



# What enables political action?

Explaining political participation and  
protest in European countries

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# Outline

- ❑ Motivation and research question
- ❑ Definition of political action
- ❑ Theoretical framework and research on PA
- ❑ Method
- ❑ Results
- ❑ Conclusions, problems, further steps

# Motivation

Giddens (1987): The biggest challenge of the social science is a bridging of the macro-micro gap.

# Motivation

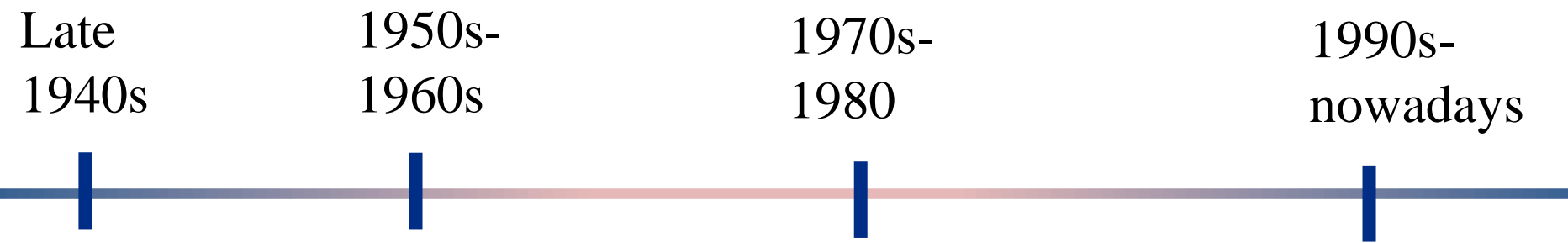
Giddens (1987): The biggest challenge of the social science is a bridging of the macro-micro gap.

Opp (2009): There is a gap in theoretical and empirical literature between micro- and macro-level explanations of political action.

# Research question

What is the effect of the context, in which political action takes place, on the relationships between actors' characteristics and this action?

# Political action: evolution of the concept



Primary  
voting

Activities in-between elections

*One-item  
measure*

*One dimension,  
several items  
(contacting politician).  
Legitimate channels.*

*Two dimensions:  
conventional and  
unconventional  
(signing petitions,  
demonstrations).*

*Multidimensionality:  
Institutionalized, non-  
institutionalized,  
political consumerism  
(buycotting)*

*Protest is irrational,  
it threatens democracy*

*Protest activities are  
additional to legitimate  
action*

*Protest activities are  
popular forms of  
political engagement*

# Political action: definition

*Action by ordinary citizens directed towards influencing some political outcomes* (Brady, 1999: 737).

- 1. Institutionalized:** a) joint or collective action; b) the actors have common goals; c) they use institutionalized channels, d) their behavior happens on regular basis
- 2. Non-institutionalized** (protest): a + b) similar; c) they use non-institutionalized channels, d) the behavior is irregular/sporadic (Opp, 2009: 34).

# Theoretical explanations of political action

Micro-level: actors' characteristics as determinants of political action.

- Some individuals will be more available for political action because they have resources that allow to take part in this activity (eg. education, income).
- To be engaged in political action one has to have some level of polit. interest and perceived polit. efficacy.



# Theoretical explanations of political action

Macro-level: resource mobilization and political opportunities structure theories

- External resources are important for mobilization to political action (e.g. GDP)
- Relatively open political structures, that accommodate citizen demands, facilitate action (e.g., democracy index).

# Theory and research on PA: What is missing?

- ❌ Theories coexist, but do not integrate. New theory does not attempt to solve problems of the previous ones (Opp, 2009).
- ❌ Empirical research reflects the lack of integration between macro- and micro-level theories.
- ✓ Two exceptions: Dalton et al. (2009) and Welzel & Deutsch (2011)

# Research on PA

- ✓ Dalton et al. (2009) showed that the relationship b/w education and protest depends on the level of political openness and economic development. For open political systems and countries with high GDP, the relationships between education and protest is stronger. Similarly, the impact of ideological values – post-materialism and Left/Right attitudes – is significantly amplified in affluent democratic countries.
- ✓ Welzel & Deutsch (2011) argued that values need to be examined also on aggregate level. They found that emancipative values: (1) lift people's protest above the level that their own emancipative values (elevator effect); (2) enhance the impact of people's own emancipative values on protest (amplifier effect).

