of education and willingness to participate in a citizen initiative.

To ease the discussion of the results, I will discuss the results for the consultation meetings and citizen initiatives separately. Then following with discussing whether the outcomes are different for more and less-educated citizens. Figures 2 and 3 display an overview of the outcomes of all hypotheses.

Model 1 of Table 1 shows that, also after adding the control variables, there is no main effect of participating in a consultation meeting on political trust; neither on trust in the Municipal Council nor on trust in Alderman and Mayor⁴. In contrast to my findings for consultation meetings, the more citizens are willing to participate in a citizen initiative the more likely they have trust in local politics.

To test the first hypothesis (1a and 1b) I examine whether the effect of participating in a consultation meeting on political trust is partially explained by whether people feel that there are enough

¹ See Table 2 in the appendix

² By using the command *vce(bootstrap)* after the regression.

³ See Table 3 in the appendix.

⁴ Table 4 in the appendix shows that there are no major differences in outcome between trust in the Municipal Council and the trust in Alderman and Mayor. These two types of trust are highly related which is also shown by a high Pearson's r correlation ($r = .72$, $p < .001$).

opportunities to express their opinion (rational perspective) or by whether citizens feel people like them can have influence (social-structure perspective). The results for consultation meetings show that there is no mediating effect of either one of the perspectives (*rejecting hypotheses 1a and 1b*). Nevertheless, there seems to be a direct effect of both the rational and the social-structure perspective on political trust. So, whether people feel there are enough opportunities to express their opinion or whether citizens feel people like them can have influence positively influences their political trust.

The results in Table 2 show that the total effect is positive and significant, for both the Municipal Council as Alderman and Mayor as the dependent variable. The effect of willingness to participate in a citizen initiative on political trust does not remain after adding the rational and social-structure perspective. This is shown by the direct effect in Table 2 which is not significant and by the results in Table 1 (Model 2). Turning to the results of hypotheses 2a and 2b, I find that citizens' trust in local politics increases, when citizens are willing to participate in a citizen initiative, because citizens feel that they have enough opportunities to express their opinion (rational perspective) and because they feel that 'people like them' can have an influence (social-structure perspective) (*corroborating hypothesis 2a and 2b*). Citizens' trust in the Municipal Council increases mostly because they feel that 'people like them' can have influence (28,5%) aligning with the social-structure perspective. This is in contrast with trust in the Alderman and Mayor, where the perceived opportunities to express an opinion of citizens explains an increase in trust more (30,8%), aligning with the rational perspective.

Table 1: linear regression for citizen participation and mediators

	Trust in Municipal Council		Trust in Alderman and Mayor	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<i>Intercept (a)</i>	2.30*** (0.08)	1.43*** (0.09)	2.24*** (0.09)	1.40*** (0.10)
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Consultation meeting	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.08 (0.05)
Citizen initiative	0.05*** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
<i>Mediator variables</i>				
Rational perspective		0.13*** (0.01)		0.15*** (0.01)
Social-structure perspective		0.20*** (0.02)		0.18*** (0.02)
<i>Control variables</i>	Included	Included	Included	Included

*Note: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$. Unstandardised coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses. Table 4 in the appendix shows full Table; including effects for control variables.*

Table 2: Decomposition of the total effect of education on political trust, direct and indirect effects via the rational and social-structure perspectives

	Citizen initiative (Municipal Council)	Citizen initiative (Alderman and Mayor)
<i>Total effect</i>	0.04*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
<i>Direct effect</i>	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
<i>Indirect effect via</i>		

Rational perspective	0.01** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)
Social-structure perspective	0.01** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)
<i>Explained percentage of the total effect of participation by...</i>		
Rational perspective	20.7%	30.8%
Social-structure perspective	28.5%	29.8%
<i>Note: *=$p < 0.05$, **=$p < 0.01$, ***=$p < 0.001$. Unstandardised coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses.</i>		

Educational attainment

In this section I will discuss whether there is a difference between more and less-educated citizens in how citizen participation builds political trust. First, by looking at whether education shapes the relationship between participating in a consultation meeting and political trust, hereby also testing this for the two perspectives on political trust (hypotheses 3a-c). Secondly, I will discuss how more and less-educated citizens are affected in their political trust when they are willing to participate in a citizen initiative, hereby again taking the two perspectives into account (hypotheses 4a-c).

