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ARTICLE



Elucidating EU engagement: rethinking dimensions of supranational participation

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ABSTRACT

Concerns about the quality of the EU's democratic participation are reflected in much of the research on EU attitudes and voting behavior in European Parliament elections or EU referendums. Yet few – if any – have considered other types of behavior that may be associated with a vibrant EU citizenry. We propose a new theoretical framework for capturing the broad range of participatory activities in which citizens may engage at the EU level, then use original survey data from the United Kingdom to test the validity of these dimensions. We also assess the extent to which predictors from existing literature (identity threat, economic concerns, political attitudes, and sociodemographics) explain these various forms of behavior. Results suggest that citizens pursue a wide array of participation avenues, with different sets of motivations underpinning each one. These findings are essential for better understanding individuals' political (dis)engagement, both with the EU and beyond.

KEYWORDS

EU engagement; European identity; political behavior; political participation

Since the Danish rejection of the Treaty of Maastricht in the early 1990s, scholars have intensely debated the democratic quality of the European Union (EU). Many point to the public's apparent lack of engagement at the European level and claim that the EU suffers from a 'democratic deficit' and the absence of a lively public sphere (Schmitter 2000). Empirical investigations in this vein have been largely limited to voting in European Parliament (EP) elections or national referenda on EU issues. These emphases make sense as the former is the most conventional form of participation and the latter has proven to have major ramifications for the integration process – most notably the 2016 'Brexit' referendum, in which a slight majority of citizens in the United Kingdom (UK) demanded exit from the EU altogether. But are these the only avenues through which EU citizens might 'engage' with the EU? We argue no: there exist a number of other behaviors that might signify a vibrant European citizenry. To better understand if

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and how people engage with the EU, we derive a theoretically-grounded typology identifying multiple new dimensions of participation and then test whether our expectations hold.

We assert that various types of actions have been overlooked when it comes to measuring mass engagement with the EU, and that these different acts – some positive, some negative – should be taken into account in order to produce a fuller picture of political participation in the European realm. After reviewing existing literature, we develop a conceptual framework to account for four different categories through which participation may take place: taking advantage of EU benefits, information-transfer, expressions of pride, and protest. A fifth category applies to those who explicitly choose *not* to participate. We test the validity of our typology using original data from a nationally-representative survey conducted in the UK in 2012. After confirming the existence of these various dimensions through factor analysis, we employ existing explanatory models to determine the extent to which established motivations like economic concern, identity threat, political attitudes, and sociodemographics explain each type. These subsequent tests are not the main focus of our study, but they raise important questions for future scholars because we show that different drivers influence each mode of participation, suggesting that citizens with certain ambitions and/or grievances may channel their sentiments into specific types of action.

Our findings contribute to scholarly understanding of democratic behavior in any context. While we assess these factors from the vantage of a complex, multilevel polity like the EU, we note their applicability to studies of political participation at the national or even subnational level and across geographic regions. Analyzing and comparing these multiple types of participation beyond just electoral behavior enhances our knowledge of what propels citizens' political actions, which then allows scholars and policymakers to better comprehend just how politically (dis)engaged the public is, and why. Such knowledge is critical for polities everywhere – and especially for the EU as European politics remain contentious and have far-reaching implications for the future of integration.

Participation at the European level

Existing research on EU-based political participation focuses exclusively on turnout in European Parliament (EP) elections, voting in national referendums on EU issues, and (less so) protest. These emphases make sense both because data are readily available and because they are the forms of participation most often associated with the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship.

The vast majority of EU participation studies investigate EP elections (e.g., Franklin and Hobolt 2011; Hernández and Kriesi 2016). Yet citizens consistently demonstrate far less interest in EP elections than national ones. In most countries, turnout is significantly lower at the European level and has declined in most European elections, from its high of 62% in 1979 to 42.6% in 2014 ('Results of the 2014 European Elections' 2014). Individual-level analyses suggest that trust in the EP and the EU more broadly promotes greater participation (Blondel et al 1998; Clark 2014). Macro-level analyses similarly indicate that turnout increases with aggregate EU support and receiving higher EU subsidies (Mattila 2003; Stockemer 2012). EP elections are often used as a forum to

express national political concerns rather than as instruments for holding the EU accountable (Reif and Schmitt 1980). Some individuals take EP elections as an opportunity to support a less-competitive party that they prefer, but on which they would not waste their vote in a (more consequential) national election. Others use EP elections to signal disapproval with the incumbent government's performance. This second-order elections theory is widely supported (Koepke and Ringe 2006; Marsh 1998; Schmitt 2005), raising alarm that the EU lacks the sort of deliberative transnational citizenry necessary for democratic success. However, some suggest that second-order voting is sometimes motivated by EU-based preferences (Clark and Rohrschneider 2009; Hobolt, Spoon, and Tilley 2009). Whether voters engage in second-order behavior or, instead, consider EU issues when making their EP vote choices appears to depend on the broader information environment in which they are embedded. Voters are less swayed by national concerns when and where EP political campaigns, the media, and the national political environment provide greater information about EU affairs (De Vries et al. 2011; Hobolt and Spoon 2012).

Research findings on referenda on the EU are similar (Hobolt 2006). Vote choice appears influenced by EU attitudes (Mendez, Mendez, and Triga 2014), and referendums often resemble second-order elections by serving as a barometer of support for the national government (Franklin, Marsh, and Wlezien 1994; Garry, Marsh, and Sinnott 2005). Perceiving that the EU threatens national culture increases the likelihood of voting against further integration (Lubbers 2008). Emotionally-speaking, referenda voters who are anxious or fearful tend to vote based on the issue in question, while those operating in a state of anger are more likely to confirm second-order expectations (Garry 2014). Individuals behave more consistently with the second-order model when elites call a referendum due to political calculations (as opposed to a legal mandate) and when the results are non-binding (Hug 2002). Additionally, political environments that better educate the public about the EU – such as in countries with greater political contestation over the issue of European integration (Hobolt 2005) or in which elites more frequently address this issue (Hobolt 2007) – yield voters motivated more by EU concerns.