# Research on PA: current project

Existing studies	My project
Only non-institutionalized	Both institutionalized and non-institutionalized
Protest as an observed variable (but see exception: Quaranta, 2010)	Inst. and non-int. actions as latent constructs

Additional research questions:

Can we treat political action as a latent construct? Are there two dimensions of political action? Does the bi-dimensional structure hold for all countries?

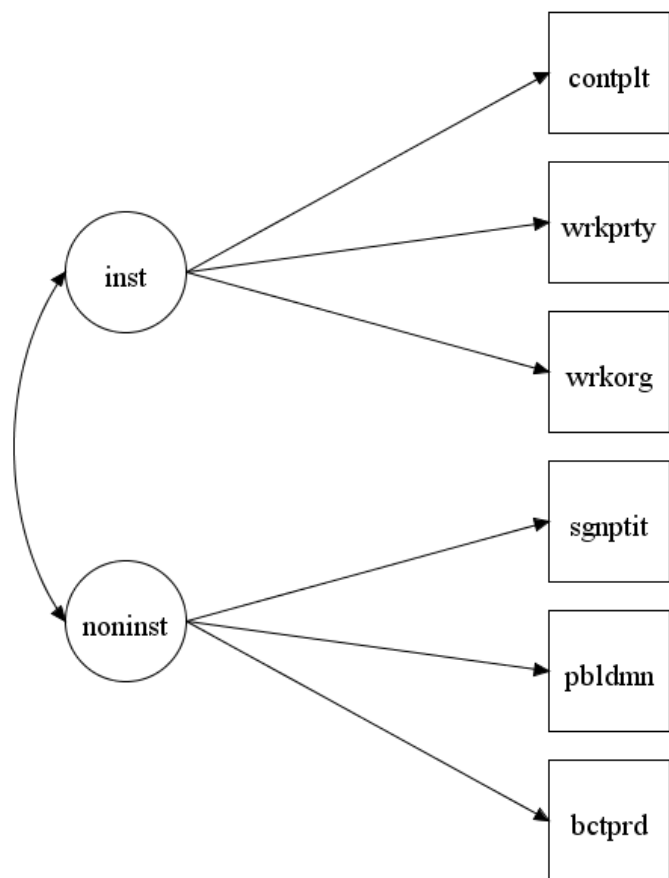
# Method

**Data:** 5th round of ESS (2010), 26 countries (N= 52,458).

**Dependent variable:** There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? (yes/no)

INSTITUTIONALIZED	NON-INSTITUTIONALIZED
Contacted politician or government	Signed petition
Worked in political party or action group	Taken part in lawful public demonstration
Worked in another organization	Boycotted certain products
	<del>Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker</del>

# Results: Measurement model and MG CFA



**Step 1:** Testing a 2-dimensional structure for each country separately.

**Step 2:** Testing configural invariance of 2-dimensional structure in all countries (simultaneous CFA).

**Step 3:** Testing metric invariance using alignment optimization procedure (Muthen & Asparouhov, 2013)

# Results: Measurement model and MG CFA

Results of alignment optimization procedure (Muthen & Asparouhov, 2013): metric invariance

## Loadings for INST

CONTPLT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
WRKPRTY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
WRKORG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	(22)	23	24	25	26

(RU)