The results show that between more and less-educated citizens who attended a consultation meeting, there is no difference in their political trust, neither for trust in the Municipal Council (Model 3 of Table 5 in the appendix) nor for trust in the Alderman and Mayor (Model 3 of Table 6 in the appendix) (*rejecting hypothesis 3c*). Furthermore, Model 3 of Table 7 in the appendix shows the interaction effect between education and participation in a consultation meeting is negative and significant ($p < 0.05$). So, between more and less-educated citizens that have been to a consultation meeting, there is a difference in their perceived opportunities to express their opinion. However, education shapes the relationship negatively instead of positively as expected (*rejecting hypothesis 3a*). Figure 1 shows that the perceived opportunities to express an opinion of more-educated citizens do not change after attending a consultation meeting; it remains somewhat stable. However, Figure 1 shows that the perceived opportunities of less-educated citizens are affected by attending a consultation meeting. Less-educated citizens seem to feel that there are more opportunities to express an opinion after attending a participation meeting than they did before participating. Even, Figure 1 shows that before attending a consultation meeting, more-educated citizens have more perceived opportunities to express an opinion. However, after attending a consultation meeting less-educated citizens surpass more-educated citizens. So, attending a consultation meeting is more beneficial for less-educated citizens than it is for more-educated citizens in terms of perceived opportunities to express an opinion.

Table 8 (Model 3) in the appendix shows the results of the social-structure perspective, indicating that citizens' perception of whether 'people like them' can exert influence doesn't depend on their education level and whether they have participated in a consultation meeting (*rejecting hypothesis 3b*).

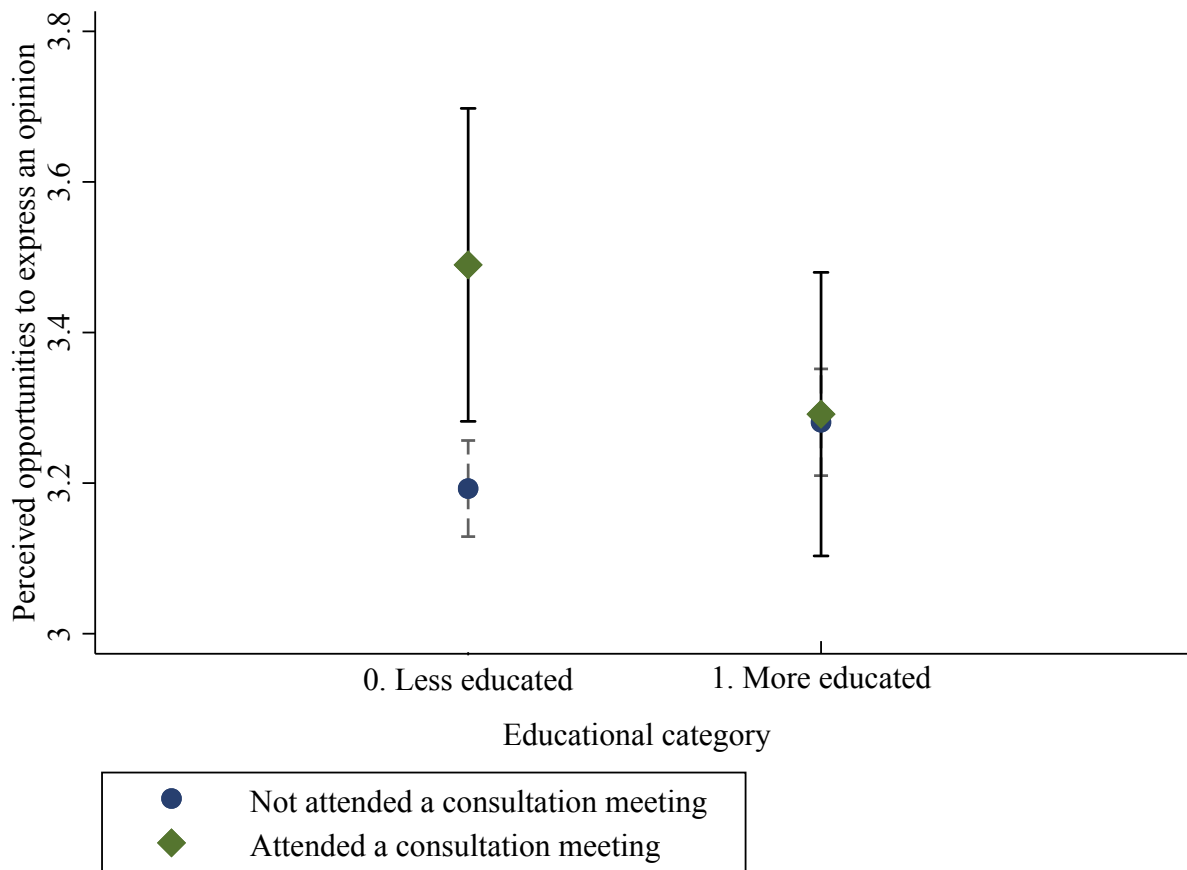
Table 3: interaction-effects for citizen participation and education

	Trust in the Municipal Council	Trust in Alderman and Mayor	Rational perspective	Social-structure perspective
<i>Interaction effects</i>				
Education * Consultation meeting	-0.03 (0.10)	0.17 (0.10)	-0.29* (0.14)	-0.11 (0.14)
Education * Citizen initiative	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)

Control variables	Included	Included	Included	Included
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Note: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$. Unstandardised coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses. See appendix for full Tables.