Lastly, a few studies explore non-traditional forms of collective action targeted at the EU, such as protests, demonstrations and strikes. While relatively few protests between 1984 and 1997 focused on EU policies, the number of such events increased throughout the 1990s as the EU's public salience grew – perhaps spawned by fear of the economic implications of European integration (Imig 2002). Reising (1999) observes spatial and temporal diffusion effects to EU protests, with protests spilling over national borders and increasing in number over time. In contrast, Uba and Ugglä (2011) show that the number of 'Europrotests' declined significantly after 2002.

In our opinion, too little attention has been devoted to the range of other avenues for supranational political participation. Given this scarcity, we still know very little about whether, how, and why the public interacts with the EU. We argue a more well-rounded assessment of EU democracy must take into account a broader range of participatory acts. Consequently, we believe there are numerous ways in which citizens might *engage* with the EU that extend far beyond the traditional foci detailed above.

Rethinking how citizens 'engage' with the EU

Political scientists have devoted significant time and attention to conceptualizing participation. Recognizing that individuals often seek alternative ways to express themselves beyond the ballot box, Verba, Nie and Kim provided the seminal definition of political participation as '...those legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take' (1978: 46). They organized different modes of participation into a fourfold typology: voting, campaign activity, communal activities, and individual contacts. Dalton (2013) added two additional categories: protest activities and internet-based activism.¹ Other studies distinguish between formal/institutionalized versus informal/non-institutionalized participation, noting a steep decline in the former while a dramatic increase in the latter cross-nationally (Grasso 2016; Hooghe and Quintelier 2014). Particularly alarming from a normative perspective is the widening socioeconomic gap in *who* is (not) participating; poorer, less-educated respondents display much weaker national-level participation than their well-off, highly-educated counterparts (Armingeon and Schädel 2015; Gallego 2007).

Whether political participation is truly declining (Gray and Caul 2000) or just taking new forms (Dalton (2000)), recent scholars contend that it needs to be re-conceptualized and question how well past categories capture the entire range of participatory actions citizens today may take (Fox 2014). In line with this, Van Deth (2014) outlines a series of decision rules demarcating ways to recognize whether an activity constitutes minimalist, targeted, or motivational participation. The minimalist definition requires that citizens voluntarily engage in behavior taking place in the political sphere. This underscores what political participation is *not*: a mere attitude, obligatory, or a professional activity. Targeted participation relaxes the criteria to include actions aimed at influencing politics or solving collective problems. Lastly, and, in our minds, most importantly for participation at the EU level, the motivational definition cares not whether the action is aimed at political actors or occurs in the political arena; rather, it is simply concerned with whether participants engage in an action to *express* their political intentions. By this standard, even *non-action* constitutes an expression of political activity (Van Deth 2014: 353).

Building upon this, we posit a new conceptual framework differentiating between five overarching modes of participation based on an individual's likely motivations for engaging with the EU. We start by returning to the foundational distinctions Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978: 55) used for their original typology: 1) the likely influence of the act on decision-makers; 2) the scope of the outcome; 3) the degree of partisan conflict involved; 4) the amount of initiative required by an individual; and 5) the extent of interpersonal cooperation necessary. Table 1 summarizes how each of our theorized forms of participation aligns with these aspects.

First, individuals engage with the EU when they utilize the opportunities made possible by European integration. Such action supports and legitimizes existing actors or institutions. While most extant research sees participation as motivated by the desire to achieve political change, some people may, in contrast, participate to affirm the existing political structure (here, the EU). As the most conventional medium for engagement, we would include voting in EP elections here. Capitalizing on EU opportunities

Table 1. A new conceptualization of EU engagement.

	TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EU OFFERINGS		INFORMATION TRANSFER		DISPLAYING EU PRIDE	PROTESTING AGAINST THE EU	INTENTIONAL NON-PARTICIPATION
Type of Influence	Low Pressure, High Information	Low Pressure, High Information	Low Pressure, High Information	Low Pressure, Low Information	Low Pressure, Low Information	High Pressure, High Information	Low Pressure, Low Information
Scope of Outcome	Collective	Collective	Particular	Particular	Particular	Collective	Particular
Level of Conflict	Little	Little	Some	Little	Little	Much	Little
Initiative Required	Some	Some	Much	Some	Some	Much	Little
Cooperation with Others	Some	Some	Little	Little	Little	Much	Little

Inspired by Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978).

conveys high information (e.g., satisfaction) to policymakers with little pressure to change. Outcomes are collective in scope and rarely conflictual, but may invoke some initiative and cooperation.

Second, participation may occur through the transmission of EU-related information. This can take place actively (when citizens purposefully seek to learn more about the EU or convey their opinions to policymakers) or passively (when citizens receive EU-laden content). Information gathering is both a participatory act itself – as individuals must often initiate contact to acquire it – and the foundation for subsequent forms of participation, which require some baseline knowledge about the system in question (i.e., the EU) so that citizens can develop and articulate their views. Information transfer is low-pressure but obviously highly informative; it typically benefits only the particular individual(s) involved in the exchange. It may, at times, invoke conflict (e.g., disagreement). It does not require cooperation with others but entails significant individual effort to convey or internalize the information.

Third, individuals may express pride in the European project. These displays can take numerous forms meant to visibly convey support for (and perhaps identification with) the EU. This category bears little influence, consists of primarily particularized acts, and involves little conflict and little cooperation while requiring some initiative.

Fourth, protest may signal citizens' mistrust of, apathy towards, or perhaps even opposition to EU policies. Protest is evidenced explicitly by demonstrating in the streets or going on strike; it is also conveyed more implicitly through buying or boycotting certain products. This category of participation should be most influential, as it conveys high information via collective action meant to pressure policymakers. There is great potential for conflict. Much initiative is required, as is much cooperation.

Finally, individuals may overtly choose *not* to participate. Intentional abstention may signal that citizens are 1) dissatisfied with current politics and withdrawing because they question the legitimacy of existing actors, policies, and institutions; 2) apathetic to politics or too consumed with existing obligations to care about EU matters; or 3) overall content with the status quo and thus see no need to step forward. Whichever it is, blatant non-participation conveys no information or pressure, is a completely individual act (albeit with collective implications if many citizens stop participating), takes no initiative, and involves neither conflict nor cooperation.