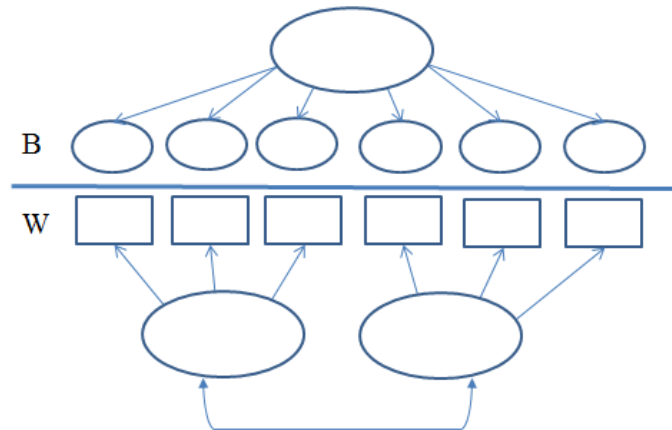
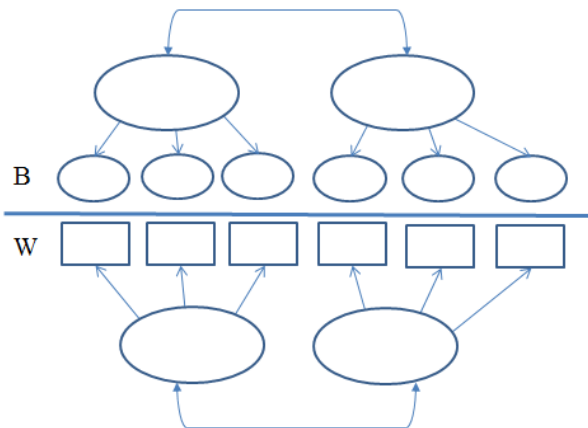
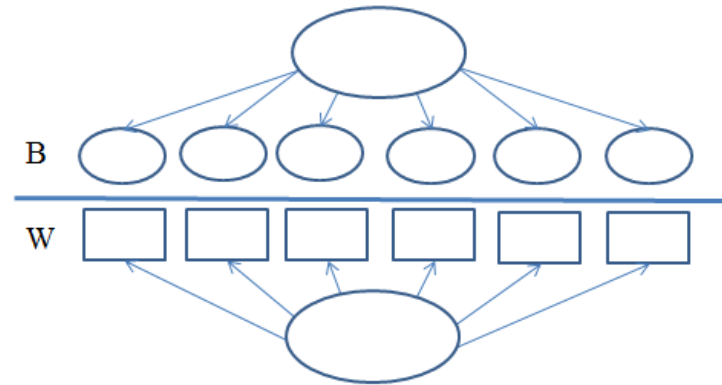
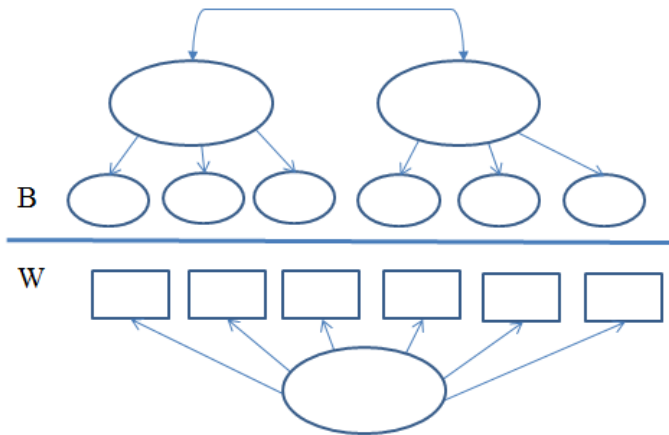
## Loadings for NONINST

SGNPTIT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
PBLDMN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
BCTPRD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

All countries have equal factor loadings for both types of political action (exception – Russia, working for organization)

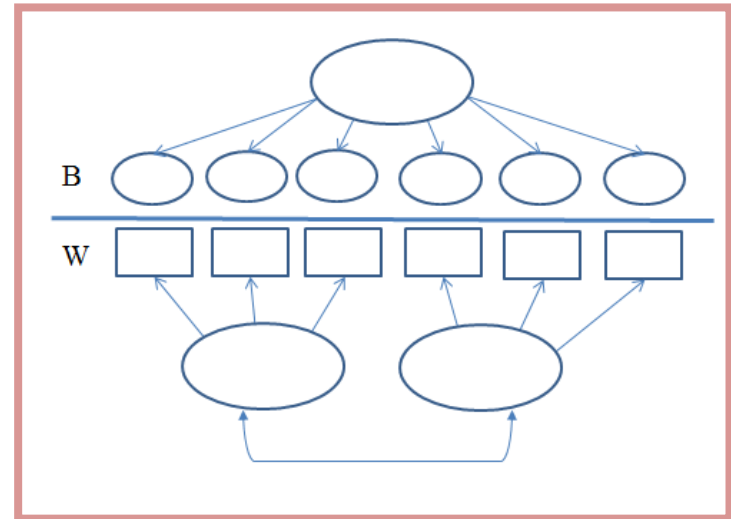
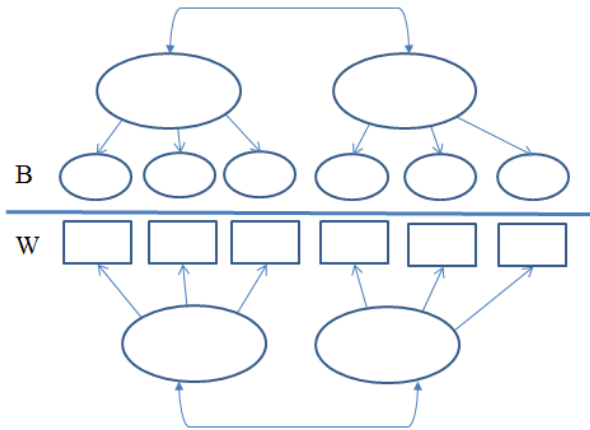
# Results: Measurement model – Multilevel framework