Figure 1: difference in perceived opportunities between more and less-educated citizens after attending a consultation meeting



Turning to the findings of willingness to participate in a citizen initiative. There is no difference between more and less-educated citizens' political trust when they are willing to participate in a citizen initiative, as shown by the insignificant interaction effect in Model 4 of Table 5 in the appendix (*rejecting hypothesis 4c*). Besides that, when we look at the rational perspective, it is found that the influence of willingness to participate in citizen initiatives on the perception of enough opportunities for expressing one's opinion is unaffected by education (*rejecting hypothesis 4a*). As for the social-structure perspective; the interaction effects in Model 4 of Table 8 in the appendix are not significant, indicating that the effect of willingness to participate in citizen initiatives on the perception of 'people like them' having influence does not differ significantly between more and less-educated citizens (*rejecting hypothesis 4b*).

To sum up my analyses, Figures 2 and 3 show the main outcomes of my analyses. Figure 3 shows that trust in local politics increases when citizens are willing to participate in a citizen initiative, because it makes citizens feel that there are enough ways to express an opinion (rational perspective) and because citizens feel that ‘people like them’ can have influence (*corroborating hypotheses 2a and 2b*). In addition, Figure 2 shows that education negatively impacts the relationship between participating in a consultation meeting and the perceived opportunities to express an opinion (*rejecting hypothesis 3a*). Indicating that the perceived opportunities to express an opinion of more and less-educated citizens are differently affected after attending a consultation meeting (see Figure 1). All non-significant relationships are not displayed in the Figures.

Figure 2: results overview of hypotheses for participating in a consultation meeting