Each mode entails individuals interacting with or making use of political outlets at the European level. They are not mutually exclusive; an individual could, say, protest an EU policy while taking advantage of opportunities facilitated by integration. Rather, we believe they capture the many ways in which individuals might engage in EU affairs by learning about the political process, articulate their preferences through a variety of mechanisms, and coordinate collectively as needed.

Baseline explanations of participation

If our conceptual framework holds, it is important to know how well existing findings apply to these domains of EU engagement. At large, political participation appears motivated by four sets of factors: economic concerns, identity threat, political considerations, and demographics.

The standard model of participation expects that individuals will engage when doing so is rationally beneficial. In support of this, EU attitudes are influenced by the actual and perceived economic costs and benefits of European integration (Eichenberg and Dalton 2007; Gabel and Palmer 1995). Citizens use their retrospective economic circumstances when evaluating options for EP elections (Kousser 2004). Economic concerns were particularly important in the 2014 EP elections due to Europe's ongoing financial crisis (Hobolt and Catherine 2016). Economic distress may motivate certain kinds of participation more than others: unemployment contributes to greater levels of non-institutionalized participation (Kern, Marien, and Hooghe 2015).

H1: EU engagement (especially protest) will be greater among those with more economic anxiety

Next, social identity incentivizes participation when group interests are perceived to be at stake – or when individuals believe their efforts will help produce a positive outcome for their preferred group (Fowler and Kam 2007). Both partisan and political-territorial identification determine one's sociopolitical outlook and engagement. In Europe, research suggests that strong national attachments promote anxiety about the deterioration of traditional culture due to EU-level pressures, and thus undermine EU support (Carey 2002; Kritzing 2003; McLaren 2002). Others maintain individuals may hold loyalties to multiple communities simultaneously and that overlapping identities may in fact be mutually reinforcing (Diez Medrano 2003; Van Kersbergen 2000).² At a minimum, identity attachments filter individuals' perceptions of the EU – and typically more so than economic explanations (Hooghe and Marks 2005). Given this, we believe identity may well influence behavior. We expect that the strength of an individual's attachment to local, national and European communities influences the extent to which they participate at the European level. Those individuals that identify strongly with the EU may be more likely to seek out information about EU politics or to express pride in the European project out of a sense of civic duty. In contrast, stronger attachments to local or national communities may motivate protesters among those who are fearful that the EU threatens the cultural integrity or political influence of those entities.

H2: EU engagement (especially information transfer and expressions of pride) will be higher among those with greater European identification

On the political side, several orientations contribute to how involved citizens are. Political interest is a standard prerequisite (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995). Attitudes towards the EU affect behavior at the European level; for instance, voting in EP elections is higher in countries with greater support for EU membership (Mattila 2003). In line with the second-order model, those who perceive more at stake are more likely to turn out (Lafeyere and Peter 2014). Citizens who feel disaffected with their national status-quo are more likely to vote in EP elections than are those content with current politics, especially when a Eurosceptic party exists to mobilize their discontent (Hernández and Kriesi 2016).

H3: EU engagement (especially taking advantage of EU opportunities) will be higher among those who are less satisfied with national politics

Lastly, socioeconomic status is a nearly undisputed cause of (non)participation (Leighley 1995; Verba and Nie 1972), and is itself a function of one's resources and civic skills as acquired through age, education, income, etc. (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). Increased education, income, and occupational prestige should correspond with greater participation across the different modes (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). In addition, men are much more politically involved than women (Fraile and Gomez 2017; Inglehart and Norris 2000; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997). Finally, there is great concern that youths participate much less than older generations, though recent research suggests younger citizens are more likely to display their views through less conventional forms of participation than voting (Sloam 2014).

H4: EU engagement (in all forms) will be higher among those who are wealthy, more educated, older, and male

Operationalizing EU engagement

We utilize data from an original, nationally representative *Political Attitudes and Identities Survey* (PAIS) conducted by the first author in the UK during summer 2012.³ We propose that the UK is an ideal place to study EU engagement because it is renowned for being the most Eurosceptic EU member state (Spiering 2004). British views towards the EU have long been notoriously divided, as evidenced by the close outcome of its recent June 2016 'Brexit' referendum. 52% of voters nationwide opted to leave the EU, though opinions varied widely across regional and urban versus rural lines (Goodwin and Heath 2016). These underlying tensions exist in all member states so, given data limitations, we are confident the UK provides a relevant test-case for assessing our theory's validity.⁴

Capturing participation

The PAIS included an innovative battery asking respondents, 'In which, if any, of the following activities have you personally taken part? (Please select all that apply),' followed by fourteen potential options presented in randomized order for respondents to check off or leave blank in order to express their degree of EU engagement. Figure 1 reports the distribution of responses to these items and suggests, as one would expect, quite a bit of variation in the types of actions citizens take toward the EU. For most aspects, participation is indeed quite low. For instance, only 1.2% of respondents indicated that they had purchased an EU flag and only 1.45% reported that they had celebrated 'Europe Day' on May 9th. For other items, participation is relatively high: 60.7% of respondents said they had used the Euro currency and 64.74% traveled to another EU country.⁵ Interestingly, 11.34% of respondents marked that they had done nothing, indicating – as we expected – that this may be its own form of in (dis)engaging with the EU.