ML EFA in order to explore the structure of political action on **country level**

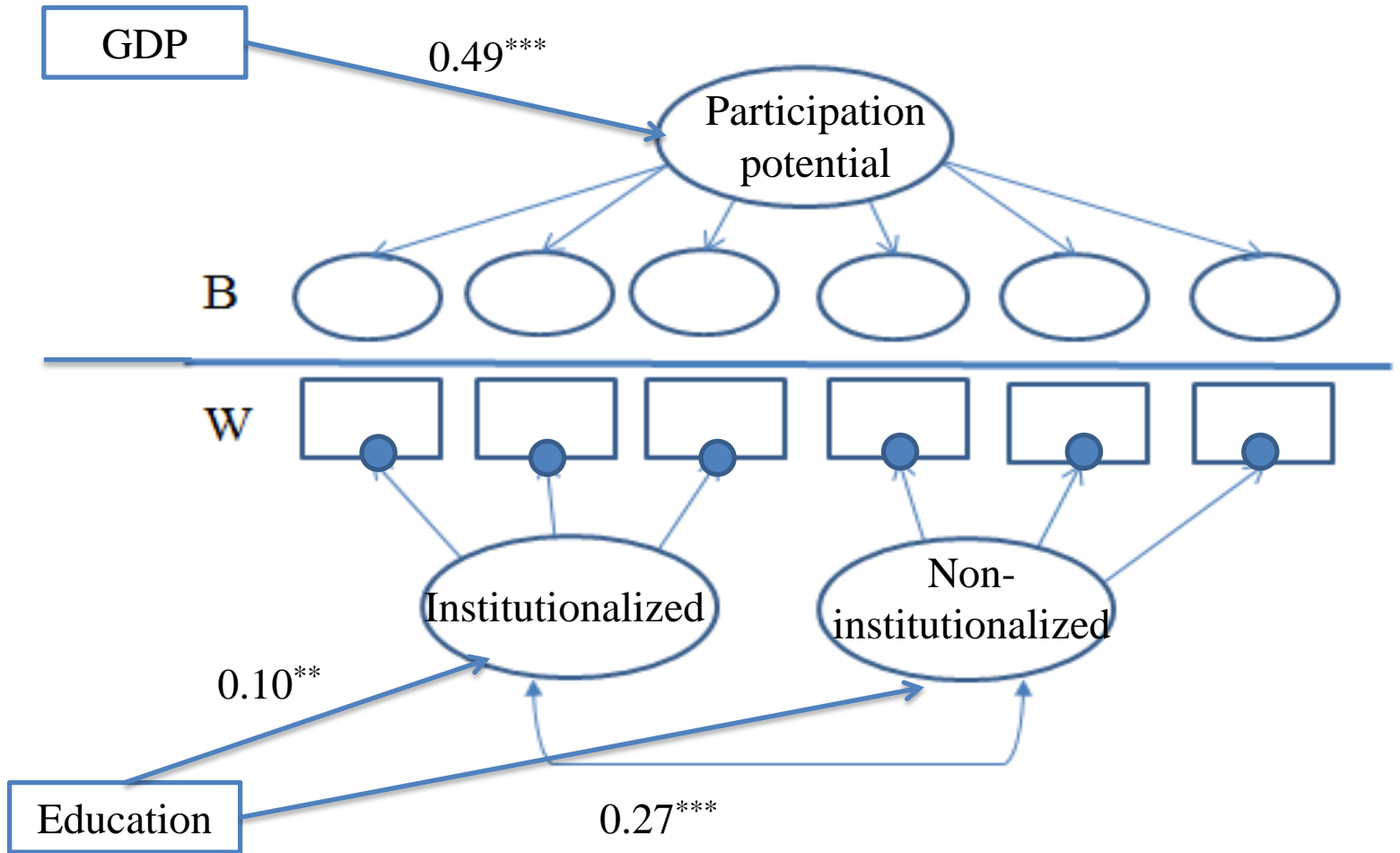