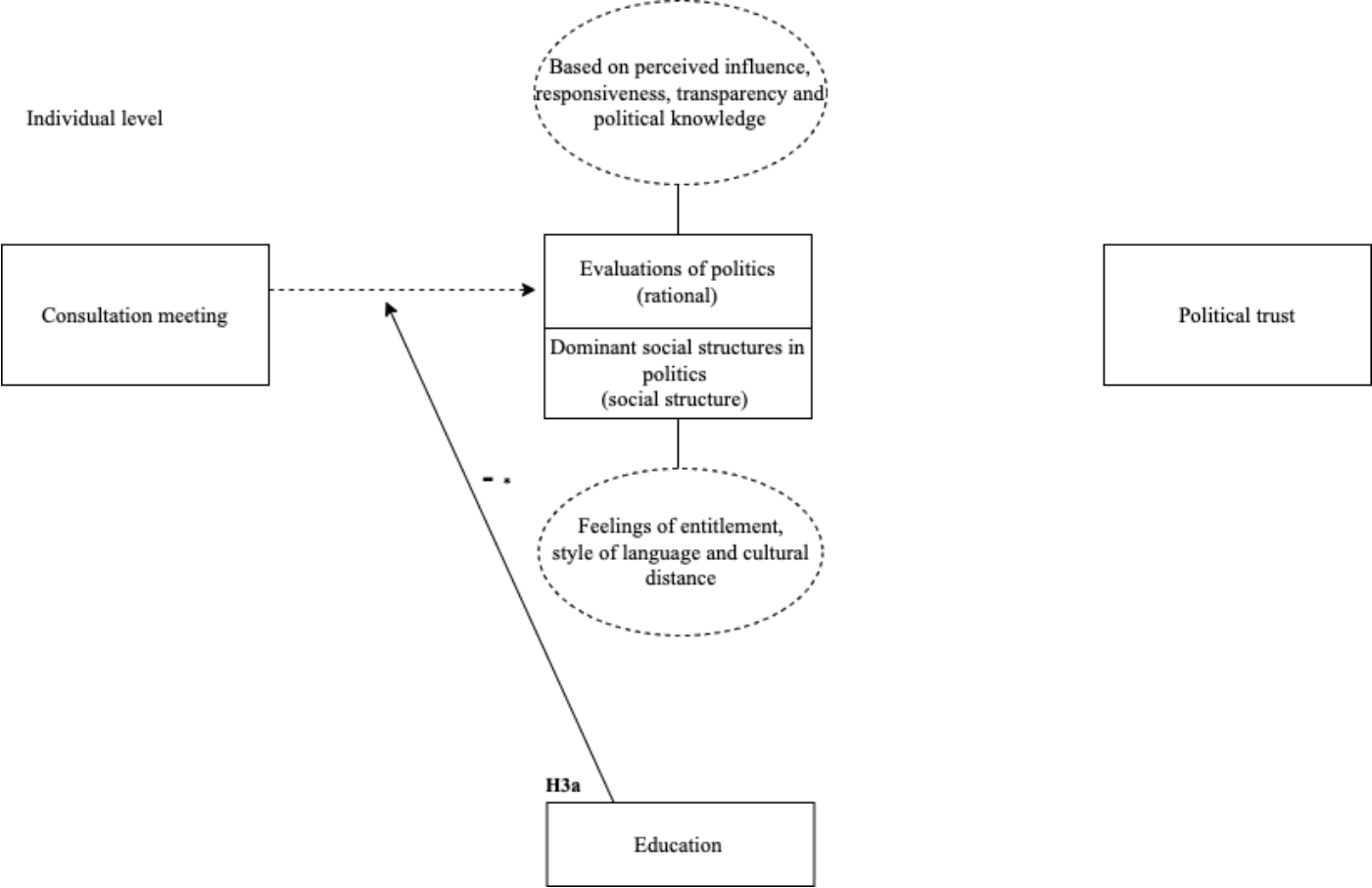
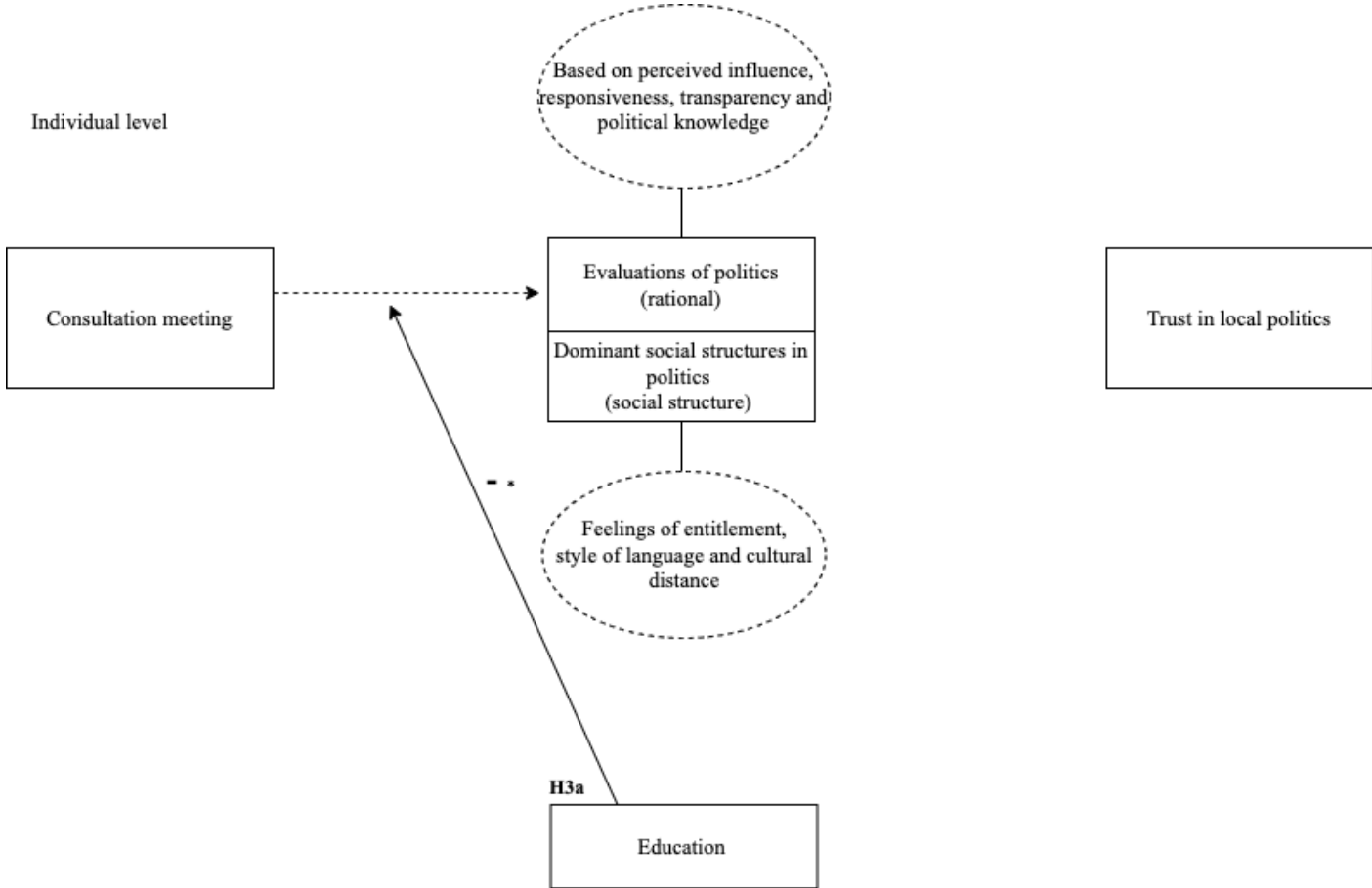


Figure 3: results overview of hypotheses for the willingness to participate in a citizen initiative



5 | Conclusion and discussion

This study aimed to test whether various forms of citizen participation foster political trust, focussing on two specific forms of participation: a consultation meeting and a citizen initiative. As these forms are commonly used in municipalities, the focus of this study is trust in local politics. Using two approaches to political trust helped set out the underlying mechanisms of how these two types of citizen participation affect political trust differently. I theorized that the political trust of more and less-educated citizens is affected differently. Building on the rational approach of political trust, I theorized that the top-down approach of consultation meetings draws upon the political knowledge of more-educated citizens, positively affecting understanding of the political process (Holum, 2022; Siebers, et al., 2019). Following the social-structure perspective, I build on the concept of the ‘diploma-democracy’ explaining that more-educated are expected to be well-acquainted with the dominant culture in politics (Bovens & Willie, 2017); this adds to their feeling of being a legitimate actor in politics (Laurison, 2015). In contrast, less-educated citizens could benefit more from the bottom-up and practical nature of citizen initiatives. The practical nature of citizen initiatives taps into the perceived influence of less-educated citizens, as explained by the rational perspective, and into their feeling of entitlement, as posited by the social-structure perspective.