This variation begs the question of whether it is the same individuals participating in each facet, or whether different individuals are participating in different ways. To get at this, we generated an additive index of the thirteen possible EU participation items (excluding the 'Did Nothing' option).⁶ Figure 2 graphs the results. The mean level is two

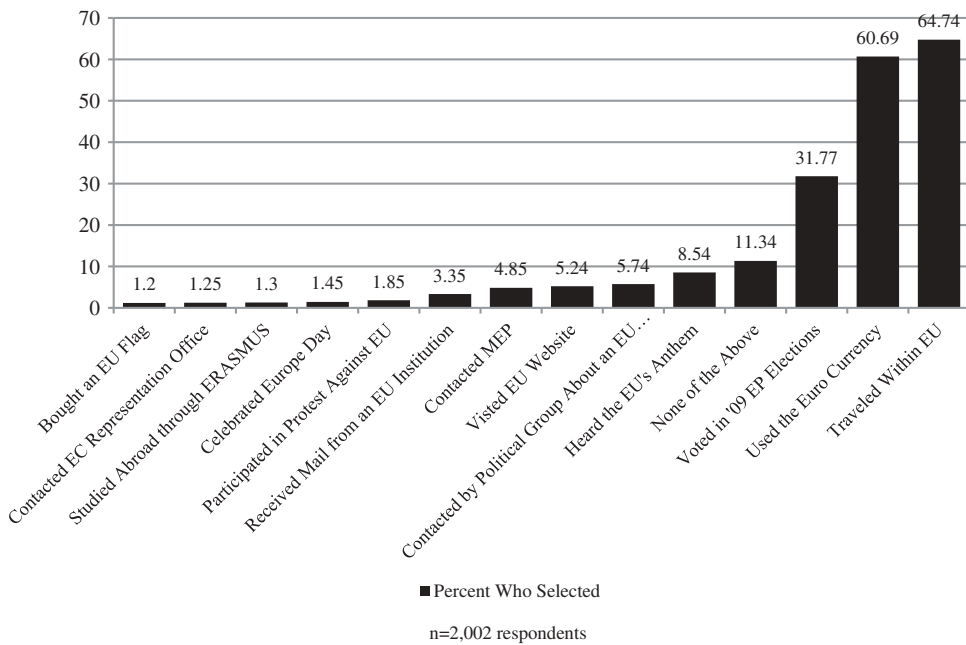


Figure 1. Distribution of EU participation items.

n = 2,002 respondents.

EU participation items per person (1.92; s.d. = 1.53), while only 0.05% of our sample reported engaging in *all* items. This lends credence to our suspicion that people engage with the EU in different ways, as opposed to supporting the idea that certain individuals are innately (non)participatory. Importantly, nearly 23% of respondents did not participate in any way – and yet did not purposely mark the ‘did nothing’ survey option. This validates our assertion that some citizens directly choose *not* to participate in EU affairs, which is – in its own way – then a dimension of EU engagement that deserves analysis apart from other types of participation.

Factor analysis

We ran principal-components analysis of the various participation items to test our theoretical expectation that EU engagement breaks down into multiple dimensions. A four-factor solution emerged, supporting our conceptual framework. Table 2 organizes each item according to the factor onto which it loaded most highly following orthogonal varimax rotation. Factor 1 consists of voting in the 2009 EP elections, traveling to another European country, and using the euro currency; these largely reflect ways in which citizens might take advantage of some EU benefits. One exception is that the explicit ‘None of the Above’ item (*Did Nothing*) also loads best here, albeit negatively while the rest load positively. Six items load onto Factor 2, all of which seem based around individuals transmitting and/or receiving information about the EU: contacting one’s Member of European Parliament (MEP); contacting or visiting a local European Commission representation office; visiting the EU’s website; being contacted by an

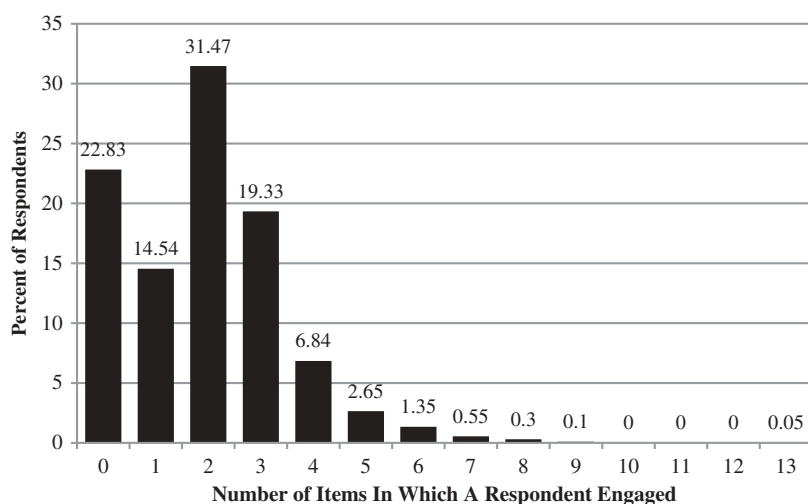


Figure 2. Range and frequency of EU participation.

n = 2,002 respondents.

Table 2. Factor analysis of participation items.

FACTOR 1: TAKING ADVANTAGE (E = 2.64)	FACTOR 2: INFORMATION TRANSFER (E = 1.77)	FACTOR 3: DISPLAYING EU PRIDE (E = 1.25)	FACTOR 4: PROTESTING AGAINST THE EU (E = 1.00)
Voted in '09 EP Elections	Contacted MEP	Studied Abroad through ERASMUS	Protested Against the EU
Traveled Within EU	Contacted EC Rep. Office	Celebrated 'Europe Day'	
Used the Euro	Visited EU Website	Bought an EU Flag	
Did Nothing	Contacted by Political Group About an EU Issue		
	Received Mail from an EU Institution		
	Heard EU Anthem		

Note: E = eigenvalue. Column entries report the factor onto which each item loaded most highly.

interest group regarding a European-wide issue; receiving mail from an EU institution; and hearing the EU's anthem. Studying abroad through the ERASMUS program, celebrating Europe Day, and purchasing an EU flag make up Factor 3, which we interpret as ways of expressing EU pride. Lastly, protesting *against* the EU – an expression of anti-EU sentiment – loads onto its own factor.