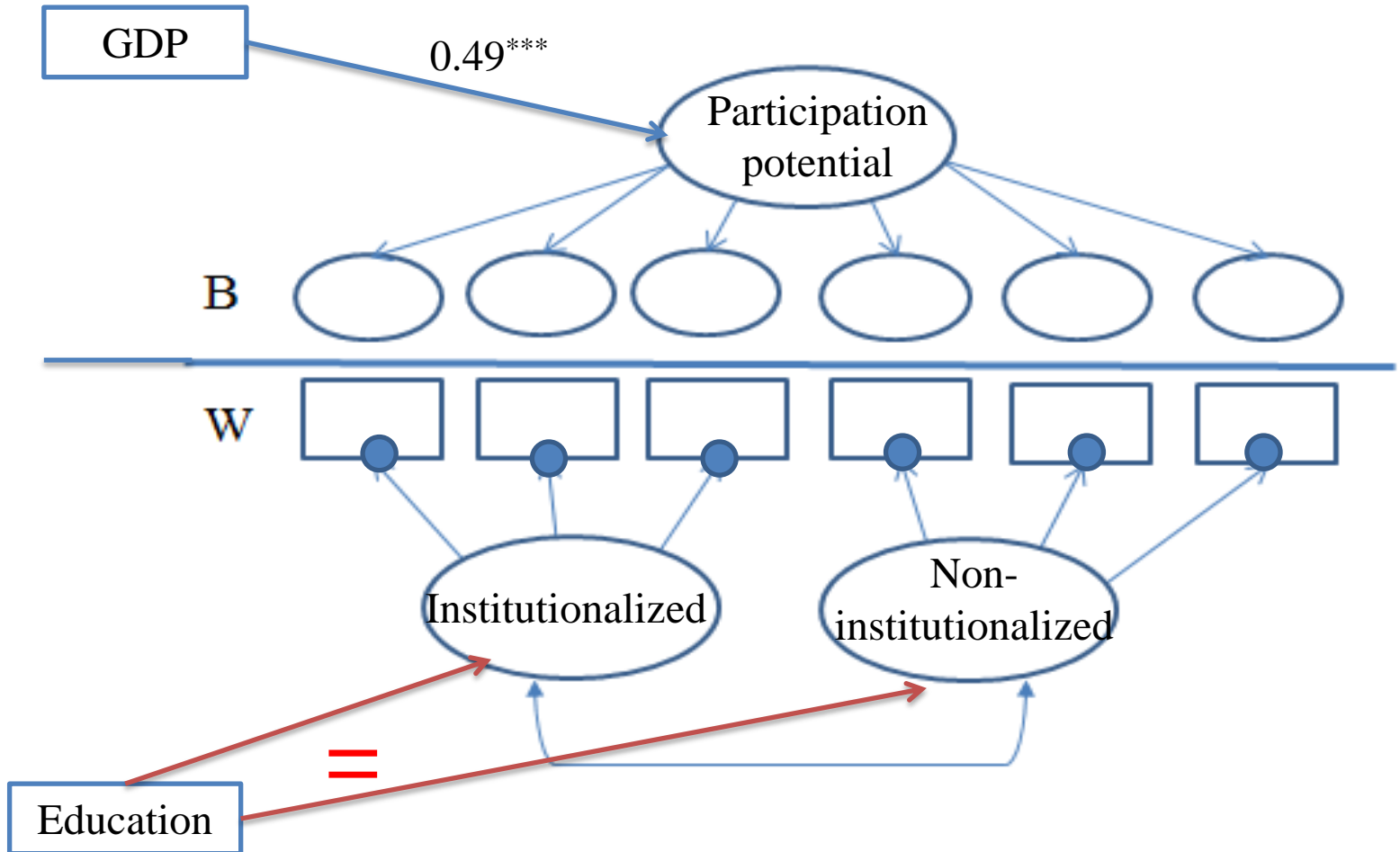
# Results: Measurement model – Multilevel framework