This study found no direct effect of attending a consultation meeting on trust in local politics; whereas citizens who are willing to participate in a citizen initiative are more likely to have more political trust. The results indicate that citizens who are willing to participate in a citizen initiative have more trust in local politics because they feel that there are enough opportunities to express their opinion. The theoretical explanation provided by the rational perspective revolves around responsiveness and perceived influence. When citizen initiatives are offered by the local government, it is likely to signal responsiveness and perceived influence to citizens. This increases the feeling that there are opportunities for citizens to express their opinion, thereby increasing their political trust (Halvorsen, 2003; Holum, M. 2022; Siebers, et al., 2019). Moreover, the results show that citizens’ political trust is increased when they are willing to participate in a citizen initiative because citizens feel that ‘people like them’ can have influence. Theoretically, the social-structure perspective explains that citizen initiatives foster citizens’ political trust because citizens feel that the type of participation is ‘suitable’ for them, for example by the use of a style of language familiar to them (Visser, et al., 2021).

In sum, both approaches explain how citizen initiatives can build political trust. However, depending on the type of local trust – in the Municipal Council, or Alderman and Mayor – one approach is more explanatory than the other. In the case of the Municipal Council, the primary driver behind the increase in citizens' trust is their perception that individuals similar to them can have influence, explaining 28.5%. In contrast, when it comes to trust in the Alderman and Mayor, the key factor explaining the rise in trust is the perceived opportunities citizens have to express their opinions, contributing 30.8%. This could be explained by their respective roles; the Municipal Council is chosen by election and is responsible for legislation and control of executive power. Citizens, therefore feel less cultural distant from the Municipal Council, because they represent politicians or parties they voted for. The Alderman and Mayor are likely perceived as more distant to citizens as there is less opportunity to engage with them, however, because they execute policy citizens probably feel that allowing for citizens initiatives is under their remit. Thusly, being willing to participate in a citizen initiative builds trust in the Alderman and Mayor because citizens feel that they give them opportunities to express an opinion.

Focussing on education, the analysis shows, when we distinguish political trust in the two different approaches, there does not seem to be an influence of educational attainment on the relationship between willingness to participate in a citizen initiative on either of the two approaches of political trust. In other words, citizens from different educational backgrounds, who are willing to participate in a citizen

initiative, are not differently affected in how they perceive the opportunities to express an opinion or whether they feel 'people like them' can exert influence.

However, the analysis shows that there is an educational gap between more and less-educated citizens in their perceptions of opportunities to express an opinion after attending a consultation meeting. Less-educated citizens feel that there are more ways to express their opinion after participating, whereas the effect is minimal for more-educated citizens. Even more so, after participating in a consultation meeting, less-educated citizens feel even more empowered in having a voice than their more-educated counterparts. This outcome is the opposite of what was theorized. Nevertheless, this could be explained by external political efficacy and political knowledge. Firstly, for less-educated citizens, participating in a consultation meeting instils the notion that politicians are more responsive to their opinions, as they had the opportunity to voice their opinions, thus impacting how they evaluate politics. Less-educated citizens participate less frequently than more-educated citizens (Schmeets, 2017). However, when they do attend a consultation meeting, it could have a stronger impact on their perceived opportunities as they finally perceive themselves as having a voice and, consequently, tend to be more satisfied after the meeting compared to more-educated citizens. This could explain why less-educated citizens surpass more-educated citizens in their perceived opportunities after attending a consultation meeting. Conversely, since more-educated citizens generally possess higher levels of external efficacy, participating in a consultation meeting does not significantly enhance their external efficacy or their view on politics (Campbell, et al., 1960). In addition, more-educated citizens might be more critical towards politics and politicians as they already experienced more types of participatory activities. Secondly, participating in a consultation meeting draws on the political knowledge of less-educated citizens. It helps them to evaluate the participatory process and their role in it, thus, making them feel that there are more opportunities to express an opinion. As more-educated citizens on average have more political knowledge, they already have this feeling and therefore participating in a consultation meeting has little impact on their perceived opportunities to express an opinion.