Based on these confirmatory results, we proceed with analyzing whether different determinants explain each mode of EU engagement. In addition to the *Additive Index*, we generated new additive indices of the items in each factor: *Take Advantage* (alpha = 0.665), *Information-Transfer* (alpha = 0.571), *Show EU Pride* (alpha = 0.329), and *Protest Against EU*.⁷ Given its negative loading and the initial results above appearing to differentiate those who purposely admit they did nothing from those who simply checked none of the participation items, we did not include *Did Nothing* in the *Information-Transfer* category and instead assess it on its own. We use OLS for four of the dependent variables (*Additive Index*, *Take Advantage*, *Information-Transfer*, and *Show*

EU Pride) and ordered logit as needed for the other two (*Protest Against EU* and *Did Nothing*). All models use robust standard errors clustered by respondents' region.⁸

Covariates

We assess economic explanations on two fronts. A mean *Egocentric Index* taps personal economic concerns based on how well respondents said things had been going in the past year regarding 'The financial situation of your household' and 'Your personal job situation' (1 = very poorly; 4 = really well). Similarly, a mean *Sociotropic Index* reflects impressions of national affairs based on how well respondents reported things had been going with 'The economic situation in the UK' and 'The employment situation in the UK' on the same 1–4 scale.

For identity, respondents were asked, 'We are all part of different groups. Some groups are more important to us than others when we think of ourselves. How important are each of the following in describing how you personally see yourself?' They then rated their degree of attachment to their town or village (*Local Identification*), their region (*Regional Identification*), the UK (*National Identification*), and Europe (*European Identification*) (1 = do not identify with it at all; 7 = identify with it very strongly).

We operationalize political motives in several ways. First, we gauge general (aka diffuse) support for integration with a mean *EU Support Index* based on strength of agreement (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) with four items⁹: 'Generally speaking, the UK's membership in the EU is a good thing;' 'Taking everything into consideration, the UK has on balance benefitted from being a member of the EU;' 'The EU conjures up a very positive image for me;' and 'The UK should leave the EU altogether.'¹⁰ To tap specific views towards the EU at that moment in time, *Current EU Direction* measures agreement (on the same 1–7 scale) with the statement, 'At the present time, things are going in the right direction in the EU.' *L-R Ideology* captures individuals' self-placement on an 11-point scale (0 = far left; 10 = far right). We measure *Political Interest* by reverse coding respondents' agreement (on a 1–7 scale) with the statement, 'I am not at all interested in politics.' Likewise, *Follow News* is based on agreement with the statement, 'I follow the news regularly.' Finally, *PM Approval* ranges from 1–7 based on agreement that, 'Prime Minister David Cameron is doing a good job.'

Lastly, we include a series of sociodemographic variables. Gender is a dummy equal to one for *Male*. *Education* ranges from zero (none) to five (advanced degree). *Age* ranges from 18 to 81. *Occupational Prestige* ranges from one (employed in an unskilled or semi-skilled manual occupation) to five (employed in a higher managerial/professional/administrative profession). *Rural-Urban Residence* reflects whether one lives in a rural area or village (one) versus a large town or city (four). And then we use dichotomous variables to isolate those who are *Unemployed* or *Employed Full-Time*.

Explaining variation in types of EU engagement

Tables 3 and 4 present a series of models parsing out the primary explanation(s) behind each dimension of EU participation. To reiterate, our covariates depict each of the predominant explanations from existing findings on EP voting and public support for European integration. Thus, at this stage we are not attempting to add novel theory to

Table 3. Determinants of linear participation dimensions.

	(1) Additive Index	(2) Take Advantage	(3) Information- Transfer	(4) Show EU Pride
<i>Economic Variables</i>				
Egocentric Index	0.130** (0.048)	0.085** (0.034)	0.042 (0.032)	0.005 (0.010)
Sociotropic Index	-0.126* (0.064)	-0.058 (0.043)	-0.082** (0.036)	0.021 (0.016)
<i>Identity Variables</i>				
Local Identification	-0.030 (0.024)	-0.024 (0.014)	-0.019 (0.020)	0.012* (0.006)
Regional Identification	-0.007 (0.023)	0.016 (0.011)	-0.014 (0.015)	-0.010** (0.004)
National Identification	0.034** (0.015)	0.018 (0.013)	0.014 (0.011)	0.002 (0.002)
European Identification	0.062*** (0.020)	0.008 (0.010)	0.046** (0.015)	0.011** (0.004)
<i>Political Variables</i>				
EU Support Index	0.171*** (0.035)	0.130*** (0.029)	0.041** (0.017)	0.008 (0.006)
Current EU Direction	-0.087** (0.030)	-0.127*** (0.024)	0.025 (0.018)	0.014 (0.009)
L-R Ideology	0.020 (0.021)	0.014 (0.019)	-0.006 (0.008)	0.009** (0.004)
Political Interest	0.070*** (0.021)	0.067*** (0.016)	0.007 (0.009)	-0.006 (0.005)
Follow News	0.050 (0.033)	0.002 (0.022)	0.034* (0.018)	0.012* (0.006)
PM Approval	-0.039** (0.015)	-0.018 (0.015)	-0.019** (0.009)	-0.000 (0.004)
<i>Sociodemographics</i>				
Male	0.317*** (0.070)	0.136* (0.065)	0.145*** (0.044)	0.022 (0.013)
Education	0.206*** (0.030)	0.088*** (0.016)	0.098*** (0.016)	0.014** (0.004)
Age	0.016*** (0.003)	0.013*** (0.002)	0.004** (0.002)	-0.002*** (0.001)
Occupational Prestige	0.176*** (0.033)	0.150*** (0.027)	0.028** (0.011)	-0.005 (0.004)
Rural-Urban Residence	0.009 (0.047)	0.016 (0.025)	-0.009 (0.029)	0.001 (0.005)
Unemployed	0.374 (0.346)	0.108 (0.160)	0.242 (0.227)	0.014 (0.029)
Employed Full-Time	-0.104 (0.111)	-0.039 (0.074)	-0.052 (0.039)	-0.009 (0.011)
Constant	-1.272*** (0.276)	-0.451* (0.241)	-0.657*** (0.207)	-0.153*** (0.042)
N	1,704	1,704	1,704	1,704
R-squared	0.217	0.194	0.129	0.080

OLS with robust standard errors clustered by region in parentheses.