# Results: Main Effects model

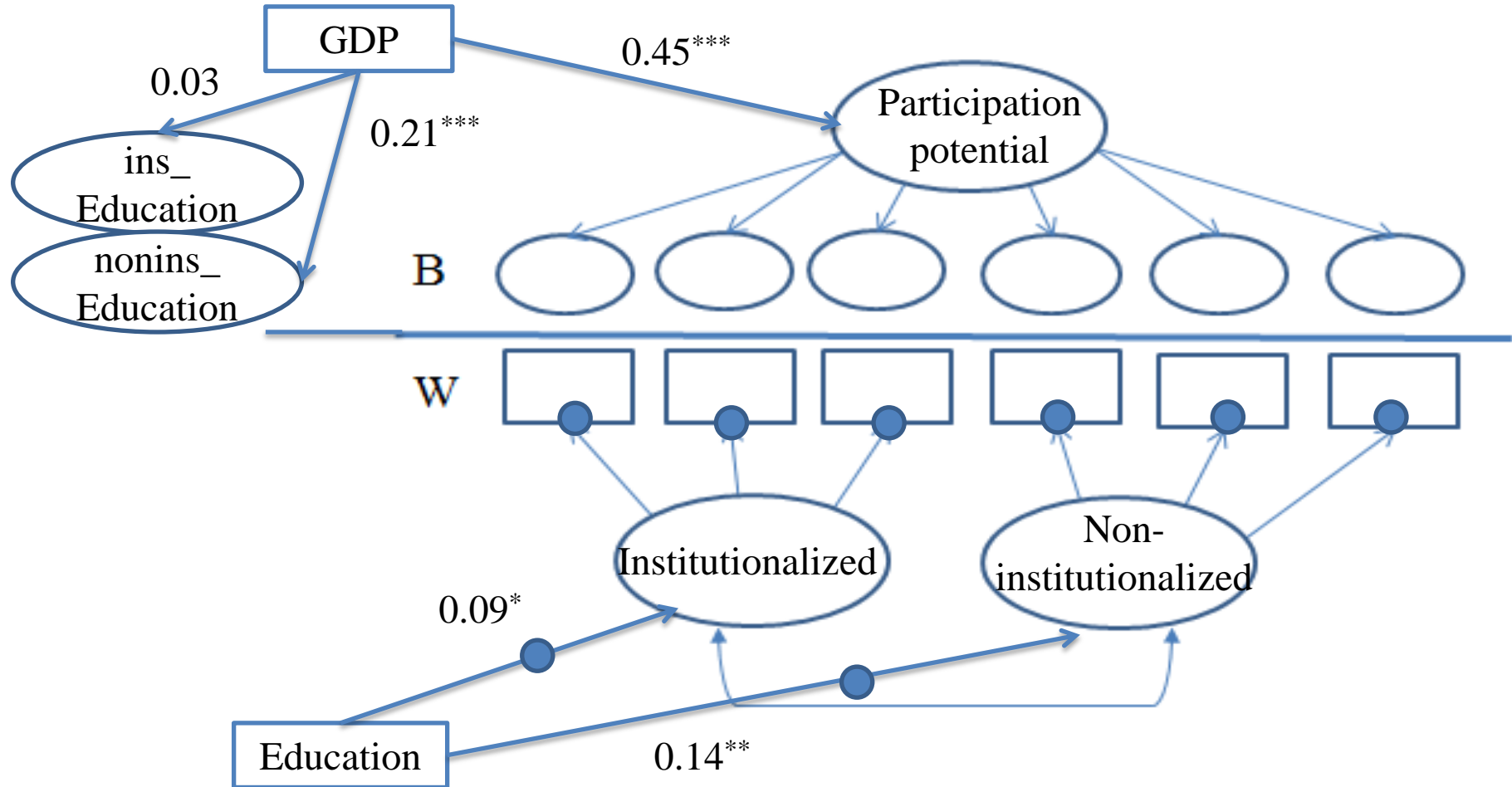


# Results: Main Effects model



Decrease in model fit -> Different processes for each dimension

# Results: Cross level interaction model



High GDP level – stronger effect of education on non-institutionalized action. GDP doesn't explain variation in effect of education on institutionalized action.

# Conclusions

- ✓ Political action can be treated as a latent construct
- ✓ 5<sup>th</sup> ESS round data show its metric invariance
- ✓ There is an evidence that independent variables (educ. for now) might predict differently institutionalized vs. non-institutionalized actions
- ✓ GDP moderates the effect of education on non-institutionalized action (the higher GDP the stronger effect of education on non-inst. action)

# Unsolved problems

*? Binary indicators require WLSMV estimation. Small 2-level  $N$  (26) requires Bayesian estimation.*

Solution: I ran one model using WLSMV, Bayesian and MLR estimation and tested the robustness of coefficient, and then switched to MLR only. Is it sufficient?

*? ML SEM works only with relatively simple models. It is not possible to enter controls or several predictors at the same time*

# Further steps

Comparison of two alternative models using ML modeling: Institutionalized and non-institutionalized action as: 1) latent constructs vs. 2) composite scores

**Thank you for your attention!**