It is important to note that both measures, consultation meetings and citizen initiatives, do not consider the degree of success achieved in terms of actual policy changes. Thus, this study does not measure whether participation leads to changes in policy. While such policy outcomes could potentially impact political trust, this aspect falls outside the scope of the present research. To enhance our understanding, future research could measure citizens' political trust at various moments in time to see if their trust fluctuates, and connect this to policy changes and citizens' feeling that local government acts upon their input given in participative activities. Citizens' trust in local politics might rise right after participation, but then drop again if citizens feel that their input didn't change anything. To gain more understanding, it would be interesting to follow citizens throughout their participatory trajectory and conduct interviews with them. This would help us see if their views and perceptions change over time and identify important moments that influence these changes. Taking both perspectives into account in future research, it can be shown whether some of the underlying mechanisms of political trust are more stable over time. Citizens' evaluations might fluctuate more over time because it is dependent on current affairs and policy changes, whilst how citizens relate to dominant (cultural) structures in politics might be more deep-rooted.

In addition, due to the availability of measures it is important to make two remarks. Firstly, the data didn't allow to measuring actual participation in citizen initiatives, instead, willingness to participate in citizen initiatives is used. Although this measurement is second-best compared to actual participation, it allows to explore a general attitude and serves as a proxy for assessing citizens' potential for active involvement in citizen initiatives. By exploring the underlying mechanisms associated with the willingness to participate in a citizen initiative, this research gained important insights into the potential impact of citizen initiatives on political trust. And thereby, this research provides a starting point for further research into understanding the relationship between participation forms like citizen initiatives, political trust and the underlying mechanisms. Future research should expand this knowledge by focusing

on actual participation to see whether this inspires different outcomes. Secondly, it is crucial to acknowledge that this study cannot establish the direction of the causal relationship. It is plausible that individuals with higher levels of trust are more inclined to participate or express willingness to participate, suggesting a potential reversal of the relationship compared to the specific focus of this study. Future research should investigate this, again, by doing longitudinal research and supplementing this with qualitative interviews, which could provide more in-depth knowledge of the direction of the relationship and the underlying mechanism.

Moreover, it is important to note that in this research the mediators are tested separately from the conditional indirect effect: education. Testing the mechanisms separately provides a fundamental basis for understanding the conditional nature of education. Nevertheless, future research should expand the knowledge on how different educational groups are affected in their political trust by underlying mechanisms. This could be done by more advanced statistical methods such as performing a mediated moderation analysis as explained by Preacher, Rucker and Hayes (2007) to aim for a more comprehensive understanding.

Furthermore, the outcomes of this research could imply that different social groups react differently to specific forms of citizen participation which could possibly hold important implications for (local) governments. This study serves as a steppingstone for future research, which should delve deeper into understanding the effects on and responses of different social groups to various forms of (local) participation. This can be achieved through monitoring, for example through surveys, that track the changes in citizens' political attitudes before and after engaging in specific participatory activities. In addition, future research could explore more underlying mechanisms of the two perspectives. To explore mechanisms within the rational perspective, for example, one could look at whether citizens feel that politicians act upon their interests or by scoring their perceived influence. To examine the social-structure perspective, questions such as 'Do you comfortable with the use of language?' or 'Do you feel able to express yourself fully in participatory?' can be asked. This study didn't have the opportunity to do so, but this could give a more complete view of the mechanisms at play.

The increasingly salient question in the Netherlands on how to increase trust in politics cannot solely be answered by expanding political participation in all sorts of forms (Derbali, 2023). Thus, this and future research can shed light on the barriers that hinder certain citizens from engaging and offer potential strategies for enhancing political trust among different citizens. Currently, national and local governments are actively seeking ways to enhance political trust. In order to comprehensively address this question, it is crucial to conduct research on how political trust is shaped. This knowledge bears high societal value because it helps to bridge the gap between (local) government and citizens and provides insights into promoting equal engagement among different social subgroups, thus bolstering democratic legitimacy. If we continue to not adequately address low participation rates this hinders democratic principles, and pushes back on inclusivity and representation (Dalton, 2004). As a consequence, certain groups in society will continue to be marginalized and, therefore, these groups may possibly experience unequal opportunities.

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7 | Appendix

7.1 | Tables

Table 1: descriptive statistics

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	N
Trust in Municipal Council	1	4	2.66	0.61	2451
Trust in Alderman and Mayor	1	4	2.67	0.64	2328
Council meeting	0	1	0.08	0.27	2855
Citizen initiative	1	5	3.09	1.10	2542
Rational perspective	1	5	3.26	0.97	2232
Social-structure perspective	1	5	3.36	0.97	2600
Education	0	1	0.43	0.50	2777
Age	18	98	51.48	18.41	2869
Female	0	1	1.53	0.50	2867
Urban character of residency	1	5	3.12	1.42	2841
Political interest	1	3	1.67	0.60	2844
Income	0	12260	1836.92	1200.61	2719

Table 2: test for multicollinearity (VIF test)

Variable	VIF
Council meeting	1.07
Citizen initiative	1.07
Rational perspective	1.09
Social-structure perspective	1.20
Education	1.27
Age	1.12
Female	1.17
Urban character of residency	1.03
Political interest	1.18
Income	1.37