Column headings denote dependent variable in each model.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

explain why citizens engage with the EU in certain ways, but instead test competing arguments from extant literature to better understand whether these known motivations lead individuals to pursue fundamentally different avenues of EU participation. Importantly, apart from certain sociodemographic features (the most consistently significant set of predictors), unique elements seem to explain each type. In other words,

Table 4. Determinants of binary dimensions of EU participation.

	(5) Protest Against EU	(6) Did Nothing
<i>Economic Variables</i>		
Egocentric Index	−0.074 (0.215)	−0.069 (0.152)
Sociotropic Index	−0.298 (0.398)	−0.008 (0.160)
<i>Identity Variables</i>		
Local Identification	0.065 (0.103)	0.109 (0.084)
Regional Identification	0.047 (0.160)	−0.105 (0.065)
National Identification	0.058 (0.197)	−0.165*** (0.050)
European Identification	−0.142 (0.091)	0.023 (0.048)
EU Support Index	−0.382** (0.188)	−0.267*** (0.078)
Current EU Direction	−0.013 (0.121)	0.329*** (0.039)
L-R Ideology	0.081 (0.080)	−0.010 (0.060)
Political Interest	0.096 (0.136)	−0.181*** (0.045)
Follow News	0.093 (0.168)	−0.116* (0.064)
PM Approval	−0.034 (0.106)	0.054 (0.059)
<i>Sociodemographics</i>		
Male	0.715** (0.354)	−0.178 (0.163)
Education	0.298** (0.118)	−0.297*** (0.072)
Age	0.009 (0.010)	−0.021*** (0.006)
Occupational Prestige	0.094 (0.147)	−0.366*** (0.085)
Rural-Urban Residence	0.074 (0.172)	0.022 (0.076)
Unemployed	0.307 (1.342)	0.555 (0.401)
Employed Full-Time	−0.088 (0.357)	0.302 (0.242)
Constant	−5.960*** (1.265)	2.404*** (0.881)
N	1,704	1,704
Pseudo R-squared	0.115	0.174

Ordered logit with robust standard errors clustered by region in parentheses.

Column headings denote dependent variable in each model.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

there is little consistency across models regarding the primary driver behind partaking in that dimension of engagement.

The determinants of the *Additive Index* (Model 1) closely match existing findings from the literature. More variables attain statistical significance here than in any other model. Rather than discuss each model item by item, [Figure 3–8](#) portray the substantive impact of the significant predictors from each model ([Figure 3–8](#)).¹¹ As shown in [Figure 3](#), education strongly affects one's overall level of EU participation; moving from having no

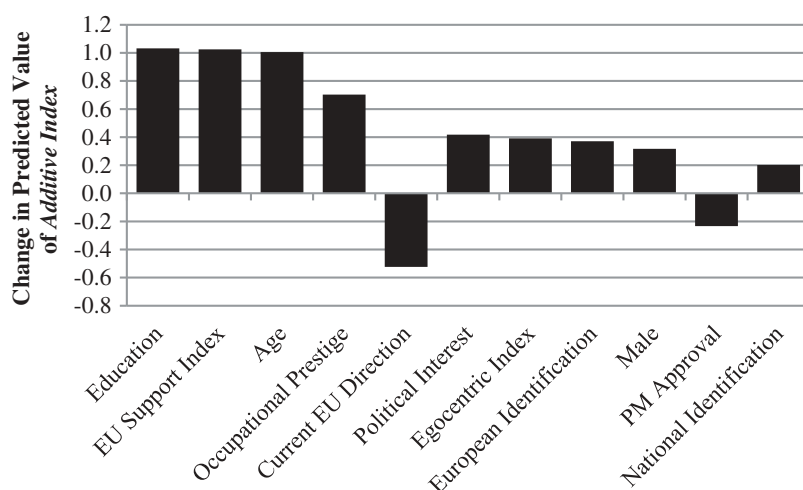


Figure 3. Magnitude of effects for *Additive Index*.

From Model 1.

education to holding an advanced degree increases engagement by 1.03 on the 0–13 scale. Support for integration and age follow closely behind. National identification has the smallest impact (only 0.2), yet a positive one nonetheless. Unsurprisingly, citizens are more likely to engage with the EU when they are politically interested, feel secure in their personal economic situation, and identify with Europe. Likewise, two variables understandably dampen EU participation: thinking the EU is currently going in the right direction and approving of the national government make one less likely to do much at the EU level.

Interesting findings emerge when we disaggregate participation into its various components. The predictors of taking advantage of EU benefits most closely match expectations from existing literature (Model 2; Figure 4). Age and attitudinal support for integration have strong positive effects (producing approximately a 0.8 change in *Take Advantage* on a 0–3 scale) while believing the EU is moving in the right direction reduces the likelihood of participation by almost as much. Sociotropic economic concerns only matter when it comes to EU information gathering (Model 3; Figure 5); the more one is worried about the national economic and employment situation, the less likely s/he is to turn to the EU. This isn't the substantively strongest motivation behind *Information-Transfer*; education retains first place followed by European identification. Engaging in displays of EU pride is affected by some things that do not show up elsewhere (Model 4; Figure 6). Ideology matters only here, and somewhat counter-intuitively: more right-leaning individuals appear more likely to participate by showing pride. This is also the only participation dimension affected by regional identification; it has a negative impact that substantively rivals European identification's positive one. However, all effects in this model are substantively quite small: the strongest determinant – age (which operates in a negative fashion in this model, likely based on the age ceiling for studying abroad) – only produces a – 0.12 change in *Show EU Pride* on a 0–3 scale while the weakest – regional identification – reduces the predicted value by –0.06.

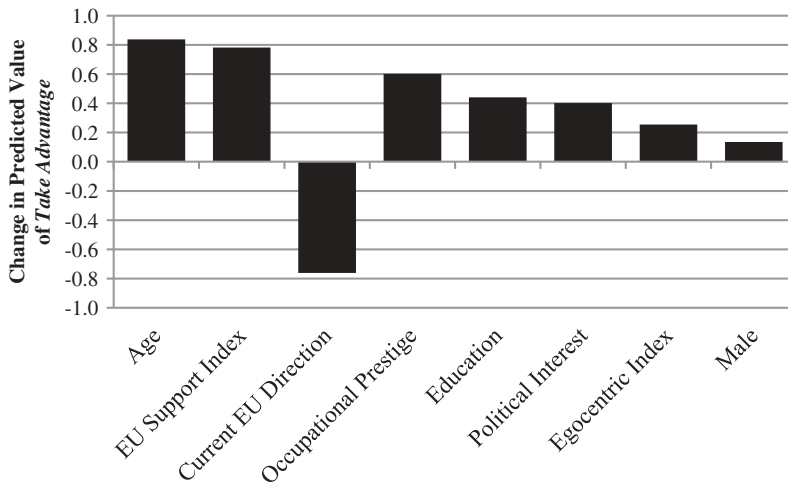


Figure 4. Magnitude of effects for *Take Advantage*.
From Model 2.

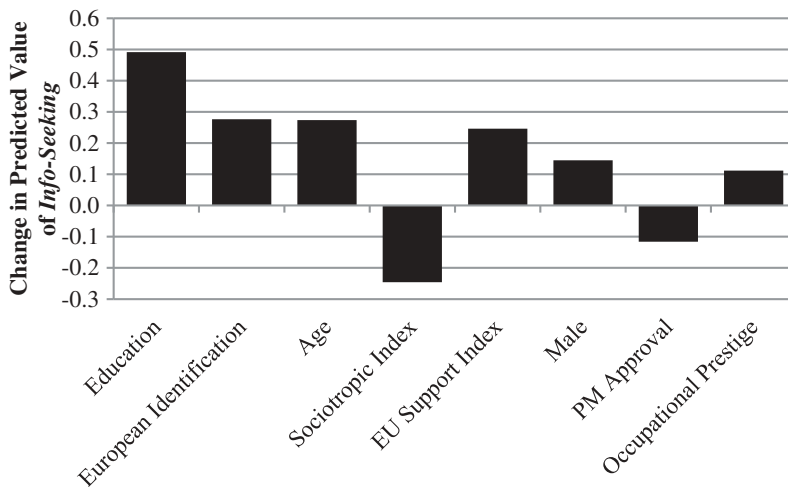


Figure 5. Magnitude of effects for *Information-Transfer*.
From Model 3.

Very few of the prevailing predictors explain EU protest (Model 5; [Figure 7](#)). Expectedly, higher EU support is negatively related to protest – but even moving from the minimum to the maximum value only reduces the predicted probability of protest by –2.8%. Education and being male are positively associated with engaging in a protest, but with even smaller substantive effects (1.8% and 0.9% respectively). Finally, typical participation explanations appear *negatively* related to explicitly doing nothing (Model 6; [Figure 8](#)). The most important determinant is *Current EU Direction*: those who think the EU is operating just fine have a 17.3% greater predicted probability of answering this item affirmatively than their counterparts who are highly dissatisfied with the EU's present state.

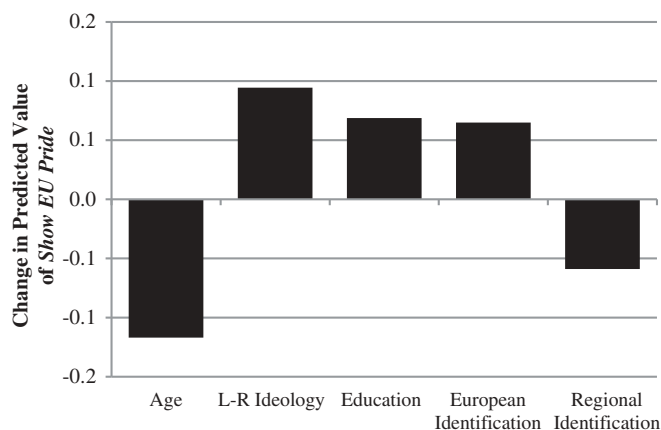


Figure 6. Magnitude of effects for *Show EU Pride*.

From Model 4.

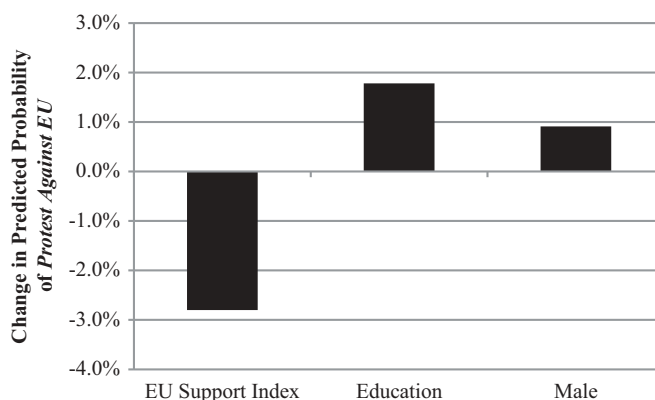


Figure 7. Magnitude of effects for *Protest Against EU*.

From Model 5.

Altogether, our findings suggest that different things motivate different types of EU engagement. Few predictors exhibit consistent significance across all models; only certain sociodemographic characteristics appear relevant for every kind of participation – usually in line with *H4*. Echoing prior studies, education is the only variable that always matters, even having the strongest substantive impact in many instances. *H2* is supported because European identification is linked to showing more EU pride, yet identity explanations have no effect on either taking advantage of EU benefits or protesting against the EU. We find little support for *H1*, as economic concerns play no part in protest. When economics do matter (e.g., for the *Additive Index* and *Take Advantage*), egocentric anxieties often outweigh sociotropic fears, reinvigorating debate over self-interest's role in political behavior (e.g., Curtis, Jupille, and Leblang 2014; Sears and Funk 1990). *H3* is not well supported because dissatisfaction with the incumbent only affects the *Additive Index* and *Information-Transfer*. Other political considerations vary by model.