Mean VIF	1.16
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Table 3: Pearson's R correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Trust municipal council	1.0											
2. Trust B&W	0.72***	1.0										
3. Council meeting	0.05*	0.04	1.0									
4. Citizen initiative	0.12***	0.10***	0.12***	1.0								
5. Rational	0.30***	0.29***	0.06	0.10	1.0							
6. Social-structure	0.40***	0.35***	0.10	0.12	0.25	1.0						
7. Education	0.14***	0.13***	0.08***	0.06**	0.04*	0.22***	1.0					
8. Urban character	0.04*	0.02	0.05*	0.08***	0.02	0.02	-0.10***	1.0				
9. Age	-0.07*	-0.01	0.09***	0.04*	0.07***	-0.07***	-0.09***	-0.17***	1.0			
10. Gender	0.01	-0.02	-0.08***	-0.02	-0.03	0.02	-0.04*	0.003	-0.09***	1.0		
11. Political interest	0.19***	0.20***	0.21***	0.22***	0.06**	0.24***	0.11***	0.03	0.23***	-0.10***	1.0	
12. Income	0.05**	0.07***	0.10***	0.04*	0.04	0.13***	0.40***	-0.05*	0.16***	-0.33***	0.13**	1.0

Note: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$.

Table 4: main effects and mediator and control variables

	Trust in Municipal Council			Trust in Alderman and Mayor		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Intercept (a)</i>	2.48*** (0.05)	2.30*** (0.08)	1.43*** (0.09)	2.50*** (0.05)	2.24*** (0.09)	1.40*** (0.10)
<i>Independent variables</i>						
Consultation meeting	0.05 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.08 (0.05)
Citizen initiative	0.06*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.04** (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
<i>Mediator variables</i>						
Rational perspective			0.13*** (0.01)			0.15*** (0.01)
Social-structure perspective			0.20*** (0.02)			0.18*** (0.02)
<i>Control variables</i>						
Education		0.10** (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)		0.11*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Age		-0.00*** (0.00)	-0.00*** (0.00)		-0.00* (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Female		0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)		0.00 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
Urban character of residency		0.02* (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)		0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Political interest		0.18*** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)		0.19*** (0.02)	0.11*** (0.03)
Income		0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)		0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
N	2301	2126	1817	2185	2017	1756
R ²	0.01	0.06	0.22	0.01	0.05	0.19

Note: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$. Unstandardised coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses.

Table 5: KHB regression mediation

	Trust in Municipal Council		Trust in Alderman and Mayor	
	Consultation meeting	Citizen initiative	Consultation meeting	Citizen initiative
<i>Total effect</i>	0.02 (0.04)	0.04*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.03** (0.01)
<i>Direct effect</i>	-0.04 (0.04)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.06 (0.04)	0.01 (0.01)
<i>Indirect effect via</i>				
Rational perspective	0.02* (0.01)	0.01** (0.00)	0.02* (0.01)	0.01** (0.00)
Social-structure perspective	0.03* (0.01)	0.01** (0.00)	0.03* (0.01)	0.01** (0.00)

<i>Explained percentage of the total effect of participation by...</i>				
Rational perspective	126.9%	20.7%	-178.4	30.8%
Social-structure perspective	177%	28.5%	-211.1%	29.8%
N	1887	1817	1824	1756
R ²	0.22	0.23	0.18	0.19

*Note: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$. Unstandardised coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses.*

Table 6: linear regression for the interaction between citizen participation and education with trust in Municipal Council as dependent variable

	Trust in the Municipal Council			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Intercept (a)</i>	2.43*** (0.04)	2.30*** (0.07)	2.30*** (0.07)	2.29*** (0.09)
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Education (ref: less-educated)	0.12*** (0.02)	0.10*** (0.02)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.10 (0.08)
Consultation meeting	0.04 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.05)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.00 (0.05)
Citizen initiative (ref: certainly not)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.04* (0.02)
<i>Interaction effects</i>				
Education * Consultation meeting			-0.03 (0.10)	
Education * Citizen initiative				-0.00 (0.02)
<i>Control variables</i>				
Age		-0.00*** (0.00)	-0.00*** (0.00)	-0.00*** (0.00)
Female		0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
Urban character of residency		0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Political interest		0.18*** (0.02)	0.18*** (0.02)	0.18*** (0.03)
Income		0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
N	2239	2126	2126	2126
R ²	0.03	0.06	0.06	0.06

*Note: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$. Unstandardised coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses.*

Table 7: linear regression for the interaction between citizen participation and education for trust in the Alderman and Mayor

	Trust in Alderman and Mayor			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4

<i>Intercept (a)</i>	2.45*** (0.05)	2.24*** (0.09)	2.23*** (0.09)	2.22*** (0.09)
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Education (ref: less-educated)	0.14*** (0.03)	0.11** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.15 (0.08)
Consultation meeting	0.01 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.05)	0.05 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.04)
Citizen initiative (ref: certainly not)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.04* (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)
<i>Interaction effects</i>				
Education * Consultation meeting			-0.17 (0.10)	
Education * Citizen initiative				-0.01 (0.02)
<i>Control variables</i>				
Age		-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00* (0.00)	-0.00* (0.00)
Female		0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)
Urban character of residency		0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Political interest		0.19*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.03)
Income		0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
N	2126	2017	2017	2017
R ²	0.02	0.05	0.05	0.05