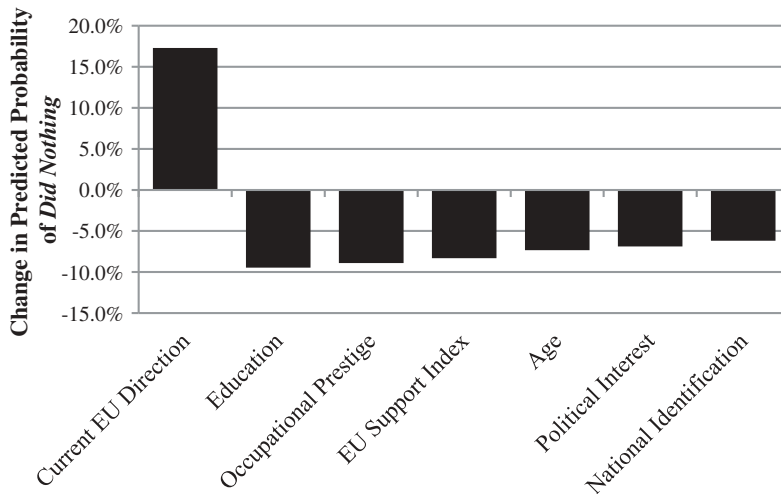


Figure 8. Magnitude of effects for *Did Nothing*.

From Model 6.

Diffuse attitudes towards the EU are a fairly predictable gauge of EU involvement; general support for integration positively affects multiple avenues of EU engagement. Of all explanatory factors (economics, identity, politics, and sociodemographics), political considerations are typically more important than others – but, again, our big punchline is that *no single category seems to explain all types of participation*. Therefore, our results suggest that, when decomposed, different avenues of EU engagement stem from unique foundations and therefore deserve much more nuanced attention than they have received.

Conclusion

Our analysis extends current work on political participation at the EU level in several ways. First, we re-conceptualize how EU citizens might get engaged, moving beyond the normal focus on voting in EP elections or EU-related referendums. Second, we affirmed a five-fold typology of engagement using original data. Our unique UK survey probed fourteen potential ways citizens might get involved at the EU level. Factor analysis and descriptive statistics confirmed that different individuals engage in different types of activities: taking advantage of EU opportunities; information transfer, showing EU pride, protest, and deliberate *non*participation. We assert that this last dimension is especially important to consider and is, to our knowledge, something as-of-yet unexplored in extant work. Third, our causal analysis tested customary explanations of participation from existing literature (economic concerns, identity attachments, political views, and sociodemographic characteristics) to see how well they determined our five types of participation. We show that, both statistically and substantively, the causes of EU engagement vary depending on the kind of activities in question – and that examining all behaviors together in one overarching participation index overlooks important variation regarding which determinants impact different aspects. While many

sociodemographic items – namely education – almost always play a role, things like identity (broken down by political-territorial level), economic anxiety (in its egocentric and sociotropic forms), and EU support (in both diffuse and specific terms) only matter in certain cases.

We hope our findings encourage scholars and policymakers to view EU engagement in a more holistic light and to target their efforts to boost democratic involvement by focusing on the specific mechanisms underlying diverse modes of participation. For instance, identification undergirds displaying EU pride, but contradicting tendencies emerge with those who feel European more likely to do things like celebrate Europe Day while those with strong regional identity much less likely to do so. To boost EU engagement, policymakers thus need to bolster citizens' identification with Europe without threatening their other loyalties. Or, take the example of protesting against the EU. In our models, this act is most affected by citizens' underlying attitudes towards integration – not economic grievances (as posited by previous literature). Similarly, and counterintuitively, citizens seem most likely *not* to participate in any way when they think the EU is going in the right direction. While all our findings deserve greater scrutiny, this last aspect raises particularly interesting implications: perhaps the apparent lack of democratic EU engagement reflects tacit consent with the current state of EU affairs whereas greater public involvement would actually signal greater *discontent* with the EU project. To the extent that the 'democratic deficit' is a crisis in legitimacy, our results suggest non-participation could in fact be a good sign.

Though our investigation is limited by studying a single country (the UK) at a single time point (2012), we believe it offers novel insight into what engagement looks like, what causes it, and what that means for evaluating a polity's democratic character. In this way, our study holds implications for political participation in general, not just the EU in particular. Our analyses should be replicated with cross-national – and ideally cross-temporal – surveys to assess the validity of our typology for all levels of political participation: local, national, and supranational. In the meantime, we encourage scholars and policymakers to conceive of engagement – especially with the EU – in broader terms than just voting, and to consider promoting additional participation – or not – depending on the various determinants underlying each type.

Notes

1. The internet has undoubtedly changed the nature of traditional participation while simultaneously opening new venues for engagement (Krueger 2002). An emerging vein of research explores variation in *who* participates online versus in person (Vicente and Novo 2014).
2. The precise effect of identity-based considerations likely depends on the political context. In many EU countries, Eurosceptic elites have sought to activate and/or aggravate fears about the EU's effects on national identity (Kopecký and Mudde 2002).
3. The London-based polling firm Opinium LLP administered the survey online by inviting almost 7,000 of its standing panelists to participate; over 2,000 did for a response rate of nearly 31%. Opinium weighted final results according to national targets for gender, age, social class, employment status, and geographic region based on data from the Office for National Statistics and National Readership Survey.

4. In contrast to elsewhere, political participation in the UK does *not* appear to be in decline (Armington and Schädel 2015), though youth disengagement is especially severe (Sloam 2014).
5. In the middle range, 31.77% claimed they had voted in the 2009 European Parliament elections. This closely matches the actual UK turnout rate of 34.7% according to the European Parliament website (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/000cdcd9d4/Turnout-%281979-2009%29.html>).
6. Alpha = 0.612.
7. The Online Appendix reports descriptive statistics for all variables.
8. There is no variance at the regional level (captured as twelve subnational units: 9 in England plus Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) for any dependent variable, therefore we do not use multilevel modeling.
9. Alpha = 0.887.
10. This last item was recoded prior to constructing the index so that higher responses indicated a stronger preference for staying in the EU.
11. Bars indicate the magnitude of moving from the minimum to maximum on each significant ($p \leq .05$) variable, holding all else at its mean. Calculated using Long and Freese's (2006) *spost* commands in Stata.

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