Table 8:
linear

Note: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$. Unstandardised coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses.

regression for the interaction between citizen participation and education with the rational perspective as dependent variable

	Rational perspective			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Intercept (a)</i>	2.90*** (0.09)	2.77*** (0.13)	2.76*** (0.12)	2.74*** (0.16)
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Education (ref: less educated)	0.06 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)	0.09 (0.015)	0.14 (0.16)
Consultation meeting	0.16 (0.09)	0.12 (0.08)	0.27* (0.13)	0.12 (0.07)
Citizen initiative (ref: certainly not)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)
<i>Interaction effects</i>				
Education * Consultation meeting			-0.29* (0.14)	
Education * Citizen initiative				-0.03 (0.04)
<i>Control variables</i>				
Age		0.00 (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Female		-0.08* (0.04)	-0.08 (0.05)	-0.08 (0.05)

Urban character of residency		0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)
Political interest		0.04 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	0.04 (0.05)
Income		0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
N	2071	1963	1963	1963
R ²	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01

Table 9:
linear

Note: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$. Unstandardised coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses.

regression for the interaction effect between citizen participation and education with the social-structure perspective as dependent variable

	Social-structure perspective			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Intercept (a)</i>	2.90*** (0.06)	2.62*** (0.13)	2.61*** (0.12)	2.61*** (0.13)
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Education (ref: less educated)	0.42*** (0.04)	0.34*** (0.05)	0.35*** (0.05)	0.36** (0.12)
Consultation meeting	0.23** (0.08)	0.13 (0.07)	0.19 (0.10)	0.12 (0.08)
Citizen initiative (ref: certainly not)	0.09*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.07** (0.03)
<i>Interaction effects</i>				
Education * Consultation meeting			-0.11 (0.14)	
Education * Citizen initiative (2)				-0.00 (0.04)
<i>Control variables</i>				
Age		-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)
Female		0.08 (0.04)	0.07 (0.05)	0.08 (0.05)
Urban character of residency		0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Political interest		0.35*** (0.03)	0.35*** (0.04)	0.35*** (0.04)
Income		0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
N	2346	2215	2215	2215
R ²	0.06	0.11	0.11	0.11

Note: *= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$, ***= $p < 0.001$. Unstandardised coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses.

7.2 | Checklist Ethical and Privacy Aspects of Research



Instruction

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Bonnie French, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: How citizen participation builds trust. Name, email of student: Donya Brik, 610474db@eur.nl
Name, email of supervisor: Kjell Noordzij, k.noordzij@essb.eur.nl Start date and duration: 10-02-2023 – 25-06-2023

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?
(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES
If 'NO': skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? NO
Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).
2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.
3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). YES

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES - NO
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES - NO
3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - NO
4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants?
Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.). YES - NO
5. Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? YES - NO
6. Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? YES - NO
7. Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? YES - NO
8. Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? YES - NO
9. Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES - NO
10. Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES - NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable. Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

The data that I will be using is collected by the LISS-institute which is a high-quality centre for data collection and is often used in social science. Centerdata takes care of the data management, this is an independent non-profit research institute based on the Tilburg University campus. Centerdata collects, analysis and disseminates reliable data for the academic community, government and market players. I received the data from them in a digital secure environment from which I can download the data through a personal account Centerdata made for me.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

The survey was submitted to 3,552 panellists and 2,846 respondents completed the survey in full, which is a response rate of 80.1% (Oudejans, 2023). So, the size of my sample will approximately be 2,846. Depending on how many missing variables are deleted after cleaning the data.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

The panel data is drawn from the population register of the Netherlands using a probability sample. So, the population from which I will sample is citizens from the Netherlands.

Continue to part V.

PART V: DATA STORAGE AND BACKUP

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

I only store the data that is already anonymized and managed by Centerdata. They take care of the process of data management, I can access this data by downloading it from a secure environment. The downloaded data will be stored on my laptop in a separate folder for the duration of my thesis.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

I use secondary data which is managed by Centerdata, they take care of every aspect within the process of data collection and make sure researchers, like me, can download the data in a secure environment. I then download the data on my laptop in a separate folder for the duration of writing analysis for my thesis. After completing my thesis, the downloaded data will be deleted from my computer.

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

I will frequently back-up the downloaded data I received from Centerdata to make sure the data is protected from accidental data loss or unauthorized access.

In case of collecting personal data how, will you anonymize the data?

The data is anonymized by the data collectors from Centerdata. The data was already anonymized when I got it.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Donya Brik

Name (EUR) supervisor: Kjell Noordzij

Date: 19-03-2023

Date: 19-3-23

